

## Choosing the Right Bible for Your Children

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**Dear Mama J:**

*I have just returned from a trip to the local Christian bookstore where I had planned to buy a new Bible for my 6-year-old daughter. After discovering three shelves of children's Bibles and Bible storybooks, I became overwhelmed trying to select one. There were so many choices of translations, artwork, study helps, not to mention all sizes and colors that I walked out in utter confusion. Could you give me some criteria for selecting an appropriate Bible for a child?*

**Perplexed Parent**

**Dear Perplexed:**

Baptists, too, come in a variety of versions, sizes, colors, and even "artwork." We all have different preferences in types of Bibles and that is why there are so many choices. You want to choose a Bible your daughter will enjoy reading as well as looking at the illustrations, but you need to choose a Bible that will not be outgrown by your child in a couple of years. Here are some considerations for making your selection:

**Version/Translation**—Children will more likely read and understand a modern language translation. While some adults may prefer the King James Version because they are familiar with it, many meanings of English words have changed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Children need contemporary words that they easily can understand without a lot of adult explanation. Consider, too, the translation used in your child's Sunday School literature as well as the one used predominantly in your church. Two good modern versions for children are the New International Version, which has a young reader's edition, and Today's English Version. Some people might prefer the New King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, or the Holman Christian Standard version.

**Illustrations**—You need to consider:

- ◆ Is the artwork colorful and appealing to children?
- ◆ Does the artwork suggest that the stories are real rather than fantasy?
- ◆ What will your child remember most about this Bible story or character from the illustration?
- ◆ Do the illustrations teach children about Bible times and culture and are they accurate?
- ◆ Will the artwork be appropriate when the child is older?

Illustrations are very important because they convey a message more powerful than words for some if not all children. Artwork can be appealing without being accurate in message or information. If the artwork is too "cartoonish" or fantasy-like, then children are less likely to perceive that the characters and events are real. Consider whether the illustrations are frightening or emphasize the sensational actions of the Bible story rather than the spiritual point of the story.

**Study Helps**—“Special” Bibles with devotions, information about Bible times and customs, maps, and other Bible study helps are abundant. Too many “helps” can make the Bible bulky as well as visually “busy” or obtrusive. If the helps are not distracting and seem to be truly helpful, they can assist your child in understanding words, background, and other puzzling information. The verse numbers need to be easily identified, too.

**Size**—Make sure that your daughter can handle the Bible. A hardback Bible is more durable and usually better for locating verses. It also needs to be a complete Bible rather than a Bible story book.

**Recommendations**—A couple of my favorites are the *Read to Me Bible for Kids* (Broadman and Holman) for preschoolers and the *Adventure Bible* (Zondervan) for elementary-age children. You will need to determine if they match your preferences in the above criteria. You might let your daughter choose her Bible from several options that you have selected.

Regardless of the version, there are some ways you can help your child to appreciate its value to her life.

- ◆ Use her Bible to read the Bible story for the family at meal time or devotion time
- ◆ Encourage her to take her Bible to Sunday School and worship service every week.
- ◆ Help her to locate the scriptures being read in worship.
- ◆ Read and discuss some of the Bible study helps with her.
- ◆ Call it the Bible—“God’s Word” or the “Sword” are confusing names for literal-minded children.