

Choosing God-centered Resources for Children

What is meant by God-centered? A simple definition: To see and understand that, in everything, Jesus is to be preeminent - the best, the greatest, most supreme (Colossians 1:16-18). That is the message of the Bible - the centrality of God in all things. God-centered resources for children should strive toward reflecting this reality.

Guidelines for Evaluating Bible Resources

CATEGORY 1 -- CHILDREN'S BIBLES

- 1. Distinguish between a true Bible and a Bible story book. The first is God's Word, the second isn't.**
- 2. Choose a version that will span a child's life -- an accurate translation that also offers the greatest ease of readability.**
- 3. Choose a Bible that displays a reverence for God's holy, priceless Word.**
- 4. Choose a Bible in which the actual text is seen as preeminent.**

5. Be cautious of “theme-based” Bibles.

CATEGORY 2 -- “CONDENSED” BIBLES

Choose those resources that properly reflect and emphasize the major themes of the biblical narrative.

CATEGORY 3 -- BIBLE STORY AND NARRATIVE BOOKS

1. Poetic license should only be used to help explain the message, not change it.

2. The stories should be conveyed within the context of the whole counsel of God paying attention to correct doctrine.

- 2. Doctrine should be seen in the context of the whole message of the Bible and the character of God.**

CATEGORY 5 -- BOOKS THAT FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Christian character resources should be grace-based in their approach.

CATEGORY 6 -- CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

- 1. Christian biographies should mainly focus on the evidences of God's gracious and powerful work demonstrated in the lives of believers.**

2. **Biographies should not overlook the sin and weaknesses of God's people.**

Final Considerations in Choosing Resources

- **The only perfect resource is the text of the Bible itself.**
- **Don't throw the baby out with the bath water! Look at the overall content of a resource.**
- **Keep in mind how the resource is to be used: With or without an adult? Be more picky and careful if the child will be reading, listening to, or watching the resource on their own.**
- **You may have to shop around and dig deep to find good resources. It is better to have a few good resources than a wide variety of poor resources.**

Encouraging the Use of God-centered Resources in the Church

1. **Take inventory of your church's classrooms, library, bookstore.**
2. **Develop clear policy for evaluating books that you will use and promote.**
3. **Inform parents and teachers.**
4. **Make recommendations.**

Sample of policy established for library material carried at *Bethlehem Baptist Church* (by Edith Carlson, church librarian):

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BIBLICALLY-BASED CHILDREN'S MATERIALS

1. The material should demonstrate that the Bible is true and really happened -- because the Bible is true and the stories really did happen.
2. The material should promote reverence toward God and His attributes. God and His power, knowledge, righteousness, justice, love, mercy, etc. should not be minimized or treated lightly.
3. The material should reflect an accurate account of the Bible narrative.
4. The material should communicate respect toward the Bible characters. Our culture is very casual, even flippant, to the point of disrespect, and this should not carry over in attitudes toward Bible characters -- especially God Himself!
5. The material should be of high quality and the illustrations should properly reflect the text and not distract or trivialize it.

Summary: Biblical accuracy, truth, reverence toward God and His attributes, and respect toward Biblical characters shall not be sacrificed for the sake of entertainment.