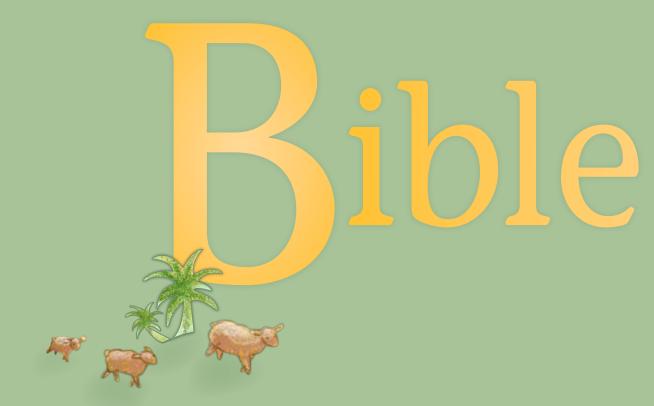


BIBLE STORIES FOR GROWING KIDS





by Francine Rivers and Shannon Rivers Coibion

Illustrated by Pascale Constantin



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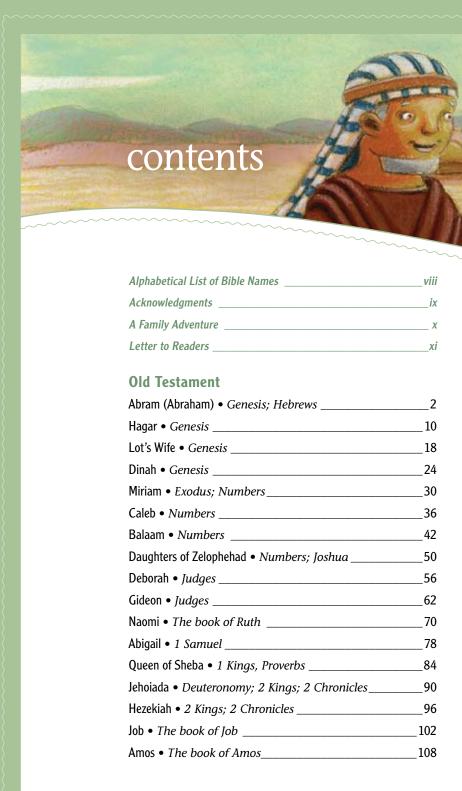
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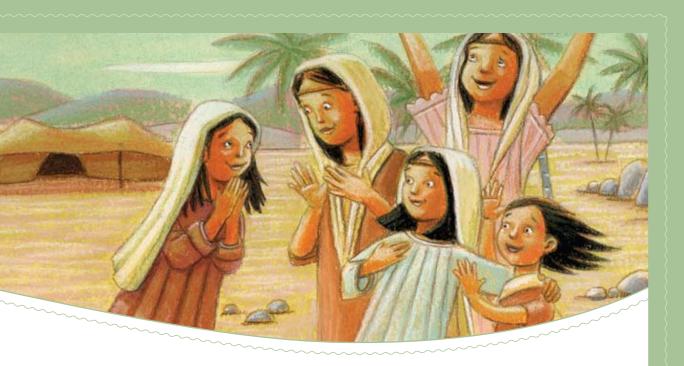
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WITH LOVE TO

Brendan and Andrea Coibion and William and Savannah Rivers







New Testament

Elizabeth • Matthew; Luke	116
Samaritan Woman • John	124
Lazarus • John	_132
Zacchaeus • Luke	_138
Judas • Matthew; Mark; Luke; John	144
Pilate • Matthew; Mark; Luke; John	150
Thomas • John	_156
Sapphira • Acts	_162
Saul (Paul) • Acts; 2 Corinthians; 2 Timothy	_168
Ananias • Acts	174
Dorcas • Acts	_180
Priscilla • Acts	_186
Timothy • Acts; 1 Corinthians; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy_	192
Scripture Index	200
About the Authors	202
About the Illustrator	203



alphabetical list of Bible names

Abigail	78
Abram (Abraham)	2
Amos	108
Ananias	
Balaam	
Caleb	36
Deborah	
Dinah	
Dorcas	
Elizabeth	
Gideon	62
Hagar	
Hezekiah	
Jehoiada	90
Job	102
Judas	144
Lazarus	132
Lot's Wife	18
Miriam	30
Naomi	70
Paul (Saul)	
Pilate	
Priscilla	
Queen of Sheba	84
Samaritan Woman	124
Sapphira	162
Saul (Paul)	
Thomas	156
Timothy	192
Zacchaeus	138
Zelophehad's Daughters	50



acknowledgments

My daughter, Shannon, and I want to give special thanks to our editor, Betty Swanberg. We had a vision to create a multigenerational book of stories and discussions about well-known and lesser-known Bible characters. However, Shannon (a homeschooling mom of two young children) and I (a writer of adult fiction) needed someone to come alongside us and teach us how to write this book. Betty has been that person, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with her.

Thank you also to Karen Watson, who shared our vision, and to the Tyndale team for their combined efforts in placing this book in your hands.

Francine Rivers



A family adventure

We live in difficult times. Our children and grandchildren face issues and situations daily that challenge their faith, morality, and way of thinking. Teaching them *what* to think will not prepare them for the worldly philosophies they face. Teaching them *how* to think, reason, and apply God's truth to their own lives will better equip them to live in the world without becoming part of it. Therefore, it is with great excitement that Shannon and I, along with the Tyndale team, present this collection of stories and growing times to you and your family.

This is not intended to be just a children's book. We hope it will become a family adventure in which you share with one another truths from Scripture, life experiences, and the power of God to change lives. And what's most important of all is that you teach your children how to put God's teachings into practice every day.

I've written each fictionalized story from the point of view of one person. In some cases, several stories cover the same situation but from different perspectives. Once the story is read, Shannon's section, Growing Time, will help involve family members in open discussion about interesting historical facts. Then you'll find questions that go beyond facts and require deeper thinking about each individual and how the issues and challenges people faced thousands of years ago are those we still face today. The prayer suggestions will help teach the principle of praying through the truths from Scripture. Children are encouraged to pray that the lessons they learn will become evident in every part of their lives.

It is our prayer that this book will strengthen the faith of each family member and equip you to go into the world. As you learn from the lives

Francie Freis

of 30 of God's people, may you become better armed and ready to point the way by word and example to your Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.



Dear reader,

Have you been listening to Bible stories and looking at Bible storybooks for as long as you can remember? Do you think you have learned everything there is to know about the people in the Bible? Well, guess what. I'm a mom, and I'm still learning! And guess what again. My mom is a grandmother, and she is still learning too!

The Bible is a very special book, because it is a gift from God. He wanted you, your parents, your grandparents, and everyone else to learn that He created people to be His friends. To help us understand that, He had many stories written down. Some of them are about people who learned to love and follow God. Others are about people who chose not to love or follow Him.

My mom, who is a good storywriter, thought it would be a good idea to learn as much as she could about 30 different Bible characters. She wanted to bring them to life through her writing. So she has written 30 stories about 30 Bible people for families just like yours. Her stories are in this book.

I'm a mom who homeschools my two children. We like to talk about Bible stories together as a family. We discover interesting facts about Bible times and talk about the people in the stories. We pray that we will learn the lessons they learned, and we ask God to help us not make the mistakes they made. I wrote the Growing Time pages in this book to help you and your family do the same.

We hope you will enjoy this book. But most of all, we pray that the stories and discussions will help you learn to be a better friend and follower of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

With love from

and from her mother

Francie Fiver

Arannon-Rivers Co. bion

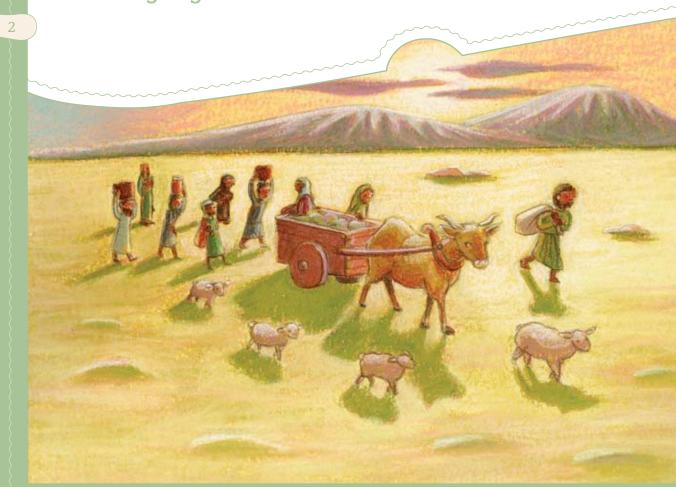


OLD TESTAMENT

heard a voice. It came as a whisper, but he could feel the power of it. It was God who spoke!

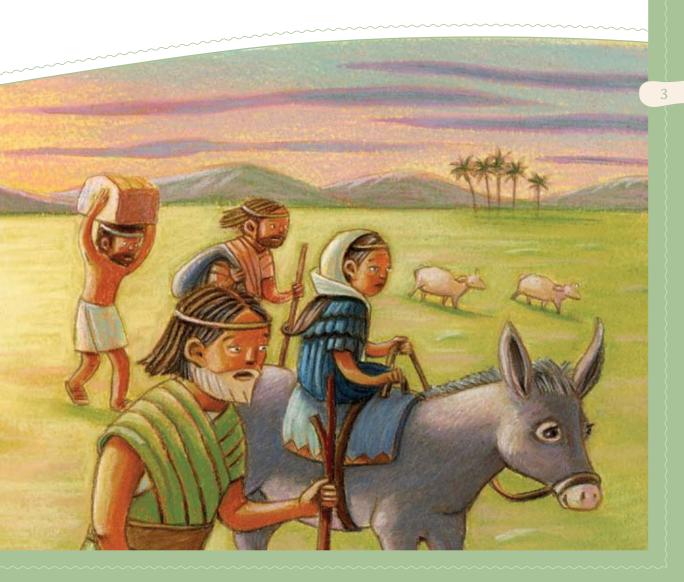
"Leave your country and your relatives, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you the father of a great nation. I will bless you with good things and make you famous. I will bless those who bless you and use bad things to curse those who curse you. But all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

Abram went to his wife, Sarai. "We're leaving Haran and going wherever the Lord leads us."



There the Lord appeared to Abram. "I am going to give this land to your children and their children."

Children! Abram and Sarai had no children, so God's





promise gave Abram hope. He built an altar for worshipping God and called it Bethel, "the house of God."

After a while, a famine came to Canaan. No crops would grow. Abram was so worried about providing food for his family that he moved to Egypt without asking God what to do.

The Egyptian king, Pharaoh, wanted Sarai for himself. Afraid for his life, Abram told the king that Sarai was his sister. God was angry. When Pharaoh learned who Sarai was, he sent her back to Abram.

Abram and Sarai left Egypt and took with them a maid named Hagar to help Sarai.

When Abram and Sarai and Lot and all their servants reached Canaan, they had so many animals there was not

enough water or grass to feed them all. Abram's servants began to fight with Lot's servants. Abram and Lot decided they must separate. Though Abram was older and deserved first choice, he asked Lot where he wanted to go. Lot chose the best piece of land. Abram stayed in Canaan.

After Lot went away, the Lord spoke to Abram again.
"I am giving all this land to you and your children forever. I will give you so many people in your family that no one will be able to count

them all!"

Years passed. Abram and Sarai grew old. Sarai gave up hope in God's promise of children. She told Abram to sleep with her servant, Hagar, and have a son. Abram did what Sarai asked, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (ISH-may-el).

When Abram was 99 years old and Sarai was almost 90, God changed Abram's name to Abraham. God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah. Then God visited them with two angels and told Abraham that Sarah would have a son within a year. Abraham believed, but Sarah laughed silently. So God told them their son's name would be Isaac, which means "laughter." And so it was, for they laughed with joy when their son was born.

One day Sarah saw Ishmael making fun of little Isaac, and Sarah feared for her son. She went to Abraham and told him to send Ishmael and Hagar away. The Lord told Abraham to listen to Sarah. Isaac was the child God had promised Abraham, and through Isaac blessings would come to the world.

Isaac grew up to be a fine boy. Abraham and Sarah loved him very much. God tested Abraham's faith by telling him to take Isaac to the top of a mountain and give him as an offering to God. So Abraham got up early in the morning, chopped wood, made bundles of food and coals, saddled his donkey, and set out for Mount Moriah (moh-RYE-uh) with Isaac.

As they walked up the mountain, Isaac said, "We have wood and fire, Father. But where is the lamb for the offering?"

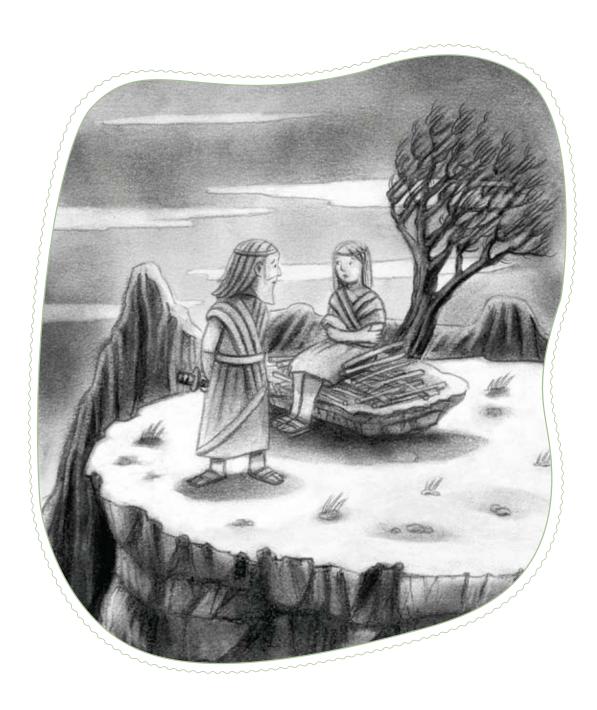
"God will provide a lamb, Son." Abraham believed God would keep His promise of many children through Isaac. If he had to give up his son as an offering, Abraham trusted God to bring Isaac back to life.

When they reached the top of the mountain, Abraham placed the wood on a flat rock and put Isaac on the altar.

As Abraham took out his knife, God told him, "You can lay down the knife, Abraham. For now I know that you truly trust Me. Because you were willing to give your son as an offering to Me, I will bless you. And all the nations of the world will be blessed because you obeyed Me."

Jesus, the Messiah, Savior and Lord of the world, came from Abraham's family many years later. Abraham is called the father of everyone who has faith in God.

Scriptures: Genesis 12-13; 15-18; 21-22; Hebrews 11:17-19



growing time

Interesting Facts

- Abraham means "father of nations." Sarah means "princess." Their grandson Jacob had many grandchildren of his own. Their families became part of many nations. So Abraham really did become the "father of nations"!
- If there is not enough rain to make crops grow, there will not be enough grain to make bread and other food. Then people die, and we say there is a famine. Famines were common in Bible times because there often was no rain.

Truths from God's Word

God is pleased when we believe what He says and obey Him as Abraham did. Sometimes God has us wait a long time for His promises to come true. He wants us to trust in Him as we wait. Trusting in God is believing that He will do what He says.

Thinking about Abraham

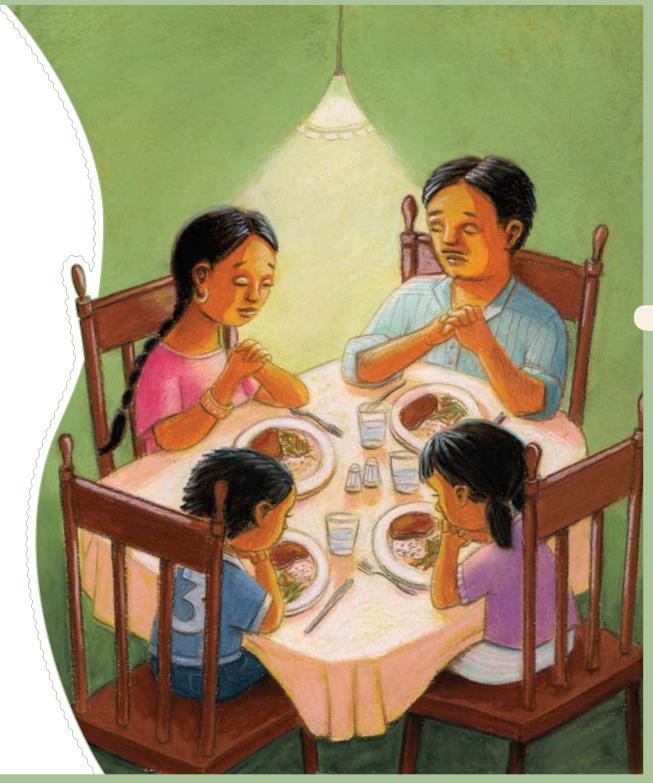
God called Abraham His friend and made him the father of all those who have faith in the one true God. When God said all nations would be blessed through Abraham's family, God was speaking of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would save the world from sin. Name some times when Abraham didn't understand everything God was asking him to do. Can you tell about some ways Abraham showed that he trusted God, even when he didn't understand everything?

Thinking about YOUR Life

What are some things that God is asking you to do, but you don't understand why? Which of God's promises to you seem like they will take a long time? How can you show that you trust God to do what He says, no matter how long it takes?

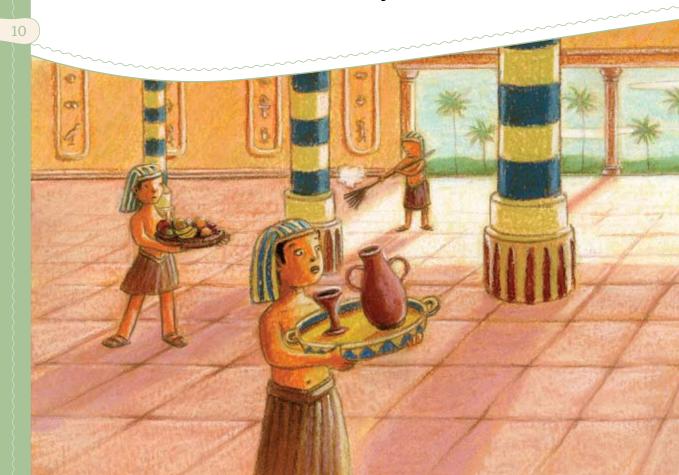
Praying for Help to Trust

- 1. Pray that God will help you trust Him.
- 2. Ask for faith to believe that God will always answer your prayers at the right time.
- 3. Pray that God will help you follow and obey Him, even when you don't understand where He is leading you.



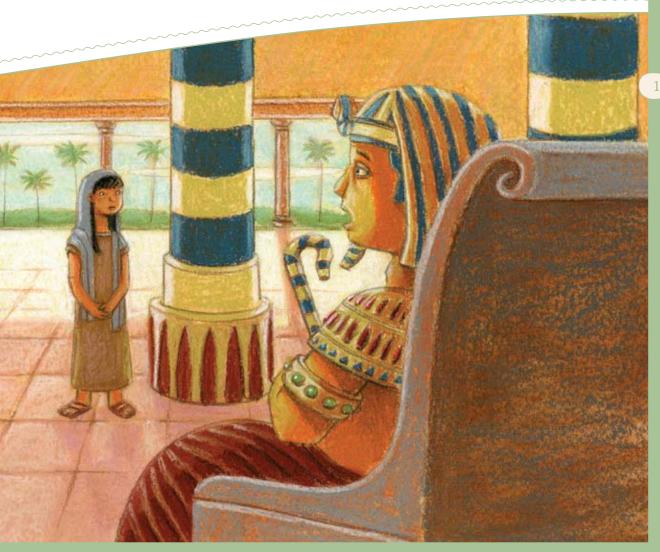
"You belong to Abraham now." Hagar heard those words as she stood in the hall of Pharaoh's palace in Egypt. She and some other Egyptian people were "gifts" to Abraham, along with sheep, cattle, and donkeys. The people would be his servants, so they would do his chores but would not be paid for their work.

Hagar cried as she left her country. She wanted to stay, but as a servant she had no choice where she went. Abraham gave her to his wife, Sarah, to serve as her personal maid.



When they arrived in Canaan, Hagar watched Abraham worship an unseen God. She found this very strange, because statues of gods stood everywhere in her country. How could Abraham worship a god he could not see? Abraham even said he could hear God speak!

Abraham's wife, Sarah, cried sometimes, just as Hagar did.



And Hagar knew why. Sarah could not have children. One day Sarah surprised Hagar by ordering her to go to Abraham and be like a wife to him. "But if you and my husband have a baby together, the child will be mine."

Hagar obeyed Sarah and soon learned she was going to have a baby. Then she refused to behave like a servant anymore. After all, she was going to have the master's child.

Sarah became furious. "We will see which of us Abraham loves more!" After Sarah talked to her husband, she began to beat Hagar. Any time Hagar didn't do her work quickly enough, Sarah beat her again. Finally Hagar could not take it anymore and ran away.



The Lord found her drinking water from a desert spring along the road back to Egypt. "Hagar, where are you going?"

Hagar had never heard God speak before. His voice was filled with great power but was also tender and kind.

"I am running away from my mistress."

"Return to Sarah and do what she says. I will give you more people in your family someday than you can count. You will soon give birth to a son. Name him Ishmael (ISH-may-el), for I have heard how sad you are." (The name means "God hears.")

Hagar learned that Ishmael would be wild like a donkey and would quarrel with his family. But her son would never be a servant!

Hagar went back, content with the way her son's life was going to be. She never expected that God was going to perform a miracle and make it possible for Sarah to have a baby too. Abraham was 100, and Sarah was 90 years old! Sarah laughed, and they named the baby Isaac—which means "laughter."

Abraham threw a party when Isaac was ready for solid food. Ishmael watched the two old people with the toddler. He laughed at Isaac and said, "I am Abraham's first son."

Ishmael's mother, Hagar, agreed with him. "You will always be Abraham's first son. Everything that is his will someday belong to you, not Isaac. The master's son will serve you!" Ishmael laughed again.

But the next morning Abraham gave Hagar and Ishmael some food and water. "Go away," he said with tears in his eyes.

"And never come back." Abraham knew that God would take care of his son Ishmael, but he also knew that God had special plans for his son Isaac.

Now all her hopes were gone, and Hagar cried harder than she had ever cried before. She and her son wandered in the wilderness until all the food and water were gone. Ishmael was so thirsty he cried until he fell asleep and couldn't wake up.

Hagar left her son under a bush and sat on a rock, sobbing out a prayer to God. "I don't want to watch the boy die!"

God spoke. "Hagar, do not be afraid.

I have heard Ishmael's cries. Go to him and comfort him, for I will make sure that he and his children and their families grow into a great nation."

When Hagar opened her eyes, she saw a well! She quickly removed the cover, filled her jar with water, and went to her son to give him a drink.

God kept His promise. Ishmael grew up and became very good with a bow and arrows. He married an Egyptian girl and had 12 sons. Their families grew into 12 large tribes scattered throughout the land. And all of them were enemies of Abraham's son Isaac.

Scriptures: Genesis 12:14-20; 16:1-16; 21:6-21; 25:12-18



growing time

Interesting Facts

- Ishmael and Isaac never got along. Ishmael grew up on the Sinai Peninsula, and many Arabs in that
 part of Egypt and surrounding countries today are proud to say they are descendants of Ishmael. Many
 Jewish people in Israel are proud to say they are descendants of Isaac. People from their families in the
 Middle East are still at war today.
- Did you ever hear the word *surrogate*? A surrogate parent is a stand-in parent. When a married couple cannot have children, sometimes they choose another person to have a baby for them. Abraham and Sarah ordered Hagar to become a surrogate parent for the child they thought they couldn't have.

Truths from God's Word

Sometimes people find themselves in a bad situation without it being any fault of their own. God is pleased when people keep trusting Him during the hard times. He wants everyone to have faith that He will turn bad situations into good ones.

Thinking about Hagar

Hagar was a servant who carried Abraham's baby inside her for nine months, knowing that Sarah would take the child when he was born. How do you think Hagar felt about that? What were some of the bad things that happened to her? What bad things happened to her son, Ishmael? How did God take her bad situation and turn it into something good?

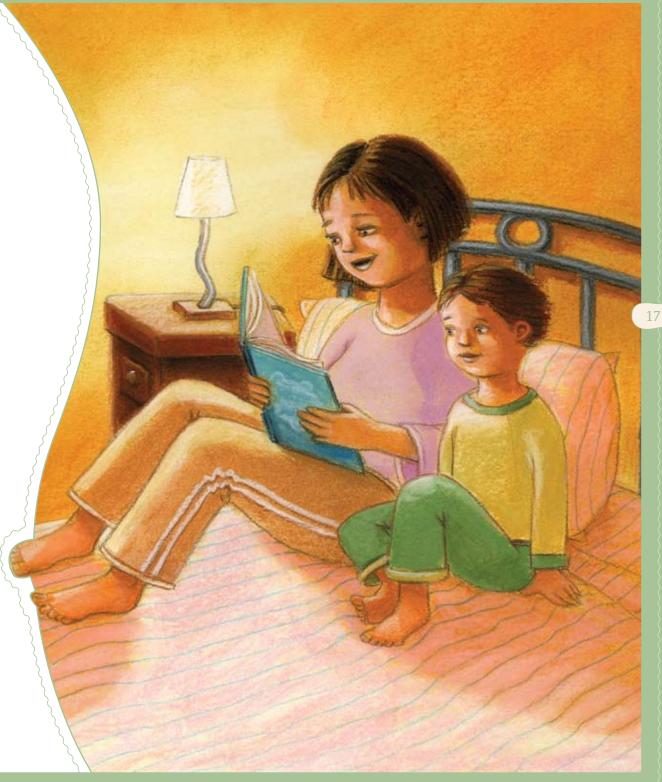
Thinking about YOUR Life

As you grow up, your parents, teachers, and other adults have the right to tell you what to do. God expects you to honor these people by obeying them. Sometimes, though, you will feel that you have not been treated well. You may think you are in a situation that is not fair. It is up to you to trust God during this time and obey anyway. Can you think of a time when you were in a bad spot and God turned the situation into something good? What was it? How did you feel after it was over?

Praying about the Hard Times

- 1. Ask God to help you trust Him, even when you are in a situation that makes you feel sad and lonely.
- 2. Pray that you will believe God can turn bad situations into good ones.
- 3. Thank God for some of the good things He has already done for you.







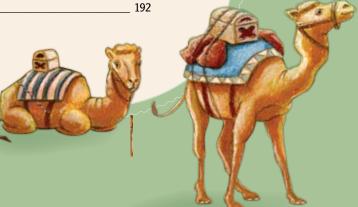
scripture index

Old Testament

Genesis 12–13; 15–18; 21–22; Hebrews 11:17-19 Abram (Abraham)	2
Genesis 12:14-20; 16:1-16; 21:6-21; 25:12-18 Hagar	_ 110
Genesis 13:5-13; 19:1-26 Lot's Wife	18
Genesis 34:1-31 Dinah	24
Exodus 2:1-21; 15:20-21; Numbers 12:1-16; 20:1 <i>Miriam</i>	30
Numbers 13:1–14:35 <i>Caleb</i>	36
Numbers 22:1–24:11 Balaam	42
Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12; Joshua 17:3-6 Daughters of Zelophehad	50
Judges 4–5 Deborah	56
Judges 6:3–7:22; 8:22-23 Gideon	62
The book of Ruth Naomi	70
1 Samuel 25:1-44 Abigail	78
1 Kings 10:1-13, Proverbs 1:7; 3:5-6 <i>Queen of Sheba</i>	84
Deuteronomy 6:5; 2 Kings 11–12;	
2 Chronicles 22:10-12; 23:1–24:25 <i>Jehoiada</i>	90
2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 29:1-2; 31:1-3; 32:9-23 Hezekiah	96
The book of Job	_ 102
The book of Amos Amos	_ 108

New Testament

Matthew 3:1-2, 13-15; Luke 1:5-80 <i>Elizabeth</i>	116
John 4:3-42 Samaritan Woman	124
John 11:1-44 Lazarus	132
Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus	138
Matthew 26:14-25, 47-50; 27:1-10; Mark 14:10-21, 43-46; Luke 22:1-23, 47-48; John 12:4-6; 13:2, 21-30; 18:2-3 <i>Judas</i>	144
$Matthew~27:11-26;~Mark~15:1-15;~Luke~23:1-25;~John~19:1-20~~\begin{tabular}{ll} \it Pilate_\\ \it & \end{tabular}$	150
John 11:3-16, 41-44; 20:18-29 <i>Thomas</i>	156
Acts 5:1-10 Sapphira	162
Acts 8:3; 9:1-19; 13–14; 15:36–28:31; 2 Corinthians 11:22-28; 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Saul (Paul)	168
Acts 9:1-19 Ananias	174
Acts 9:36-42 Dorcas	180
Acts 18 Priscilla	186
Acts 14:5-7; 16:1-5; 1 Corinthians 4:15-17; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy	192





Francine Rivers

Francine is a wife, mother, and grandmother living in northern California. She has been writing for adults for more than 30 years.

After becoming a born-again Christian in 1986, she wrote *Redeeming Love* as her statement of faith. Since then she has published numerous books and has won industry acclaim, awards, and reader loyalty. *The Last Sin Eater* won the ECPA Gold Medallion.

The characters in Francine's novels, whether real people from the Bible or fictional contemporary figures, come to life as she creates realistic conversations and background descriptions. She has written the stories of five Bible women in her Lineage of Grace series and is in the process of writing about five men in the Sons of Encouragement series. The story in each book is told from the viewpoint of one main character. And now, for the first time, Francine has used the same approach in this book of children's Bible stories.

Francine says she uses her writing to draw closer to the Lord, that through her work she might worship and praise Jesus for all He has done and is doing in her life.

Shannon Rivers Coibion

Shannon is the daughter of Francine Rivers and a full-time homemaker and homeschooling mom. She lives in northern California with her husband and two children.

Shannon, who wrote the Growing Time sections of this book, grew up in a family that read the Bible together. She was influenced not only by the after-dinner Bible readings but also by the knowledge that her parents got up early each morning to read Scripture and pray. Now Shannon lets her children know that she reads her Bible before arising each morning. And she makes certain that their schooling includes a daily reading from a one-year kids' Bible, followed by a discussion time.



about the illustrator

Pascale Constantin

Born and raised in Montreal, Pascale Constantin is the illustrator of a number of picture books, including *Camilla Chameleon, Raising a Little Stink*, and *Turlututu Rien Ne Va Plus*. She has been nominated four times for Canada's prestigious Governor General's Award for illustration. After spending several years in Barbados, Pascale has returned to live and work in Montreal, Canada.



