

Come, Walk with Me

A Bible study for families through the Book of Acts

By Shawna Duvall

Introduction

This little guide is a response to various conversations I've had over the years all centered around the question, "How do you teach your kids the Bible?" From the young mom with the toddler on her hip and a preschooler in tow, to friends with kids stretching out beyond the house and embracing those middle school and high school years, to families with work schedules and extracurricular activities that make coming together an increasing challenge...this question of wanting to know how to incorporate a regular, meaningful time of reading and studying the Word of God together is one so many in the church are asking. And maybe, like me, you've wondered the same thing. As I've talked around and about with others, it seems the common underlying desire of families is to not just simply rely on children's devotionals or story Bibles, but to really and truly know how to open the Word of God together and allow the Holy Spirit space to do His work in our hearts and in our home. We want our kids to come face to face with the glory and magnificence of God Himself in His breathed Word. Scripture says that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. So, as we read the very words of God, we are seeing and learning His heart. If we want our kids to fall in love with God, there is no better way than by introducing and immersing them in His Word.

But while this might be the desire of many people, it's not just a snap of the fingers. Finding the time between soccer practice, dance classes, homework, jobs, and a vast sea of other responsibilities and family engagements is almost impossible. Regular time in the Word together gets squeezed out of the work week and relegated to a Sunday morning. When families do attempt to have a time of reading the Bible together, they are met with an onslaught of opposition. And if you're anything like us, the result is a sporadic, unstructured, quick reading of a verse here or there, or we're left flipping through the pages of a family devotional or children's story Bible. So, with all of the challenges facing us, why even try? Why is it worth our attention and effort?

The Importance of Teaching our Children to Read and Study the Bible

I think the first and foremost reason is because God's design is for families to be the primary place a child learns and receives the truth of God's Word. Sure, they may hear it on Sunday. And if your kids attend a Christian school or homeschool, then they'll most likely hear it there, too. But I fear we too often view what should be secondary places of teaching the Bible as primary places. We've shirked responsibility and allowed the church to become a surrogate parent to our kids in teaching them the Word, a job that God has commanded families to do. Listen to God's words to His people in the book of Deuteronomy:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your

heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deut. 6:4-9 (ESV)

We often say it takes a village to raise a child. In the same breath, it absolutely takes a church to disciple a child. But I believe that if a child is granted the blessing of living in a Jesus-centered home, then he or she should be hearing and experiencing the scriptures most frequently from their primary caregivers. Whether you're a single mom or dad, a grandparent, have a spouse with a sporadic work schedule or even a spouse that is an unbeliever, we are all responsible for teaching our children entrusted to us the Gospel story found in Genesis through Revelation. And this can certainly feel like an out-of-reach task! We need one another. Which is why I pray this guide gives you some of the necessary tools you may need to be that primary place of exposure and the loudest voice they hear proclaiming to them the truth of God in His Word.

Another compelling reason why we should be intent on teaching our kids how to read and study the Bible is that although family devotionals and story Bibles are wonderful resources and indispensable supplemental materials, they are not the Bible. They are other people's words about the Bible, but they are not the living and breathing Word of God. I don't want my kids getting to high school and feeling like the Bible is a foreign language. I don't want them leaving it on a shelf to gather dust because they have no idea where to start or how to read it for themselves. Nor do I want them believing that they have to rely on the words and expressions of another to help them read the very Words of God intended for them. I want them to be familiar with it. I want them to taste and see God in His Word and be captivated by His love. I want them to be exposed to it over and over again and grow in believing that God's Word is good, true and reliable. I want them to have become so engaged with God's word over their formative years that when they are launched out into this world and away from our kitchen table, they feel a longing to open the pages of scripture because it's home and life to them. This world is loud. Our kids will need to hear constant whispers and echoes of truth to keep them from becoming deluded and deceived by the shouting of the world. When they are faced with moral and ethical dilemmas, persecution from darkness, accusations from the enemy, temptations beyond what they've ever known before...what will fill their minds? Will the cartoon version of Jonah from their children's Bible story book be enough? Will they know how to wield the sword of truth when fiery darts are aimed at them?

I fear we've dumbed down and animated so much of scripture to make it appetizing and kid-friendly that sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between a Bible story and a Netflix cartoon. Your kids may surprise you with how much they are able to take in and understand. I've been amazed to see how young minds can sometimes grasp such lofty theology. But we've got to give them a chance. We've got to give them the tools to do it.

A final reason why it's worth pursuing a regular time in the Word together with your family is because it builds unity. God's desire is for the world to see His glory through the way the church loves and lives together as One in His Spirit. As we come together around a table with the Word open before us, we are being taught by the Holy Spirit and He is knitting our hearts together in Him. We are filling our minds with the same truth as we go our separate ways throughout the day. We find the truths we read have a way of weaving themselves into our conversations and help in our decision-making processes. Creating a rhythm of gathering together to read and study the Scripture and joining in prayer brings us back to a

central point as a family. Like homing pigeons, we have a unified sense of direction and home. When we gather, it helps realign our compasses to True North and sets us on course to live out God's mission together as a family unit.

Challenges we Face in Teaching our Kids to Read and Study the Bible

OK, so you're ready and willing, but you may be asking "How?". Or thinking something like, "Where do we start? I don't even know how to open the Bible and read it myself, so how in the world am I going to lead my kids in this? And every minute of our day is already accounted for, so finding the time is nearly impossible. Do you even know how often we're around our table together? Or when we're even in the same room? And then there's the challenge of trying to study the Bible with a four-year-old and fourteen-year-old at the same time."

The obstacles are real, aren't they? In our home the struggle is just as real. Dear friend, my heart resonates. Please hear me when I say this little guide isn't me saying, "We've arrived." It's me saying, "You're welcome to join in if you want. We're tripping along and learning as we go." We're far from perfect over here. It's messy. The kids tease and fight. Sometimes they don't even want to be there. They'll refuse to answer a question or keep checking the clock and get antsy. We skip days (weeks even?) in the crazy of life. Often only Greg or myself are present to lead our time. Sometimes all we can do is just read the verse of the day on our Bible app. But two things have helped in our pursuit.

One, we expect opposition. The enemy loathes children and hates the Word of Truth, especially considering his name is the father of lies. So, we are not surprised when we find it difficult to sit down together to read and study the Bible. There is a battle raging for the souls of our children. We fight back with persevering faith and persistent obedience. When it's the hardest to sit down and even just read one verse together, that's probably when we need it the most. Recognizing that our battle is not against people and circumstance, but rather against powers of darkness actively working to destroy our family gives us a little forbearance in the process and also a little "umph" in our stubbornness to open the Word together despite opposition.

Two, we find a time to read and study together that naturally fits into the overall rhythm of our family's schedule during that season. It has looked differently for us at different times. This year we have three kids in elementary and middle school, all in extra-curricular activities at different times. Family dinner time, while a priority to us, simply cannot happen every day. What we did notice, however, was that every morning we all seemed to be gathered at the breakfast table around seven. So, we instituted what we call "Five at Seven", meaning five minutes of Bible at seven o' clock. That five minutes usually ranges between ten and twelve minutes, but we liked the name, so it stuck. So that's our rhythm for now. This next year it may change again. Maybe during summer months we'll reevaluate. The point is, what's your family's rhythm? When can you carve out your own "Five at Seven" in a way that naturally fits in with the flow of your days and weeks?

It's not easy and it takes a lot of true grit, intentionality and perseverance, but I'll tell you, it's worth it. The quiet joy we've experienced as family in just opening the scriptures and walking through a book of the Bible together has stuck with us and kept us going. It's become a part of our day that we're willing to

fight for. The biggest point is...we keep showing up. We keep opening the Bible. We keep at it. And I know that if by God's grace our crazy family can do it, you can too.

The Invitation to "Come, Walk with Me!"

And that's where I hope the format of this step-by-step guide will act as another tool in your belt. I hope it gives you the confidence to "keep showing up". If you are newer to studying God's Word, then it will give you some basic principles to follow that you can apply to studying any chapter or verse in Scripture from page one to the end. It's organized so that your Bible study time together can be manageable and flexible enough for you to fit into your unique family schedule on any given day. It will also provide two separate tracks for you to follow if you have younger or older children, or a mix of both.

So let's do this, shall we? Let's open the pages of the text and let our kids explore and ask and wrestle and come face to face with God Himself. Let's invite them along in the journey of reading and studying God's Word together *with us!* As they see you become captivated by the glory of God in the scriptures, it will speak volumes to them. Picture yourself holding in one hand the Word of God and extending your other hand to your child saying, "Come! Walk with me!". I promise you, your family will never be the same.

How to Use This Study Guide

Before you embark on the first steps of your journey through Acts, there are a few things that might be a little help to you along the way. I realize at first this whole thing can seem overwhelming. You may feel like you don't have enough Biblical knowledge to do this. Or you're looking at the questions and thinking, "There is no way we're going to be able to get through all of this in under twelve minutes!". Perhaps you're like our family and have a wide range of kiddos at varying developmental stages and with differing learning styles. Friend, let me encourage you! I've been attempting to open, read and study the Bible with my kids since my middle schooler was in preschool. It's been a process. And let me tell you, many times it feels like utter chaos. I'm sure we've walked away from the kitchen table or the rug on the living room floor and the kids just experienced more sinful flesh than the beautiful fruit of the Spirit. I've closed the Bible in tears of frustration. There are times when I feel like I've totally ignored the older one in order to bring it down to the level of the younger. And vice versa. Or way too often the younger has been asked to sit still longer than he is able (Which is like a max of three seconds if we're really being honest here.). So, what I'm saying is that we're right here in the middle of it with you. And in effort to extend my hand out to you, here are just a few ideas, disqualifiers, and some clarification on "how this works". And...hopefully a truckload of grace for you as you venture towards Acts chapter one together. The biggest step is to just simply *show up*. You have the Word of the God and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is *for you*. He is passionate about you walking and abiding in His Word right along with your kids. And even more, He is faithful and He will lead you every step of the way! Be encouraged! You can do this!

How it Works

This study guide is broken into two tracks. *Track One*, for those with younger children or with a limited amount of time, is aimed between 5-10 minutes in length. *Track Two*, for those with older children in the mix, is structured to allow around 10-15 minutes together in prayer and in the Word.

Both tracks will follow the same steps for any given day but be modified accordingly.

- 1) **Scripture memory verse** – There will be one verse assigned for the week taken from the chapters covered in those weeks daily readings. For example, for Week One, the scripture memory verse is Acts 1:8. You will read this together every day for one week and work on putting it to memory. My kids love, love, love getting to make up hand motions to help them remember the words in the verse. You can do this with them! Or, if your family is musical, put the verse to music or to a beat. Anything to help make it fun and make it stick!
- 2) **Scripture reading** – Track One will have an abbreviated reading taken from that day's assigned text. In contrast, Track Two will include all the verses, so by the end of the study you will have read every verse of every chapter of Acts with your kids. For both Track One and Track Two, the parents will have a main portion of the text to read aloud. Then there will be one or two verses for your kids to read aloud as well if they are able. (If they are early readers, maybe just pick out a few words you know they can grasp.) This gets them participating in the Word and builds understanding and confidence starting at young age that the Bible is God's Word written for them and that they can interact and read it for themselves.
- 3) **For Younger Children** – For those following Track One with littles, in order to help keep them engaged, I have included a prompt for you that relates to the text so you don't have to come up with one on the fly. Each day there is a there is an option of an image for your younger ones to attempt to draw. For example, from Acts 2 for the coming of the Holy Spirit, they are prompted to draw a picture of a campfire or fire in the fireplace. However, please feel free to get creative and veer off the page! Instead of drawing, if you want to give them playdoh, Legos or blocks, reenact the text with dolls or figures, or let them bring their stuffed animal friend...whatever! The point is, your time together with your kids will be so much richer if they have something to keep their hands busy. If your oldest child is still fairly young, then feel free to modify the questions and just use the daily creative prompt as a teaching visual to help them remember something from the verses you read together. There is a bit more commentary below in the FAQs on how to lead your time with your younger ones.
- 4) **Study Questions** – This is the meat of your time together. It is when you and your kids will walk through the text together and ask a series of questions from the *Daily Study Guide Outline* that will lead to a deeper understanding of God's truth and a practical way in which each person can take that truth and apply it to their lives in a transforming way. These questions are presented in three ways:

1) *Daily Study Guide Outline* - For those of you following Track One, the *Daily Study Guide Outline* is where you will camp out. These questions will be more than enough to cover the scripture section with your little ones. For those with older kids, these questions are the basics and a great starting point (or ending point if you are in a rush). The *Daily Study Guide Outline* is printed at the beginning of every week. So, for example, if you open to Week One in your guide,

you will find right before Day One, a printed out *Daily Study Guide Outline*. This guide is the exact same set of questions every week. They don't change even though you will be working your way through Acts. The intention is not for you to ask every single question. Simply use the questions as a guide to lead your discussion with your children.

2) *Study Guide Bookmark* – This tear-out bookmark is an abbreviated version of the *Daily Study Guide Outline*. It is helpful on days when you have limited time or if you are studying with young children. I recommend tucking the bookmark in your Bible so you can open quickly again to Acts on the next day.

3) *Supplemental Study Questions* - For those following Track Two, you will follow the *Daily Study Guide Outline* for Track One, but in addition, you will have extra supplemental questions to help your older kids dive a little deeper and ask more probing questions that will lead them to a fuller and more mature understanding of the text. These extra questions, unlike the *Daily Study Guide Outline* questions, will change daily depending on the text you are studying together. They are divided up under headings just like in the *Daily Study Guide Outline*. However, if there are no additional questions written under a heading, then that means you should just refer to the *Daily Study Guide Outline* questions. For example, on Week One Day One, there are no additional questions written under the Track Two "How Can I Change?" heading since the ones already written in the *Daily Study Guide Outline* are sufficient for that day's scripture passage. There will be more discussion on each specific heading in the section below. Again, the goal is not to ask every single question but rather to use the questions as a guide to help you in your discussion together.

- 5) **Prayer** – Don't forget to end your time in prayer together. This is a vital time for each person to take whatever truths the Holy Spirit revealed in His Word and begin to own them personally and allow them to begin to change hearts and minds. Here are some helpful tips for prayer time:
- a. **Pray the scriptures together** – Use God's Word and simply pray that with your kids. For example, in Acts 4:29 it says, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness..." You can pray together that God would help you to continue to speak His Word with boldness in your spheres of influence, wherever you may be.
 - b. **Pray for one another** – For us, this is such a powerful way to build unity in our family through fostering compassion and care (especially our kids have been too busy pointing the finger at one another). We ask them to each pray a sincere prayer for one another.
 - c. **Pray for your answers to "How can I change?"** – Listen to one another's answers and then pray for that. Maybe as the parent (and maybe if time is limited), take the main point and the big application point and just pray out loud for that one thing.
 - d. **Pray prayers of thanks and praise to God** – Think about what you specifically learned about God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit from these verses and declare it together with thanks and praise. We want to teach our kids that the Bible isn't a book about us. It's a book about who God is and His redemptive work to save the world and bring His people back into relationship with Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ – the real hero of the Bible! We want to show our kids how to pray prayers

that are centered on Jesus Christ as the King of the Kingdom and out of an overflow of our awe and desperate need for Him.

- e. **Pray with the mission in mind** – The aim of the book of Acts is to tell the story of how believers in Jesus Christ were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses and spread the good news of the Gospel starting with the Jews all the way to the ends of the earth. This is still the mission of the church today. We can pray with others in mind. Maybe regularly pray for a missionary connected to your family or a local church and show how they are carrying out this mission we see in Acts. Or pray that each person in your family can carry out that mission and for people in your own spheres of influence that need to hear the Good News!

Following the Headings on the *Daily Study Guide Outline*

Everyday your questions follow a very simple Bible study method of:

- 1) Observing
- 2) Interpreting
- 3) Applying

I realized early on that those big words were way too complicated for my kids. So, what you have in your guide is the “kid version” of this very common and widely used method.

For those following Track One, the *Daily Study Guide Outline* questions will follow this method. However, the questions will not change even though you are moving through the book of Acts. They will simply act as a guide for you to get your kids thinking and will help you move through the steps of observing, interpreting and applying in a conversational way.

For those following Track Two, the *Daily Study Guide Outline* questions used in Track One are the same. However, the additional daily questions will be unique to the scripture reading for that day and guide you in going deeper into the text to draw out more specific observations, lead to a more in-depth understanding of spiritual truths and principles, and ultimately challenge your older children with more mature questions to apply to their lives.

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.” Psalm 119:33-35

Observation



What do I see?

This first set of questions in your outline is the “observation” portion. It’s OK to spend much of your time here. The extent to which you take the time to look at the text and figure out what’s there, is directly related to how well you will understand it. To make this fun, I added hand motions. We ask this first

question, “What do I see?” by putting our hands in circles around our eyes like little binoculars. Every day when we sit down to read a text we start by asking “What do I see?” with our hand motions. The questions in this section are like the “black and white” questions. Super simple observation. They are the “Who”, “What”, “Where”, “When” and “Are/Is” questions. The purpose of observing the text is to slow us down so we do not miss any important words, details or links in the passage that will help lead us to understand the text the way God meant it to be understood when he wrote it through His servant Luke. The “What do I see” observation questions are like the pavestones that lead us to the next step of the outline, the interpretation or “What does it mean?” questions.

Interpretation



What does it mean?

The second set of questions is the “interpretation” portion. This is where the deeper understanding will happen and the kids will be able to ask questions about the *meaning* of words or concepts that you uncovered in the “What do I see?” section. Our hand motion for “What does it mean?” is to put up our hands on either side of us like we’re carrying platters. It’s like the “I don’t know” hand position. In this section, these are the “Why?” and “What does that mean?” questions. This is where the kids can say, “I don’t get it.”, or “Why does it say that?”. It’s so important to take the time to get to the true meaning of the text because from the answers to these questions you will make decisions on what you need to apply or change in your heart and lives. And since our goal is to know Jesus more and become more like Him, we want to make sure we are clearly understanding what He means in His Word about who He is and how He has made a way for us to know Him and be transformed by His Spirit of truth.

In order to offer some additional insight for parents and caregivers on the specific meaning of the text for that day, I added the *Parents’ Corner* at the bottom of each daily question guide. Even for parents following Track One, this can be helpful as they walk through the text and answer the questions with their kids. Essentially, the *Parents’ Corner* is abbreviated study Bible notes, but with an emphasis on both the Gospel in the book of Acts and on how that day’s particular text fits into the overall main theme of the book of Acts and the Bible as a whole.



In Real Life

This section is supposed to be like a hook for them to hang things on. Although it’s part of the “What does it mean?” section, it’s unique in that they get to use their creative minds to bring the truths off the page and into real life. They get to come up with an illustration and/or idea from real life that relates to the text. Often, this is when the “light bulb” switches on for them. They might say, “Oh! I get it! It’s kind of like when...” It’s supposed to be something fun, kind of like a visual aid...It helps them remember the text as you move on and also helps kids engage in conversation. We love this part in our family! This is a great time for the younger kids to pipe in if they have been sitting more quietly listening to the older ones.

Application



How Can I Change?

This final set of questions is the “application” portion. It’s the “Now what?” or “So what?”. The “How can I change” hand motion is to place both your hands over your heart. Once we’ve read the text and grown in our understanding of it leads us to wonder, “What does it have to do with me?”. The Bible says that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. One of the things I absolutely love about using this method with my kids is that it helps them not just to grow in head knowledge about the stories in the Bible, but it gives them an opportunity to take the truths that we discovered and sit with them for a minute and think about how their lives can be different (become more like Jesus) in light of those truths. It gives the Holy Spirit room to work in His personal way in each of their lives. And in mine! So often this time ends with me confessing my own sin or my deep need for grace or my own desire to have the Spirit work in me to help me change and grow. This speaks volumes to your kids when you are just honest with them on how the Word of God impacts your own heart and mind. We don’t have to have it all together in front of them! In fact, the more you can walk *with* them in this, the more they are willing to follow because they will become more and more captivated by the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ as they see Him transforming your life and theirs.

What Do We Need to Get Started?

This study method with your children is intended to be super simple...like a “grab and go” type thing. So, I recommend keeping the following things within reach near the kitchen table (or wherever you gather). Maybe store them all in a basket or together on a shelf.

- 1) **Bibles** - If you just have one, that’s totally fine. However, if you can have an adult version, and a kids’ version that might work best. For this kind of study, I highly recommend either the ESV or the NIV translations. (See the FAQs section below for further detail.) My kids each have their own Bibles at their various reading levels. For those of you with little ones, feel free to let them bring their own children’s versions with pictures even though they won’t have the text. They can still hold it and feel like they are participating.
- 2) **Paper and markers/crayons** – If you are following Track One and have younger children, then you will want to grab paper and something to write or color with for your littles. If you have older children, sometimes the more visual ones like to write words down, or draw a picture or image. Whatever works! You may even want to have a notebook on hand to jot down prayers, amazing truths you learned, ways God worked in your lives...The sky is the limit!
- 3) **Map** - If you have access to a study Bible (I recommend the ESV Study Bible), then there are various maps printed throughout as well as a special section in the back that will help you follow the story of Acts as it moves out from Jerusalem all the way to Rome. No worries if you don’t have a study Bible, it’s all on Google Images! Just google away (ex. Google “book of acts map”) and you’ll find an arsenal of maps to help your kids “see” the story in a new way. At times I will search Google for images of drawings or photographs of the landscape, ancient ruins or depictions of what the ancient city might have looked like to help my kids visualize where the story is taking place.

- 4) **This guide and the tools inside** – Every week go ahead and either dog-ear or mark in your book the *Daily Study Guide Outline* questions for quick and easy access. Also tear out your *Weekly Scripture Memory Card* and the *Study Guide Bookmark* to tuck in your Bible and mark your place in Acts. Also check out the FAQs at the end of this section for a list of recommended resources to supplement your Bible reading time.

FAQs

What do I do when I have a wide range of children's ages and developmental levels?

Great question! This is such a common challenge. I'm not sure I have any great answers, but I'll share what has worked for me. I am a believer in getting young ones involved in experiencing the actual Bible itself as early as possible...via scripture memory, songs, role play, drawing or crafts. (If you are more left brained than right and the creativity thing unnerves you, just follow the prompt for younger children on each day and have them draw or doodle. You right brained people may thrive here!) But in order to get them involved with the actual text, you will have to do some tweaking of the questions or redirecting when things get off track. I have found that asking my younger kids the "What do you see?" questions and my older children the "What does it mean?" and "How can I change?" questions seems to work well. To keep my younger child's attention, often I will insert "What do you see?" questions throughout our entire time together, even if we've moved on to deeper understanding of the text.

I've also been surprised at how much the younger ones are absorbing even if their hands are busy doing something else. So, often, for the sake of pure sanity and just so we can get make it to the end without Greg or I constantly getting on the younger one to sit still and listen, we almost always give him something to do. If we're hurried, then I will just let the kids eat their breakfast (or whatever meal or snack) since that seems to help them stay focused.

One word of caution is to not forget the younger one is there when you get into deeper discussion with your older ones. This is so challenging for me when our discussion is rich! While they will not be following every word, it's so important to keep them not only engaged with the content, but to keep them engaged as a valuable family member. We want our little ones to grow up knowing their presence and contribution to our family is just as important as anyone else's.

Ultimately, you know your kids. While structure is necessary and helpful to sticking with the goal of reading the Bible together, give yourself (and your kids) the grace to do what you need to do. It's OK to encourage and train them to sit still, listen and participate, but not to the detriment of them growing up to loathe family Bible reading time.

What do I do when our time is short and we're rushed?

This is where I wish I could just take you by the hands and look in your eyes and say, "Just do what you can! It's not about answering every question or following the guide exactly perfect! It's about showing up! It's about grace. It's about you opening the Bible with your kids and just reading the next thing." When you only have 3-5 minutes, then just read the text (or follow the Track One abbreviated reading for that day), mention one thing you observe or "see", and then pray together. Unless this is a text you have studied personally in the past, I would encourage you on rushed days not to just jump to a "How

can I change” question. If you only have a minute or two, stick with straight up observations about the who, what, where, and when(s) of the text and focus on what you learn about God and the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Another option is to break that day into two. There’s no pressure to do all five days in one week. It’s simply a guide for you. If it takes you two full weeks to work through one week of questions, then that’s totally fine.

One of the benefits of this method is that when you are rushed for time (which is commonly us), at least you are reading the Bible, the actual Word of God, together instead of someone else’s devotional thoughts for the day. Not that there isn’t a time and place for devotionals and children’s Bible stories...absolutely there is! But using our few minutes together around the table to read God’s Word is so much more powerful and builds the habit in our children of daily ingesting the truth of the scriptures.

What do I do when I don’t understand the text?

I’ve already mentioned the parent’s corner above that will hopefully be of some help, however, if there are parts of the text that are confusing (and I’m sure there will be!) then don’t hesitate to:

- 1) Feel free to tell your kids you don’t know. God and His ways are a mystery! As we grow in spiritual understanding and in the knowledge of Christ and His Word then things will become more and more clear. But your kids need to see and know that even you still have to figure things out and that you are a life-long learner of the truths of the Bible.
- 2) You can always revisit the questions again the next day. There’s no pressure to move on to the next day’s text just because it’s “the next day”. You may find you want to take time for yourself to re-read or study those verses on your own. Maybe ask a spiritual leader in your life, a pastor, a friend, or consult a commentary. Remember we are walking together with our kids. They will learn Christ as we learn Christ.

What do I do if we miss a day?

No worries! You can take as much time as you want to work through the book of Acts. If it takes you two weeks to do one week of daily readings, then that’s totally fine! The guide is broken up into days and weeks to help you move through in an orderly fashion and to help you see the end goal of working through the entire book as something attainable that can fit on a timeline. However, if you’re like us and your days get interrupted or out of sync (or you woke up late...again!) then just pick up the next day where you left off. The important thing is to keep at it!

What do I do when it just seems like too much for my kids?

If you try the questions with your kids and it still seems like too much for them I recommend two different options:

- 1) Go ahead and keep going with Acts, but just read only one or two verses from that day’s reading. You may need to skim through ahead of time and pick out a verse from that section. Then, when it’s time to ask the questions, stick with the “What do I see?” questions but ask them even more simply focusing on the names of the people in that text or something they said. Or, have them repeat words after you like “baptize”, “repent”, “Holy Spirit”, “witness” or

“gospel”. They may not understand what they mean yet, but you are giving them exposure. You are planting little seeds and God will water them over time!

- 2) You can also abandon ship and just shelve this study for a year or so. However, I would strongly encourage you to still incorporate the method used here! You can pick out other verses in the Bible (maybe something you’re reading on your own or that your pastor covered in his sermon on Sunday) and still have your kids do the hand motions for “What do I see?”, “What does it mean?” and “How can I change?”. You’ll be so surprised that even a three or four-year-old can do these hand motions and begin to answer these questions with a little prompting from you. You can also still put scriptures into memory with them. Even if you feel like this study of Acts is a step beyond them, continue to keep reading God’s Word with them.

What do I do when my kids don’t want to study the Bible?

So, this one feels a little personal over here. The struggle is real. One of my children in particular has a very independent spirit and a strong bent towards needing to feel in control. As a result, an instructive, structured time in the Word with my husband or I leading the way doesn’t usually go over too well. Typically, I find I react out of my own discouragement, disappointment or pressure from limited time and I push too hard, just making the opposition worse. My encouragement to you (and to myself) is pray for eyes to see your child with compassion and treat him or her with understanding. Remember, for many of our kids, they are still becoming disciples of Christ. They do not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them. And even if they are in Christ, then they are like little saplings with weak roots. We should not expect them to have a desire in their flesh for the things of God. But we can pray for it. And we can show them the dazzling grace of God and captivate them by the joy we have in Him. I am reminded of Romans 2:4 that says “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance...”. In the same way, we should walk with our resistant ones with kindness and patience, careful not to provoke them or push them further away.

Practically speaking, maybe trying to understand the underlying reason your child doesn’t want to join in and meeting them in that place of discontentment would soften their heart. Maybe they are feeling left out. Maybe they’re afraid of giving a wrong answer. Maybe they’d just simply rather be playing outside. Maybe it’s me. I might not be doing my job of bringing it down to their level. Maybe I talk too much. Maybe they’re bored.

Whatever the reason, one idea could be to pay special attention to them for a few days during your study time together. Maybe let them come up with their own hand motions to the scripture memory. Let them sit on your lap. Or maybe let them read the kids’ scripture reading for that day by themselves. And pray. Pray for a softening of their heart towards God and His Word. I often pray that my kids would “hate what is evil and cling to what is good”. Pray for grace and mercy and for insight for yourself to be able to shepherd their child’s heart in a way that draws them to the Living Water, Christ Himself.

What do I do when this feels overwhelming?

You’ve got this, friend! Just keep showing up! Even if you just read one verse or answer one question for the day! This is a process. Don’t expect it to be smooth sailing. Don’t expect to get through every question every day. That’s not what we’re going for here anyway. We’re going for spending meaningful time in the Word with our kids in a way that gets them familiar with the scriptures and helps them grow in the confidence of being able to read and study God’s Word on their own someday. Don’t allow the

structure of this guide to quench the joy of the Spirit that comes from reading and taking in the living Word of God. It is such a gift! As you continue to choose to walk in obedience in this, God will equip you with everything you need through His Spirit. Be encouraged and of good faith. The One who called you is faithful, and He will do it.

What if I'm just not a natural teacher?

The Body of Christ is made up of many parts with varying roles. That means most of the parts will not be naturally gifted in teaching. Some will. But probably most won't. Even if this is not natural for you, that does not exclude you from God's desire and design for *you* to be the one to teach your children His Word in your home. In the same way, even though I am not gifted administratively, that doesn't exclude me from serving in an administrative capacity. It's just more difficult for me. The Holy Spirit's job is to lead us into all truth. I have found time and again that He is so tender and faithful to give us the right words and insights that will make your time together rich and life-giving regardless of whether or not you are a gifted teacher or communicator.

My husband is incredibly gifted in mercy and has a strong pastoral heart. He is not as much of a natural teacher as I am. However, this does not mean that I lead all of our times together as a family just because it comes more easily for me. We share that responsibility. But even while communicating content and ideas is something very natural to me, I also respect that others have insight from the Holy Spirit as well. If you are a natural teacher, remember to respect and allow space for others to lead and teach in their own way. God will use all of us in our unique ways as we submit to Him and offer ourselves as willing vessels.

How can my spouse and I do this together?

One of the main reason *why* I wrote this guide was to encourage and equip both moms *and* dads to read the Bible together with their children. It usually seems to be the case that the Mom is the one teaching the Bible, memorizing scriptures, singing worship songs and overall exposing the kids to the Word. It's not that the fathers don't want to, but generally speaking, they are the ones away from the home more often, especially in the early years. Fathers also seem to feel a bit more hesitant, inadequate, ill-equipped and uncomfortable when it comes to teaching and leading the family in the scriptures. Women have a vast array of Bible studies, Moms groups, online encouragement and friendships that help foster and grow her ability to handle the scriptures with her children. For men, not as much. Fathers sometimes feel like it's more natural for the moms and they can do a better job, so it's just easier to leave that to her and the dads can be the ones to read the story Bible when they tuck in their kids at night. My strong hope and prayer is that this guide might be a really helpful tool for equipping and building confidence in both parents, so that regardless of one's comfort level, anyone could read the Track One scripture of the day and lead the family discussion using the questions on the bookmark.

I would urge you, if you are married to a believing spouse, find a time to read the Bible together as a family as often as possible. By God's design, fathers are the spiritual head of the family. I don't believe that means the Dad has to lead your Bible reading time together every day, but I do believe that means he should be the driving force, the one at the helm of the ship getting the crew on board, saying, "Let's go!".

In terms of what this looks like in our marriage, Greg and I have figured out our dance over the years. It took time. As the kids have grown, we now read the Word together as a family as regular as possible and Greg and I have found a way to partner together in step with one another. We share responsibility (Sometimes, it simply falls to which one of us is in a better frame of mind or who has had their coffee that morning!). We give each other grace and space to lead in our own way when it's our turn. We look to one another for insights. We pay attention and stay engaged when the other person is leading. We keep the rhythm rolling when one of us is away from home or running late.

The point is, link arms and do this together. Encourage one another. Support one another. Be your spouse's biggest cheerleader. Find your dance together and waltz (or tango!) away!

What do I do if my spouse is hesitant to participate?

This answer spurs off the question above. For those hesitant because they lack confidence, then take small steps. Try having that spouse be the one who reads the text and only asks the "What do I see" questions for the day. Or maybe start very simple, only reading the Track One text and answering the questions on the bookmark. Be intentional to verbally encourage your spouse when your study time is over. Don't attempt Mt. Everest overnight. Be careful not to compare your spouse or your family to another.

Perhaps you and your spouse could be a few days or a week ahead in the study together on an adult level before you lead your kids. For some internal processors, it might be beneficial to get to read and study in advance to give time to think about the concepts and gain confidence in being able to lead your family.

Finally, if your spouse is willing, pray together about your family Bible reading time. Pray for your kids. Pray for one another that God would give you everything you need to open His Word with your family. Get on the same page in saying you want to do this together. We often say, "Team Duvall" in our house. Reading the Bible together as a family is not *my* idea or *Greg's* idea. It's *God's* idea and we're walking out His will together.

What other resources are out there to help?

Bibles

ESV Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001. 2011 Text Edition.

ESV Study Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011

ESV Big Picture Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015 (Designed for children ages 5-8)

ESV Children's Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017 (Designed for children ages 5-10)

ESV Following Jesus Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015 (Designed for children ages 8-12)

ESV Student Study Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011 (Designed for students ages 12+)

The NKJV Big Picture Interactive Bible: Connecting Christ Throughout God's Story. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015

NIV Student Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011 (Designed for students ages 12+)

Story Bibles and Theology Books for Families

Sally Lloyd Jones. *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name.* Grand Rapids, MI: ZonderKidz, 2007

David Helm. *The Big Picture Story Bible.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014 (designed for children ages 2-7)

Marty Machowski. *The Ology: Ancient Truths Ever New.* Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2015

Kevin DeYoung. *The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015

Kevin DeYoung. *The Biggest Story ABC.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017

Kathy Keller. *The New City Catechism: 52 Questions and Answers for Our Hearts and Minds (The Gospel Coalition).* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017

David Mauss & Sergio Cariello. *The Action Bible: God's Redemptive Story.* Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015 (designed for ages 9-11)

Catherine DeVries & Sergio Cariello. *The Action Storybook Bible: An Interactive Adventure through God's Redemptive Story.* Colorado Springs, CO: David D. Cook, 2017 (designed for ages 8 and under)

Media and Online tools

YouVersion Bible App (connecting with Scripture regularly)

YouVersion Bible for Kids App (interactive scripture T

www.blueletterbible.org (Bible study tools)

Blue Letter Bible App (Bible study tools)

Buck Denver Asks...What's in the Bible? Video series and other books and media:

www.whatsinthebible.com.