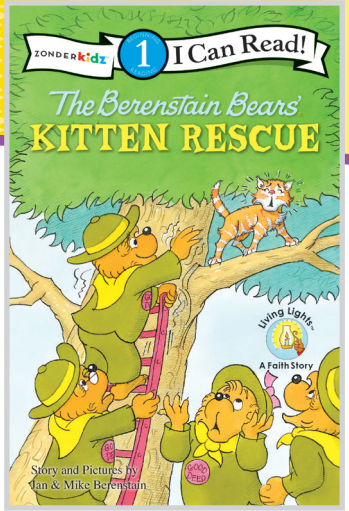

BEGINING 1 READING

The Berenstain Bears' Kitten Rescue

Author and Illustrator: Jan and Mike Berenstain

About the Book

The Good Deed Scouts want to help someone in need. Then they hear a kitten caught in a tree! They try to rescue it. Then several others try: Papa, the fire-bears, the rescue copter, and then Sister Bear. The kitty comes down when it smells food! Everyone cheers and is happy that the kitty is rescued!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the problem that the scouts wanted to solve?
2. Who all tried to help rescue the kitten? What worked in the end?
3. What did the rescue copter try to do?
4. Who did Muffy's owner thank for the rescue?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize part of Psalm 82:4 (NIrV): "Save those who are weak and needy." It is a good thing to be able to help each other and to accept help when it is given. Write the verse on a whiteboard and erase words as you commit the verse to memory.

Print Concepts: Look at page 9. What does each sentence begin with? What does it end with? Sentences are complete thoughts that start with a capital letter and end with some kind of end punctuation. Use a paper plate and either flour or shaving cream. Pick a page from *The Berenstain Bears' Kitten Rescue* and practice each capital letter and then end punctuation. Learn the names of the end punctuation (period, question mark, exclamation mark).

Animal Rescue: Have you seen an animal stuck in a tree before? It does happen, and the scouts wanted to help. What really is the best way to help? Find out so that you are ready if you come across animals that need help. Answer these questions as you read: Why do some cats get stuck? Who is the best person to call? Should I call the fire department? What other kinds of animals have gotten stuck in trees before?

* One resource to answer these questions is "FAQ," Cat in a Tree Emergency Rescue, accessed October 9, 2017, http://www2.catinatreerescue.com/view/faq.cfm.

Balance: Climbing a tree can be fun, but the scouts and Papa Bear had a hard time. The scouts lost their balance! Practice keeping your balance by taping a straight line of masking tape to the floor. Walk on the line without stepping off. Then walk backwards. Then scoot sideways on the line. Try a bear crawl on the line (hands and feet on the line at the same time). Lastly try the hardest of all: a cartwheel with both hands on the line and then both feet landing on the line. This one will probably take a lot of practice! Good balance will help you in many situations!

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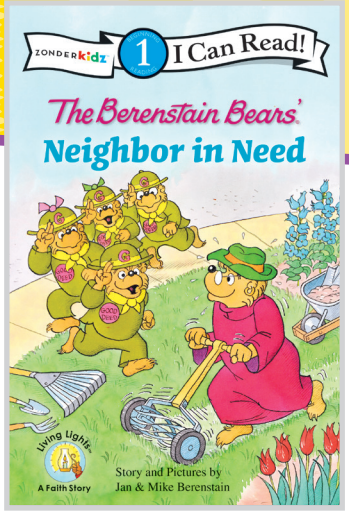

BEGINING 1 READING

The Berenstain Bears' Neighbor in Need

Author and Illustrator: Jan and Mike Berenstain

About the Book

The Good Deed Scouts are looking for good deeds to do. Mrs. Grizzle has them help with mowing and yard work. She had lots more for them to help with as well! They worked long and hard, so Mrs. Grizzle rewarded them with magic tricks. Then she gave them each flowers to take home. Mama pointed out that the Lord blesses anyone who does good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why are the scouts wanting to help Mrs. Grizzle with so many chores? Would you do the same?
2. Who is Daisy and how did she feel about a bath?
3. What were Mrs. Grizzle's good deeds? Did the scouts enjoy her good deeds?
4. How does the story show that the Lord blesses anyone who does good? How were the scouts blessed or rewarded? How was Mrs. Grizzle blessed or rewarded?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize part of 1 Timothy 6:18 (NIrV): "Be rich in doing good things. They must give freely." This is the verse that Scout Fred quotes in the beginning. Being rich means that there is plenty or a lot of something. So if the scouts are to be rich in doing good, then that means that they should do a lot of good things! How do you think they did? How often do you do good things without wanting to get rewarded? Write the verse on a whiteboard and erase words as you commit the verse to memory.

Magic Tricks: Magic tricks are fascinating! They don't seem to make sense! It's not a wonder that the cubs loved Mrs. Grizzle's tricks. Did you know that there are Christian magicians? They use magic tricks to explain truths in the Bible. Google "magic tricks for Bible lessons," and choose a short youtube video. If possible, preview it for age appropriateness. Talk about the trick but also the truth that the magician shared. Do they readers know any tricks?

Good Deeds: The scouts aimed to do a good deed every day. List or count up all the good deeds they did for Mrs. Grizzle. Do you think they enjoyed doing each one? Maybe there were some that were just really hard or that they didn't enjoy. They did them anyway! Brainstorm some good deeds that you could do in your classroom, for the assistants, or for your parents. See if you can complete at least one good deed today! Then aim for one good deed the next day! Make your own "Good Deed" scout badge to wear to remind you to be "rich in doing good things"!

Be Musical: Search for an easy musical instrument to make, like a shaker, castanet, pan flute, or tambourine. To make a shaker, you can use an empty (and smooth) soup can, put rice in it, place a cut off balloon over it, and secure it with a rubber band. To make a castanet, use a strip of cardboard folded in half. Then attach a bottle cap (or perhaps buttons) to each end so that the smooth tops click against each other. Just as Mrs. Grizzle's music made the cubs happy, choose a song to sing with your new musical instruments! Enjoy making music!

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BEGINING 1 READING

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Illustrator: Molly Idle

About the Book

This story is the song *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*. Many specific things are listed, such as the sun and moon, the wind and rain, and you and me. God holds everything in His hands.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to the song lyrics name seven things God has in His hands. Is there anything the class would add?
2. Place these five things mentioned in alphabetical order: brother, wind, lions, sun, flowers. (Provide a list of the ABC's if students need it.)
3. Read Psalm 95:3–5. What do these verses say about God and what is His?
4. Which picture is your favorite? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Job 12:10 (NIrV): "He holds the life of every creature in his hand." God cares about each thing, person, and animal. Remember the beginning of John 3:16? "God so loved the world." Repeat the verse while throwing a ball back and forth. Have readers repeat a phrase after you as you throw the ball.

God Moment: How can it be that God has the whole world in His hands? Look up and talk about this word that describes God: *omnipotent*. It means that God is all-powerful. We aren't all-powerful, so it's hard for us to understand so much power that God can hold the whole world! Read Psalm 47:7–8. Remember that God created the whole world. Come up with a hand motion (or two) to help you remember this truth: "God is omnipotent: all-powerful!" Then say those words with confidence as you do your hand motion. Teach someone the words and motions that you have learned.

Listen: Find *He's God the Whole World in His Hands* online and learn the song. Put motions to the song as you learn it. If you play an instrument use the music at the end of the book and play it with the children.

Types of Songs: This song was originally called a spiritual. These are usually inspirational songs created by African Americans during slavery. The songs reminded them of God's promises and helped them with the hard lives they had. The songs are mostly about God, Bible stories, and freedom. You may know some other spirituals such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Go, Tell It on the Mountain." Find them online and listen to these songs. As you listen, decide if the song is mostly about God, a Bible story (which one?), or freedom.

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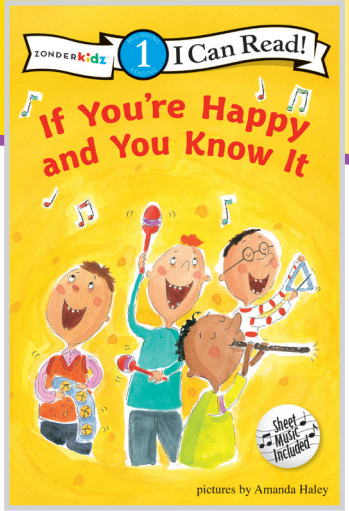

BEGINING READING 1

If You're Happy and You Know It

Illustrator: Amanda Haley

About the Book

This is the lyrics for *If You're Happy and You Know It*. Readers go through several verses and what kinds of things make children happy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at the pictures. What are some things that can make kids happy?
2. The "setting" of a story is when and where something happens. Describe one of the settings that the story shows. According to the clothes and what is happening, could this happen in today's world (or is it from the past or future)?
3. What makes you happy?
4. What are the five senses? Can you give an example of each in the book? Are there any senses not pictured?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Psalm 28:7 (NIrV): "My heart jumps for joy. With my song I praise him." Whom are we to praise? One way to praise God is with singing. Learn this verse as a reminder to sing praises to God! Repeat the verse in various ways—using different inflections, rhythm, or a soft and then loud voice.

Sing: Find this song online and practice singing it. Is the song you heard the same as the one you read? How are they the same or different? Maybe you can find two or three versions to listen to and sing. Then choreograph a dance or act out the song.

Prayer: The last part of the song says that if you are happy, you should thank the Lord. This means that you should take time to pray and tell God what your reasons are for being happy. Brainstorm a list of at least five things that make the class happy. You can probably think of many more than five! Then take some time to pray and thank God for these blessings.

Be Musical!: What makes you happy? Break the class into small groups. Have them write your own verse and teach it to others. Notice in the book that whatever makes kids happy is not actually mentioned in the verse. That part is the illustration! Draw what makes the group happy and then write the verse. Maybe the motion will relate to your picture. For instance, if soccer makes you happy, then your verse might be this: "If you're happy and you know it, kick the ball!" Just kick an imaginary ball!

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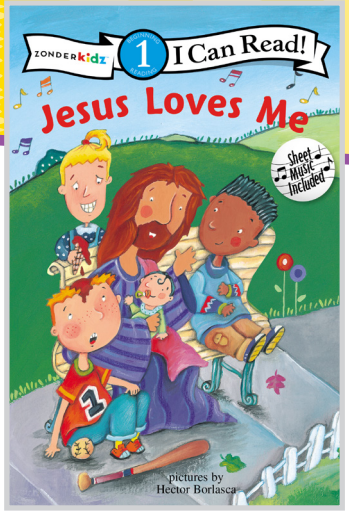

BEGINING READING 1

Jesus Loves Me

Illustrator: Hector Borlasca

About the Book

Jesus loves us. The Bible tells us that He loves children. He helps us. He washes away our sin. He loved us by dying for us and making a way to heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What sentences are repeated throughout Jesus Loves Me?
2. Using the illustrations, point out some ways that Jesus loves us.
3. What is the book with the cross on it called?How do you know it's the Bible?
4. Which illustration is your favorite? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize part of Matthew 19:14 (NIrV): "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me.'" Jesus wanted to spend time with children and interact with them. The next verse says that He blessed them. Use motions to help you remember and memorize this verse.

Jesus Loves Me: You are unique, and Jesus loves you! He wants you to share His love with others. Make a picture to keep and a picture to share. Write "Jesus Loves Me" (or draw a heart instead of "loves"). You can write the words lightly in pencil fi rst. Then use fi nger paint and your fi nger! Then make the second picture by writing and fi ngerprinting "Jesus Loves You." When you give this second picture to a friend, explain the story Jesus Loves Me and the ways that Jesus shows His love to each of us.

Be Musical: At the end of this book is sheet music. It has notes and words on it. This is so an instrument can play the song while someone sings. Have someone play the piano or another instrument, and sing along with it. Show students how the notes correspond to a certain key on the piano and that by reading the notes, we can know what and how to play. Read Psalm 98:4 (NIrV). If readers show an interest, show them how to play a stanza or two and let them try it.

God Is Near: Jesus lived over 2,000 years ago. Although he doesn't walk around with us now, He is alive and does help us. As page 28 says, Jesus died for us, but He also rose from the dead to show that He was stronger than death! He lives in heaven now and prays for us (see Romans 8:34). Play hangman with readers for key words in Isaiah 41:13 (NIrV): "I am the LORD your _____. I take _____ of your _____ _____. I say to you, 'Do not be _____. I will _____ you.'" Send readers home with this verse as an encouragement that no matter what, God is with us and helps us.

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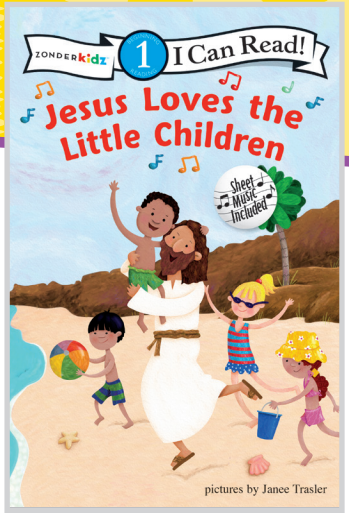

BEGINING READING 1

Jesus Loves the Little Children

Illustrator: Janee Trasler

About the Book

Jesus loves children. They are precious to him. He'll take children by the hand and lead them. Jesus is the Shepherd, the Savior, and a protector. He loves each one!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you see Jesus doing with children?
2. Look at the background of the pictures. What do you see?
3. What is the refrain, the repeated line, of the song?
4. Which child in the story is most like you? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize part of Psalm 127:3 (NIrV): "Children are a gift from the LORD." Children are precious to God! He loves each one and wants to be their forever friend. Repeat the verse while jumping rope—one word or phrase per jump.

Where in the World? The refrain in this book is "Jesus loves the little children of the world." Look at the backgrounds again and notice what countries are mentioned. Print out a map and find these countries. The girl on page 6 could be from **Spain**. Kangaroos are pictured on pages 8–9. Often we associate kangaroos with **Australia**. Page 13 shows the Taj Mahal, which is in **India**. The clock tower on page 17 is Big Ben in **Great Britain**. The pyramids on pages 20–21 could be from **Egypt**. Then **China** and **Peru** are mentioned. After finding these countries, write the refrain across the top of your map. Pray and thank Jesus that he loves each child.

Games: What games do you like to play? What activities do you see throughout the story? Children are shown building sand castles, dancing, climbing trees, picnicking, riding elephants, building snowmen, walking, playing marbles, fishing, playing soccer, and praying. Games help kids make friends and have fun together. Learn about a variety of children's games from around the world and choose one to play.

Be Musical: At the end of this story is sheet music. It has notes and words on it. This is so an instrument can play the song while someone sings. Make your own instrument! Then sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" with it. Read Psalm 98:4 (NIrV) and thank God for music. Either search for a homemade instrument that appeals to your reader, or make a simple shaker out of a toilet paper roll, several layers of covering (like foil), and rubber bands. Fill it with dried beans or small rocks. Alternately, you can decorate and fill a small water bottle. Tape the lid shut to avoid any accidents.

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SHARED My First READING

Barnabas Goes Swimming

Author and Illustrator: Royden Lepp

About the Book

Barnabas and Russell want to swim. They invite more friends, but they are busy. They go to the brook anyway. At the water's edge, Gary Gator is sad and wants to swim too. He is happy to join Barnabas and Russell! Then the other friends show up after all.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are Peter Pig and Prickly Paul too busy doing?
2. Why wasn't Gary Gator swimming when Barnabas and Russell found him?
3. How would you feel if your friends were too busy to join you in playing?
4. What would you like to do most: play in the mud, take a nap, swim, or something else? Do you like to invite friends to join you?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Psalm 118:24 (NIrV): "Let us be joyful today and be glad." Repeat the verse in various ways—using different inflections, rhythm, or a soft and then loud voice. Try different emotions too—try to say it in a sad voice; a joyful voice; an angry voice. Then see if readers can say it on their own.

Safe Swimming: What are some rules for when you go swimming? Gary Gator was obeying one. What did he say about swimming alone? Swimming can be a lot of fun but only if certain rules are followed. Research five rules that are important to obey when swimming in a pool. For instance, only swim when an adult is with you. Write them out on a poster (dictate them or print and cut out text) and then draw pictures next to each one to help you remember them.

Explore Emotions: How do you think Barnabas and Russell felt when their friends were too busy to play? How did they react? Did they yell, scream, or whine? They didn't seem to let it bother them too much. Instead they were sorry that their friends were too busy. What are some appropriate ways you can react when disappointed? What can you say? Create some word bubbles on popsicle sticks with phrases to use when you are disappointed: "Maybe next time!" or "I'm sorry you can't come!" or "I can wait for you!" or "Can I join you?" Focus on being a good friend.

Be a Friend: Sometimes it can be hard to ask friends to play. What if they say no? What if no one wants to be friends? But what if they say yes, and you find a new friend? Sometimes the risk is worth it. It also gets easier if you practice asking friends to play. Role play! Take turns acting out a time when you might ask a friend to play. If the pretend friend says no, then talk about possible reasons for this (too busy, doesn't want to play what you asked about, etc.). Also remember what kind of a friend you want to be to those around you.

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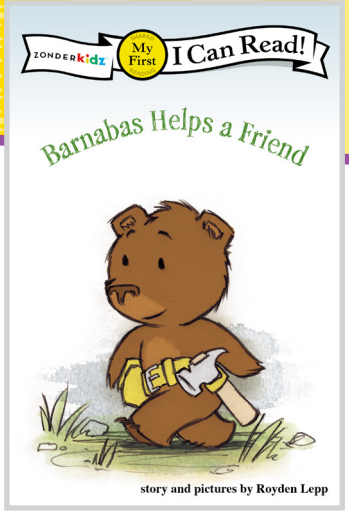

SHARED My First READING

Barnabas Helps a Friend

Author and Illustrator: Royden Lepp

About the Book

A storm washed across Brookdale Wood. Barnabas went to check on his friends. He and Russell found that Mr. Beaver's house had a tree across it! They needed to help him. It was too big and hard for just the three of them. Everyone else said they were too busy to help. But when they returned to help Mr. Beaver, all the friends were there! All together they were able to help Mr. Beaver work on his house.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you feel about storms (lightning, wind, rain)? What do you do if storms scare you?
2. Who is Barnabas's best friend?
3. Why was Mr. Beaver sad? What was he going to do about his situation?
4. Do you think it's important to have friends? How can you help your friends?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize all or part of Proverbs 17:17 (NIrV): "A friend loves at all times. They are there to help when trouble comes." Do you feel loved when someone helps you? When we are in trouble, it can be a sad and lonely time. Repeat the verse while throwing a ball back and forth. Have readers repeat a phrase after you as you throw the ball. Commit the verse to memory.

Friendship: Think about what it means to be a friend. Do you think friends should help each other? Sometimes this means looking out for others first. Sometimes you need to check in with your friends and ask them if they need help. Google "friends help friends Christian song for kids" and choose one that readers can relate to the story. Practice the song and perform it for a class or parents (at pickup), if possible.

Build It: Build a frame out of popsicle sticks or small sticks. Think about Barnabas and his friends helping Mr. Beaver rebuild his house. Use glue, thin twine, yarn, or hot glue (with supervision) to secure the frame. On paper that will fit in the frame, write out what Barnabas learns: "Friends help friends!" Decorate it, color it, and then secure it to the frame. Take it home to hang in your room.

Be Strong! Look at all the ways Barnabas and his friends helped Mr. Beaver. Does it look like hard work? Did they need to be strong? Sometimes helping friends means a lot of hard work! It helps to be fit and strong. Set up a rotation for readers to work on their muscles. (Suggestions: jumping jacks; lift a pile of books ten times; if outside, secure a rope to a sturdy tree and pull; if outside, play tug-of-war; do sit-ups) If possible, set up a few rotations where partners work together: stand back-to-back and pass a book or a ball from one person to the other; throw a ball back and forth; gently kick a ball back and forth.

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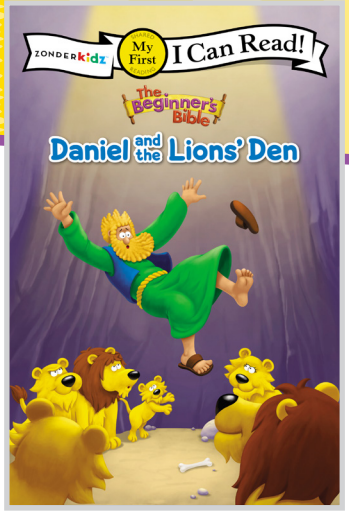

SHARED My First READING

Daniel and the Lions' Den

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Daniel loved God and prayed to Him every day. The king loved Daniel too. Some men tricked the king into making a law ordering people to pray only to the king. Daniel could not obey this law. He prayed only to God. The punishment for this was to be thrown into the hungry lions' den. The king was sad. Daniel prayed for God's help in the lions' den. He sent an angel! The lions did not hurt Daniel. The king was so happy that he told all his people about Daniel's great God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is Daniel? Who liked him? Who did not like him? Why did these men not like him?
2. If you were Daniel, what would you have done when you were told that you could only pray to the king and not God? Daniel was brave and knew that God was in charge.
3. Why did the king sign the law that said people should only pray to him? (See pages 10–11.)
4. Who helped Daniel when he was in the lions' den? (See pages 26–27.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Daniel was a brave man because he knew that God is great. He obeyed God and did not pray to anyone else. So he asked for help even when he faced lions. Memorize Daniel 6:22 (NIrV) to remember God's care of Daniel: "My God has sent his angel. And his angel shut the mouths of the lions. They haven't hurt me at all." Place phrases on index cards, mix them up, and have readers place them in the correct order. For an added challenge take one index card away, and have readers fill in the missing one from memory.

Spotlight on Animals: Lions are hungry, big animals. Was it usual or unusual for lions to leave Daniel alone? Research how much lions eat. See what else you can find out about lions. Create an idea web of words or pictures (place the word or a picture of a lion in the middle and then place spokes coming from "lion" to each piece of information). Was it a miracle that the lions' mouths were shut? Remember that Daniel loved God, he prayed for God's help, and then God sent an angel to help Daniel.

Pray for Leaders: It is important to obey our leaders as they work to keep order, keep people safe, and make important decisions. Daniel respected those in authority. But when the king said he could not pray to God, Daniel knew he had to make a choice. First he had to obey God. Who leads your country? Learn the names and positions of the president, vice president, and maybe a local leader. If possible, pull up pictures of these leaders to show readers. The Bible says that God puts these leaders over us. Take a moment and pray for your leaders and government. Pray that they will follow God. Read Colossians 1:9 and explain it to readers. You may insert their names and pray this Scripture with readers: "Jesus, please fill _____ with the knowledge of what God wants. We pray that God will give _____ the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. Amen."

Print Concepts: God does some amazing things. Daniel knows that God can do anything. The king learns that God can save and that God is great. Ask readers what this mark is: ! (exclamation mark) Read these sentences from the story: "God's angel helped me with the lions!" (page 30) "The king was so happy!" (page 31) Discuss these and other sentences that show emotions such as amazement, excitement, or relief. Show readers how these sentences are to be read correctly with emotion. Then show readers the incorrect way to read such sentences (with a flat voice). Encourage readers to watch for these exclamation marks and read them with the correct emotion. As an added emphasis, draw a big exclamation mark on a paper. Then fill it with words or emoticons so readers remember to read with emotion.

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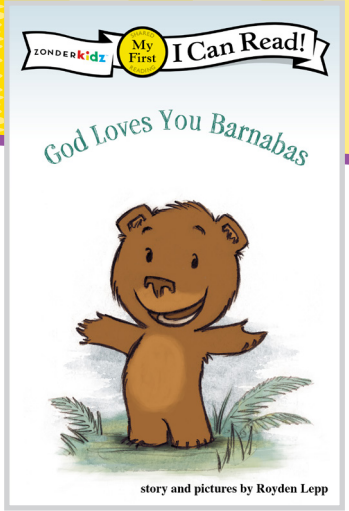

SHARED My First READING

God Loves You Barnabas

Author and Illustrator: Royden Lepp

About the Book

Barnabas visits his friends in Brookdale Wood. Each one is very good at something. He is impressed! Then he tells Russell that he is not good at anything. Russell and his other friends encourage Barnabas. God cares about our hearts, and Barnabas has a kind heart!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Name two of Barnabas's friends and what they are good at.
2. What is a compliment? Find the compliments in the story and read them again.
3. Look at page 23. How is Barnabas feeling? Why do you think he was feeling this way?
4. How do Barnabas's friends make him feel better in the end?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize 1 Corinthians 12:4 (NIrV): "There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given to believers by the same Spirit." Repeat the verse as different animals. Use a fish voice (your finger jostles your lips as you talk), hiss like a snake on the "s" sounds, or jump like a kangaroo as you repeat the verse. Talk about what the verse means. What are some gifts or special abilities that you and your friends have? How can these gifts be used to show others God's love?

Fruit of the Spirit: What was the important lesson that Barnabas learned? God cares what is in our hearts! He wants us to show love, joy, and peace. We need to work on being patient, kind, and good. We can be faithful and gentle. We can be in control of ourselves. (See and read Galatians 5:22–23.) It doesn't matter *what* we do, but *how* we do everything! To remember that we want to have this fruit of the Spirit in our hearts, make this craft together. Draw and cut out two large hearts. Staple or tape just the bottom halves together to make a pocket. Then on strips of paper or pictures of fruit, write out an attribute (fruit of the spirit) on each strip/fruit (love, joy, peace, etc.). As you talk about how you can have these in your life, place each one inside the heart. On the outside of the heart write: "God cares what is in our hearts!"

Wow!: Review the basics of writing a letter: greeting (Dear _____,), body (write what you want to tell the reader), closing (Sincerely,), and Signature (your name). Choose someone to compliment and write them a letter. If necessary have the readers dictate their letters as you write. Have the children decorate their letters. Then give the letter to the person yourself or ask a parent to mail it for you.

Print Concepts: Does your classroom have a letter of the week this week? If so, point out all the words in *God Loves You Barnabas* that start with the letter of the week. Write out the uppercase and lowercase letters across the top of a lined paper. Then use the colors of the rainbow to write out two more lines of the letter (one uppercase, one lowercase line).

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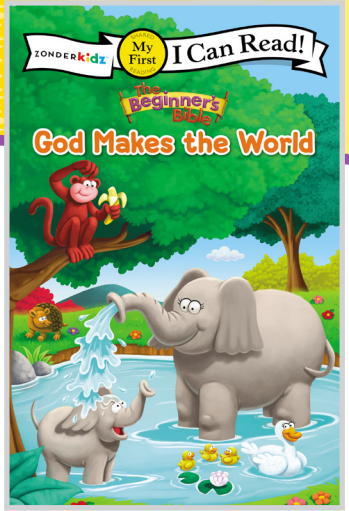

SHARED My First READING

God Makes the World

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

In seven days, God created the whole world. Adam and Eve were happy. They had one rule to obey. A snake (who was really Satan) spoke to them and said it was alright to not obey the rule. Then they had to leave the garden because they had sinned. They were sad but God still loved them. One day He would send Jesus to take away all sin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How many days did God use to create the world? What is your favorite day/picture in this story? Why?
2. What was the garden called where God placed Adam and Eve? Did they stay there forever?What happened?
3. Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. Does this mean that God did not love them anymore?What was God's plan?
4. God gives us rules to obey to keep us safe for our own good. What was the one rule God gave Adam and Eve? What happened?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Genesis 1:31 (NIrV): "God saw everything he had made. And it was very good." Repeat the verse while throwing a ball back and forth. Have readers repeat a phrase after you, as you throw the ball.

Creation: List and illustrate the seven days of Creation. Create a memory game with numbers 1–7 on cards and then correlating pictures or words for each day. Match the numbers and pictures/words!

Jesus Saves: Adam and Eve disobeyed God. They were sorry they hadn't listened. Have you done things you know you shouldn't have done? How do you feel afterwards? We should feel sad and sorry. We can talk to God and tell Him that we are sorry. The Bible tells us that He will forgive us, if we ask. First John 1:9 (NIrV) says this: "But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure." Talk about this verse with readers and explain the last page of Adam and Eve in the Garden again (page 32). If they do not know Jesus, then tell them how they can know Him and invite Him into their lives: "Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner because I have disobeyed You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sin too. You rose from the dead so that I can live. Please come into my life. I want to live for You each day. Amen." Be sure that parents know and can follow up with their child, if they did pray this prayer.

Nature Walk: Go on a nature walk and talk about all that you see that God created. Collect some samples, if appropriate (a small stick, a blade of grass, a feather, a leaf, a picture of the sun). End your time by praying to thank God for His creation.

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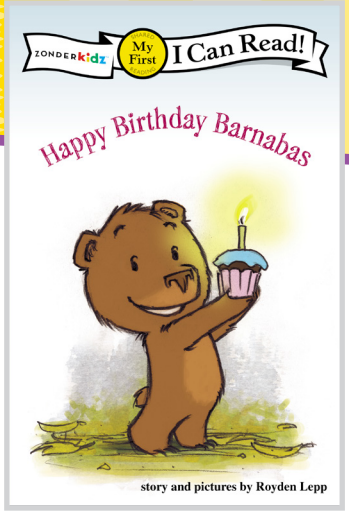

SHARED My First READING

Happy Birthday Barnabas

Author and Illustrator: Royden Lepp

About the Book

It is Barnabas Bear's birthday! His friend Russell brings him a treat, and they sit down outside to enjoy a cup of tea together. Then many friends pass by, carrying a variety of things and don't see Russell. He wonders where everyone is going, so he follows them to the farm. Then he is surprised that it is all for his birthday party!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What items were Barnabas's friends carrying to the farm? Explain how each item was used to make Barnabas's birthday party special.
2. Do you think Russell was in on the surprise?If so, what was his role? If not, then explain how his visiting with Barnabas helped both the party planners and Barnabas.
3. Have you had a birthday surprise before? If so, what was the surprise? If not, then what would you like to be surprised with for your birthday?
4. Would you rather help plan a surprise or be the person surprised? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have students memorize the first part of Deuteronomy 32:43 (You nations, be full of joy. Be joyful together with God's people.), the key verse that this story illustrates. What is joy? What makes you feel joyful? Add motions when each reader says the verse!

Act It Out: Each of Barnabas's friends helped with one part to create a fun, special party. In small groups, have students perform a skit about a surprise that one of them has experienced. If possible each student is to take one part—simple costumes, the story, the set.

Print Concepts: Which one character speaks most of the time? What kind of a sentence does he usually speak in the story (declarative—a tell me about sentence, interrogative—a question, imperative—a command, or exclamatory—an excited sentence)? Have students create a poster with five questions that they would like to ask God. Illustrate these as well!.

Puzzle It Out: By the end of the story, students may have expected a surprise birthday party being put together. They know it is Barnabas's birthday, and then see a ladder, crayons, balloons, and cupcakes. Have students think of an activity. As a group come up with five clues about what the activity might be. See if a friend or another reading group can solve the little mystery. Then have small groups do the same activity on their own. Have them write down or dictate, if they are prereaders, their five clues about the activity. Have groups pair up to guess the secret activity just by the clues! Trade partners several times and continue investigating!

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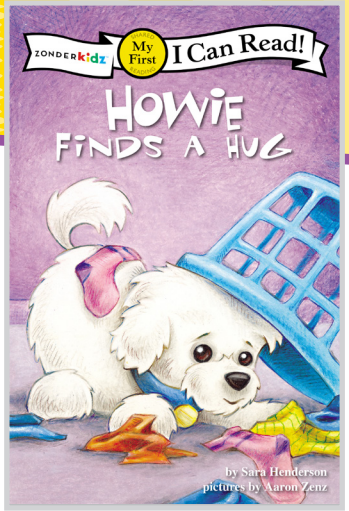

SHARED My First READING

Howie Finds a Hug

Author and Illustrator: Sara Henderson, Aaron Zenz

About the Book

Howie needs a hug, but each member of his family is busy with various activities. After he visits each one, he heads back to his bed, sad. All of a sudden his whole family shows up for a big family hug! Howie is happy and realizes that a family is a hug from God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Howie is pictured on page ten. He finds out that Emma is too busy for a hug. How does he feel? How can you tell?
2. Name two family members. What were they too busy doing? Are you too busy when your pet or sibling wants to play?
3. Howie wants a hug. Each person thinks he wants to play. Look at the pictures. What does Howie take from each person to the next one?What can you tell about Howie since he visits each family member?
4. First John 4:7—Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God—is the verse that this story helps us understand. God can't actually hug us. How does this story show us God's love? How does God show you His love?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have students memorize the first part of 1 John 4:7 (Dear friends, let us love one another.), the key verse that this story illustrates. As a group talk about people that you love. What else do you love?

Explore Emotions: Howie felt sad when everyone was busy. At the end though, he was happy when the family hugged him. Have students draw or create a picture of something that makes them sad. Then have them draw a picture of something that makes them happy! Have the readers write or dictate one or two words that tell what the picture shows. Share the pictures and talk about being happy and sad.

Connect with Math: Students are to take a survey of their classmates. What shows them God's love most: helping a sibling, snuggling with their pet, doing something fun with their mom or dad, or presents. Tell them they can only choose one thing! Then instruct them how to make tally marks in boxes or how to create a bar graph to show the results.

Imagine: Students may write or dictate a letter to Howie or draw a picture for him about what he can try next time he wants a hug from his family. Have the readers add a picture to the letter, showing Howie just what the letter means.

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Howie Goes Shopping

Author: Sara Henderson

Illustrator: Aaron Zenz

About the Book

Howie the puppy hides in the car when Emma and Mother go shopping. Howie runs into the store and makes a big mess when he runs around the store.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is going to the store to shop?
2. Name three things Howie sees at the store.
3. Who finally catches Howie? Finish this sentence she says to Howie: "Howie, you made a _____."
4. Who cleans up the mess Howie made in the store?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize the first part of Ephesians 4:32 (NIrV): "Be kind and tender to one another." God wants us to love and forgive people. He loves and forgives us when we are good and when we are not so good! Repeat the verse while throwing a ball back and forth. Have readers repeat a phrase after you as you throw the ball.

Let's Go Shopping: Talk about different kinds of stores people can go to. Talk about the types of things you can buy at each store. Everything we have comes from God—he provides us with what we need. Have your readers list five things they want to buy at a grocery store. Talk about how each thing is from God. Now name some things that God has given us that cannot be gotten at a store. If you do not get them from a store, where do you get these things? Write this "shopping list" on a piece of chart paper or a chalkboard. Talk about where these things come from: love, happiness, hugs, laughs, joy, forgiveness, kindness.

Helping People Out: People at the store help Howie and Emma clean up the big mess in the store. How can you help other people clean up? Is there a table in the classroom that needs to be straightened out? Do the dishes need to be washed at home? Should you clean your bedroom today? Help someone out and do it with a smile on your face.

Words With -ING: The word shopping ends with -ing. Find more words in Howie Goes Shopping that end with -ing (hiding, stopping, dropping, popping). Words that end with -ing show action! Use those words in new sentences. Now make a list of more words that end with -ing. How many can your readers come up with? Set a goal ... 5? 10? Choose 5 of the -ing words and have the readers act them out—hopping? Writing? Reading? Clapping?

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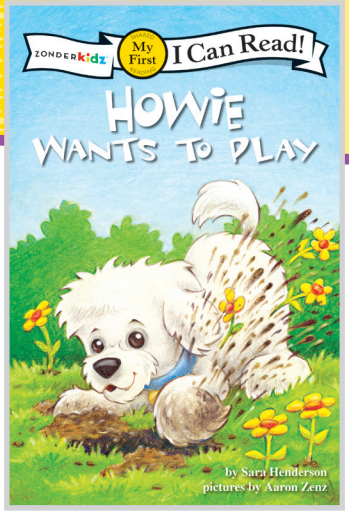

SHARED My First READING

Howie Wants to Play

Author: Sara Henderson
Illustrator: Aaron Zenz

About the Book

It is time for Howie to wake up and play. But Howie makes a mess everywhere he plays. Emma must find Howie, clean him up, and play with Howie.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How many people are in Howie's family? Name them.
2. Name four places Howie plays and makes a mess.
3. Why doesn't Emma want Howie to go into the house after he plays in the garden? How does Emma fix her problem?
4. If you had a dog, where would you take your dog to play?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize part of Psalm 118:24: "This is the day the Lord has made." Clap as you say each word. Start slow as you clap and say each word. Speed up the clapping and the reciting as the readers learn the verse. Then talk about special days. What makes a day special? What is the most special day you can think of? Draw a picture of your most special day. Write at the bottom of the picture: "This is the day the Lord has made!"

Family Fun: Talk about the people in your family that live at your house. (Howie has Mother, Dad, Brother, Sister, and Emma.) How many people live there? Is there a room that is the favorite place for the family to gather and spend time? Do people like to hang out in the kitchen? The living room or even the backyard? What makes that place special for your family and friends? Do you watch TV, play games, eat meals and snacks, talk?

Having a Pet: Talk about having pets. First talk about Howie and Emma. What do you know about them? Howie is Emma's puppy. Howie likes to run and play. Howie sometimes gets dirty. It is Emma's job to play with Howie. She also must clean up after Howie. Sometimes having a pet can be a challenge! Now list some animals that other people have as pets (dogs, cats, birds, fish, snakes, rabbits, hamsters). Talk about the responsibilities a person with a pet has every day (feeding, watering, playing, cleaning up, caring/petting/loving). What are some unusual pets some people have? When God made the world he gave Adam and Eve a big job—name the animals and the take care of them! How can we do that today?

Time to Work/Time to Play: There are right times to work and right times to play. Children work at school. They have lots of things to learn like reading, math, and writing. Children play at school too. They have recess and break time. Make a T-chart on chart paper or a chalkboard. Make one column "Play" and one column "Work". Under each title, write down ways that your readers work and play. Which do they like better? Why? Choose one thing to work on for ten minutes and one thing to play for ten minutes.

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Howie's Tea Party

Author and Illustrator: Sara Henderson, Aaron Zenz

About the Book

Emma pretends to have a tea party. She invites Howie to join her. She puts a hat on Howie and calls him Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown doesn't act the way Emma thinks she should. Then Emma remembers that God made puppies to run and play.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is Emma pretending? Who is Mrs. Brown?
2. List the different things Mrs. Brown does that are not right for a tea party (or have readers point to the pages that show these behaviors). See pages 14, 17, 18, 20, and 27.
3. Explain what Emma remembers in the end (see pages 31–32). How has God made you special?
4. Do you think you would have reacted as Emma did when Howie just wanted to be a puppy?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize 1 Corinthians 7:7 (NIrV): "You each have your own gift from God. One has this gift. Another has that." The story illustrates this verse. Discuss with readers what this verse means and what readers are good at. Then put each word or short phrase on index cards. Shuffle them and have readers organize the verse in order for practice.

Explore Emotions: It can be hard when things do not go as planned. Ask readers how Emma seems to feel when Howie licks the food (page 18) and when he runs around (page 22). Does she feel happy, excited, or frustrated? Discuss with readers what they do when they feel frustrated. What does Emma realize about Howie (see page 31 when she realizes that God made puppies to run and play)? Remembering that Howie is a puppy helps Emma. When we feel frustrated, we can step away for a minute to calm down, go get a snack, ask an adult for help, or remember a verse that we have learned. Have students practice these strategies (role-play).

Mind Your Manners: Discuss manners with readers, what are manners? What manners does Emma think Mrs. Brown should use? What manners do your parents remind you of at dinner? Have a pretend (or real!) tea party with readers and have them practice these fun, specific tea party manners: (1) pinkie's up!, (2) stir the tea gently without hitting the side of the cup, (3) sit with elbows off the table, (4) always pass items right to left and always ask a neighbor for any items you cannot reach, and (5) enjoy your tea.

*Victoria Hudgins, "Tea Party Manners for Kids," A Subtle Revelry, http://asubtlerevelry.com/how-to-teach-tea-party-manners-to-kids/.

I'm Sorry!: Emma realized that she had made Howie sad. What had she done? How did she make it up to Howie? Saying you're sorry can be hard. What do you think would have happened if Emma hadn't apologized? Help readers visualize and practice apologizing. Google "I'm Sorry Rhyme for Kids" and choose a fitting rhyme. Help readers realize that the reason we apologize is so that we can be friends again.

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BEGINING READING 1

Pirate in Training

Author and Illustrator: Karen Poth, VeggieTales

About the Book

The pirates are tired of playing all day. Then Junior knocks on their door and wants to be a pirate in training. He doesn't want to go to school. It's too much work. The pirates tell him that being a pirate is hard work too. To be a good pirate Junior needs to do well in school first! He also might discover something else he'd rather do than being a pirate. Junior thinks and then decides that maybe school is a good idea!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who did the pirates think was at their door?Who was it really?
2. Why did Junior want to be a pirate?
3. Larry said that being a pirate is hard work. For what do they use their learning?
4. What did Junior decide to do? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Proverbs 13:4 (NIrV): "People who refuse to work want things and get nothing. But the desires of people who work hard are completely satisfied." The book of Proverbs was written by the very wise King Solomon. He knew a lot about life and making good choices. Why is working hard a good choice? Work on memorizing the verse by writing out the verse in phrases on index cards. Then shuffle them and have readers organize them in order. Do this several times, taking turns, until readers can say the verse from memory.

Dream Job: What would you like to be someday? What are you good at? What do you like to learn about? Fill in the blank from the story: "To be a good _____, you must go to school." Think about this job and what you can't do yet. Make a list titled "What I Still Need to Learn at School." It might also help to have a parent, teacher, helper, or aide tell you more about your dream job. As a resource, you could watch one of the YouTube videos from the list at Kids.gov.

* "Government Jobs Lesson Plan," Kids.gov, accessed July 17, 2017, https://kids.usa.gov/teachers/lesson-plans/jobs/government-jobs/index.shtml.

Print Concepts: Words on a page tell us what to say and how to say it. What do you notice about these examples from Pirate in Training: "KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! . . . The pirates LOVED lunch. . . . Being a pirate IS a lot of work. . . . Or a pirate with a BIG hat and a rope! Or maybe even a SPACEMAN flying through space!" Certain words are all capitalized. How should these be read? Practice reading these with emotion.

Explore Emotions: At first the pirates imagine who is knocking. They come up with different, exciting ideas. How do they feel when it is none of those; it is Junior instead? Then Junior realizes that the pirates don't think he should be a pirate but should stay in school. How might he have felt at first? Each character might have felt disappointed. Have you ever felt disappointed? Do you recover quickly and move on, just as the pirates and Junior did? Describe a time that you felt disappointed and what you then did. If you have a hard time finding your smile after being disappointed, you can try drawing a picture of your feelings, talk to a parent, or play "I Spy."

* For further coping ideas, try "5 Tips to Help Kids Handle Disappointment," Quick and Dirty Tips, accessed July 17, 2017, http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/parenting/school-age/5-tips-to-help-kids-handle-disappointment.

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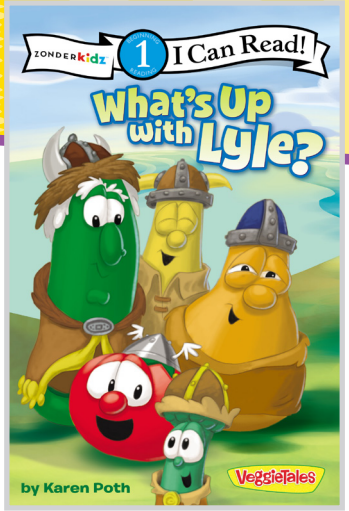

BEGINING READING 1

What's Up with Lyle?

Author and Illustrator: Karen Poth, VeggieTales

About the Book

An unusual group of Vikings lived on Noble Island. Ugalee, a mean Viking, wanted the nicer Vikings to help him. They wanted to go to the fair instead. This made Ugalee mad. Lyle joined those going to the fair. He liked to knit rather than sail or fish like the others. They laughed at him. When they wanted to go home after the fair, there was a big problem. Ugalee had ruined their boat. Lyle quickly fixed the sails with his knitting. He saved the day!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Before reading the story,** ask readers to look at the title, the front cover, and the back cover. Who is Lyle? Predict what you think the story will be about. What kind of a lesson will they learn?
2. Name two things you learned about Vikings.
3. Who is Ugalee? Ugalee and Lyle taught lessons through their actions. Which was a better lesson?
4. Who are you most like in this story? How?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Ephesians 4:2 (NIrV): "Don't be proud at all. Be completely gentle. Be patient. Put up with one another in love." How does this verse apply to What's Up with Lyle? Who had to put up with whom in love? Practice memorizing the verse by putting motions to key words and repeating the verse.

Learn a Skill: Lyle had learned a useful and good skill: knitting! What skills have you learned? Readers can tell about a skill they have learned, such as making friendship bracelets, cracking an egg, or drawing a cat. If possible, they can teach other readers. If time permits, Google "finger knitting for kids" and learn how to finger knit together! God often uses your skills, talents, and experiences we have in life, so don't be shy about learning something new!

Be a Friend: Who are examples of good friends in the story? Who was not a good friend? What did the Vikings do when they saw Lyle knitting? Why did they laugh? (See page 30.) It can be hard to get along with people who are different. It's not nice to laugh or be mean though. What are some better options for getting along? Ask when you want to use something rather than just taking it from them. Ask a friend to play with you at recess. Introduce yourself and ask their name. A good rule to follow is one from the Bible—treat others the way you want to be treated! Draw a reader's hand on a piece of paper. Title it "Be a Good Friend!" and write ways to be a good friend on each finger.

Vikings: Who were the Vikings? The story tells you some details, like they lived long ago in a faraway place. They were sailors and rode in big ships. They were also explorers and boat builders. Read through ten facts for kids about Vikings from the link given.* If time permits, color and/or build a simple Viking ship from the free Crayola resource.** Encourage readers to write the memory verse on the side of the ship as a reminder of *What's Up with Lyle?*

* "10 Facts about the Vikings," National Geographic Kids, accessed July 18, 2017, https://www.natgeokids.com/au/discover/history/general-history/10-facts-about-the-vikings/.

** "Viking Ship," Crayola, accessed July 18, 2017, http://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/viking-ship-coloring-page/.

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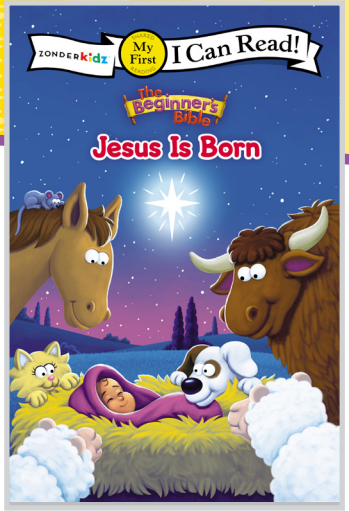

SHARED My First READING

Jesus Is Born

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Angels told Mary that she would have a special baby named Jesus. Mary and Joseph were told that Jesus was God's Son. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Shepherds and wise men came to visit Him. The king named Herod heard about this baby king. He was angry and wanted to kill Jesus. So Mary and Joseph took Jesus far away until it was safe to go back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did the first angel tell Mary about what God was going to do? (See pages 7–9.) Who did the angel say that the baby boy was?
2. Look at pages 6–7: How did Mary feel when she first saw an angel? Once they started talking, how do you think Mary felt?
3. Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of Jesus? (See page 4.)
4. We see that King Herod was a mean king. What did he want to do? (See page 23.) Why did he want to do something so mean? (See page 27.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: The focus passage for this story is Luke 2:8–11 (NIrV): "There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.'' For younger children, focus on and memorize the last two sentences. Put motions to the phrases or words to help readers remember the verses. Discuss why the shepherds would have been terrified. How could this good news be for all the people? Does this include you and me?

Look Into It: The first people to hear of Jesus' birth were shepherds. As far as we know, they were Jesus' first visitors. This is interesting since later Jesus was called the Good Shepherd (see John 10:11). What is a shepherd's job? Why do you think Jesus is called our Good Shepherd? (For example: He lays his life down for His sheep; He protects; He brings His sheep to food and water.) Research and find out more about shepherds!

Celebrate: Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Read the lyrics for "Silent Night" and sing one of the verses. How does it compare to the story you read?

Map Skills: Look at or label a map printout and show key places to better understand the setting (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Egypt). The trip from Bethlehem to Egypt would have probably been 100–200 miles. This would have taken a long time without cars or planes! Apply this understanding to readers' lives: Sometimes God asks us to move or to do something that may be hard. Why did God tell Joseph to take Jesus far away? (See pages 28 and 31.) Take a moment and thank God for loving you and keeping you safe.

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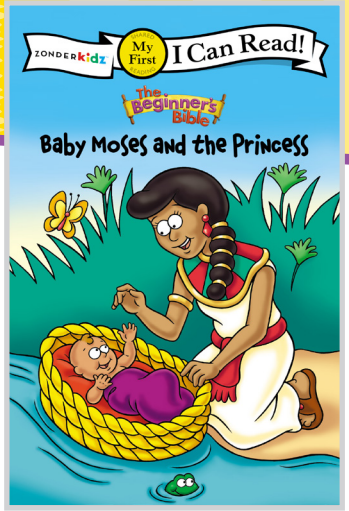

SHARED My First READING

Baby Moses and the Princess

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Miriam and her family lived in a country with a mean king. He wanted all baby boys taken away. This meant Miriam's brother, Baby Moses, too. Miriam's mom wanted to keep Moses safe. She made a basket and put Moses in it in the river. The princess saw him. She wanted to keep him. Miriam knew that someone had to take care of the baby! She told the princess that her mom could take care of him until he was older. God heard their prayers and kept Moses safe!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Put these four parts of the story in order: (1) The princess finds Moses in his basket. (2) Moses goes to live at the palace. (3) Miriam tells the princess that her mom can care for Moses. (4) Moses floats in the river. (Write these four parts on index cards so readers can manipulate the four parts. For an extra challenge, add more parts for readers to place in the correct sequence.)
2. How did Moses' mother decide to keep Moses safe? What did she make? Where did she put Moses?
3. Point of View: This story is told from Miriam's point of view. This means we see what happens through her eyes. What would the story be like if it were told from the princess's point of view?Would she know that Moses was actually in Miriam's family?
4. Are there words in the story that you don't understand? (For instance, "reeds" on page 18.) What are some other words for "happy" on page 29? (Perhaps excited, relieved, thrilled.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Were Miriam and her family afraid sometimes? On pages 19 and 26 what did Miriam do? She trusted and prayed that God would keep Moses safe. Memorize Psalm 56:3 (NIrV): "When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." Use a white board to practice the verse. Write it out. Then erase one word at a time until readers can say it on their own.

Standing on God's Promises: Make a booklet titled "God Is Near Me." Use blank paper, folded in half. Decorate with stickers, markers, or crayons. On at least one page, write or draw ways that you know God is watching over you. Be sure to leave some blank pages! You can keep your eyes open for more answers to prayer or God-moments and add them in the next days, months, or years. In Psalm 105:5 we are encouraged to remember the good things He has done!

Act It Out: What would it have been like to have been in Miriam's shoes? Have readers act out the story. They can act as you reread the story, or they can act and speak. Add props, if available.

Using Technology: Provide pairs of readers with iPads, digital cameras, or another device with which they can take pictures. Have them choose five key parts to the story of Moses (for example: basket, sister, princess, prayer, baby, etc.). Then have them find items that correlate to these key parts and take pictures of those items. Next have children share their pictures with another team.

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SHARED My First READING

David and the Giant

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Goliath the giant wanted to fight King Saul's army. The army did not want to fight Goliath because they were afraid. Young David came to bring his older brothers food and saw Goliath. He said that he would fight Goliath with God's help! He used stones and his slingshot and killed Goliath. David was a hero, but he knew God had helped him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. David differed quite a lot from the soldiers in King Saul's army. Talk about how the soldiers and David felt about Goliath (see pages 4 and 11). Talk about their difference in ages. Talk about the tools which they used to fight (armor, sword, etc. and a slingshot). Did David or King Saul's soldiers rely on God?
2. What did David think about wearing armor to fight Goliath? Why did he not want to wear it?
3. Which person won the fight, David or Goliath?Does David say that he did it all by himself?
4. What would you have done if you were David?What do you think of the soldiers and of David?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: After David was grown up, he wrote many of the psalms (songs or poems) that we have in the Bible. He had many situations in which he would need to trust God. When he was young, David learned that he could rely on God. Have readers memorize Psalm 56:3 (NIrV): "When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." These are David's words! Ask God to help readers remember this verse when they are in hard times.

Be Musical: Google "David and Goliath kids' songs" or "Psalm 56:3 songs for kids." Choose one to listen to and learn with your reader.

Measure Me: First Samuel 17 describes Goliath, his armor, and his weapons. He was 9 feet 9 inches tall. Use measuring tape and chalk or masking tape to measure and mark Goliath's height. Then measure one or two readers for comparison. We also learn that the tip of Goliath's spear was about fifteen pounds. Weigh out fifteen pounds of books and have students try carrying the stack for a minute each. Then discuss if height and strength mean sure success. David was the one to succeed because he had God on his side.

Practice, Practice: David was probably not always perfect with a slingshot. We are told that he probably used a slingshot to shoot animals who wanted to harm his sheep. Discuss this: How much do you think he practiced? Are you learning something now that needs practice? Then practice throwing a ball to each other. Alternately, readers can try to hit a target (a can, a propped-up Frisbee, etc.) with a ball.

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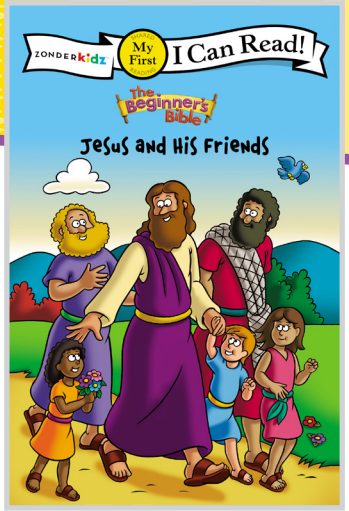

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Jesus and His Friends

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Jesus is God's Son. He and His disciples taught many people about God's love. John helped Jesus and baptized Him as well. Jesus helped and healed many people. He also performed miracles like feeding five thousand hungry people with just a little bread and fish.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Jesus? Who was John? (See pages 4, 8, 9, and 10.)
2. What are disciples? How many disciples did Jesus have? (See pages 12–14.)
3. How did five loaves of bread and two small fish feed five thousand people? (See pages 26–29.)
4. What is your favorite part or page of this story?Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: In the book of John, Jesus tells us that others will know we are His disciples if we love each other. We can be the hands and feet of Jesus. What kinds of things can you do to show others Jesus' love? How can you treat your siblings? Have readers memorize John 13:34–35 (NIrV): "Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples." Write the verse on a whiteboard. Go through the verse several times, erasing words as you commit the verse to memory.

Setting: Study the pictures in the story. Why are people dressed as they are? Do they look like people in your neighborhood? These people look different because Jesus lived about two thousand years ago and was in a different country. Draw a picture of what you think Jesus would look like if He were with you now—this year and in your country. Then explain your picture to another reader.

Name Game: Learn the names of the twelve disciples. Put the names into a familiar tune, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." (Ju-das, Si-mon, Thadd-e-us, Thom-as, James, Bar-tho-lem-ew; Phi-lip, John, Jah-ames, Pe-ter, Matth-ew, An-drew. These are Je-sus' di-sci-i-ples. The-ere are twelve of them!) Practice it several times.

Conversations: Discuss with readers how to have effective conversations. What are some rules to follow when speaking and listening? (take turns, listen carefully, ask questions to understand clearly) First, use motions to review these rules. Pass a small ball or beanbag to students to practice taking turns. Have them cup their hands behind their ears to remember to listen. Then have them show each other puzzled looks to remember to ask questions, if needed. Next, in small groups, have students practice these rules for conversations. The first speaker (with the small ball in hand) should choose his or her favorite part of Jesus and His Friends to retell. The listeners should cup their ears while they listen. Then have them ask any follow-up questions before switching roles.

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Jesus Feeds the People

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

A boy is eager to find Jesus. He takes his lunch for the day and goes to find him and the crowd. The crowd gets hungry, and Jesus tells the disciples to find some food, and they will feed the crowds. The boy gives them his food. The helpers do not know how five loaves of bread and two fish will feed the huge crowd. Jesus prays over the bread and fish and then starts to divide the food into baskets. The food multiplies! Everyone gets plenty to eat. There are even twelve baskets left over!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When the boy gave up his lunch, what was he thinking? Did he think he would go hungry? Do you think he was surprised that his lunch fed so many?
2. How do you think this time with Jesus changed the boy's life? What if you were that boy? What did he tell his mom and dad when he got home?
3. Look at the picture on page 31. What do you think the helpers are saying? How do you think they and the boy are feeling?
4. The people wanted to hear Jesus tell them about God's love (see page 14). How did this miracle *show* them God's love?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Knowing how Jesus fed the people helps us see God's love and goodness. Help readers memorize Psalm 31:19—"How great your goodness is!" Practice the verse with different readings: change the rhythm of the words; stress different words; use soft and loud voices.

Food in Israel: Help readers recall that the boy in the story lives in a land called Israel. Do they know that this is still a country today? Help them research what kinds of foods are common for kids' lunches in Israel. Would you be willing to give your lunch to someone important, even if you were really hungry?

What Just Happened: A miracle is something so unusual and amazing that people know it was God. The five loaves of bread and two fish feeding five thousand people is truly a miracle (see Matthew 14:13–21). Read about another time that Jesus fed a crowd in Matthew 15:29–39 and talk about how the miracles are similar and different.

Act It Out: Have readers act out the story using props, or just pretending to have the various items. Help readers nail down key parts to the story and practice once or twice before performing for others.

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Jesus Saves the World

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Jesus was born to save us from our sins. When He grew up, He taught people about God's love. He also said they needed to love each other. He helped many people. He performed miracles—calming a storm and healing sick people. Then bad people took Him and nailed Him to a cross. This was God's plan though, to save us from our sins. Jesus rose from the dead and later went to heaven. He will come again one day!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jesus born? (See page 7.)
2. Describe in your own words what sin is. (to miss the mark or target; doing bad; not doing what pleases God; something that separates us from God; disobeying)
3. Which words are not clear to you? (perhaps baptized, miracles, tomb, risen, heaven). By looking at the pictures and reading the sentences again, guess the meaning of these words.
4. What two things happened when Jesus went to the garden? (See pages 24–26.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize John 14:6 (NIrV). Jesus is speaking: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Repeat the verse in various ways—using different rhythm or a soft and then loud voice. Discuss what this means in light of the story read. How can people "come to the Father"? What does this mean?

Jesus Saves: Jesus came to save us from our sins (page 7). Our sin (or disobeying) separates us from God. He wants to know us, so He sent His Son, Jesus. He taught people what it means to love God and others. But then He died on a cross. What is the best news of all? That He died and then rose again! He is stronger than death! Because of this, we can be forgiven of our sins and have a relationship with God! When we pray, we talk with God. The Bible tells us that He will forgive us through Jesus, if we ask. First John 1:9 (NIrV) says this: "But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure." And John 3:16 (NIrV) tells us this: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life." Talk about these verses with readers. If they do not know Jesus, tell them how they can know Him and invite Him into their lives: "Dear Jesus, I know I have disobeyed You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sin too. You rose from the dead so that I can live. Please come into my life. I want to live for You each day. Amen." Be sure that parents know and can follow up with their child, if they did pray this prayer.

Setting: Study the pictures in the story. Why are people dressed as they are? Do they look like people in your neighborhood? We don't usually see soldiers like the ones in the pictures either. These people look different because Jesus lived about two thousand years ago and was in a different country. The Romans ruled much of the world at that time, so the soldiers are Roman soldiers. Imagine what would be different for people then. Make a chart with labels of "then/now." Have readers place these items in either the "then" column or the "now" column: Roman soldiers, cell phone, donkeys, cars, tunics, jeans.

Names: Have readers write their names on a coloring page about Jesus calming the storm or a piece of paper. Talk about the correct way to write names—using a capital letter, followed by lowercase letters. Then look on page 18. Jesus said, "Stop, Storm." What do you notice about the word "storm"? He was speaking to the storm! "Storm" is a name here, just like Jack, Sue, or Matthew.

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Jonah and the Giant Fish

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

God told Jonah to visit Nineveh where people were doing bad things. Jonah did not want to go, so he took a ship away from Nineveh. A storm came, the sailors threw Jonah into the sea because he told them that would stop the storm, and a big fish swallowed Jonah. After three days Jonah told God he was sorry. The big fish spit him out onto dry land, and Jonah went to Nineveh. The people listened to Jonah, and God forgave them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. God is omnipotent. This means that He is all powerful. How can you tell that the storm, the big fish, and Jonah all listened to and obeyed God? How can you tell that He is in charge of everything?
2. Jonah disobeyed, but God saved Him. How did God save Jonah? What do you think Jonah thought about for three days and three nights in the fish? What did Jonah pray after he had disobeyed?
3. What was different about Jonah the second time God asked him to go to Nineveh? (see page 28) Do you think God can help you be brave and help you to obey just like Jonah?
4. Often authors and illustrators will give you clues about what is going to happen in a story. This is called foreshadowing. Look at the illustrations on pages seven and nine. What clue is given about what will happen to Jonah?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Jonah shows us that God forgives and loves everyone. Have readers memorize Jonah 4:2b (NIrV): "I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them." Talk about the meaning of words that readers do not know. Write the verse on a whiteboard. Go through the verse several times, erasing words as you commit the verse to memory.

God Moment: Point out to readers that they can learn more about God through the book of Jonah in the Bible. Then read Jonah 1:9; 2:2; 2:9; and 4:2. Ask students what they learn about God from these verses and from Jonah and the Big Fish. Help them create list of God's characteristics.

Map Mix: Look at a map printout together and show key places to better understand where this story took place—the setting (Nineveh, Joppa, Tarshish, Mediterranean Sea). Review what God asked Jonah to do and where Jonah headed instead. Apply this understanding to readers' lives: Are there times that you want to do the exact opposite of what you know you should do? For instance, you know you should be kind to your siblings, but you aren't? Jonah learned that it was better to obey and that God would help him be brave. Pray that God will help you too to make good choices.

Using Technology: If possible, provide pairs of readers with iPads, digital cameras, or another device with which they can take pictures. Have them choose five key parts to the story of Jonah (for example: directions, not listening, water, fish, praying for forgiveness, etc.). Then have them find items that correlate to these key parts and take pictures of those items. Next have children share their pictures with another team.

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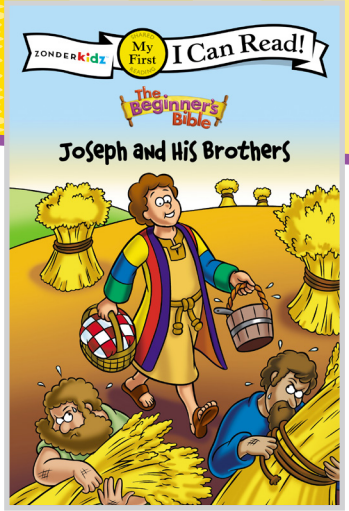

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Joseph and His Brothers

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

Jacob had many sons. The youngest—and his favorite—was Joseph. This made his older brothers jealous. When they got the chance, they sold Joseph and sent him away. Joseph was put in jail where he told some people what their dreams meant. When the king had a dream, Joseph told him that God wanted them to save up food. There would be years with little food. When this came true, even Joseph's brothers came looking for food. They realized that God had put Joseph there so that God's people wouldn't go hungry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Jacob?
2. Who did Joseph meet in jail? What did his dream mean?
3. Place these four events in the correct order: (1) The brothers bowed to Joseph. (2) Food stopped growing. (3) Joseph gets a robe. (4) Joseph forgives his brothers. (Write these four parts on index cards so readers can manipulate the four parts. For an extra challenge, add more parts for readers to place in the correct sequence.)
4. What does it mean that Joseph forgave his brothers? (to stop blaming them or to stop feeling angry at his brothers)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize the first part of Romans 8:28 (NIrV): "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." Repeat the verse while jumping rope—one word per jump. Or you can toss a ball or beanbag to each other with each person saying one word or phrase.

Puzzle It Out: Print a page of this story (one per reader). Then cut each into several larger pieces to create a simple puzzle. As readers put their puzzle together again, talk about how the puzzle is like Joseph's life. Hold up one piece. Say, "Joseph got sent away from his family. Was that a good or bad piece of his life?" Hold up another piece. Say, "Joseph was put in jail. Was that a good or a bad piece of his life?" Hold up another piece. Say, "Joseph was put in charge of all the food. Was that a good or a bad piece of his life?" Finish putting together the puzzle. Say, "Once Joseph met his brothers again, what did he realize? Joseph was able to see that God had put all the good and bad pieces of his life together so that he could help others. God meant everything for good!" (See pages 30–32.) Readers may tape their picture together (on the back). As they do so, remind them that God can use good and bad in our lives to show others His love.

God's Special People: Joseph's father, Jacob, had many sons. Eventually God changed his name to Israel. This was the start to the nation of Israel and the Jewish people of which Jesus belonged to as well. Since this is such an important family (nation and people), let's create the first part of their family tree! Draw Jacob/Israel at the top of the paper. Then place his twelve sons underneath. Draw lines from Jacob/Israel to each son. If names are too hard for readers to write, then write them on pieces of index card or paper, and have readers tape or glue them on their papers. These are the twelve sons (according to Genesis 49): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Benjamin.

Letter Writing: Write or dictate a pretend letter to Joseph. Tell him what you admire about him—his good attitude, his trust in God, his planning for food, his telling about dreams. Remember to write "Dear Joseph," first. Then write or dictate a few sentences. Then sign it: "From _____." Readers may want to decorate the letter and/or draw a picture to accompany the writing.

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The Lost Son

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

A man had two sons. One son wanted to travel. His dad gave him money, and off he went. Before too long his money was gone. He had to make money to live, so he worked with stinky pigs. Then he wanted to go back home but didn't know if his dad would still love him. His dad forgave him and was glad to have him back home!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did the dad give his son for travel?
2. What did the son spend his money on? Was he careful with his money by spending it on things that would last?
3. How did the son's dad feel about his son coming home? How do you know?
4. What is your favorite part of this story? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize 1 John 3:1 (NIrV): "See what amazing love the Father has given us! Because of it, we are called children of God." The father in the story is a mirror of God the Father who loves us no matter what. We must realize that God's amazing love is a gift. Write the verse on a whiteboard. After practicing it a few times, start wiping off all but the beginning letters of each word. Keep practicing until readers have the verse memorized.

Act It Out: Have readers each take a role and reenact the story. Have them think about the emotions of the son and father before they begin. Read the "Parent Note" on the copyright page and explain to readers that "Jack" is not actually the son's name. They can still call him Jack for the reenactment though. Use simple props, if available.

Family Flag: Have readers create a "family flag" for the dad and two sons. The story talks about the love of the father, about the father's forgiveness, about Jack being sorry, and about being lost and found. Talk about how symbols are pictures of something that also stands for something more. For instance, a picture of a heart is also a symbol of love. A picture of money is also a symbol of being rich. What would this family's flag look like? Is it a flag from the beginning or end of the story?

Money Smarts: In the story, Jack wanted to have money to do whatever he felt like. Was he careful with his money? Or did he run out of money? We need to learn to be careful with what God gives us, even our money. Create three jars or paper cups for saving, spending, and giving. Talk about putting some in each jar whenever readers earn money. What would they save for? What would they like to spend money on? To whom would they give some money?

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Moses and the King

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

God's people were slaves. God wanted Moses to help the slaves and bring them to a new land. The mean king did not want to let his slaves go. So God sent all kinds of bad things but the king still said no. When the king's son died, he let them go. They got to the Red Sea. God parted the water for the people. The king's soldiers chased them but the water came down on them. God saved his people!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at page 4. What kind of work are the slaves doing? Does it look easy or hard? (They had been building bricks, but the mean king kept making it harder to make bricks. The Israelites were having a really hard time.)
2. How did God get Moses' attention? What did He want Moses to do?
3. Look at pages 8–9. What does it look like Moses had been doing? Had he been leading people?How did he feel about helping the slaves (see page 10)?
4. List the things God did to show His power to the mean king. (See pages 16–24.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Exodus 6:7 (NIrV): "I will take you to be my own people. I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God when I throw off the load the Egyptians have put on your shoulders." Repeat the verse in various ways—using different inflections, rhythm, or a soft and then loud voice.

Praise God: The book of Exodus tells the full story of God bringing the slaves out of Egypt. He wanted to give them the Promised Land. After God parted the Red Sea, Moses' sister Miriam sang a song of praise to God (see Exodus 15). Read Exodus 15:21. Then find a children's song based on Miriam's song of praise on YouTube (like "I Will Exalt Him" or "The Horse and the Rider"). Compare any details in the song with the Scripture passage.

Walk Through the Red Sea: Research and find out how big the Red Sea would have been when Moses and the Israelites walked across it.* Could they have jumped across it? Measure how far you can jump. Measure how tall you are. If there is anything else in your area with which readers are familiar, contrast this with the Red Sea as well (one of the Great Lakes, a tall building, a long bridge, a river). Then compare and contrast these to the Red Sea. If time allows, put each of these in order from smallest to biggest (using drawings or words).

* The Red Sea was about ten miles across where Moses and the Israelites crossed. "The Red Sea Crossing," Ark Discovery International, accessed July 11, 2017, http://www.arkdiscovery.com/red_sea_crossing.htm.

Setting: Look at pages 4–5 again. What can you tell about the setting? Do you know what country is known for pyramids, sphinx, and pharaohs? Study and learn one new fact about Egypt in the past. You might ask one of these questions: Where is Egypt? Where is the Red Sea? What are pyramids? Can you still see pyramids today? What kinds of animals are common in Egypt? See how far Egypt is from where you live. Color in a map, draw a picture of a sphinx, draw a picture of common animals, or build a pyramid with blocks.

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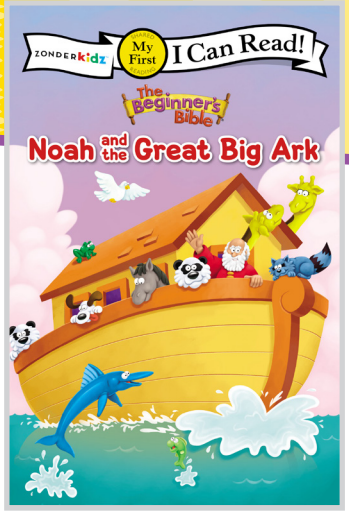

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Noah and the Ark

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

A long time ago Noah and his family were the only people in the world who loved God. God told Noah to build an ark to save his family and the animals of the world. When it was done, the rain started. The earth flooded. After a time the water dried up. Noah, his family, and the animals left the ark. God sent a rainbow to tell Noah that He would never cover the whole earth with water again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How was Noah different from everyone else?(See pages 4–7.)
2. What did God tell Noah to build? What was it called?
3. What did God send to fill the ark?
4. Why did God send a rainbow? What does it remind us of today?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Genesis 9:11 (NIrV). God is speaking: "Here is my covenant I am making with you. The waters of a flood will never again destroy all life. A flood will never again destroy the earth." Use motions and repetition to memorize this verse.

Rainbows: God always keeps His promises, even those He made a long time ago. We learn about the first rainbow in the story about Noah. God says the rainbow is a symbol showing that God will never flood the whole earth again. Using various colors of tissue paper and construction paper, have readers create a "stained glass" rainbow. Hang it up with some yarn. Write "God keeps His promises!" at the bottom.

Build It: Noah lived a long time ago. The Bible tells us that people lived a lot longer then. The ark probably took Noah a long time to build. It had to be big enough for a lot of animals. Just recently an ark like Noah's ark was built so that we can see and feel what it might have been like. With readers visit the ark online (it is in Kentucky) and talk about what it might have been like.* Try building your own ark out of materials available—toothpicks and marshmallows, popsicle sticks, cardboard, paper, tape, etc.

God Glasses: Talk about God's promises such as God protects those who love Him. Use pipe cleaners to create glasses to wear. As they put them on, create a booklet with words and/or pictures for God's promises shown on pages 12 and 32. Have them look at the booklet through their glasses. Then have them keep them on as you ask about their own lives. Are these promises still true? Will God protect you at school? Will God be with you when you have to try something new? You don't have to have the glasses on for God's promises to be true, but maybe they will help you remember what God has promised.

* "Noah's Ark," Ark Encounter, accessed July 11, 2017, https://arkencounter.com/noahs-ark/.

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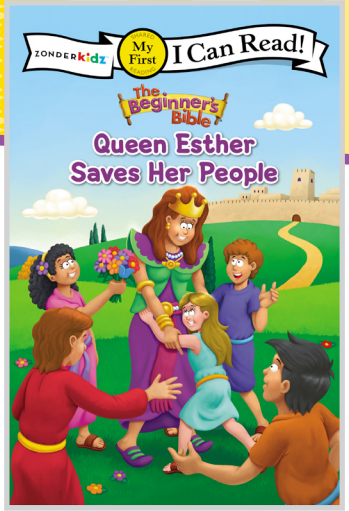

SHARED My First READING

Queen Esther Saves Her People

The Beginner's Bible

About the Book

The king didn't know that the new queen, Esther, was Jewish. His friend Haman had the king sign a law to get rid of all Jews. Queen Esther's cousin Mordecai told her she should speak to the king about that law. This was not easy to do, but Queen Esther was brave. The king was mad at Haman when he found out about Haman's trick. He made Mordecai his new helper. The Jewish people were saved!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who are Mordecai and Haman?
2. What was the problem that Haman created? (See pages 15–17.)
3. What did the king (and Haman) not know about Queen Esther?
4. How did God use Queen Esther even though she was afraid?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Hide God's Word in Your Heart: Have readers memorize Psalm 34:17 (NIrV): "Godly people cry out, and the LORD hears them. He saves them from all their troubles." Repeat the verse in various ways—using different rhythm or a soft and then loud voice. Discuss how this verse applies to *Queen Esther Saves Her People* since it is not a verse from Esther. How did God save Esther? How did He save the Jewish people?

Such a Time: Esther is not Wonder Woman yet she is a hero. God used Esther to save His people! Did she have to speak up? What if she had been silent and just let things happen? Mordecai told Esther that maybe God made her the queen so that she could speak up. In the book of Esther, it says, "Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like this" (Esther 4:14). God has plans for you, and it may include speaking up for Him or doing something for Him. Make a simple word bubble as a reminder. Use a piece of construction paper, cut out a word bubble, and tape a popsicle stick to the back. Have readers choose a phrase to put in their word bubble, like "God loves us!" or "Jesus saves us!" or "Do you know my friend, Jesus?"

What's the Word: Unscramble some key words from *Queen Esther Saves Her People*: kgni (king), enque (queen), eEhrts (Esther), asev (save), wJe (Jew). Partner up and explain these words and why they are key to the story. Readers may want to point to pages in the story to help them explain the words.

Jewish People: Who are the Jews and what sets them apart? Many people throughout history have wanted to hurt Jewish people. They are special to God though, and He has always rescued them. He has called them His people, and they are to worship Him only. So it has to do with family history (ethnic group) as well as what they believe (religion). Many now live in a country called Israel. Look at a map to find Israel. Draw a picture of its flag.

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