

A Pastor's Perspective — On Reading the Bible

“Family Devotions For Beginners” by Jeremy Wike

Certain growth stages of children are predictable. One of my favorites, in my limited journey of fatherhood, is the “Why?” phase. By the age of three, children follow everything a parent says with “Why?” Curiosity in children is both delightful and terrifying.

We want our children to absorb all they can about life, but there's always the chance they will ask risky questions—the kind where answers are too complicated, too delicate, or, let's face it, too revealing of our own ignorance. I wonder if this fear of being caught without a good answer contributes to why many parents don't make family Bible reading more of a priority.

Can I confess something to you if you promise not to tell my four kids? (I have a reputation as a pastor to protect, you know.) Okay. Here goes: *I still have lots of questions about the Bible*. And sometimes I mispronounce names and places. And I still want to tell God that He could have been nicer to Lot's wife. And to Job. Is that okay with God?

I wonder if God is more interested in our engagement with His story than He is that we confidently have answers to our kids' humdinger questions. I wonder if God simply wants us to be committed to the journey of knowing Him through His Word and allowing His Spirit to teach us—parents and children alike. I wonder if our kids will thank us as adults for acknowledging that God allows tension and questions that we can't reconcile. If these are true, then allow me to offer three benefits to habitually reading the Bible with our families, no matter their ages or our (lack of?) Bible literacy:

- 1) **God wants us to see Himself** as He acts out His love and justice through history. In other words, we learn about God *in action* throughout the Bible. Our kids need to see that God isn't aloof, isn't wringing His hands at the world's problems, and isn't a haphazard tyrant. He responds *differently* throughout history, but He's still the Sovereign, Personal God of Scripture.
- 2) **God wants us to see our need for His love and grace** reaching its climax on the cross where Jesus bore the weight of the sin of the world. But we must not overlook that his love and grace are present from beginning to end of His story.
- 3) **God wants us to see that He uses His people to shine the light of Jesus into our topsy-turvy world.** Instead of waiting for God to get angry and smite the “enemy”, God's M.O. is to call ordinary people—like you and me!—to insert ourselves into the messes of the world and act on His behalf. That hasn't changed since God called the likes of Noah, Gideon, Jonah, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther, and Peter.

Begin your journey of family devotions by grabbing one of many great kids' Bibles available and get reading. Otherwise, you may hear your children later asking you: “*Why didn't you help me understand the Bible better when I was younger?*”

NOTE: Jeremy Wike is one of the authors of the 33-day Family Devotionals included in the Let's Know the Bible Conference Notebook.

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