

Teaching Your Kids to Appreciate God's Word

By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

One of our jobs as parents is to plant the Word of God into our children's lives. God's Word provides them with a solid foundation upon which their lives can be built. In 1 Peter 1:24-25, we read, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field: the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." Creating an appreciation for God's Word in kids isn't always an easy task! But, I encourage you to do the best you can. Be persistent, pray, and then let God be God – who does the work to change lives! If you are looking for some ideas on how to instill an appreciation for God's Word into your children's lives, here are some ideas to help you get started.

Surround Your Kids With Good Resources. Younger children love Bible stories filled with action; stories like David and Goliath, Abraham and Lot, the Birth of Jesus, etc. So, if your kids are young, read Bible stories to them often. Utilize the many top-quality Christian videos available today. In reading, watching and talking about Bible stories, you'll be planting the concept that the Bible is important in your children's lives.

If your children are older, be sure to give them a Bible translation that they can better understand. There are a number of "youth friendly" translations available, such as *The New Century Version* and *The New Living Translation*. There are also many "student" Bibles available, in a variety of formats, that include special notes and articles highlighting how the Bible specifically applies to young people's lives.

Model Your Own Appreciation for God's Word to Your Children. Do you have a regular devotional time where you read and study the Bible? Do your kids know it? How about letting your kids watch you model your appreciation for God's Word. Don't forget that your actions will teach your kids a lot about how important you believe the Bible to be – probably even more than your words!

Create the Expectation that the Bible is an Everyday Guide for Everyday Life. In my years of youth ministry, I've often heard claims from students that the Bible is boring and isn't relevant to living today. Too often, adults have passed along a poor concept of the Bible: that it is much like a school text to be read and memorized, but without much connection to how it applies to everyday life. You can raise your children's level of expectation of the Bible (and their appreciation for it) by demonstrating to them that God's Word is a trustworthy, everyday guide. Here are some specific ways you can accomplish this:

- ***Know what the Bible says.*** You don't have to be a Bible scholar, but be a fellow-learner. This means that when your kids face a life issue or have a question about the Bible, share with them what you know the Bible says or work together with your child to find out what the Bible has to say on the issue or question.

- ***Know what the Bible doesn't say.*** This is similar to the point above, but in this case, we need to help our children understand that the Bible doesn't specifically address every issue. For

example, your teen might ask you a question about what the Bible says about sexuality, like “How far is too far?” We need to be honest with our kids that the Bible doesn’t say, “Thou shalt not kiss thy neighbor.” But the Bible *does* have a lot to say about general principles for governing relationships, respect, lust, etc. which could absolutely apply when addressing the question.

• ***Emphasize the Good, Bad and the Ugly in Scripture.*** By pointing to Bible stories where we read about the both the victories and failures of God’s people, you’ll be making an important connection from the Bible to the reality of life which your kids experience. It is actually helpful for your children to learn that the Bible doesn’t contain only stories about nice people who always do the right thing. They will see that the Bible contains the stories of real people who experience the entire spectrum of human existence, many of whom are committed to living lives of faith in spite of their sin and struggles. Your children will benefit from seeing these everyday, common experiences found in the Scriptures because they will learn that the Bible addresses real life issues.

• ***Emphasize Application of the Bible to Real Life Issues.*** When we help our kids see that the Bible is relevant and applies to real life issues – either specifically or by general principles – we create a sense of confidence in and appreciation for God’s Word in our children’s lives. As a result, our children will return to the Bible again and again for guidance and wisdom in their lives.

Teach Your Children How to Study God’s Word. The wisdom found in the following old adage, “Give a man a fish and he’ll be hungry tomorrow; teach a man how to fish and he’ll never go hungry again” also applies when it comes to teaching our kids to have an appreciation for God’s Word. If we, as parents, only tell our children about what they can find in the Bible, without teaching them how to discover and learn from the Bible on their own, they’ll become dependent on us, or on others, for their spiritual feeding. As your children grow older, be sure to give them the tools they need to be able to learn from the Scriptures on their own. Teach them a simple, Bible study plan where they can look at any Scripture passage and ask questions about the passage, such as,

- *Who wrote the passage?*
- *Who was the passage written to?*
- *Where was the author? Where was the audience?*
- *When was the passage written?*
- *Why was it written?*
- *What was taking place at the time?*
- *What does the passage say?*
- *What action was instructed?*
- *What did the passage mean to the people it was originally meant for?*
- *What does it mean for me, today?*
- *What can I learn from the passage?*
- *How can I apply what I’ve learned to my own life?*