

The bible as literature series opener

As literature, I simply love the bible. It has some of the best characters that have ever existed. They are usually put in the most bizarre of circumstances by an all-powerful God that is generally not the nicest being. The God of the Old Testament clearly had no intention of straying from Zeus' sentiments when it came to ruling. So, why subject your child to the God of the Old Testament, or the New Testament for that matter? Why discuss the Koran with a freethinking child? Two words: religious literacy. Whether or not you choose to sit in the pews every Sunday with your child, or attend the mosque regularly, young people need to know some of the basic stories in the religious texts of all kind, why people of faith consider them important, and how they fit into the context of other religious viewpoints. In short, to keep your child from making the close-minded assumptions that tend to be made when people know absolutely nothing about the faith/cultural practices of other people. If our goal is to create freethinking young adults and open-minded citizens of the planet, they need all the information they can get! Instead of going line by line through these texts, and certainly as a way of NOT exposing young children to religious ritual without understanding its significance, consider clicking on the Bible as literature posts. As the weeks go on, I'll be reading and analyzing specific parts of the Bible that all Americans should be familiar with.

With religions dwindling emphasis in American society, people will be looking for ever creative ways to convince your child that they are doing something wrong by not going to church or worshiping God steadfastly. This will equip your child with the skills needed to feel confident in their knowledge of the Bible without the added dogma and rituals that come with the faith. I will also (eventually) add other important religious texts.....remember, your job isn't to choose your child's faith; our job as parents is to prepare young people to make that decision for themselves!

So, grab your bible, and read along. My suggestion would be that young people should not be exposed to the actual Bible itself until they are old enough to read and follow the ideas being presented (which varies for each child). With our girls, we take small stories in the bible, describe them, and ask what thoughts they have on the subject. At eight and nine, it's usually about all they care to know. It's also important for you to take some time with the text as well, self-question, explore the bible as literature and not as holy: the view is amazing!

Ultimately, we all have to take the religious literacy of our young ones seriously. Misunderstandings are often the cause of ridicule, scorn and ignorant perceptions, and tragically, violence.

So at some point after age 9, I strongly encourage you to make the Bible available to your freethinking child. Don't forget about the Koran, the Torah, The Tao Te Ching, the writings of Confucius, and more. This can be something that you do once a week as a family, your son can read it alone, your daughter can write in response to a chapter, whatever works best for your family; you will be amazed at the conversations and thoughts that stir in your mind—all without TV!

All that matters is that they have exposure to various viewpoints of faith, and someone to give them truthful advice without trying to convince them that they-or their parents-are wrong for their views.

Next up in the series is **Genesis Chapters 1-4: telling the story of life to young children.** Each Sunday, I'll travel through the Bible and make sense of what can be a very confusing book!