

saint mary's press touching hearts. enlivening minds.



GOD'S WORD IS POWERFUL IN Louching hearts. St. John Baptist de La Salle

Our founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, believed that God's word is powerful in touching hearts. We still believe that today.

Isn't it inspiring to watch a child discover just why that little baby was born long ago in Bethlehem? How the Old Testament foretold that miracle—which was God's plan all along? How that matters to her life as she discovers her place in God's story? And, how God's plan matters to her heart as she discovers just how much God loves her?

In this guide, you'll discover new ways of inspiring a love of the Word of God in your children. Like you, we seek to help children discover and fall in love with Jesus.

Thank you for the good work that you do and for the miracles you perform every day, by touching the hearts of children.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us. Live Jesus in our hearts forever!

WANT MORE INSPIRATION?

We have a series of refreshing readings and FREE activities ready for you!

SMP.ORG/DISCOVERFAITH

TWENTY YEARS AGO, WE HAD AN "AHA!" MOMENT.

We discovered that Catholic youth didn't know how to navigate the Bible, they weren't familiar with its important people and events, and they did not know how to discover its spiritual truths.

Because of this lack of basic biblical literacy, they were unable to truly know and love the Word of God. The Bible became a big, intimidating book that sat on the shelf.

So in 1999, compelled by our mission to touch the hearts and minds of young people with the Good News, we hatched a two-pronged plan. First, we created *The* Catholic Youth Bible*, then followed that with Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics and The Catholic Children's Bible. Together, these Bibles answer the need to make the Bible approachable for every young person, no matter their age.

Secondly, to structure and guide our efforts to build biblical literacy in youth, we described three goals for all our biblical products.

We call this scaffold the ABCs of biblical literacy:

ACCESS:

becoming knowledgeable and comfortable in using the Bible!

BIG PICTURE:

knowing and understanding the biblical story of salvation history!

CONTEXT:

understanding how to interpret Bible books and passages in their proper contexts!



EGIVE THEM ACCESSI

HAVE CHILDREN USE THE BIBLE REGULARLY

Many children do not know how to use the Bible. They may have heard Bible stories, and maybe they were even given a Bible for their First Communion. But they do not know how the Bible is structured or how to discover specific passages or stories within it. By focusing on the Access goal, we can help our children become more familiar and

comfortable with the Bible.

Too often children read Scripture passages as quotations in their textbooks. There may be only one Bible in the classroom, so the catechist looks up the passage and then hands the opened Bible to a young person to read. These practices do not encourage children to learn how to find Bible passages or to understand how the Bible is organized.

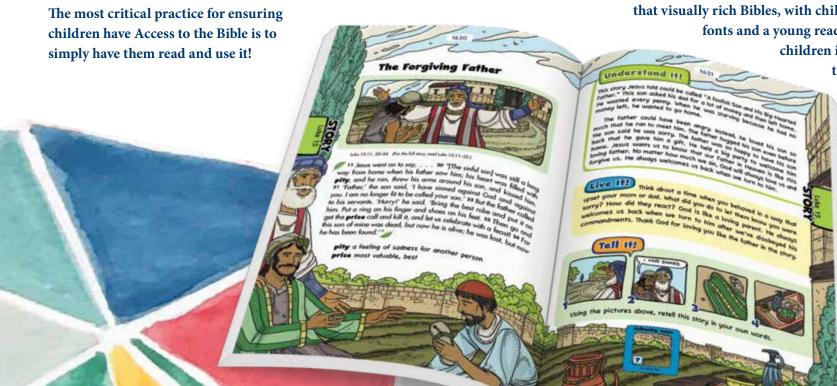
The first practical tip is to have child-friendly, complete Bibles available in every classroom and have the children use them—regularly! We've learned that even young children can look up passages and discover stories with the guidance of skilled and patient catechists and teachers. What we model has a much greater impact than what we simply say!

But, it isn't just having Bibles in our children's classrooms, it is also the type of Bibles we have available.

Children will quickly lose interest in a text heavy, hard-to-read Bible. Our testing affirms that visually rich Bibles, with child-friendly

> fonts and a young reading-level, draw children in and stimulate their interest.

"WHAT WE MODEL HAS A MUCH GREATER IMPACT THAN WHAT WE SIMPLY SAY!"





GIVE THEM THE BIG PICTURE!

INTRODUCE CHILDREN TO KEY BIBLE PEOPLE AND EVENTS

There's a reason the Catechism begins with an overview of salvation history (#290-682). Much of Catholic theology presumes we know and understand this overarching story of God's saving work. Understanding how each biblical book's story fits into this bigger history is the mark of a truly biblically literate person.

This kind of knowledge grows with repetition and review. You can help children to develop this knowledge by regularly exposing them to people and events in Scripture.

Our second practical tip: have an intentional plan for reading about key people and events—from the Bible—throughout your elementary curriculum. Your children's understanding of salvation history will deepen as they discover these people and grow to love their stories.

The Catholic Children's Bible helps you to do this by focusing on 125 key people and events through a series of regular Featured Stories, sprinkled throughout the Bible. The use of these Featured Stories will develop as the child's reading ability develops. For younger children, adults can read the stories in these spreads to them. As the children grow older, they can read these stories and discover their meaning on their own. Using these Featured Stories consistently will provide children an excellent foundation for knowing and understanding salvation history.



EGIVE THEM CONTEXT!

TWO QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP CHILDREN INTERPRET WHAT THEY READ

While it is not always developmentally appropriate to introduce children to the nuances of biblical interpretation, we can introduce them to the principles. The most basic of those principles comes from the Vatican II document, *Dei Verbum (The Word of God)*. It says, "the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words" (#12).

2 SIMPLE QUESTIONS CAN HELP GET AT THIS TWO-STEP PROCESS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:

- What is this Bible story about? What do you think the person writing this was trying to say?
- What is God teaching us through this story?

Consistently asking these two questions plants the seed that human authors wrote the Bible's stories and that God is speaking to us through their words. In discussing the Bible, catechists and teachers can bring in insights based on context, genre, the relationship between the two Testaments, the culture of the time, the Church's Tradition, and so on.

We invite you to take a look at *The Catholic Children's Bible*—watch as as children discover a love for Scripture, become Biblically literate, and grow in their Catholic faith.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle tells us: "You can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to your care." May these insights, culled from our years of ministry, empower you to touch hearts...and to perform miracles.







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IN CHILDREN

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