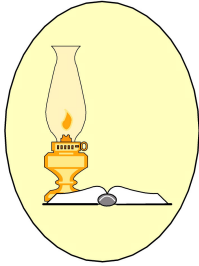


2.6 How can we teach children to use the Bible?



The church desires children to learn to respect the Bible as the authority that can tell them how to live. Therefore it is not enough that children just hear others teach them the Bible. They must learn to use the Bible and to read the Bible themselves. They should learn how to get around in the Bible, and how to find verses and passages they need in the Bible.

First of all, encourage the children to have their own Bible, or at least a portion of one.

It's hard to look up things in the Bible if there is no Bible in your home, or if the children are not permitted to read or even to touch the family Bible. It's better if there can be more than one Bible in the home. If the father or mother knows how to read, he or she should have his own Bible. Ideally the children should also have Bibles of their own, but if this is not possible, the family could try to have one Bible for all the children. Every Senior Secondary School student, however, should have his or her own Bible to read.

If Bibles are scarce, the church should consider why this is so. If the problem is availability, the church may arrange to buy a carton of Bibles when one of the members goes to the city. People who want Bibles could pay ahead for them, like putting in an order, or if possible, the church could buy them from its treasury and then resell them to replace the money. If Bibles are available for sale, the church should let everyone know where they can buy a Bible and what the cost is. The church can do much to encourage people to purchase their own Bibles.

If it is not possible to purchase a complete Bible, a family may buy a New Testament for the children. This is much less costly, and it will give the children practice in finding verses and in reading. However, they will not be able to follow any Sunday school lessons from the Old Testament.

Sometimes Scripture portions are available. These do not give the same kind of practice in finding verses, but they do give the children part of God's Word to read and treasure. For poor families, Scripture portions can be a decent solution or at least a starting point.

The Sunday school teacher can help create in the children a desire to have a Bible. Every week, he can ask the children to hold up their Bibles. When they sing songs about the Bible, he can ask them to hold up or to wave their Bibles. He can ask children who are good readers to read a verse or two of the lesson.

Teach how to use the Bible little by little.

You should spend a little time each week, very gradually teaching children how to use the Bible. About 3 minutes is enough. If you add a Bible drill, this can add 3 to 5 minutes more. Keep reviewing each point week by week until most of the children seem to grasp it. Then move on to the next point.

Review consistently.

You must frequently review the points you have already covered. Many places in the Bible, God says that we forget easily. That's why constant review is essential.

First, teach the two major divisions of the Bible.

When you begin teaching how to use the Bible, the first thing is to help children understand the two main divisions of the Bible—The Old Testament, and the New Testament. We can offer some teaching like this:

1. **The Old Testament** is the first part of a complete Bible. It is the older part of the Bible, the part that was written first. It is the history of God’s people in old times, and of God’s people called the Jews, Judah, or Israel. Everything in the Old Testament happened before Jesus was born. It points to Jesus, telling us THE SAVIOR WILL COME.
2. **The New Testament** is the second part of a complete Bible. It is the newer part of the Bible. It is the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, and of His followers, the church. It was written shortly after Jesus’ death. It, too, points to Jesus, telling us THE SAVIOR HAS COME.

As we are teaching what these two main divisions are all about, we can show the children these parts of our Bible. They can see that the Old Testament is much longer than the New Testament. They can see and find the title pages that say Old Testament and New Testament. They can learn to quickly tell whether a book contains the entire Bible or only the New Testament (by the size of the book).

Adapting this teaching to the level of the children:

All teaching that is simply learned and repeated can be learned by all the children, whatever the age group. Even preschool children can learn to tell the difference between the Old and New Testaments and can repeat the names of Bible books. However, only children who know how to read can participate in the parts that require reading and finding Bible verses.

Second, gradually teach the books of the Bible by groups.

We want the children to know what books are found in the Bible, and in what order, and how they are divided up. We want them to have an idea of the general teaching found in each book and in each group of books. This will help make the Bible seem more familiar and less like a stranger to them. They will be able to quickly find verses they need, or teachings that are found in the Bible. They will be able to use their Bibles themselves, and to help others. The Bible will become like a friend to them.

1. Show them the list of Bible books in the Table of Contents at the beginning of the Bible. This list should show the books in order, and on what page the beginning of each book can be found. Each child who has a Bible can open to the list and look at it. Those who are good readers can read the list aloud in unison. Those who cannot read so well can repeat the names of the books after you.
2. Show how the list is divided into subject groups. Discuss the meaning of each group.

Old Testament: Books of Moses or Books of the Law

Books written by Moses, showing the early history of the earth and of the Jews came to be a nation, and God’s laws and old God’s people, how time rules of worship

Books of History

Books that continue the history of the Jews through the time of the judges and the kings, how God punished them and they were taken captive, then came back and rebuilt

Books of Poetry

Songs and poems from the lives of God’s people, written by David and others

Long Books of Prophecy

Longer books giving warning to God’s people and telling about future events and the coming of the Messiah

Short Books of Prophecy

Shorter books giving warning to God’s people and telling about future events and the coming of the Messiah

New Testament: Gospels The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

History The beginning and spread of the church

Epistles or Letters of Paul

Other Epistles or Letters

Prophecy Messages to the churches and last events

3. **You might begin by teaching the New Testament.** It's shorter, it tells directly about Jesus, and many more children may own New Testaments than complete Bibles, because they are more inexpensive.

However, you can just as easily begin with the Old Testament if your children have complete Bibles or if they are studying lessons from the Old Testament.

4. Teach the children to recite the names of all the books in one section first, then have them learn the books from another section. For instance, if you are teaching the New Testament, you should teach THE GOSPELS first. Later, add the book of HISTORY. After that, add the LETTERS OF PAUL, etc. With each group or section, keep on teaching and reviewing it for as long as you need to, until the children know them very well.

Not all Bibles show the groups or sections of books, so we list them here:

OLD TESTAMENT

<u>Books of Moses or the Law</u>	<u>Books of History</u>
Genesis	Joshua
Exodus	Judges
Leviticus	Ruth
Numbers	1, 2 Samuel
Deuteronomy	1,2 Kings
	1,2 Chronicles
	Ezra
	Nehemiah
	Esther

<u>Books of Poetry</u>	<u>Long Books of Prophecy</u>	<u>Short Books of Prophecy</u>	
Job	Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum
Psalms	Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk
Proverbs	Lamentations	Amos	Zephaniah
Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Obadiah	Haggai
Song of Solomon	Daniel	Jonah	Zechariah
<u>Total Number of Old Testament books: 39</u>		Micah	Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

<u>Gospels</u>	<u>History of Church</u>
Matthew	Acts
Mark	
Luke	
John	

<u>Letters from the Apostle Paul</u>	<u>Letters from Others</u>	<u>Prophecies of the End</u>
Romans	Hebrews (maybe)	Revelation
1, 2 Corinthians	James	
Galatians	1,2 Peter	
Ephesians	1,2,3 John	
Philippians	Jude	
Colossians		
1,2 Thessalonians	<u>Total Number of New Testament Books: 27</u>	
1,2 Timothy		
Titus		
Philemon	<u>TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS IN THE BIBLE: 66</u>	

5. If the children have Bibles, they can **open them to the books** they are learning. It helps a lot to have one or more helpers on hand to give assistance.
5. They **can look for different Bible books**, but only for those whose names they have learned. The name of the book is written on top of the page.

Adapting to the Children’s Level: Teaching about books, chapters and verses begins only with those who can read. Younger children just learn in general about the Old and New Testaments.

Then, we teach the children to find chapters in the Bible.

When the children have memorized many of the groups and the names of the books, we teach them to find chapters in the Bible. The chapters are divisions people have made to divide up the books so we can find things more easily. The chapters are numbered from 1 at the beginning of each new book. The chapter numbers are written in large print at the beginning of the chapter. When two numbers are listed together, the first one is the chapter number. The children can practice finding chapters in their Bibles. For example, they can look for John chapter 3. Or, they can open their Bibles to anyplace and tell what book and what chapter they are looking at. They can also practice look at references (sometimes called addresses), like John 3:16, and telling what is the book and what is the chapter.

Finally, we teach the children to find verses in the Bible.

The final step is to teach the children to find verses in the Bible. Each chapter is divided into verses which are numbered. A verse is usually one or two sentences long, but it might be only part of a sentence. Verse numbers are written in smaller print, often at the beginning of the verse. In a Bible reference or address, the last number is the verse number. For example, in John 3:16, 16 is the verse number.

We explain these things to the children and show them in the Bible. Then we help them open their own Bibles, and show them in their Bibles. When they understand, they can begin to look up Bible references. For example, they might look up Matthew 5:8. When some of the children have found it, they can help others. They can also open their Bibles to any place, put their finger down on a verse, and tell what verse it is. They should practice this continually until they are proficient at it.

When they learn to do this very well, they can play a game called Bible Drill. Children who are good readers like this game a lot. They can do it alone or in groups. If in groups, give them names like University Children, Smart Smart Children, etc. The children hold their Bibles up. The teacher calls out a Bible reference and has the children repeat it several times. Finally he says “Go!” and the children race to see who can find the verse first. The first one to find it stands up and begins to read.

PRACTICE: SHOWING A VERSE TO A FRIEND

Here is a practice the children can do. Once they have learned how to find verses well, every week give them one verse to look up at home and read to their families. The church can announce to the parents that each week the children will have this practice assignment. This should only be done once the children have become quite proficient.

LET’S REVIEW

Complete these statements:

We teach children first the _____ of the Bible, second the _____ and _____ of the Bible, then to find the _____ of the Bible, and finally to find the _____.

How long a time each week should the Sunday school spend on teaching children to use the Bible?
About _____ minutes without a Bible drill, or about _____ minutes more with a Bible drill.

The Old Testament shows that the Savior _____ come; the New Testament that the Savior _____ come.

What part of the teaching of this chapter should be taught to preschool children?

.....

Where is the Table of Contents found in the Bible?

.....

What should a church do if very few of its children have access to a Bible?

.....

LET'S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Before you can teach the books of the Bible you have to know them. Learn the names of the books by group, and write them on a piece of paper. Then compare your list with ours. Check for completeness, order, and spelling.