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THE GIFT OF A CHILDREN'S BIBLE

**Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path**
- Psalm 119:105

FOR ALL OF US

A wonderful woman I met at her congregation in Canada in January, sent me this email last month:

I brought my mom to live with us in early January. She was suffering from dementia and lung cancer. It was our decision to have her live out the rest of her life with us. Little did we know at that time just how short and valuable that time would turn out to be. My husband observed that for me to even consider bringing mom into our home, it had to be God speaking to me.

When you were here, at one session, you related the story of a friend of yours who purchased *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, a beautifully illustrated children's Bible, for her 82 year old mother, a lifelong reader of scripture. Her mother loved it, declaring, "This is the first Bible I have read that I simply could not put down." I was totally convicted by that story to get a copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* for my mom.

I was a bit nervous to give it to her, because it was a child's Bible and I didn't want to insult or embarrass her. The funny thing is, she was thrilled and began to read the book immediately. In fact, she couldn't put it down. Whenever she could, which was often, she read the Bible. And then, when she was done, she began to read it again. She devoured it.

I never knew at the time how close to death she was and that *The Jesus Storybook Bible* would be the last book my mom ever read. She passed away on February 25 and, praise the Lord, my own precious daughter and I were at her side.

Thank you for sharing that story with us and encouraging us that the Bible was for all of us, not the least of which was my mom.

I'm so grateful that the last book she would read on this earth was *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. It comforted me in an indescribable way.

I replied:

I wept as I read your precious story. Thank you so much for sharing this with me. This is so touching. We assume that our parents or any of our elders don't need a children's Bible to read. We all need a Bible that engages us. What an incredible gift you gave your mother. Now, may you and your darling daughter find great comfort in reading that Bible (or any other one) together, remembering that your mother is in your circle, now and forever.

FOR FAMILIES

When you are invited to a baby shower or baptism or Gotcha Day or wedding reception for a family being formed by marriage, purchase a favorite and appealing Bible that the entire family will be able to use together.

When someone you love is diagnosed with memory loss or a serious illness, consider giving the gift of a children's Bible. Deliver it and read a story or two, discussing what you have just read and what it means to each of you.

Give your own family the gift of a new family Bible. No one gets points taken off for reading from an illustrated Bible! Look for the language that is filled with God's love and grace.

Then, use it! Read a Bible story at the dinner table or as part of your bedtime routine.

FOR CONGREGATIONS

To whom do you give a Bible? Which one(s)? How often? Why?

None of us expects that the baptismal gown worn by an infant will be worn again at their confirmation. Why? Well, of course, it won't fit!

Why then do we think that one Bible fits all? The Bible our children will read during their confirmation class or youth ministry experiences really doesn't "fit" the toddler or preschooler or elementary-age child they were.

Just as our kids need clothes in many different sizes as they grow, so, too, do they need a "wardrobe" of Bibles to fit their growing minds and spirits. A great congregation in North Carolina with a visionary Christian Education and Youth Ministry Director gives seven Bibles from birth through high school graduation. But, how can a congregation afford to do that?

Here are a few ideas:

- * Ask your older members to donate to a Bible Fund, if they want the next generations to have faith and to love the Bible.
- * Take special offerings for Bibles.
- * Invite families to give their children and adults the birthday gift of donating the cost of a Bible to their congregation.
- * Offer the Bible Fund as a memorial designation when members die or something to be included in their will.
- * Encourage Bible study groups to donate the cost of a Bible or two.

If we want to get the word of God inside our kids, we need to fulfill the baptismal promise to "place in their hands the Holy Scriptures."

After the gift of a Bible, host an event for the kids who received a new Bible and their parents to come together and use that Bible. Invite baptismal sponsors, parents, grandparents, and others who love the recipient to mark their favorite stories or passages or to write a blessing in the new Bible. Then, give them a simple devotion to do, using this Bible. Practice makes perfect ... and builds the spiritual practice of reading God's word together.

Another benefit: Parents who might not have grown up reading God's word, can do so now, without fear of incompetence or ignorance. You will be raising up more than one generation to love God's word.

Some congregations have placed children's Bibles in the pew rack, alongside a more traditional adult version. It says to the children, "The Bible is for you, too" and "We expected you to come." It doesn't hurt a thing to have a scripture lesson read occasionally from a children's Bible.

Offer family Bible studies, to help families gather around God's word.

families gather around God's word. For six years, I've been doing one at my church ... and it is one of the most precious experiences of my life. It has certainly expanded those I hold close as members of my faith family.

Leave out an assortment of Bibles, where others can see and access them. Use them often enough that they never need to be dusted!

May God's word be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path! Amen.

NEED SOME HELP?

Do you need some help gaining perspective, evaluating your ministries, reestablishing your priorities, discerning where God is calling your congregation now, and engaging all to participate? This might be the time for coaching with Marilyn Sharpe, a ministry partner who will focus, inspire, and walk with you and your ministry team to follow where God is leading.

CALL OR [EMAIL](#) NOW!

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