



The Bible for Me: Bible Stories & Prayers

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The Bible for Me is a welcoming children's anthology that focuses on God's personal involvement in people's daily lives.

Mike Nawrocki and Amy Parker's *The Bible for Me* is a cheerful, read-aloud introduction to the stories of the Christian Bible.

In this volume for families, pared down biblical tales are used to indicate God's enduring love for people. Geared toward infants, toddlers, and preschool children, the book evinces wonder over creation and gratitude for God's care. There are clear examples of obedience and providence, too. Some stories are tied to practical themes, as with the book's consideration of friendship via the story of Jonathan and David. Indeed, each story is prefaced by a description of its core concept, and each concludes with a short, customizable prayer.

The book's language is compact, fresh, and sometimes embellished for the audience's amusement, as when Eden is shown growing blueberry bushes and potatoes, and when Goliath is scoffed at as a "big oaf." Central stories are distilled down to their focal themes, as with the story of Joseph and Mary, who display their faith by participating in God's plans. The book also highlights the birth of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension in crisp terms.

But while the book's stories about Moses and the Israelites, Joshua, and Gideon adhere to their original outlines, many of the more harsh biblical stories are toned down in consideration of the audience, too. Genesis's early chapters become a story about Adam and Eve breaking a "rule;" the story of Abraham and Sarah omits any mention of Hagar; and the causes of Noah's flood are generalized, with the book mentioning that people forgot God and did "lots of terrible things." Such vague abbreviations become common in the text, which underplays people's own roles in their problems and tames biblical messages concerning the magnitudes of sin and grace. Some of the book's interpretations of stories are also unusual, as when it presents the story of Martha and Mary as one about sibling rivalry to make it more relatable to the audience.

The book's expressive, colorful cartoon illustrations are variously charming and too blurry. In the former case, there are active outdoor backgrounds, adorable animals, and scenes from biblical towns; in the latter case, these qualities fade. On occasion, humor is threaded into the artwork, including a trail of dust clouds as Jonah flees from his task, and with plagues of meatball-shaped hail that are observed by a wide-eyed locust.

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KAREN RIGBY (July 12, 2022)

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