

## EVALUATING BIBLE STORYBOOKS

### Big Momma Makes the World

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Phyllis Root
  - b. Publisher: Candlewick Press
  - c. Year of Publication: 2007 (Paperback version)
2. **This is:** One Bible story – Creation
3. **This is:** Midrash (creative commentary on one or more biblical stories)
4. **Intended Age level:** 4 – 8 years  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** It offers a good and different interpretation of God to engage children's imaginations.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** It is fairly true to the story, but allows for creative interpretation
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is intended to be read/shared with a child. It is not a "study" book for a faith-imagination shaper.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** It asks the reader to suspend interpretations that limit God (such as limiting God to male).
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** It is a very good book with really wonderful illustrations and a neat way of retelling the creation story. It could be good to use in an adult class or within a sermon.

### Mr. And Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Nancy Wood
  - b. Publisher: Candlewick Press
  - c. Year of Publication: 2006
2. **This is:** Imaginative Creation Story
3. **This is:** Midrash (creative commentary on one or more biblical stories)

4. **Intended Age level:** 3-6 years  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** This is not a good choice if what you want is the Biblical story of creation. This is an imaginative, midrashic creation story so persons looking for “the Biblical creation story” would be disappointed.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** This is not meant as a direct interpretation of Biblical text!
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is intended to be read.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** It asks nothing explicit. The book itself is imaginative interpretation.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None

### Noah’s Wife: The Story of Naamah

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
  - b. Publisher: Jewish Lights Publishing
  - c. Year of Publication: 2002
2. **This is:** One Bible story – Noah’s Ark
3. **This is:** Midrash (creative commentary on one or more biblical stories). It imaginatively retells Noah’s Ark from a different perspective.
4. **Intended Age level:** The book itself says ages 4 and up.  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** The book is rather long, so younger children may have a harder time with it. The evaluating team thinks it is geared to older elementary children (and up).
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** It is not meant to replicate the Biblical telling of the Noah story. Instead, it is intentionally midrash; it interprets the story by retelling it from a different imagined perspective – that of Noah’s wife. As midrash, it is loosely based on the ancient text.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It would be a wonderful conversation starter. It gives voice to those without voice in our Biblical canon. Here, we read the story of Noah’s wife,

but are also reminded of the original Biblical text. It would be a wonderful supplement to a Bible study or Sunday School lesson.

7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** This storybook asks readers to consider a Biblical text from another perspective. In this instance, the story is interpreted through the imagined lens of Noah's wife.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would definitely use it, particularly with girls who might often feel that their voice is missing from the Biblical text.

### **But God Remembered**

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
  - b. Publisher: Jewish Lights Press
  - c. Year of Publication: 1995
2. **This is:** A few selected Biblical stories, on a theme: stories about women in the Bible.
3. **This is:** Midrash (creative commentary on one or more biblical stories)
4. **Intended Age level:** Ages 10 - up
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** It is explicitly and intentionally midrash, and even offers an introduction to the tradition of midrash as commentary on scripture.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is meant to be read aloud, by parent or teacher, to a child.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** As all midrash does, it implicitly asks that the reader step into a Biblical story, but then be open to asking imaginative questions and playing with "so what's not explicitly said in the text?".
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None, but the introduction to the book does help parents and teachers understand the tradition of midrash.
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would recommend this book.

## Psalm 23

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Tim Ladwig (illustrator)
  - b. Publisher: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
  - c. Year of Publication: 1997 (Paperback version)
2. **This is:** One Bible story – Psalm 23
3. **This is:** A formal translation (New International Version) and midrash. While the words are explicitly the words of the Biblical text, the illustrations provide an accompanying story that is an interpretation of the text for contemporary children.
4. **Intended Age level:** 4 – 8 years  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** This works for all ages, but the illustrations feature elementary-aged children. The illustrations would help a young child understand the text.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** The NIV text is exactly presented. The illustrations are hermeneutical, offering contemporary interpretation of the Psalm in light of the lives of urban children.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is intended to be read aloud while looking at the pictures. It can also be used devotionally.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** The illustrations certainly ask the reader to be a Biblical interpreter. It would be important to talk about these illustrations with children.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None. The illustrations themselves offer the interpretation.
9. **Advanced theological question:** The illustrations suggest that the biblical text witnesses to the story of God WITH us; Jesus is the shepherd and watches over children as they navigate through their urban neighborhood.
10. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would recommend this book for all ages. It would be a wonderful devotional tool, conversation starter, etc., in Sunday School, youth group, etc.

## **God is Like a Mother Hen and Much, Much More**

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Carolyn Stahl Bohler
  - b. Publisher: Presbyterian Publishing
  - c. Year of Publication: 1996
2. **This is:** Other: A children's storybook that introduces different images/names for God.
3. **This is:** Midrash and names/images for God that are linked to specific Biblical texts.
4. **Intended Age level:** Preschool
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** While some of the images are well grounded in scripture, some of the images of God do not seem to be rooted in exegesis. (For example, "God is like a teddy bear".)
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is intended to be read aloud.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** Although 'father' is a very common image for God, this book asks the reader to imagine God in a variety of other ways as well, such as mommy, friend, teacher. It ends by asking the reader to add his/her own images of God.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** The book gives guidance about metaphors, and offers an index correlating the God-images with Biblical text references.
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** This book should only be used with care by an experienced and well-grounded teacher.

## **Jesus, the Word**

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones
  - b. Publisher: Augsburg Fortress
  - c. Year of Publication: 2005
2. **This is:** Other: Based on the Gospel of John's christology of the Word, it presents the presence of word in story.

3. **This is:** A paraphrase, not a direct translation.
4. **Intended Age level:** 3-6 years  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** The emphasis in this book is on the illustrations which are very appropriate.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** The translation is good for the age group and the large format text with colorful pictures is inviting for the age.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is best read aloud.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** The book itself, in word and illustration, provides an interpretation of “Word”.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None.
9. **Advanced theological question:** Explains “Word” in a way children can grasp. Thus, it is not a full “theology of Word” but rather an introduction to one element of “word” that can be understood by young children.
10. **Overall, how do you feel about this children’s or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would recommend this book.

### **The First Christmas: Luke 2:1-20**

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Mary Manz Simon
  - b. Publisher: Concordia Publishing
  - c. Year of Publication: 1993
2. **This is:** One Bible story – Luke’s version of the birth of Jesus
3. **This is:** A formal translation (King James Version)
4. **Intended Age level:** Broadly intended for family.  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** The language is appropriate for a parent or older youth to read aloud to younger children at Christmas. The illustrations are beautiful, but not ethnically accurate.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** This is the King James version text.

6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is meant to be read to younger children by adults or older children.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** No interpretation except the illustrations is provided, nor are any questions asked.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** The only interpretive materials are the fantastically detailed and Americanized illustrations on each page. Users would do well to carefully look at and evaluate these illustrations as they interpret the story.
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** This book is fine as long as you realize that the illustrations portray a white Jesus, and balance this book with other versions and depictions of the story.

### The Nativity

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Julie Vivas (illustrator)
  - b. Publisher: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
  - c. Year of Publication: 1986
2. **This is:** One Bible story – The Nativity – birth of Christ
3. **This is:** A formal translation (King James Version)
4. **Intended Age level:** All ages  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** With children, this book should be accompanied by dialogue with an adult.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** This follows the King James version text exactly.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is meant to tell the nativity story, but it is distinctive in the pictorial depictions of that story.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** The book itself offers the interpretation through the illustrations.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None

9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would recommend this BUT would have the children tell the story to accompany the illustrations rather than reading aloud the KJV text.

### Light

1. **Basic Publication Information**
  - a. Author: Jane Breskin Zalben
  - b. Publisher: Dutton Children's Books
  - c. Year of Publication: 2007
2. **This is:** One Bible story – Creation
3. **This is:** Midrash (creative commentary on a Biblical story)
4. **Intended Age level:** Ages 3-7  
**How appropriate for this age level is the content, language, illustrations (if any), etc?** Appropriate for young children – adults.
5. **How well does this Bible or Bible storybook translate and present the original text?** It is not intended to be the Biblical text on creation, but rather an interpretation for children about God creating.
6. **How is this Bible or Bible storybook intended to be USED by the child or adolescent?** It is meant to be read.
7. **What does this Bible or Bible storybook ask of the READER AS BIBLICAL INTERPRETER?** This book invites the reader to look for God's light in all things.
8. **What accompanying interpretive materials come in it?** None
9. **Overall, how do you feel about this children's or youth Bible or Bible storybook?** We would want to use this book in an adult Sunday school class as a different way to look at creation and what it means to have light and peace in the world.