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MY FIRST MESSAGE



A DEVOTIONAL BIBLE FOR KIDS

EUGENE H. PETERSON

ILLUSTRATED BY ROB CORLEY AND TOM BANCROFT

COLORS BY JON CONKLING

NAVPRESS 
BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE
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My First Message

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INTRODUCTION

Long before the rendition of the Bible known as *The Message* was completed, Eugene Peterson translated portions of the Bible for members of his congregation so they could grasp the powerful relevancy of God’s message. Eugene knew the life-changing potential of interacting with the Scriptures. But he also knew that unless people understood what they were reading—by hearing it in a way that connected it to their lives—change wouldn’t take place. That is the spirit behind *My First Message*, a children’s devotional Bible for kids between the ages of four and eight, their parents, grandparents, and friends.

Why *My First Message* Is Different

Many children’s Bibles simplify biblical stories to make them easier for children to understand. But parents have told us that they prefer reading a *real* Bible story rather than a simplified retelling of the story. That’s why we’ve used the text from *The Message* for the fifty Bible stories featured. In some cases we’ve eliminated words or minor parts of the story your child may not understand. We’ve included whimsical, fun illustrations to further engage your child with the story, trying to be as historically accurate as possible with the details.

My First Message is a devotional Bible for you to use with your children to help them develop a lifelong habit of devotional interaction with God’s Word. These devotionals emphasize thinking about what Scripture means and putting it into practice in a way appropriate for children four to eight years old.

Read. Think. Pray. Live.

My First Message uses a time-tested practice of *lectio divina*—or “spiritual reading”—a simple but powerful practice used by Christians for centuries to deepen their devotional

lives. It is based on four key elements: *reading* the Bible, *thinking* about what it means, *praying* in response to what it says, and *living* out the truth.

Read. You want your kids to know that these are *true* stories, but they are still *stories*. Have fun with them. Add inflection to emphasize important points. Use different voices to help your kids differentiate between the characters. Don't worry that you're not good enough at creating voices. Your kids will love it! As you read, encourage your child to look for Manty, the praying mantis character hidden in many of the illustrations.

Think. Almost every page in *My First Message* includes a "Think" question. Some of the questions are intended to convey information ("How much taller than you was Goliath?"). Others put your child in the shoes of the characters ("Why wasn't David afraid of the giant?"). Use the questions as they are written or adapt them to your child's situation. Be sure to pause after each page to ask the "Think" question. Don't be afraid of silence after you ask the question. The goal is not to get easy answers but to stimulate real interaction with Scripture. Feel free to reword the questions—or to substitute your own questions that you think are more appropriate for the age of your child.

Pray. This is a chance for your child to interact with God about the things you've read. There are helpful suggestions for tying the readings to your prayer time, but there isn't a written prayer for your child to recite. This is a chance to teach your child that prayer isn't just repeating religious-sounding words—it's an opportunity to talk to God freely and honestly.

Read the "Pray" section aloud to your child. The first time or two through this section you may want to demonstrate to your child how you talk to God. Keep it short and childlike. Encourage your child to insert his or her own thoughts into their conversation with God. Remind your child that it's not about getting it right—it's about talking honestly with God.

Live. The fun activities in each “Live” section help kids see what it means to live out the principles they’ve just heard, thought about, and prayed about. It’s your child’s chance to change behavior or start a new pattern of behavior. Don’t feel like you have to do all of the activities. Pick the one that you think is most appropriate for your child and have fun with it. If you don’t have time for the “Live” activity, don’t worry. You can come back to it at a more appropriate time.

How to Effectively Use This Bible with Your Child

Remember that your children are kids! You don’t want to talk down to them, but don’t expect them to have your capacity to absorb information. Here are some suggestions to get the most out of this devotional experience.

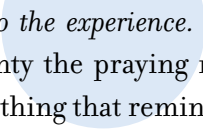
Allow about 10-15 minutes for each story. That should be an adequate amount of time to read, think, pray, and do a short, fun application activity. If you don’t have time to finish the story, that’s okay. The important thing is not the quantity of time you spend—it’s the quality of time you spend interacting with God and His Word.

Look for Manty. As you read, encourage your child to look for Manty, the praying mantis character that is hidden in many of the illustrations.



Don’t try to read more than one story at a time. The goal is not to cram as much information as possible into your children’s heads—it’s to have them understand and interact with smaller chunks of information. Don’t overwhelm your child. Allow time to absorb the information and internalize it. Don’t be in a hurry. Make this a fun experience.

Don’t rush through the story. A good storyteller never rushes the story. You’re not trying to finish an activity—you’re trying to help your child build a relationship with God. That takes time. Your goal isn’t to get through the story to the application. The stories are valuable on their own and if you make reading them a fun experience, your kids will remember them for life.

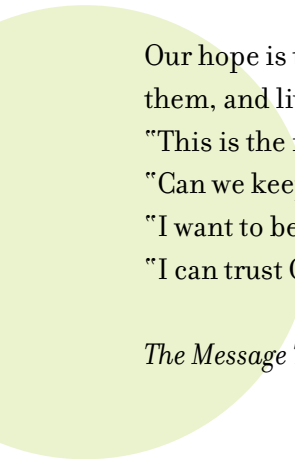


Don't ignore the "fun" elements built into the experience. Your children may be more excited about the illustrations and Manty the praying mantis than about the story. Don't worry! An illustration may be the thing that reminds your child of the truths he or she has been exposed to—even if all the words didn't register.

Prepare yourself. Familiarize yourself with the story, the "Think" sections, and the "Live" activities before you start. Take time to think through the characters (and get your "voices" ready!), think about the prayer time, and have an idea which "Live" activity your child will enjoy.

A Lifetime of Devotion to God's Word

Even though this devotional Bible always nudges your child toward acting on the truths they've heard, we've made it accessible and fun. We want your children to keep reading the Bible, thinking about what it means, praying about what they read, and living out the truths they discover daily—for the rest of their lives.



Our hope is that as you and your child read these stories, think about them, pray about them, and live out the truths they contain, that you hear your child say:

"This is the most fun Bible I've ever read."

"Can we keep reading?"

"I want to be like David."

"I can trust God, too!"

The Message Team