

The Interactive Story

We recently visited our 2 ½ year-old grandson in San Francisco. As many grandparents do, we took a couple of small gifts with us. One was an interactive story book with all kinds of buttons on it. Our grandson, Jude, loves books. As we read to him at the end of each section of the book there was a symbol. Each symbol corresponded to a particular button, creating musical sound effects to reinforce the meaning of that part of the story. When we came to a symbol we would point it out to Jude, asking him to push the sound effect button with the same symbol.

Jude felt like he was part of the story so he was eager to experience it again and again. We probably read the book to him 30 times over the weekend. Each time through the book his interest intensified and, because of his personal involvement, he had a greater understanding of the story.

The same could be true for us as we read or listen to Bible passages. If the reading of the Bible is an academic exercise it won't create the same depth of understanding as it would if we were personally engaged in it. Being a casual, distant observer to the stories of the Bible will diminish its influence on our own lives. Nice story, but that is someone else's life. We might think of the drama in the story as some else's problem. As a result, the lessons of the Bible become merely moral advice – for other people. When we hear of a difficult situation, how many of us think, "I'm glad that is not me?" Or perhaps you think, "At least I'm not as bad as that guy."



Look inside the front cover of your Bible and you'll probably see your name inscribed. Your Bible was a gift presented lovingly to you. The lessons in the Bible are lessons appropriate for you. You might experience some of the same issues as the biblical characters. We might not experience them in as dramatic a way as the Biblical characters did, but they still are issues for our life. For example, we don't often have to fight a Goliath but we all have seemingly unsurmountable challenges. By trusting God, we can claim victory over the issue. The Bible tells stories on topics such as worry, faithfulness, anger, anxiety, attitude, gossip, materialism, courage, discernment, patience, perseverance, priorities and scores of others. It provides us God's perspective on how to handle them. How about you? Are any of these issues that you face? The nature of mankind hasn't changed much since the time of Adam and Eve. They are our issues today.

As you read and hear the Gospel, know that it was written to give **you** guidance and has applications for your life. It is not a history book about someone else's problems. Instead, it is a guide for yours. And, it is a call to action. *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (James 1:22).* Read and hear God's word interactively. How does your situation parallel those in the Bible? Perhaps it is God pushing the buttons, hoping you see that the lessons in the Bible are for your life. God is nudging you to listen intently – interactively. In effect, He is saying, "This part is about you." The characters of the Bible face many of the lessons that you do. Jude wanted to hear the story again and again because he saw himself as part of the story. You are, too.

Steps to Better Understanding: Ask yourself these questions: What is the main point of this passage? What can I learn from this passage? What does Jesus require of me today? And then pray about what you have just read.

Scripture: *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).*

Prayer: Heavenly Father. The Bible shows us examples of people who struggled in their faith. It also shows us how you want us to live our lives. We pray for wisdom to understand its application for our lives. Amen.