



- Session 4 -

Placing in Their Hands the Holy Scriptures

Select Learning

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer

Gathering Table

Add storybook Bibles collected during the week to the Gathering Table. If possible, identify and invite someone in your faith community who has a well-used and marked Bible to be a guest for this session – and bring their Bible!

Introduce the Video – Guests: Dr. Dick Hardel, Rev. Dick Staats, Rev. Cora Aguilar

Introduce the group to the theme for this session. The questions are a way of preparing and your minds and hearts to the content they will see in the video.

In Session 4 the focus is on the Book of Faith, our Bible, knowing and telling Bible stories, what to look for in selecting a Bible and the use of storybook Bibles for all ages. As you watch this segment, consider:

- Are there Bible stories you know by heart? When did you first hear or read Bible stories?
- Have you ever received or given a Bible to someone? What was their reaction? Yours?
- How can Bible stories bring all generations together?

Watch the video

Discussion

Segment I. Passing on the Faith By Heart

Dr. Dick Hardel begins by sharing the importance of knowing God's Story by heart . . . from his mother's lips to his ears to his heart, and from his lips to his children's ears and hearts . . .

- Share a memory of hearing someone read, tell or act-out a Bible Story that captured your imagination.
- What passage would you highlight in a Bible as one of your favorites? Do you think most people find it difficult to write or mark in their Bibles? Explain.
- Who do you know with a well used and marked Bible? Ask them about it.

Segment II. God in Action through Storybook Bibles

If the facilitator or the church library has a collection of storybook Bibles, bring them to this session and allow time for participants to explore them. Distribute the “List of Recommended Bibles” handout. Rev. Dick Staats showed us some of his favorite storybook Bibles:

- The Beginner's Bible (Also in Spanish)
- Egermeier's Bible Story Book
- The Family Storybook Bible
- The Jesus Storybook Bible (Also in Spanish)
- Lift the Flap Bible
- Spark Storybook Bible

Dick shares his passion for collecting, reading and giving away storybook Bibles. When selecting a storybook Bible, he looks at how well the story of Genesis is presented and how hopeful is Revelation. He surveys the artwork and facial expressions. Do they also tell the story or merely decorate it?

- What do you look for when selecting a Bible?

Dick believes that giving someone a storybook Bible is like giving someone a piece of apple pie. No one will be offended. He has given storybook Bibles to his barber, banker, U.S. mail delivery person, hardware clerk, neighbors and others. He does it with such ease!

- Name someone to whom you could give a storybook Bible. What would you say?
- What do you think would be his or her reaction?

Segment III. God's Story for All Generations

Pastor Cora Aguilar shares her excitement and the positive response from her congregation's introduction to The Jesus Storybook Bible. She incorporated the storybook Bible into Sunday School, worship, adult Bible classes and into the home.

Pastor Cora uses four questions that she believes assist everyone, whatever age or biblical knowledge to understand, and make God's Story their own:

1. What is the story about?
2. With whom do you most identify?
3. Where do you see signs of God's covenant (promise) with God's people?
4. What does the story call us to do as God's people?

Consider:

- What methods or approaches have you used to grasp God's grace in a Bible story?
- Describe a setting, church or home, where children, youth, adults and elders might hear a Bible story together.

- How could you engage everyone in these four questions?

Pastor Cora believes many adults, even those who have grown up in the Christian faith, are intimidated by the Bible. That they do not fully understand the basic Biblical narrative and Christian message for life.

Ask participants to generate ideas for the following question. Gather responses and write them on a white board or newsprint.

What ideas do you have, as a result of this session, for home or for your congregation to help people become comfortable and excited about opening the Bible, even a storybook Bible . . . “that we might be born into a whole new life in Christ?”

Make It My Own – Take It Home

This is your time to review and plan for next steps:

1. **Celebrate:** Name occasions in the life of your congregation or household where persons of all ages are equipped to know God's Story as their story.
2. **Tweak:** Based on what you have experienced in this session, what is one step you might take to discover and share God's Story in your church, home or neighborhood?
3. **Add:** What is one new idea or approach to learning and enjoying Bible stories you could try in your congregation? Household? When? How?

Closing

*Thank everyone for participating. If you have presented *Equipping Households of Faith* as a series, remind people this is the last session. Ask for interest in continued conversation and engagement of the ideas presented in the series. Share information about future sessions or a new series. Offer a closing prayer. Be available for questions and conversation.*

Extend the Conversation

- Does your congregation give out Bibles? To what age group? How could members of your faith community enrich this “gifting” to make it more meaningful - a milestone event?
- What would be the effect of placing the Spark Story Bible, or another storybook Bible in church pews? What would be the reaction from each generation? Guests?

Last Session Bonus! Survey the group to assess the interest in organizing and leading an congregational focus on the various faith practices introduced in this Unit. Consider a “Read the Bible” initiative. See the *Bible Activity Supplement* for ideas for home and congregation.

Accompanying this Session

- Participant Guide
- Bibliography & Resources
- List of Recommended Bibles
- Supplemental Bible Activities

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Prepare to Watch the Video - Guests: Dr. Dick Hardel, Rev. Dick Staats, Rev. Cora Aguilar

- Are there Bible stories you know by heart? When did you first hear or read Bible stories?
- Have you ever received or given a Bible to someone? What was their reaction?
- How can Bible stories bring all generations together?

Watch the Video

Discussion

I. Passing on the Faith By Heart

Dick Hardel begins by sharing the importance of knowing God's Story by heart. From his mother's lips to his ears and to his heart, and from his lips to his children's ears and hearts . . .

- Share a memory of hearing someone read, tell or act-out a Bible story that captured your imagination.
- What passage would you highlight in a Bible as one of your favorites? Do you think it is difficult for most people to write or mark in their Bibles? Explain.
- Who do you know who has a well used and marked Bible? Ask them about it.

II. God in Action through Storybook Bibles

Dick Staats showed us some of his favorite storybook Bibles:

- The Beginner's Bible (Also in Spanish)
- Egermeier's Bible Story Book
- The Family Storybook Bible
- The Jesus Storybook Bible (Also in Spanish)
- Lift the Flap Bible
- Spark Storybook Bible

Dick believes that giving someone a storybook Bible is like giving someone a piece of pie. Explore the Bibles on the Gathering Table. Glance through the *List of Recommended Bibles*.

- What do you look for when selecting a Bible?
- Name someone to whom you could give a story Bible?
- What would you say? What do you think would be the reaction?

III. God's Story for All Generations

Pastor Cora shares four questions she believes will assist everyone, whatever age or biblical knowledge, to understand and make God's Story their own. The four questions are:

1. What is the story about?
2. With whom do you most identify?
3. Where do you see signs of God's covenant (promise) with God's people?
4. What does the story call us to do as God's people?

Consider:

- What methods or approach have you used to grasp God's grace in a Biblical story?
- Describe a setting, church or home, where children, youth, adults and elders read and hear Bible stories together. How would you engage all ages in these four questions?

Cora believes many adults, even those who have grown up in the Christian faith, do not fully understand the basic biblical narrative and Christian message for life.

What ideas do you have, as a result of this session, for home or congregation, to help people become comfortable with the Bible, “to be born into a whole new life in Christ?”

Make It My Own – Take It Home

This is your time to review and plan for next steps.

1. **Celebrate:** Name those occasions in the life of your congregation or household where people of all ages are given God's Story as their story.
2. **Tweak:** Based on what you have experienced in this session, what is one step you might take to get God's Story into your church, home or neighborhood?
3. **Add:** What is one new idea or approach to learning and enjoying Bible stories you could try in your congregation? Household? When? How?

Closing

Extend the Conversation

- Does your congregation give out Bibles? How could the people of your congregation enrich this “gifting” to make it an even more meaningful, milestone event?
- What would be the effect of placing a storybook Bible, in your church pews? Reaction from older adults in your congregation? Youth? Children? First time guests?

Resources for This Session

- Bibliography & Resources
- Recommended Bibles
- Supplemental Bible Activities

BIBLIOGRAPHY, REFERENCES and RESOURCES

Bible Gateway. <http://www.biblegateway.com>

A free service for reading and researching Scripture online, all in more than 50 languages or translation of your choice. Ability to compare translations side-by-side.

Bible Milestones. http://store.vibrantfaith.org/product_p/bm.htm

This down-loadable resource provides congregations with multiple ideas to mark giving and receiving of Bibles. Includes a litany and blessing for worship, enrichment events and resources for households to mark this milestone using Four Key faith practices.

Book of Faith. www.bookoffaith.org Social Networking Site <http://bookoffaith.ning.com/>

Enter the Bible. Luther Seminary <http://www.enterthebible.org/Bible.aspx>

An extensive interactive guide and reference tool to enrich your reading of the Bible. A wealth of resources. Adds depth to your Bible study. For teens and adults

The Text This Week. <http://www.textweek.com/>

Lectionary based scripture study and resources, including links to movies, drama and art associated with the text. Includes lesson plans, bulletins, and stories for children.

Bibles Referenced by Rev. Dick Staats

Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *Lift the Flap Bible*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 2000.

Milton, Ralph. *The Family Story Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996

Sattgast, L.J. *My Very First Bible*. Eugene: Harvest House, 1995.

[21 contributors] *Spark Story Bible*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009.
<http://www.activatefaith.org/>

Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007.

Also in Spanish. Listen to the stories on the web: <http://www.jesusstorybookbible.com/>

Rev. Cora Aquilar

Pastor Cora describes the results of introducing a storybook Bible to the adults in her mission congregation. Check out this video about another congregation's approach.

Book of Faith: For All Generations. <http://bookoffaith.ning.com/video/book-of-faith-for-all>

In this seven-minute video view another example of *The Jesus Storybook* woven into all aspects of congregational life.

Recommended Bibles and Bible Storybooks for All Ages, Stages and Households

For Preschool Children, Early Readers and All Generations

Adventure Bible Storybook (Zonderkidz): Over 50 stories with key verses highlighted for each one.

The Beginner's Bible: Timeless Children's Stories (Zonderkidz): Almost 100 Bible stories told in an easy to read format with kid friendly pictures that make you smile.

The Jesus Storybook Bible (Zonderkidz): Written by Sally Lloyd-Jones, this unique storybook Bible reveals Jesus as the center of every story. In Spanish. A personal favorite! Listen to the stories on the web: <http://www.jesusstorybookbible.com/>

My First Message: A Devotional Bible for Kids (NavPress): Based on Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, this Bible storybook features engaging illustrations as well as prayers, questions, and things to do at the end of each story.

Lift the Flap Bible (Standard): Durable cover for little ones. Involves the child in every story with 40 flaps to open.

My Very First Bible ((Harvest House): Sixty stories told very simply with lavish and bold illustrations.

The Rhyme Bible Storybook (Zonderkidz): 35 classic Bible stories are retold in delightful rhymes.

Spark Story Bible (Augsburg Fortress): 150 stories in a hardback book with colorful artwork to engage young children. Accompanying curriculum available at <http://www.activatefaith.org/>

For Elementary Children and Households

The Adventure Bible (Zonderkidz): This NIV Bible contains book introductions, relevant historical facts, and ways to live God's Word in daily life. For students ages 8–12.

The Adventure Bible for Young Readers (Zonderkidz): Many of the features of the regular *Adventure Bible* are found in this version, but the shorter sentence structure and simpler vocabulary makes it a better choice for ages 6–10.

Egermeier's Bible Story Book (Warner Press): A classic, first written in 1922 by Elsie Egermeier with the view point of the child in mind. New and revised edition, 1962, added full page illustrations. A great family Bible with basic maps and timeline.

The Family Story Bible (Westminster Knox): Ralph Milton believes that if you are not having fun reading the Bible, then you are not doing it right. His "Word to Adults" is a must read. Stories of faith told in a down-to-earth way. A great first Bible for families new to church or to the Christian faith.

Holy Bible (American Bible Society): This Contemporary English Version is made to be read aloud and easily understood. Aimed at 3rd grade reading levels.

The Spark Bible (Augsburg Fortress): Designed for children in grades 3–6, this NRSV Bible also includes stickers for use in marking and highlighting passages. <http://www.activatefaith.org/>

For Middle and High School Youth and Their Friends

The Message. The Bible in Contemporary Language (NavPress): Written by Eugene Peterson, truly a translation using today's words, idioms and metaphors. It is a “reading Bible,” says Peterson, meant to get people into the Word. Teenagers find the language is more accessible to them than a traditional Bible.

The NIV Student Bible (Zondervan): This student Bible contains introductions to each book, including tips on how to read it, biographies about 100 biblical people and a guided tour section which highlights important events in the Bible. Also included are short articles or questions to stimulate discussion and thought.

For Adults of Every Age in Every Stage of Life

The Life Application Study Bible (Zondervan): Available in several translations, this Bible provides study notes which encourages readers to apply what they read to their own lives.

The Lutheran Study Bible (Augsburg Fortress Publishers): This NRSV Bible is full of “extras” for reading and studying the Bible. Many pastors and teaching theologians contributed to this extensive collection of resources enabling us to open scripture and join the conversation.

Marriage Devotional Bible (Zondervan): An NIV translation with guided reflections and life applications written by three couples active in marriage enrichment.

The Message. The Bible in Contemporary Language (NavPress): Written by Eugene Peterson, a “reading Bible,” meant to get people into the Word. Many find the language more accessible and fresh than wording in a traditional Bible.

The NIV Study Bible (Zondervan): Provides extensive study notes and cross-references as well as multiple indexes.

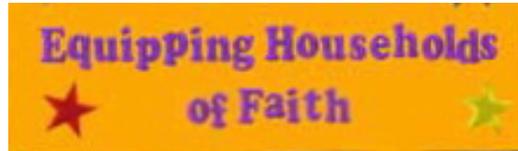
The People's Bible (Fortress Press): An NRSV Bible that highlights the role of the cultures in shaping the development of the Bible and the way people read it. Study notes and section overviews are provided by a number of distinguished scholars.

Serendipity Bible (Zondervan): This NIV Bible is suitable for leading small group studies. It suggests several tracks for reading and studying the Bible depending on the composition of the group. It also provides questions for facilitators to open group study, stimulate discussion, and help people process what the passage might mean for them personally.

Thank you to *Teresa Kaldor*, past President of Lutheran Association of Christian Educators, for compiling the initial foundation for this list. www.faithfulteaching.org

Resource created by Dick & Linda Staats
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Household of Faith Covenant



At the time of baptism, parents and sponsors pledge to place in their child's hands the Holy Scriptures and nurture him or her in faith and prayer. All the baptized, when they affirm their baptism, promise to hear the Word of God.

As a household, we make a commitment to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, and empowered by the Word for our daily lives.

We commit to read and discuss one Bible story each week for the coming year.

_____	_____
NAME	DATE
_____	_____
NAME	DATE
_____	_____
NAME	DATE
_____	_____
NAME	DATE
_____	_____
NAME	DATE

Name of Congregation

THE BIBLE IS EASY!

One Story a Week for 52 Weeks

What if you or the people in your household could read one story a week from a Bible storybook and read the whole Bible in a year? You would gain a good, clear grasp of what God has done for you in Jesus and promises still to do every day and forever. Your understanding of God's love for you and for all people and all of creation would also grow. You could read it alone, or with a friend, with a neighbor, grandma in an assisted living center, a work associate, as a couple, or with the people in your household.

You might want to prepare a question for engaging everyone in caring conversation. For example, the story of David & Goliath, "Can you think of a situation in which you or someone else was scared because the other person was bigger? What happened?" Or before beginning, ask the teens to specifically listen for the all the characteristics of a leader they hear in the David & Goliath story. After reading the story, ask each listener to come up with a faith title for the story. "David & Goliath" simply identifies the story. "Overwhelmed, but God Overcomes!" is a title that strengthens our faith. Or "God Calls Even Young People to Lead," directs us on how to become disciples at any age.

In one year, through 52 stories, whether read alone, with another, or together as a household, you will have become better acquainted with the gist and grit of our faith in God through Jesus and gained the ease of talking faith with one other. After one year, do it again using another story Bible or make up your own Bible-reading plan. It's good to keep it simple, doable and always count on God's Spirit to strengthen Christ in us.

How to make God's Stories Your Stories

- Pledge as a family, household, couple or individual to read one story a week for 52 weeks.
- Select a Bible storybook or Bible from which you will read the story each week. Choose one that is appropriate for your children or grandchildren's ages or your own life-stage. Keep it in plain sight as a reminder each week to read God's Story of Jesus and as a reminder to make it your story!
- Starting at the beginning of the list. Read one story, out-loud, each week. If a story is not in your Bible storybook, read the story directly from the Bible text. Or choose another story, not on the list, but in your storybook Bible.
- Use one or more of the following questions to discuss the story:
 - What is the story about? Retell the story in your own words, act it out, or portray a scene in an artistic manner (draw, model it in clay, etc.)
 - What did you like best in the story? With whom did you most identify?
 - How does this story connect with the previous one? Where do you see signs of God's covenant (*promise or pledge*) with God's people?
 - What does this story call you or your household to do as God's people?
- The stories below are listed by their familiar titles, but God's stories are more than titles. Every Bible story is a faith story. Each week rename the story giving it a faith title.
- How does God nurture your faith through each story?

Old Testament Story

1. Creation
2. Sin & the Fall
3. The Flood & the First Covenant
4. Abraham & Sarah
5. Isaac and his family

6. Young Joseph
7. Joseph Helps his Family
8. Baby Moses
9. Moses & the Burning Bush
10. The Plagues
11. The First Passover
12. The Exodus
13. The Ten Commandments
14. Joshua & Jericho
15. Naomi & Ruth
16. Samuel Hears God
17. Anointing of David
18. David & Goliath
19. King David
20. Solomon

21. Elijah & the Prophets
22. Naaman is Healed
23. Daniel in the Lions' Den
24. Jonah & the Big Fish

Bible Text

- Genesis 1 - 2
Genesis 3
Genesis 6 - 9
Genesis 12, 13, 15
Genesis 25: 19 - 34;
Genesis 27:1 – 29:30
Genesis 37
Genesis 39-45
Exodus 1 - 2
Exodus 3 – 4
Exodus 7 -10
Exodus 11 – 12
Exodus 14 – 15
Exodus 16, 19 – 20
Joshua 1, 2, 6
Ruth 1: 1 - 22
1 Samuel 3
1 Samuel 16
1 Samuel 17
2 Samuel 7; Psalm 23
1 King 4: 29 – 34;
1 Kings 6: 1- 13
1 Kings 18: 16 – 39
2 Kings 5: 1 – 17
Daniel 6
Jonah 1 – 3

Key Bible Verses

- Genesis 1: 27-28
Genesis 3: 5
Genesis 9: 8 -11
Genesis 12:1-2
Genesis 28:15

Genesis 37: 3 - 4
Genesis 50: 20
Exodus 2: 23 -24
Exodus 3: 13 -15
Exodus 6: 7
Exodus 12: 26-27
Exodus 15: 2
Exodus 20: 2 – 3
Joshua 1: 9
Ruth 1: 16
1 Samuel 3: 10
1 Samuel 16: 7
1 Samuel 17: 37
2 Samuel 7: 12 – 13
1 Kings 6: 12 – 13

1 Kings 18: 36
2 Kings 5: 15
Daniel 6: 10
Jonah 2: 9

New Testament Story

25. Mary & Elizabeth
26. Birth of Jesus
27. The Wise Men
28. John the Baptist & Jesus' Baptism
29. Temptations in the Wilderness
30. Jesus Calls his Disciples
31. Through the Roof
32. The Mountain Sermon

33. The Story of Seeds
34. Jesus Calms the Storm
35. A Dying Girl & a Sick Woman
36. Feeding of the 5,000
37. The Good Samaritan
38. The Lost Son
39. Jesus and the Children

Bible Text

- Luke 1
Luke 2: 1 – 20
Matthew 2
Matthew 3
Luke 4: 1 – 13
Luke 5: 1 – 11
Luke 5: 17 – 26
Matthew 5: 3 – 12;
Matthew 6
Mark 4: 1 – 33
Matthew 8: 23 – 27
Luke 8: 40 – 56
Matthew 14: 13 – 21
Luke 10: 25 – 37
Luke 15
Luke 18: 15 – 17

Key Bible Verses

- Luke 1: 31 – 33
Luke 2: 10 – 11
Matthew 2: 11
Matthew 3: 17
Luke 4: 12 – 13
Luke 5: 9 – 10
Luke 5: 24
Matthew 6: 9 - 15

Mark 4: 30 – 31
Matthew 8: 27
Luke 8: 48
Matthew 14: 19 – 20
Luke 10: 27 – 28
Luke 15: 31 – 32
Luke 18: 16

40. Zacchaeus	Luke 19: 1 – 10	Luke 19: 9 – 10
41. Riding into Jerusalem	Matthew 21: 1 – 17	Matthew 21: 9
42. Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet	John 13: 1 – 15	John 12: 14 – 15
43. The Last Supper	Luke 22: 1 – 38;	Luke 22: 19 – 20
44. Jesus' Arrest & Trial	Matthew 26: 36 – 27: 31	Matthew 26: 39
45. The Crucifixion	Luke 23: 26 – 56	Luke 23: 42 - 43
46. The Resurrection	John 20	John 20: 17 -18
47. Ascension	Acts 1: 1 -11; Matthew 28: 16 – 20	Matthew 28: 19 - 20
48. Pentecost	Acts 2	Acts 2: 38 - 39
49. Healing of the Lame Man	Acts 3: 1 – 16	Acts 3: 16
50. Saul's Story	Acts 9: 1 – 22	Acts 9: 15 – 16
51. Paul and Silas in Jail	Acts 16: 16 – 40	Acts 16: 31
52. A Vision of Heaven	Revelations 21: 1 – 22: 6	Revelations 21: 6 - 7

Thank you to *Teresa Kaldor*,
past President of Lutheran Association of Christian Educators,
for researching and compiling the list of 52 Bible stories.
<http://faithfulteaching.org/>

Thank you to *Rev. Dick Staats* for his words of introduction and suggestions
for making God's story our story. dick@couplecare.com

GIVE YOUR BIBLE A VACATION!

Hey folks! When planning a vacation with family or friends, do you think of taking a Bible along with you?

“Oh, my golly gosh, absolutely not! That would be an additional 3 pounds in one of our suitcases. We are on the go from the moment we wake up in the morning to the minute our heads hit the pillow at night, got to maximize our time seeing and doing everything we can. We never read the Bible at home, so why would we think of taking a Bible with us on vacation? If we did and never got around to using it, we'd feel guilty. Nope, we don't think about taking a Bible with us.”

These responses are like a leftover container of cold spaghetti in the refrigerator with no sauce, all entangled and stuck together. Is it or is it not a good idea to take a Bible along on vacation? We need to consider the purpose, planning and practice of a vacation. Then the purpose, planning and practice of reading the Bible. Does it make sense to give our Bible a vacation as well?

WHAT IS A VACATION?

Webster's definition of a vacation is “a period of time for pleasure, rest, or relaxation, especially one with pay granted to an employee.” Consider the following summer vacation: A family plans to tour the gold mine at Lead, South Dakota, ride the Terry Peak ski lift, walk the wild west streets of Deadwood, attend the Passion Play in Spearfish, hike to the fire ranger tower on top of Harney Peak, visit and ponder Mount Rushmore, and go horseback riding at Outlaw Ranch, a camp near Custer, where they will lodge and eat most of their meals. They will spend another week at Grandpa and Grandma's farm in central Kansas before driving back to their home in Denver. What good would it be to blend Bible reading into such a vacation?

A vacation can be an opportunity for a family to begin reading the Bible because they are together all the time without distractions and interruptions. A family that already reads the Bible together can make their vacation an opportunity to travel through some specific story of the Bible, for example the faith journey of Jacob's family, which is dramatic and ends with tears of great joy. A family might romp around in the Book of Proverbs to gather choice bits of wisdom on how to think and talk and act as people of faith in God. If a family or friends plans to travel in Israel instead of the Black Hills of South Dakota, they would be on location of many Bible stories weaving together what they read and see and hear and smell and taste and touch. The possibilities for vacation plans and Bible reading are many and varied.

IDEAS FOR INCLUDING BIBLE STORIES AS VACATION STORIES

- A family might discuss and decide a faith theme for their vacation, like “Wherever We Go & Whatever Happens, We Trust God's Care!” Shorten it into “Wherever, Whatever, Trust God!” Or, WWTG.

- Might choose seven stories from the Bible. Read one each morning at breakfast, or in a special place outdoors after breakfast, or in the car on the way to the day's first site. Driving back to camp or the hotel, at supper time, or around the fireplace in the evening are good times to reflect upon the story for the day.
- If traveling throughout Turkey where St. Paul went on his missionary journeys, biblical information and stories would provide the introduction to every town and village. If spending a week in Washington, D.C. a family might consider the governments of biblical times, like the pharaohs of Egypt, the Judges of Israel, King David, the emperors and governors of Rome, or King Herod at the time of Jesus' birth, and others. Learning of those governments would help us more fully appreciate the government of our country.
- A family might choose one book of the Bible for their vacation, like the prophet Daniel.
- Adopt the vacation theme, "God's People Travel." Read all the Bible stories related to people traveling and how God cared for them.
- There's also an ancient practice of opening the Bible to whatever page and reading from that page to be surprised by how it fits your experience on that day. A different person opens the Bible each day.

GOD'S STORIES FOR ALL AGES

Most people think the Bible is difficult, not very readable, hard to understand, definitely not fun, so why spoil a good vacation? Have we created a mistaken identity for the Bible? Wasn't the Bible written in the common, ordinary, everyday words of its era? The people got it, didn't they? Our problem is that we still use Bibles in the language of past eras. We need the Bible in the words and expressions of our time.

Compare Proverbs 12, verse 25 in the King James Version with Eugene Peterson's *The Message*:

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop;
but a good words maketh it glad.

Worry weighs us down;
a cheerful word picks us up.

This is also the reason we suggest using Bible storybooks to read the Bible together as a family. Check out the *Recommended Bibles and Bible Storybooks for All Ages* handout. Some have fewer words and many pictures. Others have many words and fewer pictures. So take a Bible with you on vacation and also begin a collection of Bibles at home.

WHY READ THE BIBLE AS A HOUSEHOLD – AT HOME OR ON VACATION?

Jesus was God on earth. He lived the way God created people to think, talk and behave. God accepted His perfect life as lived for us so we don't have to be good, to be good with God.

Jesus' own people, maxed out by their fear, rejected Him, and to appease the crowd the Roman governor executed Him by crucifixion.

And God laid on Jesus the wrong doing and selfishness of all history, including yours and mine.

Jesus went through hell for us and God accepted Jesus' death as died for us.

God raised Jesus from the grave. Death could not contain Him.

God promises the same for us, life beyond death, life in the world to come.

God wants us to live basking in forgiveness and bouncing in hope,

to learn of Jesus and to think and talk and act like Him,

that we might show and tell people God's love for them and for all creation.

Exactly why we want to read the Bible, to know the story of God's love for the world and to live well like Jesus today in God's world.

Within our families we have much to do with each other dealing with life's experiences.

Reading the Bible together, God's good stories, gives us chewy, good faith talk in which God grooms us to be more like Jesus in the world today.

Now what do you think of giving your Bible a vacation, to travel with you and provide some Godly zest along the way?

PREPARING FOR YOUR BIBLE-VACATION

STEP ONE -

One morning, well before leaving on vacation, ask each person to remember an experience from the day to share at meal-time or bed-time that evening. After all tell their stories, ask if they understood each other's experience. Could they picture it? Ask if they think the Bible is as easy to understand? If not, why not? What if we had the Bible in words like we talk today? As a household discuss what it would mean to give the Bible a vacation.

STEP TWO -

Shortly before your vacation or stay-cation, as you sit around the dinner table, decide on a storybook Bible you plan to take on vacation with you. Read the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 or some other story as a sample of the daily practice you want to begin during your vacation. Decide when, how, and the amount of time you will spend reading Bible stories during your vacation.

TRAVEL OPTIONS -

If children or grandchildren are joining you on the vacation, and you allow them to play DVD's in the vehicle while traveling, include Bible stories in the selection. The Jesus Storybook Bible is available on CD's as well.

A BIBLE-VACATION INITIATIVE for HOME and CONGREGATION

At the beginning of summer vacation time for your community, invite everyone in your congregation to give their Bible a vacation, even if a household or individual is planning a “stay-cation” rather than a trip or traveling away from home. Select a specific number of weeks for this Bible-Vacation initiative.

- Plan a forum or learning hour for all ages. Introduce the idea using the *Give Your Bible A Vacation* handout as a resource.
- Gather a variety of Bibles for people to browse. In addition to the suggestions in this handout, brainstorm ways to utilize Bibles for a vacation or “stay-cation.”
- Create a covenant for people to sign, as households or as an entire community of faith. Make your Bible-Vacation a fun, enjoyable experience for everyone.
- Read the Joshua 4 text. Instruct each person or household to select a rock or stone during their travels, or choose one from their yard, to bring to the church on a designated Sunday at the end of the initiative, such as Rally Day or a Sunday in August. Explain that the stones will be a part of the ritual of “remembering” and sharing the stories of their travels and taking their Bible on vacation.
- On the designated Sunday, ask each person/household to pile their rocks together in the midst of where you gather - backyard, courtyard, sanctuary or other designated space. Sing songs of faith that portray images of rocks.
- Create small groups, involving all ages (five in a group is ideal). Facilitate the sharing of stories about each one's summer journey, at home or away. Prepare written conversation prompts, like “Why did you choose this rock? When did you think about God? How were you cared for? How was your adventure similar to the adventures of God's people? Describe, draw or act out your Bible-Vacation.
- Consider offering a week-long evening VBS for households. Create a curriculum using Bible stories that include rocks and stones. Or focus on stories about God's people traveling. Make walking sticks. Find God's story in your story.

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