

GROWING UP CATHOLIC

Faith Activities
on the **BIBLE**

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INTRODUCTION

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis wrote, “The study of the sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer. It is essential that the revealed word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith” (175). Even the youngest believers have the right to access the treasures of sacred Scripture. After all, Jesus did say, “Let the little children come to me” (Matthew 19:14).

God’s great gift of the Bible shows us who Jesus is: the Son of God and our Savior. It presents salvation history, culminating in the teachings and life of Jesus. It is our story and our children’s story. What’s more, the Bible is a channel to encounter God, to hear God, and to speak to God.

Unfortunately, for way too long, Catholics lagged behind in knowledge of the Bible. In overreacting to Protestants, who believed only what was in Scripture, the church discouraged Catholics from reading the Bible. We heard Scripture readings at Mass, but these were in Latin. Finally, in 1943, Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, gave impetus to studying the Bible. Catholic biblical scholars flourished. But

it wasn’t until 1974 that the first Bible-study program for ordinary Catholics in the United States was published (Little Rock Scripture Study). Today many parishes offer some form of Bible study. Understandable versions of the Bible appeared, including

in 2013 the first complete Catholic Bible for children from grades one to four (*The Children’s Catholic Bible*). Now, with the church’s emphasis on new evangelization, familiarity with the Bible has assumed even greater importance.

This Book

The lessons in this book give children keys to unlock Scripture. They learn, not the specific content of the Bible, but rather, basic understandings about it, attitudes toward it, and skills for using it that will make them biblically literate. With this foundation, they will be equipped to explore and mine the riches of the Bible effectively.

For each of the thirty lessons in this book, a one-page plan is provided with one focused objective. Catechist Notes offer background on the topic and also suggest additional ideas for the lesson. Materials needed for the lesson are listed. Adaptable, step-by-step parent instructions are also provided for use in whole family or intergenerational settings.

The steps for developing the topic are few and simple. They engage the children, draw on their experiences, and vary from lesson to lesson. Each lesson is accompanied by an Activity Sheet to be duplicated for the children. The sheets develop or reinforce the lesson in different ways, such as a prayer service, plays, art projects, and paper and pencil activities. A brief prayer concludes the lesson.

Swedish Carmelite Wilfrid Stinissen said, “As a rocket fires off a spaceship outside the earth into space, so the word can propel us into God’s endlessness.” Several lessons teach how to use the Bible for prayer. This is appropriate, for the ultimate purpose of Scripture is to deepen our relationship with God, a relationship that is nourished by prayer.

By supplementing regular religion lessons with the lessons in this book, teachers, catechists, and parents will bring children closer to praying the prayer of the prophet Jeremiah: “Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16).

Important Note

The Scripture citations in this book are based on a Bible that begins numbering psalm verses with the psalm itself. Some versions of the Bible, such as *The New American Bible*, identify a psalm’s introductory information as verse 1. If your children use Bibles where this is the case, the psalm citations for the activities in *Lessons and Activities on the Bible* will be one verse less than the ones in their Bibles. For example, Psalm 21:1 in this book will be Psalm 21:2 in their Bibles.

THE BIBLE, GOD'S BOOK

Objective

The children will understand that the Bible is holy because it is God's word to us.

Catechist Notes

The Bible is the bestseller of all times for good reason. God is the author! He influenced the writers to record what he wanted. In the Bible, God speaks to us today as really as he spoke to Abraham, Moses, and the people in Israel. There is no blessing for a Bible. It needs none.

Materials

- ☐ **A COPY OF A BESTSELLER LIST** (optional)
- ☐ **A BIBLE** covered with a cloth
- ☐ **A GPS UNIT**
- ☐ **A BOARD OR A LARGE SHEET OF POSTER PAPER AND A MARKER**
- ☐ **PENS OR PENCILS**
- ☐ **COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 1**

Activity

① Show a bestseller list, if possible, and discuss:

- Each week, the *New York Times* newspaper publishes a list of bestselling books. Under this cloth is the bestseller of all time. What do you think it is? (the Bible)
- [Ask a child to uncover the Bible and hand it to you.]
- Who is your favorite author?
- The Bible is so popular because of its author. There is no author's name on the cover, but who is the author? (God)

② Explain inspiration through a story.

- Suppose you broke your arm and had to stay home from school. You wanted to send a letter to your classmates, but you couldn't write. A friend comes over to visit. How could you get your letter written? (The friend could write

it.) Whose letter would it be? (mine)

- This is how God is the author of the Bible. The thoughts are God's, but many different people wrote them for God. God did not dictate the words to them, but he influenced them to write what he wished. We say that God inspired the writers. The Bible is "God-breathed." Inspiration is like mental telepathy.
- Because the Bible is God's book, it has no errors regarding matters of faith.
- How did God speak to Moses? (in a burning bush) To the Israelites? (through prophets) To Mary? (through the Angel Gabriel) To Joseph? (in dreams) God speaks to us in the Bible. God tells us what he is like and how much he loves us. He also tells us how to live so that we will be happy.

③ On the board or a large sheet of paper write
 "____ Bible" and
 "____ Scripture."

Explain that the word *bible* means books and *scripture* means writing. State that we give the Bible two names that indicate that it is God's book. Ask what these names are. (holy, sacred) Have the two children who answer correctly fill in the missing letters.

④ Distribute copies of Activity Sheet 1 and have the children work it. When they are finished, check Part I. **Answer:** *The Bible is the word of God in the words of human beings.* Then discuss Part II. **Possible answers:** 1. *God is the author of the Bible who inspired people to write it for him.* 2. *Read it. Turn the pages carefully. Cover the Bible. Keep it clean.* 3. *Don't throw the Bible, put it on the floor, or doodle in it.*

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the gift of your word in Scripture. May reading and listening to it bring me closer to you.

What Is the Bible?

≡ PART ONE ≡

Using the code, write on the lines the letters that match the numbers under the lines. You will see a definition of the Bible.

CODE

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

20 8 5 2 9 2 12 5 9 19

20 8 5 23 15 18 4 15 6 7 15 4

9 14 20 8 5 23 15 18 4 19

15 6 8 21 13 1 14 2 5 9 14 7 19

≡ PART TWO ≡

1 Use the word *author* and any form of the word *inspire* to explain the meaning of the definition above.

2 If you believe that the Bible is God's word, how will you treat it and handle it?

3 If you believe that the Bible is holy, what won't you do to it?

THE BIBLE, GOD'S BOOK

Objective

- ☐ To understand that the Bible is holy because it is God's word to us.

Step-by-Step

1. Tell your child that each week, *The New York Times* publishes a list of bestselling books, and that under the cloth is the bestseller of all time. Have them guess what it is (the Bible), then uncover it.
2. Ask your child's favorite author. Explain that the Bible is so popular because of its author. There is no author's name on the cover, but who is the author? (*God*)
3. Help your child understand how the Bible is the *inspired* Word of God, using a story:
 - ▶ Suppose you broke your arm and had to stay home from school. You wanted to send a letter to your classmates, but you couldn't write. A friend comes over to visit. How could you get your letter written? (*The friend could write it.*) Whose letter would it be? (*mine*)
 - ▶ This is how God is the author of the Bible. The thoughts are God's, but many different people wrote them for God. God did not dictate the words to them, but he influenced them to write what he wished. We say that God inspired the writers. The Bible is "God-breathed." Inspiration is like mental telepathy.
 - ▶ Because the Bible is God's book, it has no errors regarding matters of faith.
 - ▶ How did God speak to Moses? (*in a burning bush*) To the Israelites? (*through prophets*) To Mary? (*through the Angel Gabriel*) To Joseph? (*in dreams*) God speaks to us in the Bible. God tells us what he is like and how much he loves us. He also tells us how to live so that we will be happy.
4. Explain that the word *bible* means books and *scripture* means writing. State that we give the Bible two names that indicate that it is God's book. Have them guess what they are (answers are on the back):

_____ **Bible &** _____ **Scripture**

5. Have your child work on Part One of the activity sheet, helping as needed. The answers are on the back of this page. Then work on Part Two together.
6. End your time by praying this together:
Thank you, God, for the gift of your word in Scripture.
May reading and listening to it bring me closer to you. Amen.
7. Cover the Bible with the cloth again if another family will be using it after you!

THE BIBLE, GOD'S BOOK

Puzzle Answers

- ▶ Holy Bible
- ▶ Sacred Scripture

Activity Sheet (Part One)

- ▶ The Bible is the word of God in the words of human beings.

Activity Sheet (Part Two)

Possible answers:

- ▶ 1. God is the author of the Bible who inspired people to write it for him.
- ▶ 2. Read it. Turn the pages carefully. Cover the Bible. Keep it clean.
- ▶ 3. Don't throw the Bible, put it on the floor, or doodle in it.



HONORING THE HOLY BIBLE

Objective

The children will learn ways to honor and love God's word, in particular by enthroning the Bible.

Catechist Notes

The Jewish people, our spiritual ancestors, show great esteem for Scripture. Christian monks honored the Bible by painstakingly copying it by hand, creating illuminated manuscripts. By reverently holding the Bible and reading from it in a slow, dignified manner, you will instill in the children respect for God's word.

Materials

- ☐ **AN ITEM THAT IS SPECIAL TO YOU**, such as a picture of a loved one, a trophy, a homemade gift
- ☐ **A SAMPLE OR PICTURE OF AN ILLUMINATED BIBLE**
- ☐ **A BIBLE WITH A PAGE MARKER SET AT MATTHEW 7:24-27**
- ☐ **A PRAYER TABLE COVERED BY CLOTH, AND ON IT A CRUCIFIX, PLANT, CANDLE, AND MATCHES** (if allowed; otherwise use an electronic candle)
- ☐ **MUSIC FOR THE SONGS CHOSEN FOR THE ENTHRONEMENT**
- ☐ **COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 2**

Activity

- 1 Show an item you cherish and tell why it means a lot to you. Explain how you give it special treatment: for example, by displaying it, placing a candle or flowers in front of it, or setting it out on special occasions. Then ask the children to name items they cherish and tell how they treat them.
- 2 Explain how Jewish people honor God's word.
 - In their places of worship, they keep the scrolls of God's word in a special place in a container called an ark.
 - On one of their holy days, they dance with the scrolls of God's word.

- 3 Show a sample of an illuminated Bible and comment:

- Before the printing press was invented, monks honored the Bible by spending years producing copies by hand. They printed the words with decorative letters and added illustrations tinted with gold and silver.

- 4 Ask how the Bible is honored at Mass. (The Book of the Gospels is carried in the entrance procession and then placed on the altar; it may be incensed; when the presider carries it to the lectern, servers may accompany him with candles; we stand for the gospel; after proclaiming the gospel, the priest or deacon kisses the book.)

- 5 State that we can honor the Bible by setting it in a special place during a prayer service called an enthronement. Pass out copies of Activity Sheet 2 and prepare the children for the ceremony:

- Choose a leader to carry the Bible at the head of the procession, place it on the table, bow, and say, "I praise you, God, for your holy word."
- Choose a reader to read from the Bible (or the sheet).
- Designate sides 1 and 2.
- Explain that, in the prayer, God's word is also called the law and ordinances.
- Explain how the procession will go.

- 6 Light the candle and carry out the enthronement. Encourage the children to hold an enthronement at home.

Prayer

I praise you, God, for your kindness in giving us your word. May I always read the Bible with reverence and awe.

Enthronement of the Bible

A candle is lit (if fire laws allow).

SONG

A song about God's word, such as "Your Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet"

Leader: O loving God, thank you for the gift of the Bible, which enlightens us. In sacred Scripture we hear the story of your love for us and how you saved us. We learn about you and your teachings. We discover how to live a good life. May we always treasure Scripture and use it to deepen our friendship with you.

All: Amen.

PROCESSION

Carrying a Bible high, a person leads a procession to the prayer table, sets the Bible there, and bows to it, saying, "I praise you, God, for your holy word." Each person approaches the Bible, bows, and repeats the prayer.

READING

Parable of the house built on rock (Matthew 7:24-27)

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on

sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!

SILENT REFLECTION

How can I give God's word in the Bible a larger role in my life?

PRAYER (from Psalm 119, about the word of God)

Side 1: Happy are those whose way is blameless,

Side 2: who walk in the law of the Lord. (v. 1)

Side 1: How can young people keep their way pure?

Side 2: By guarding it according to your word. (v. 9)

Side 1: I treasure your word in my heart,

Side 2: so that I may not sin against you. (v. 11)

Side 1: Remember your word to your servant,

Side 2: in which you have made me hope. (v. 49)

Side 1: My soul longs for your salvation;

Side 2: I hope in your word. (v. 81)

Side 1: How sweet are your words to my taste,

Side 2: sweeter than honey to my mouth! (v. 103)

Side 1: Your word is a lamp to my feet

Side 2: and a light to my path. (v. 105)

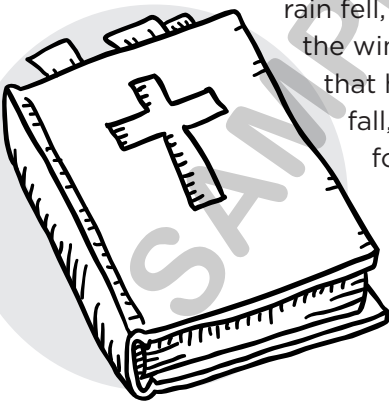
Side 1: The sum of your word is truth;

Side 2: and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever. (v. 160)

Side 1: I rejoice at your word

Side 2: like one who finds great spoil. (v. 162)

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



HONORING THE HOLY BIBLE

Objective

- To understand ways to honor and love God's word, in particular by enthroning the Bible

Step-by-Step

1. Think about an item that is very special to you. Share with each other what the item is and why it means so much to you. How do you give your item special treatment? (*displaying it, being careful with it, setting it out on special occasions, etc.*)
2. Explain to your child different ways people show special **reverence** for God's word:
 - ▶ The Jewish people keep the scrolls of God's word in a special place called an *ark*.
 - ▶ On one of their holy days, Jewish people dance with the scrolls of God's word, just as King David did when he brought the 10 Commandments to Jerusalem!
 - ▶ Before the printing press, monks spent years copying the Bible by hand, using decorative letters and adding illustrations tinted with gold and silver. (if possible, *show an example of an illuminated Bible*)
 - ▶ What are some ways we can show our reverence for God's word? (*we can be careful about how we hold and treat it, we can read from it slowly*)
3. Ask your child how the Bible is honored at Mass. See answers on back.
4. There is a special prayer service called an **enthronement** where we can honor the Bible by placing it in a special place. Let's try it together:
 - ▶ Look over Activity Sheet 2 and choose parts. You will need a leader to carry the Bible, a reader, and one person to be side 1 and one person to be side 2. If there are only two of you, you will have more than one part. Note that God's word (the Bible) is also called the law.
 - ▶ Light the candle (if allowed) and perform the enthronement.
 - ▶ Consider doing an enthronement with your Bible at home.
5. End your time by praying this together:
I praise you, God, for your kindness in giving us your word. May I always read the Bible with reverence and awe. Amen.



HONORING THE HOLY BIBLE

How is the Bible honored at Mass?

- ▶ The Book of Gospels is carried in during the procession and placed on the altar.
- ▶ Sometimes the priest will incense the Book of the Gospels.
- ▶ We stand for the Gospel reading.
- ▶ After reading the Gospel, the priest or deacon will kiss the book.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Objective

The children will become familiar with the parts of their Bible, discovering features that help them read and understand it.

Catechist Notes

The books of the Bible were first written on scrolls of papyrus made from the pith of reeds. These were replaced by parchment scrolls made from animal skins. Eventually pieces were bound together to form a codex like our modern books. The printing press made it easier to produce Bibles, but God's word was still inaccessible to the many people who were illiterate. Today when most people can read, Bibles are not only easily obtained, but they include aids for reading them. Having the children examine their Bibles will make them aware of everything that their versions offer. They won't be like the teacher who discovered the reproducible sheets at the back of her manual at the end of the school year!

Beforehand, choose questions in #2 or add questions that correspond to the version of the Bible your children are using.

Materials

- ☐ **BIBLES**
- ☐ **A LOCKED CASH BOX OR JEWELRY BOX**
- ☐ **TREASURE INSIDE THE BOX**, *perhaps a dollar*
- ☐ **THE KEY TO THE BOX**
- ☐ **CRAYONS OR MARKERS**
- ☐ **SCISSORS**
- ☐ **HOLE PUNCH**
- ☐ **THIN RIBBON, YARN, OR RAFFIA**
- ☐ **CLEAR CONTACT PAPER** *(optional)*
- ☐ **COPIES OF ACTIVITY SHEET 3** *on sturdy paper*

Activity

- 1 Keeping the key to a locked box hidden, ask for a volunteer to open the box. When the child isn't

able to, ask what is needed. (the key) Produce the key and hand it to the child. Comment:

- The word of God is like a treasure, but to enjoy its riches, to understand it, we need the right keys. Today you will search your Bible to find the keys it offers.

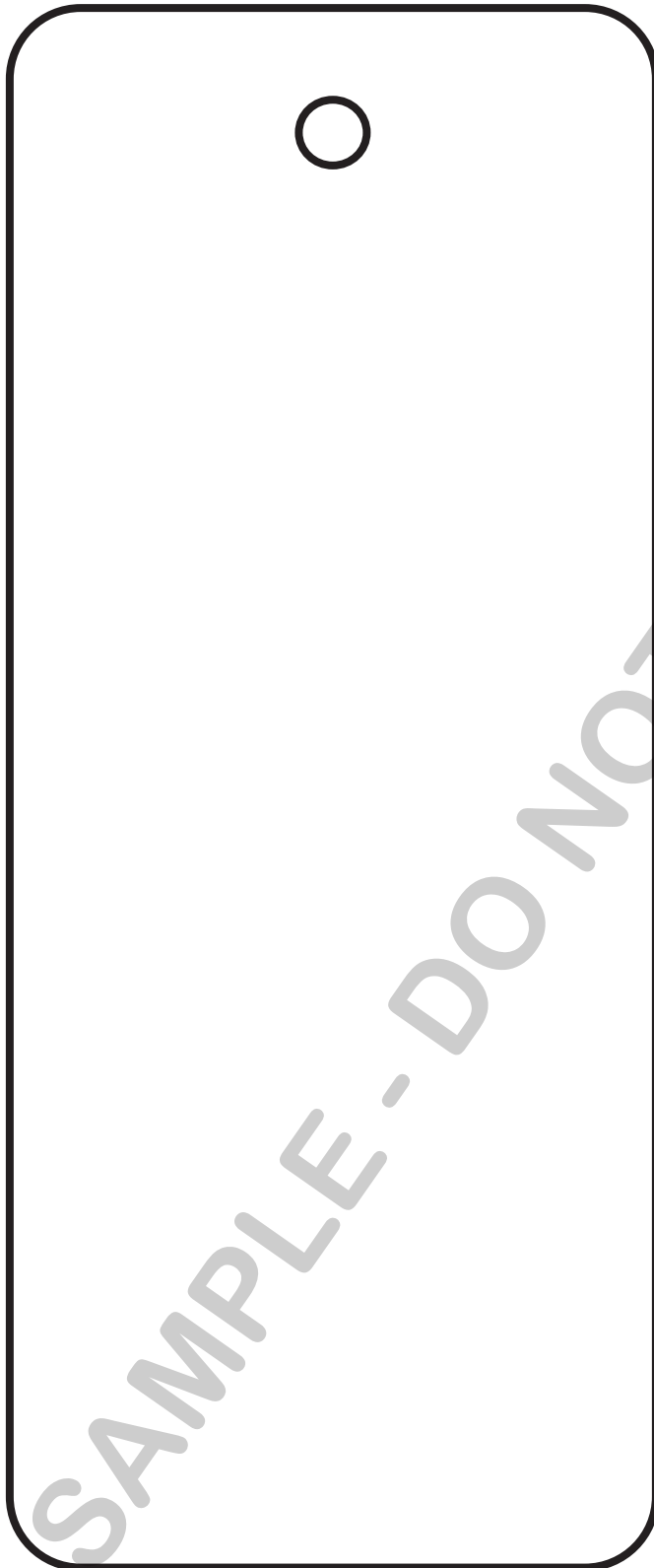
- 2 From the following questions, ask those that pertain to your children's Bibles.

- Is there a prayer at the front of your Bible, asking for God's help in reading it?
- Does your Bible have an introduction to the whole Bible?
- Are there introductions to each book throughout the Bible?
- What page is the table of contents on?
- Does your Bible tell you the abbreviations of its books?
- Does your Bible have pictures? Maps?
- Does your Bible have footnotes that explain verses?
- For certain verses, does your Bible direct you to related verses?
- At the top of a page do you find book and chapter that are on that page?
- Is there an index in your Bible?
- Does your Bible have a glossary?
- What other helps does your Bible have?

- 3 Pass out the copies of Activity Sheet 3 and have the children follow the directions for making book-marks for their Bibles. They might cover the book-marks with contact paper.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, as I learn to make my way around the Bible, may it bring me to better know and follow your Way.



A Bible Bookmark

DIRECTIONS

1 Cut out the bookmark and punch a hole in the end.

2 Choose a saying about God's word or create your own. Write it on the bookmark.

Sayings:

- » Your word is a lamp for my feet.
- » God's word is alive.
- » God's word, my treasure.
- » God is love.
- » Let my word dwell in you. ~Jesus

3 Decorate the bookmark. You might add Christian symbols like the following:
a cross, a fish, a sun, a dove,
a triangle, a heart, a Bible,
a chi rho.

4 String a piece of ribbon, yarn, or raffia through the hole and tie it on.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Objective

- ☐ To become familiar with the parts of the Bible
- ☐ To discover features to help read and understand the Bible

Step-by-Step

1. Keeping the key to the locked box hidden, ask your child to open the box. When your child isn't able to, ask what is needed. (*the key*) Hand your child the key and as they open the box, explain:
 - ▶ The word of God (the Bible) is like a **treasure**, but to enjoy its riches, to understand it, we need the right keys.
2. Explore your Bible to answer the following questions:
 - ▶ Is there a prayer at the front of your Bible, asking for God's help in reading it?
 - ▶ Does your Bible have an introduction to the whole Bible?
 - ▶ Are there introductions to each book throughout the Bible?
 - ▶ What page is the table of contents on?
 - ▶ Does your Bible tell you the abbreviations of its books?
 - ▶ Does your Bible have pictures? Maps?
 - ▶ Does your Bible have footnotes that explain verses? Check the bottoms of your pages.
 - ▶ For certain verses, does your Bible direct you to related verses? These would be under your footnotes.
 - ▶ At the top of a page do you find the book and chapter that are on that page?
 - ▶ Is there an index in your Bible?
 - ▶ Does your Bible have a glossary?
 - ▶ What other helps does your Bible have?
3. Take a copy of Activity Sheet 3 and following the directions for making a bookmark for your Bible.
4. End your time by praying this together:
*Dear Jesus, as I learn to make my way around the Bible,
may it bring me to better know and follow your Way. Amen.*

