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# 22 Ideas to Help Your Children Study and Love the Bible

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The first time I became aware of my mom's love for God's Word, my brother and I were racing around the living room playing hockey. At some point I noticed my mom calmly reading her Bible on our bright orange couch, and I ran to get my little Gideon New Testament to "read" next to her. I probably sat 20 seconds before getting up and running somewhere else.

Today I laugh with understanding, thinking of my mama reading the Bible with noisy children running around, and I have a strong desire to pass on the love of God's Word that she shared with me that day.

As an educator and mother, I have noticed that children learn to love God's Word differently than adults. They're still learning to read, and lack many higher-level thinking skills adults use as they study the Bible.

Children can also respond in surprising ways when parents teach them about spiritual things. They may get bored quickly. If you ask them if they want to hear what God taught you that morning, they might answer no. They don't pick up the Bible with the combination of discipline and joy that we parents have developed. Instead we may see periods of interest and delight, followed by apparent disinterest.

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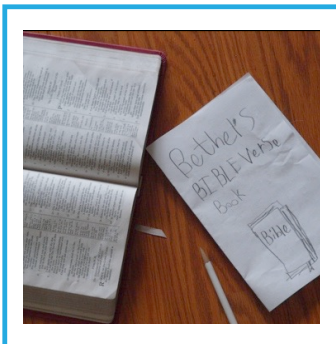
If we confuse their developmental limitations with a lack of interest, we may miss the very real ways that children are responding to the work of the Holy Spirit within them.

For the last few years, I've been gathering the ideas we've found helpful for nurturing our children's interest and skill in reading the Bible. My children don't yet read the Bible voraciously, and I'm still asking God for wisdom, but perhaps some of our approaches may encourage you to try some new ideas with your own family.

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## Here are 22 ideas to help your children study and love the Bible:

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1. Help children write out favorite verses in a handmade book, or on index cards to tape on their wall next to their beds. They may enjoy making and printing "business cards" with verses and clip art. These also make good gifts!
2. Consider allowing children to stay up later than normal if they are reading or listening to their Bible in their rooms. This reward is highly motivating to my night owl, although not as motivating for my child who goes to sleep within two minutes of laying his head on the pillow.

3. Download an audio Bible (here's one [free resource](#)) and give children the means of listening to it in their rooms. I used to think that my son was not interested in the Bible, but when he could listen to it, I got a better sense of his actual interest level. Listening also enables children to understand more of the Bible than reading alone, because of pronunciation and dramatic / auditory cues.

4. Teach them that a child doesn't have to be a good reader to love and obey the Bible! Ask them how the foolish man who built his house on the sand was different than the wise man who built his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Hint: It isn't "build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ"!

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5. Show children how to search for verses on a topic online (such as BibleGateway.com), or with a concordance. Teach them the Bible study tools and apps that you use. Some of my best Bible memories as a child were of my dad helping me use the Bible reference works in his library.

6. If children use an electronic Bible, help them use it more effectively. Show them how to use the search function, or pronunciation/dictionary features, and so on. I grew up loving the center margin cross references in my Bible, and I look for a Bible with cross references for my children. I've shown them how cross references help them find an original prophecy, similar verses, or the harmony of the gospels.



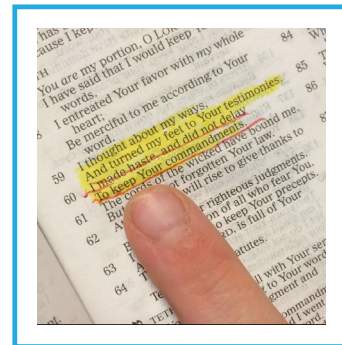
7. Help children make a chain of verses in their Bibles by writing another reference on the same topic in the margin. Making connections is one way children (and parents) learn to be active and happy students of God's Word.

8. Encourage your children to memorize the books of the Bible. Sword drills are a simple and enjoyable way for children to practice locating verses in a print Bible and grow in confidence as they increase skill.

9. Teach them to use the maps in their Bibles. I spent one day helping them find places in the maps at the back of their Bibles when we were reading through Acts. Helping children locate the exact location communicates that the Bible is reliable and true, and is especially helpful for spatial learners.

10. Help children identify Bible synonyms for everyday concepts. For example, if they want to know what the Bible has to say about "fighting," show them how the Bible includes other words like strife, wars, contention, and so on.

11. Help children identify Bible opposites as they study. Ask, "What is the opposite of love? What is the opposite of pride?" Show them the Bible opposites in Ephesians 4:25-32.
12. Talk about the process of actively reading: "After I read a passage, I wonder how..." and pause to see if they can finish the sentence. If not, you can supply your own ideas. For example, if I'm reading where Jesus tells me to take up my cross and follow him, I am going to ask myself (and my children), "When I read this verse, I wonder how to obey it. What does that mean, to take up my cross? Is there something else in the passage that gives me a clue?" Then we can turn these questions into prayers or further discussions.
13. When I want to guide children into applying Scripture, I'm more successful when I share three or four possible responses and ask them to pick one to pray about, or apply in some specific way. Children also do well if we supply a scenario and ask them how to apply a particular verse. If I ask how they might apply God's Word when someone yells at them on the soccer field, or when a sibling is mean to them, they can usually take the next step. Children need to know good doctrine, but they also need to see how they can actively read and respond to the text on their own.
14. Help young children find and highlight verses they have memorized, even if they haven't yet become fluent readers. Show them how highlighting these verses makes it easy to scan the Bible and find them again quickly. Verses that are already memorized are the easiest verses for new and struggling readers to find in the Bible and actually read. Yes, they may highlight strange verses, or highlight too many, but I have always enjoyed having a glimpse into my children's independent spiritual life when they proudly show me what they've marked. My youngest daughter, Laurel, was especially delighted when I helped her find her favorite verses and showed her how to use a card to highlight in a straight line. Then she could read her Bible just like her older siblings.
15. Teach them verses that correspond to their interests. My son loves bird verses. On the other hand, my daughter Bethel likes horse verses, and I don't yet have a good sense of the verses that my youngest daughter likes. Every once in awhile, I tell one of them, "I have a verse for you." and then I read it to them, or give them a paper with the reference on it.



16. Teach them verses that can help them in their specific circumstance. When Bethel told me she was having a hard time being afraid at night, I showed her some Psalms about going to sleep. I discovered later that she highlighted those verses and learned them well. Another time, I helped David label some Psalms—"when I am discouraged," "when others are being mean," "when I can't sleep," and so on. Like my children, I am excited when I see the relevance of God's Word to my life, when I see that God has given me everything I need for life and godliness. However, I'm learning children don't always get the connection without someone specifically teaching it.
17. One of the motivations I had growing up for reading God's Word was watching my mom and dad love and study God's Word. It challenges me to remember that I am teaching my children to love, by what I love.
18. I have been especially challenged to remember that I can nurture a love for God's Word, but I cannot create it. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. Remembering the work of the Holy Spirit drives me to pray more fervently for my children, and also to rest in his provision for the results of my labor.
19. If you like to read, check out *I Read It, But I Don't Get It* by Chris Tovani, and *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler [I'm partial to the old, out-of-print edition]. Neither of these books is about reading the Bible specifically, but they both address the process of becoming an active reader. You may find them inspiring as I did. One important idea from these books is that good readers aren't terribly concerned about gaps in their understanding as they read. In fact, those gaps actually cause them to be more alert and more active as they read. Help your children not to fear how much they don't understand. Teach them that good readers have lots of questions as they read, and encourage them to keep going and to keep asking questions when they don't understand.
20. When it comes to choosing a translation, remember it's not just about the reading level. Children who grow up in Christian homes learn at some point not to worry about what is too difficult. Some verses will be difficult regardless of the translation; likewise, even a more difficult to read translation will have passages that most young readers can read. For any translation, parents can help the child by finding places that he can read and understand.
21. Consider purchasing for your children the translation your church uses. New readers have great difficulty following along with public reading of God's Word when their Bible is different than the one being read. In fact, our ability as adults to read and listen to two different texts is quite complex.

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**22.** One of the projects our family worked on together was compiling Scripture verses on topics we were interested in. When the children discussed certain problems, we would add a new topic. Talking about Bible topics and collecting verses was a rewarding and happy time for our family. Gradually, the topics grew into a book that we decided to share with others.

You can read more about the **Topical Bible for Kids** below. And if you'd like a PDF version of this article to take with you or share with others, download it [here](#).

As always, I enjoy hearing from readers. I want to hear the ideas that you have found helpful or inspiring! Send me a note at [brockme@gmail.com](mailto:brockme@gmail.com) or find me on Twitter [@michelleebrock](https://twitter.com/michelleebrock)



**Michelle Brock** comes from a family of Bible lovers, and is passionate about sharing that love with her husband and three children. She also loves the coffee her husband roasts weekly, the poetry of TS Eliot, rocks, and seashells. Michelle blogs at [as4me.net](http://as4me.net).

## About the Topical Bible for Kids

The **Topical Bible for Kids** contains Scriptures chosen and organized to delight and encourage elementary aged children. Parents and teachers can use this book to nurture active, happy readers of the Bible. It encourages the process of turning to God's Word when facing a specific challenge, question, or happy experience.

Perfect for use as a child's reference book or a guide for family devotions. Includes 87 topics that children are interested in.

Available in ESV, NASB, and KJV translation of the Bible.

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