

NOT ***The Bible is [^]Boring!***

By Lisa Updike



It was my birthday. Grandpa and Grannie came over and we cooked out hamburgers and hotdogs. We had all my favorites: deviled eggs made by Grannie herself, macaroni and cheese from the blue box, and...watermelon! Yum! We ate out on the deck with the green umbrella giving us shade, and listened to Grandpa tell his silly stories about when he was my age. Soon it was time for my cake. Mom made me chocolate with chocolate icing and loads of sprinkles on top, too! Dad tried to light the candles, but the breeze kept blowing them out, so I listened to them sing the birthday song without the candles lit on the cake. Everybody said I was a clown when I took a deep breath and dramatically pretended to huff and puff each unlit candle.

Licking the last bit of chocolate from my fingers, I turned expectantly to Mom. I knew my presents were next. I got a nice shirt (not a great snag, but not too bad), a DVD of a movie I had been wanting (score!), a really fun board game (pretty good). I was hoping for an envelope with money from Grandpa and Grannie, but instead they brought out a wrapped rectangle shaped box. They were clearly excited. "Hmmm, it's

got to be good," I thought, "with them grinning like that!" I ripped into the paper and opened the box. It was a leather-bound Bible, with my name in gold down in the bottom right hand corner. It was really beautiful, but I didn't know what to say.

"Open it up, honey! Look inside the front!" Grannie requested. I looked up at her and Grandpa. They were so excited that they had tears in their eyes. I felt pressure to act really happy. I flipped it open, and saw that Grandpa had written a note to me. "Read it aloud," Dad added. Carefully decoding Grandpa's old-fashioned cursive, I read,

*To our precious grandchild on the
occasion of his tenth birthday:*

*Isaiah 40:8 tells us that the grass withers,
the flower fades, but the word of our God
will stand forever.*

*And Psalm 119:105 tells us that God's word
is a lamp to our feet and a light for our
path.*

Hebrews 4:12 explains to us that the Word of God is living and active.

There are no words more important than the words found in these pages.

We pray you will live by them, meditate on them, and thereby be changed by them, giving glory to God in all you do.

*With more love than we can express,
Grandpa and Grannie*

Everyone was crying except for me. I guessed that when I got older I'd appreciate everything it said. I knew they really loved me. I knew this was an expensive nice gift. I felt guilty, but I was super disappointed. I was hoping for money...or Legos. Knowing it was the right thing to do, I said enthusiastically, "Thank you so much!" and gave Grannie and Grandpa each a big hug. Grannie kissed my cheek and said that they pray for me every day to grow into a man of God.

After that we cleaned up and went inside to play my new board game until it was time for Gran and Gramps to leave. Kisses all around, and it was bed-time.

Taking all my gifts in my arms, I went to my room and got ready for bed. I climbed in between the crisp, cool sheets thinking about my day. It was nice. I still felt a little disappointed about the Bible, and then that made me feel a little guilty. You're supposed to love God's word. It's just that, well, it's not Legos. It's not fun. It's, well, it's actually kind of *boring*, especially if you flip to the wrong part!

As I drifted off to sleep I whispered to God. "Dear Lord, I know the Bible is Your Word and super important. But to tell the truth, I'm not really excited about a new Bible. Will you help me?" I yawned as I said, "Amen."

The next morning as Mom poured milk on my Frosted Flakes and handed me the bowl, she said, "Well, I guess you were a bit surprised about that Bible."

"Uh, yeah! Really surprised!" I said, looking down into the bowl of cereal. She bent over to look into my eyes and gave me a smile. "It wasn't so much of a good surprise, though, was it?"

She had me. Mom seems to be able to read my thoughts when I least want her to. "Well, I appreciate it and all. And I know the Bible is the most important book in the world. I know Grannie and Grandpa gave it to me because they love me. It's just that it really isn't....it's not...I mean..." I was searching for the right word. I didn't want to tell Mom I thought it was boring.

Mom interrupted. "I know. A Bible isn't much fun. It can be hard to read, and sometimes it seems sort of boring." Wow! She did it again! How did she do that? I wiped a little dribble of milk from my chin and nodded. What more was there to add?

She poured herself a glass of cranberry juice and sat down at the table beside me. "You know, I'm super proud of you."

I looked up. "Really? Why?"

"Well, you were very kind to Grannie and Grandpa last night, and thanked them nicely. You told me that you know they gave it to you because they love you, and best of all, you said that you know the Bible is the most important book in the world."

"Yeah, but you also know I think it is boring..."

Mom started clearing the table. "Yep, but once you know a little more about the Bible, you'll find it a little more...engaging."

"Engaging?"

"Yes. It's the only living book! It's God actually speaking! Dad and I are going to help you learn how to interact with it, and you'll see. In fact, Grannie,

Grandpa, Dad and I are already praying for the Holy Spirit to start preparing your heart.” She repeated herself with a twinkle in her eye, “Yes, you’ll see!”

I jumped up and asked for permission to go to my friend’s house now. We had planned to spend the day together. Mom said yes, but also warned me not to make plans with my friends for after dinner, because she and Dad wanted some special time with me. “Weird,” I thought, but nodded my head, grabbed my shoes and ran out the door.

After a dinner of meatloaf and left over mac-n-cheese from my birthday meal I started to get up. Dad stopped me. “Wait a minute, son; we’ve got something special to do! And after we’re done, you can have the last piece of your birthday cake.”

*THE OLD TESTAMENT TELLS US A SAVIOR IS COMING.
THE NEW TESTAMENT TELLS US A SAVIOR HAS COME*



“Sounds good to me!”

Dad continued, “We really want you to enjoy your new Bible, but there’s some basic stuff that is really helpful to know before you get started.” I thought to myself, “Really? It’s a book. Don’t you just open it and start reading?” Dad continued before I said anything out loud. “First of all, it’s really helpful to realize that the Bible is more like a whole library than a regular book.”

I responded, “Oh! That’s why the pastor will say something like, ‘Turn to the *book* of John.’”

“Exactly. In fact, there are 66 books in the Bible, and those books are divided into two main parts.”

“I know! You’re talking about the Old Testament and the New Testament!”

“Right again! Do you know why the Bible is divided like that?”

I had to think a minute. What would be the big difference? I started thinking about the Bible stories I knew while Dad waited patiently...Moses, Old Testament...Creation, Adam and Eve, way in the beginning...David, Old...Jesus walks on water, New...

“Hey, the New Testament Books all have Jesus in them, or happened after He was born!”

Dad was smiling, “Yep! I like to think of it this way: the Old Testament tells us a Savior is coming and the New Testament tells us a Savior has come.”

“So the whole Bible is really about Jesus?”

“Yes, in one way or another it is, but there are four books that everyone can see are about Jesus.”

Oh, yeah, we learned in Sunday School. Those are called the Gospels...um
Mmmmatthew....Mark....Luke, and, and...

He prodded me, “Starts with a J...”

“John!”

“That’s right.”

Mom had joined us now and added to our conversation. “There are four gospels and they tell us four things: how Jesus was born, how He lived, how He died, and how He rose again!”

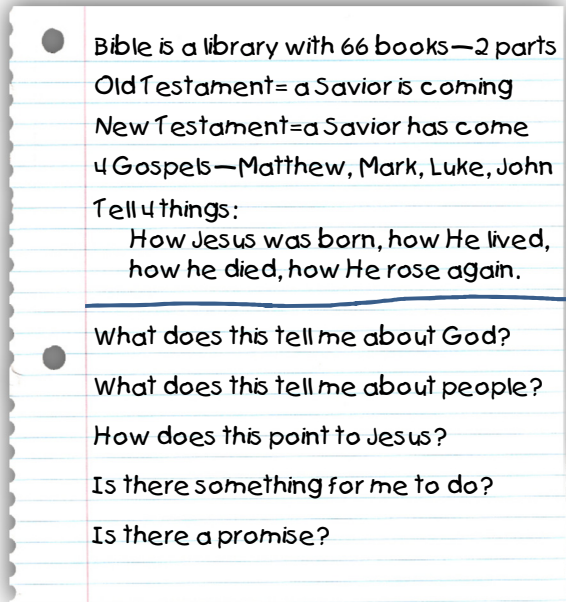
“Can I have my cake now?”

Mom smiled and brought me my slice of cake, and then she placed a small spiral notebook and cool mechanical pencil beside my plate.

“What’s that for?” I wondered out loud.

“Well, Dad has given you a starter kit of knowledge. I’d like you to write down what you’ve learned on the first page to help it to stick in that noggin of yours. Then draw a line and write these questions at the bottom of the first page: What does this tell me about God? What does this tell me about people? How does this point to Jesus? Is there something for me to do (like a command)? And, is there a promise?”

I ate my cake, opened my book and wrote:



“Now what, Mom?”

“Now that you’ve got a little basic knowledge I want you to pick one of the Gospels to start reading—just a chapter a night. Every time you read, write down what passage you are reading on a page in your notebook, and ask yourself those questions, and write what you’ve learned. Then write anything else you think is interesting. Before you read, ask Jesus to help you learn more about Him.”

“And son,” Dad patted my shoulder, “we’ll be praying for you, too. The Bible is alive and God will speak through it to you!”

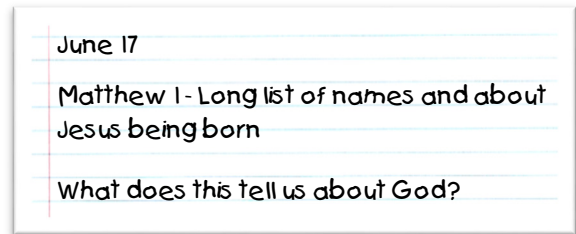
That night I caught a bunch of fireflies in a jar, poked some holes in it for air and took it to my bedroom for a night light. After hugging Mom and Dad goodnight and brushing my teeth I climbed into bed with my Bible, notebook, and mechanical pencil.

“Jesus, help me learn about You.” It was a short prayer, but I really meant it.

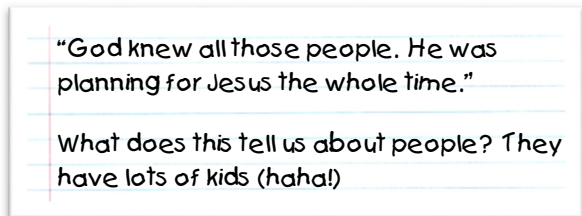
I decided to turn to the very first gospel, Matthew. I couldn’t believe it! First thing I did was turn to one of the boring parts of the Bible! It was a whole list of names that I couldn’t pronounce, but I did my best. Truth be told, I kind of skimmed over a bunch of

them. Then I got to the story parts about Mary and Joseph. That was better.

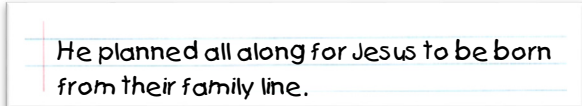
Then I wrote in my notebook.



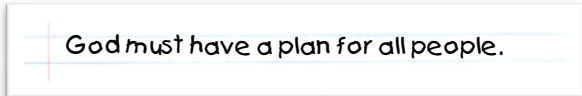
Wow, that was kind of a hard one. I thought for a bit.



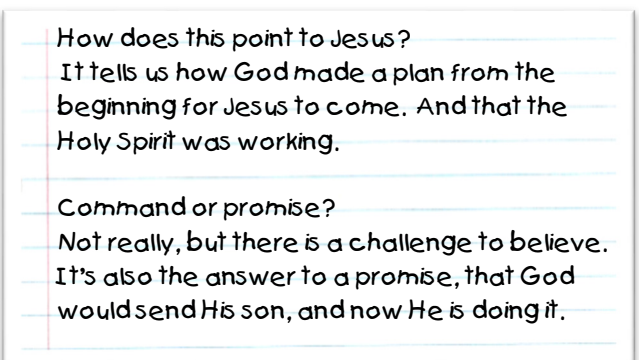
But then I got a little more serious.



I felt kind of smart as I wrote that down. It made me realize that if God had a plan for all those people, He must have a plan for me too. Oh! I could write that, too!



Then I realized all those people were from the Old Testament! I remembered Dad telling me the Old Testament tells us a Savior is coming. Ha! It was fun putting these pieces together in my head. Not fun like reading a sports book, but fun like when you have a good feeling from thinking hard and understanding something.



I thought a little more...

Anything else...Jesus had parents and grandparents just like me, even though He is God. He was like me but really different. God has a plan for His people.

Smiling, I closed my notebook and Bible, slipped the mechanical pencil neatly into the spiral of the notebook and put them all on my nightstand next to the jar of fireflies. "Thanks, Jesus, that You came and planned it for so long, and for having a plan for my life, and for helping me realize some stuff about the Bible, and for helping it not to be too boring, and for Grannie and Grandpa loving me so much, and for Mom and Dad teaching me, and (yawn) everything else that I forgot. Amen.

The next day I got up and noticed that Mom had hung a bulletin board in the kitchen. She had pinned up a picture of a bookshelf filled with the books of the Bible and labels running along the shelves to explain what kind of books they were. "Books of Moses, History, Poetry, Prophecy, Gospels, another History, Letters, and one last book of Prophecy."

The bulletin board also had some index cards poked up on it, and a ribbon with a marker tied to the end. Two of the index cards had been written on by my mother.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together! Psalm 34:3

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

"...it's really helpful to realize that the Bible is more like a whole library than a regular book."

On another card Dad had written,

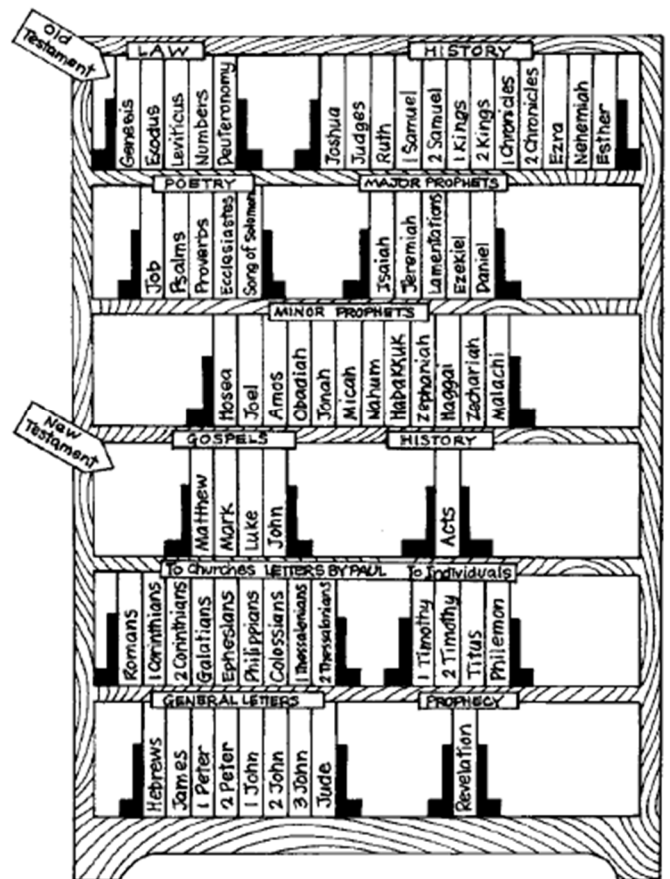
"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate." Psalm 127:4-5

"Hey, Mom, what's this?"

"Good morning to you, too," she answered with a funny smile. "How was your Bible reading last night?"

"Uh, good morning. It was actually pretty good. I used your questions and stuff." Her eyes sparkled again like they did whenever she talked about Jesus, or anything to do with Him. Continuing, she pointed to the board. "This is phase two of 'Operation Learn to Read the Bible.' Two books are especially easy and fun to read. They are Proverbs and Psalms."

The Bible—A Library of Smaller Books



I looked at the picture of the bookshelf. “Old Testament books of Poetry!”

“You’re learning fast! Yes, and so I would encourage you to read just a little from them each day, too. When you find one you especially like, write it on a card and pin it to the board. It will be fun to see which verses are favorites for all of us!”

“OK. I’ll find one by tomorrow!”

That night I read my second chapter of Matthew and wrote down a couple of things, and then I decided to look through Proverbs. I kind of skipped around. Some of them were funny and made me laugh out loud, others I didn’t really understand, and some were sad.

The next morning I grabbed an index card and took it back to my room. Using my cool mechanical pencil I wrote:

*Go to the ant, O sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,
she prepares her bread in summer
and gathers her food in harvest. Proverbs 6:6-8*

I ran out and stuck it to the board with a red pushpin. Dad was on his way out the door to work. “Good one, on! I’m being wise like the ant right now, and going to work to provide for the family!”

He gave me a hug and pecked Mom on the cheek.

Every day continued like that. Mom and Dad asking about what I read. Sometimes I would show them my notebook, and sometimes they would even show me something in theirs! I really liked that.

Today, our board is covered with Bible verses. Sometimes even friends will add their favorites.

Almost every night I read a little bit from my Bible and always write at least a little something. Most of the time it’s a pretty good habit. Sometimes, it’s still a little boring, but the more I understand, the less it’s boring. Every once in a while we talk about what each of us is reading in the Bible. About once a week Dad will sit with me and help me understand a little bit more about the Bible, like how the Samuel books and Chronicle books are about the same time period from different points of view (just like the Gospels), or that the letters Paul wrote were written during the history time of Acts. It’s helpful to understand those things.

Also, we’ve started to pick a verse at a time that we memorize as a family. We have it taped up ALL OVER the house. You can’t do a chore without looking at it. We say it together before dinner, and now that school has started again, Mom makes sure to say it with me before I head out the door.

Best of all, I am being changed! God’s Word really is alive. It takes hard work, but now I get it—all the work is worth it. I’ve told Grannie and Grandpa how at first I was disappointed with their gift, but now I know it really was the best choice for me at just the right time. Funny, they weren’t surprised at all. At one time they had felt the same way, too.

How about you? Do you think the Bible is boring like I did? Why don’t you give it a try? If you do, I’m pretty sure you will be changed like I was.

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