



## Questions to Ask When Choosing a Children's Bible

- What is the theological perspective of the publisher? Locate the About Us tab on the publisher's website (or Statement of Faith or What We Believe or Theological Understandings, or words to that effect) and be sure to read the fine print.
- How is Jesus portrayed? God? The Holy Spirit? Is this in keeping with your denomination's/ congregation's beliefs and traditions?
- How are skin colors portrayed in the pictures? Are they all white or do they match the actual skin color of the ethnicity of the biblical characters?
- While there are stereotypes (gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, abilities, for instance) in the Bible due to the cultures of the time, is it implied that they are to be lived out today? Are there any implied value judgements for today?
- Are biblical themes that match the beliefs of your denomination lifted up? For instance, the United Church of Christ values peace, justice, diversity, and welcoming all.
- Are stories about the women in the Bible included?
- Is the language used inclusive? (i.e. when humanity or a group of people are referenced, is the term used representative of all of humanity or just males or other specific dominant or powerful groups?)
- What adjectives are used in reference to other cultures? (for example, words that imply less-than or an unrealistic description of the actual culture such "savage" or "primitive," for instance.
- What is the copyright date? Think of the events that have shaped our cultural understandings of people and places in reference to that and what it might mean for the interpretation and presentation of the biblical stories chosen for this particular Bible.
- Which Bible stories have been chosen for this particular edition? Are there any stories that are key to your congregation's/denomination's beliefs and values that are left out? Are there any that are included that you believe should not be presented to young children until they are older?
- Locate key Bible stories such as the Creation and Fall, the Crucifixion, and Jesus' Resurrection. How is the male/female relationship portrayed in the creation of Adam and Eve? How is "dominion over the earth" described? What does it tell children about sin? Is there reference to Jesus' blood and if so, is it more for adults than for children? How is death described? Is it straight-forward or too descriptive? What other questions are important for you to ask about these stories?

*Be mindful of the power of books. What children see and read or hear has the power to cultivate either positive or negative behaviors, values, and sense of oneself, as well as a child's attitudes toward others.*

### **What do I do if my congregation has already invested in a set of children's Bibles that include words or concepts that do not agree with our beliefs?**

One creative way to work with this is to cover over the words/phrases that you'd prefer to not share with the children and invite them to write in their own more acceptable words related to your beliefs. (Many thanks to longtime AUCE member, Kristin Putney, Director of Faith Formation, Youth & Family Ministries at Seekonk (MA) Congregational Church for this idea.)