



## Reading Scripture with My Family

God reveals himself to us in many ways, but one of the ways he makes himself known most clearly is through the words of Holy Scripture. This is one reason Scripture is read at every Mass as part of the Liturgy of the Word. This revelation is also why reading your Bible at home can be such a nourishing and meaningful devotional practice. In Psalm 119, the psalmist puts it this way: “How I love your law, Lord! I study it all day long. . . . Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.” The Bible is not an inert document. It is a wonderful treasure through which the living God speaks to us.

As a parent, you can have the privilege of inviting your family to encounter God through the Bible. Scripture is not just for scholars or grown-ups; it is for everyone. As your family reads, discusses, and prays about God’s Word together, you will find God revealing himself to each of you in new and perhaps unexpected ways. You may also find that regular Scripture reading stokes your child’s imagination and curiosity about God and brings your family closer as you spend time together.

**Consider the following ideas as you think about how to respond to God’s call in this way.**

- **Take your child’s age and abilities into account.** Select Scripture passages that will be engaging and understandable for every member of your family. Narrative portions of the Bible, such as the Gospel of Mark or the first twenty chapters of Exodus, are often good places to start. (The *Loyola Kids Book of Bible Stories* by Amy Welborn can provide some ideas for appropriate selections for younger children.) You may also want to find and display illustrations to accompany the passage. To give older children a chance to experience the language of Scripture firsthand, consider inviting them to read aloud the passage to the rest of the family.
- **Read the passage yourself before gathering with your family.** This will help you facilitate discussion and guide children through their questions. You will also have a chance to acquaint yourself with the context of the passage, which will give you a sense of how it fits into the larger story that God is telling through the Bible.
- **Begin every Scripture-reading session with prayer.** Prayer encourages a reflective mind-set and sets the stage for the Holy Spirit to work through the words of the Bible. You may use a traditional prayer or pray using your own words. Ask God for the grace to hear his voice in the words you read. Prayer prepares the soil of your family’s hearts for the seed of God’s teaching.
- **Allow time for discussion after the reading.** Children can be active participants in your time together. Talk about the Scripture passage after you read it. What was it about? What did God reveal about himself in the story? What might God be teaching us through the passage?
- **Foster an environment where it is okay to ask questions.** The Bible can be hard to understand for children and adults alike. Children are naturally curious, and it is important for them to know that they need not be ashamed if they don’t understand something or have questions. Try to answer questions to the best of your ability, but be honest if you are unsure of the answers. Check with your parish priest or catechetical leader for answers to tough questions.
- **Conclude your time together with prayer.** Just as prayer prepares us to hear God’s Word, so also does it lead us to reflect on what we have just heard. Invite your child to consider what God might be saying to him or her through the words of Holy Scripture. Allow time for him or her to pray aloud or silently, then conclude with a prayer thanking God and asking him for the grace to put his teaching into action.