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THE USE OF THE BIBLE WITH JUNIORS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Religious Education

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

That the Bible is too much neglected in the religious training of children seems to be the feeling of many devout Christians in our time. The child's approach to God, it is asserted, is directed solely through naturalistic or extra-biblical channels. Some leaders in Christian education say that so much of the Bible is foreign to the child's experience, and that therefore the Bible is too difficult for him to read with understanding. It is advised that purposeful Bible reading be delayed until the late teens. Several studies indicate, however, that many Bible passages can be read with understanding and interest by boys and girls of Junior age. The writer assumes that parts of the Scriptures can be read with much profit by Juniors. If that be so, it is important that parents and teachers be able to give direction to children in the matter of such reading. Certainly the practice of using the Bible to inculcate truth and to establish habit during the formative years of late childhood receives the support of a long tradition in the Christian church.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study (1) to point to the importance of the Junior age for

establishing the habit of Bible reading, (2) to consider the reading interests and reading comprehension of Juniors, (3) to discuss the readability of the Bible in terms of the Junior age and (4) to suggest effective ways of using the Bible with Juniors.

Importance of the study. The past thirty years has seen a real effort in the field of secular education to adapt textbook language to the various levels of reading difficulty. Because of the work of such men as Thorndike, Lorge, and Betts, textbook vocabulary of the various grade levels is these days more or less familiar and meaningful to the child. Stories are in keeping with his interests and range of experience.

A survey of the literature of religious education shows that little research has been undertaken to determine what Biblical passages are appropriate, in terms of interest and reading comprehension, for use with children at various age levels. The writer, selecting the Junior years, seeks to give some guidance in using graded Bible materials for these years.

## II. PROCEDURE OF RESEARCH

Literature dealing with criteria for selecting Bible reading matter according to the pupil's age level is by no means abundant. The writer examined literature on the Junior



child and on readability of textbooks for children in the libraries of the University of Kentucky, the College of the Bible, Southern Baptist Seminary, Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary. Some of the books were of direct help in the present study. One of these is The University of Iowa Studies in Character, which measures the comprehension difficulty of the precepts and parables of Jesus. Another study is that by George E. Dawson on the Bible interests of a thousand children, reported in his The Child and His Religion. Two books by Rudolf Flesch supply a readability scale for obtaining an approximate measure of the reading level of books. These are The Art of Plain Talk and How to Test Readability.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JUNIOR AGE FOR ESTABLISHING THE HABIT OF BIBLE READING

Certain features characteristic of the Junior age make this a time "par excellence" for the establishing of the Bible reading habit.

Habits. There can be no question that the earlier growth stages preceeding the Junior age are of immense importance in child development. Nor is it to be doubted that the years nine to twelve are also highly significant in this regard. In fact there is a growing body of literature that focuses on this time as one fraught with very great possibilities for habit cultivation. These years, which many believe to be in the peak of the habit-forming period, should be a time of reenforcing practices of right thinking and commendable conduct. They are particularly significant for developing the habit of Bible reading. In this regard one writer remarks:

Many temptations in later life would have its antidote if the Holy Spirit could bring the needed Scripture to mind, but because someone substituted the lesser for the greater, solicitude for external appearance instead of inner furnishing, the Word is not there to be

recalled.<sup>1</sup>

Many religious educators feel that if good habits of reading the Bible are not formed during this period, it is almost certain that they never will be.

Intellectual curiosity. Although physical growth is slow, the Junior age is marked by constant activity. The Junior child likes to undertake difficult tasks. He has more endurance than the Primary child. Possessed with a desire for adventure, the Junior is willing to try anything. His curiosity leads him to investigate things for himself. He is eager to acquire new information. Creasman has this to say of the Junior child:

Mentally he is reaching out and drawing in like the octopus everything which he can grasp. He absorbs everything he hears, good or bad alike, reads everything that comes within his reach regardless of its quality, investigates everything at hand.<sup>2</sup>

Children from nine to eleven are more intellectually alert to people and events in the world about them than is the case with those of Primary age. Their mental horizons are enlarged through the radio, newspaper, television, books,

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<sup>1</sup>Emma A. Robinson, The Junior Worker and His Work (Chicago: Jennings Graham, 1911), p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Myrtle R. Creasman, Working with Juniors (Nashville: Sunday-school Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), p. 44.

and through the conversations of adults.<sup>3</sup>

During the latter part of this period, the Junior's interest varies, sometimes radically. At times he is much more interested in reading a book than in participating in active games. His interest in reading can be the foundation for the building of good reading habits.

Skill in reading. By the time a child reaches the fourth grade in school, he has acquired enough skill to read with understanding for instruction and enjoyment. It is a fact that his eyes focus more clearly by now.<sup>4</sup> This condition increases his reading ability.

By the age of ten, most children are able to search for the main idea of a written passage. The Junior is able to take an active part in the study of his Sunday-school lessons. Till this time, the teacher must transmit the lesson from the Bible to the child by telling or reading the story. Now however, he may read directly from the Bible. This newly-acquired skill in reading the Bible is one of the distinctive characteristics of Junior boys and girls.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, Language Arts for Today's Children (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Lillian Moore Rice, Better Bible Teaching for Juniors (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 37.

Witty lists reading processes and skills which teachers in the public school seek to develop in the child of nine, ten, and eleven. The Sunday-school teacher should give his pupils opportunities to use these skills in the study of the lesson and in the reading of the Bible. They are listed as follows:

- I. DEVELOPING COMPREHENSION.
  - A. Following directions and finding instruction.
  - B. Finding answers to personal and social problems.
- II. READING TO REMEMBER.
  - A. Remembering important ideas.
  - B. Remembering significant details.
- III. ASSOCIATED IDEAS AND MATERIALS.
  - A. Finding proof.
  - B. Finding information relevant to particular problems.
  - C. Examining the basic assumptions.
  - D. Study the adequacy of presentations.
- IV. ORGANIZING IDEAS AND MATERIALS.
  - A. Arranging events in sequence and making outlines.
  - B. Summarizing.<sup>6</sup>

Pleasure in reading. Because the Junior is able to read with some skill, reading is, in most instances, a pleasure to him. This delight in reading make it easier for him to acquire the Bible reading habit. Juniors are diligent readers. They will read more at this age than at any other time in their developmental period.<sup>7</sup> A study on the reading habits

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949), p. 153.

<sup>7</sup>Alfred L. Murray, Psychology for Christian Teachers (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1938), p. 88.

of children from nine to eleven shows that Juniors spend all-total an hour a day on study, music, and reading.<sup>8</sup> An investigation in 1946 by Witty and Coomer of the play preferences and habits of almost one thousand elementary children intimates that boys and girls of Junior age are solidly interested in reading. Play was defined as "any activity in which a child took part simply because he wanted to do so." The items were arranged in the approximate order of the frequency with which they were mentioned. Of a total of ninety-three items, reading of books was number twelve. When the child reaches adolescence, there is a definite decrease in this interest in reading.<sup>9</sup>

An earlier study by Chave on the number of books read by children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades indicates that Juniors are prolific readers. In a fourth grade class, twelve out of forty said that they read an average of one book per week. In a fifth-grade class of forty-two, nineteen reported that they read more than one book a week; nine read more than two books per week. Fourteen in a sixth-grade class of thirty-eight reported one book per week; eleven read two

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<sup>8</sup>Ernest J. Chave, The Junior (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1925), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Witty, op. cit., p. 208.

books per week. It is significant to note that these children were not guided in their selection of books. They generally went to the library and chose whatever appealed to their fancy. Much of their reading was of a common, mediocre type because no one had directed them to the better books.<sup>10</sup>

Guidance in reading. While Juniors have preferences in what they read, they are not yet discriminating in their choice of books. They tend to read anything and everything they can find. They are intrigued by stories of action and excitement. If a book meets these standards, he does not judge the reading matter on any other basis.<sup>11</sup> Comics are particularly appealing to children of this age. Of course there are many acceptable comic strips for children. But a study of favorite comic strips in Grades IX through XII rated "Batman" first in these grades, and "Superman" second.<sup>12</sup>

The development of a child's character is greatly affected by what he reads. "The Junior age is not alone the time for the formation of habits of action, but of thought."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Chave, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Wade C. Barclay, et. al., Life in the Making (Nashville: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917), p. 100.

<sup>12</sup>Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XXVIII, 1942, cited by Witty, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>13</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 43.

Even though he desires to think and act independently, the Junior boy or girl cannot help but be influenced by these things.

Interest in individuals, a development of the Junior age, is manifested in the idealizing of heroes. The hero of a story becomes his ideal of life. It is the deeds of the hero rather than the character of the hero that impresses boys and girls of this age.<sup>14</sup>

Cases studied of boys and girls running away from home have revealed the fact that often the desire was to imitate some runaway hero. Records in juvenile courts trace incidents of petty thievery, vandalism, and the setting of fires to the influence of books read. On the other hand, some of our greatest missionaries, ministers, and other leaders were as boys motivated in their choice of work by the high ideals of a worthy hero.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hugh Hartshorne, Childhood and Character (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1919), p. 105.

<sup>15</sup>Robinson, op. cit., p. 43.



## CHAPTER III

### TWO FACTORS BASIC TO THE USE OF THE BIBLE WITH JUNIORS

In order to direct Juniors intelligently to passages of Scripture appropriate for their personal Bible reading we must know something of their ability to comprehend what they read. We must know, too, where their interests lie. The more we know about them the wiser will be our guidance. As one writer remarks, "The nature of the pupil determines the material and methods of nurture."<sup>1</sup>

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE ABILITY

Reasoning power. The Junior learns gradually how to think and act for himself. Because he is becoming increasingly mature and because his world of knowledge is growing rapidly, he is now better able to compare, discriminate, and form conclusions. Ability to think is of course still not what it will be later, but he is evidencing now a mental quickening that will greatly facilitate the task of learning. This intellectual alertness manifests itself in incredulity, in exploration, in reading, in rabid inquisitiveness, and in an ever-increasing ability to subject action to intellectual

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<sup>1</sup>Wade C. Barclay, et. al., Life in the Making (Nashville: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917), p. 11.

control.<sup>2</sup> The Junior loves to put his developing power of reason to work on such things as puzzles, riddles, and conundrums. He also enjoys using foreign words and queer sounding jargon or "pig latin."

A child of average intelligence will have difficulty with abstract ideas until he reaches the age of twelve or thirteen. Such abstract terms as kindness, patience, honesty, salvation, redemption, atonement, the Trinity, and many other words common to adult thinking are difficult for the child to understand. These abstract ideas must be demonstrated for him in a concrete way. "Concepts can never be given over to the child ready-made. They are not formed in the mind from verbal definitions or descriptions; they must grow up out of actual experience."<sup>3</sup> To understand the concept of kindness, he needs to see kindness working.

Along with the child's growth in the ability to use general ideas, there is development in his concept of God. It is believed by one authority that the materialistic ideas of God which children commonly hold until they are approximately six, begin to be spiritualized from the age of seven

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<sup>2</sup>Myrtle B. Creasman, Working With Juniors (Nashville: Sunday-school Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>George H. Betts & Marion O. Hawthorne, Method in Teaching Religion (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), p. 159.

to ten or perhaps twelve. Children are able to understand the character of God by seeing the various acts of God.<sup>4</sup>

One study, which measured children's comprehension of the precepts and parables of Jesus, found that there was little increase in comprehension between the years eight and eleven and between thirteen and sixteen. The period of greatest increase occurred from age eleven to thirteen. Subject matter involving insight and appreciation may be stressed during this period of growth in comprehension. The study also disclosed the fact that increase in comprehension of Biblical material was not dependent upon the child's attendance at Sunday-school and church. The pupil's score was not affected by the regularity of his own or his parents' attendance. The consistent increment in comprehension that occurred between ages eleven and thirteen, it was decided, indicates the development of native ability.<sup>5</sup>

Research by Gans on reading in the middle grades suggests that children of this group need more experiences in reflective reading. Gans found a distinct need for develop-

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<sup>4</sup>Lewis Joseph Sherrill, The Opening Doors of Childhood (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel P. Franklin, Measurement of the Comprehension Difficulty of the Precepts and Parables of Jesus (Vol. II, No. 1 of the University of Iowa Studies in Character, ed. Edwin D. Starbuck. Iowa City: Uni. of Iowa Press, 1924), p. 43.

ing the critical, selective power necessary for reference reading.<sup>6</sup>

Literalism. The Junior has a desire to know about real things. He is not nearly so interested now in fairy stories. He is able to distinguish fact from make-believe. His imagination comes under the control of the mind. He can place himself in the role of the hero he admires, but he no longer lives in the world of imagination as he did in younger childhood. The Junior's drive to investigate things for himself and exact the truth often makes him an extreme literalist.

Historic sense. Prior to the Junior age the child lives in a circumscribed world with a decidedly limited sense of past or future events. Concepts of past centuries are rarely grasped by children before the age of eleven.<sup>7</sup> It will be some time before the child can conceive historical events in one long process as adults are able to do.

In her study of the child's historic sense, Mrs. Barnes found it had a rapid development during the period from nine

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<sup>6</sup>A Study of Critical Reading Comprehension in the Intermediate Grades, 1940, cited by Harold G. Shane, Research Helps in Teaching the Language Arts (Washington D. C.: 1955), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>The Commission on the English Curriculum of the Nat'l Council of Teachers of English, Language Arts for Today's Children (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 35.

or ten to thirteen or fourteen.<sup>8</sup> Another writer believes that when a youngster enters into the Junior year he is ready to group historic events in Bible history. The significance of the Old and New Testaments in their relationship to each other now has meaning for him. He can begin to place Bible verses and persons in the proper time sequence in history.<sup>9</sup>

In helping him cultivate a feeling for the historic the wise teacher draws heavily on biography. History can perhaps be taught best to children of this age through this medium. For they are interested in stories which concern people of other years and their customs. It is a fact that history and geography are studied by public-school children in this period. Miss Ward, studying the geographical interests of several thousand children, found that boys and girls had a definite interest in places that were associated with human personalities.<sup>10</sup> Dawson found that the historical and geographical interests of more than a thousand children were prominent by the age of ten. He concluded that children from nine to thirteen or fourteen would be naturally interested in

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<sup>8</sup>Studies in Education, p. 43-52, 83-93, cited by George E. Dawson, The Child and His Religion (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909), p. 74.

<sup>9</sup>Lillian Moore Rice, Better Bible Teaching for Juniors (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 34.

<sup>10</sup>Education, Vol. XVIII, cited by Dawson, Loc. cit.

the historical and geographical parts of the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

## II. READING INTERESTS

The reading interests of children have been studied extensively over a period of at least twenty years. General patterns of interest appear consistently in various age groups. Such factors as sex and intelligence, it has been found, have a direct bearing upon children's reading interests and preferences.<sup>12</sup>

In the old, disciplinary school of education, the interests of children were not considered. Its attitude toward children's interests was expressed in the statement of Mr. Dooley that "it don't make any difference what ye teach children, provided they don't like it."<sup>13</sup> Today we recognize that interest is an important factor in improving reading skill and in encouraging habits of reading.

Heroic stories of action. Boys and girls want books that are full of action. Most studies of children's interests show that exciting adventure stories, humorous and mystery

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<sup>11</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>12</sup>Harold G. Shane, Research Helps in Teaching the Language Arts (Washington D. C.: 1955), p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>Edward St. John, Stories and Story-Telling (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1910), p. 55.

tales are rated at the top by children of this age. Lazar listed the following elements in accounting for the appeal of certain stories to pupils in grades four, five, and six: adventure, action, excitement, thrill, mystery, realism, child life, humor, animal life and nature, sportsmanship and bravery, sports and airplanes and other inventions.<sup>14</sup> Juniors are especially fond of the heroic in reading.

Terman and Lima found that the story preferences of boys and girls begin to diverge about the age of nine.<sup>15</sup> Boys then are eager to read stories of thrilling adventure, tales of heroism, animal stories, and realistic narrative. About the same age girls turn more to stories of home and school life, and to fairy tales. Both boys and girls like stories of childhood, stories of children like themselves, such as the story of Tom Sawyer.

Jordan studied the influence of intelligence, as well as sex, upon the reading interests of children. "Dull" boys were found to prefer fairy tales, school life, poetry, and mystery stories. The more intelligent children chose adven-

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<sup>14</sup>Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average, and Dull Children, 1937, cited by Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1949), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1931), p. 38.

ture tales and science magazines.<sup>16</sup>

Dawson made a careful study of Bible-material preferences of a thousand children: which Testament? which books of the Bible? scenes? stories? and characters? the person and work of Jesus? The information furnished by this study is important in helping teachers and parents to select Biblical passages that are suited to the mental capacity, interests, and needs of the Junior child. Some of Dawson's findings are now considered.

Choice of Testament. Even though teachers of the Bible to children seem to stress the New Testament more than the Old Testament, Dawson's study showed that both boys and girls from nine to fourteen prefer the Old Testament to the New. As early as the age of eight, forty per cent of the boys and twenty-eight per cent of the girls prefer the Old Testament. This interest holds through the Junior age, reaching a peak at the age of thirteen for boys and twelve for girls.<sup>17</sup> The preference for the Old Testament may be influenced by the fact that the first part of the Bible contains a much larger number of stories than does the second.

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<sup>16</sup>A. M. Jordan, "Children's Interests in Reading" School Journal 25:323-330; November, December 1940. Nigh

<sup>17</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 59.



Choice among the books of the Bible by Juniors. As might be anticipated, the historical books of the Bible rated high with pre-adolescent children, especially with boys. For the boys, interest in the historical books reaches its peak at age eleven, when sixty per cent express their preference for these. The peak of the girls' interest in these books is reached at thirteen with forty-six per cent choosing the historical category. Interest in the poetic books begins for the boys at age nine and reaches its maximum at fourteen. The same is true for the girls. There is some preference expressed by both boys and girls for the prophetic books.<sup>18</sup> Interest in the Gospels for some reason seems to decline during the Junior period.

Choice of Bible scenes, stories, and characters. Of the fifty-seven Bible scenes or pictures preferred, according to Dawson, twenty-six are from the Old Testament and thirty-one are from the New. The fifteen most popular scenes are listed in Table I.

The three most popular characters are from the New Testament. The most popular Old Testament characters are David, Moses, Joseph, and Daniel.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

TABLE I

CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES OF BIBLE SCENES<sup>20</sup>

Scenes	Boys	Girls	Total
1. Daniel in the Lions' Den	53	52	105
2. The Crucifixion	45	33	78
3. The Birth of Jesus	27	38	65
4. Jesus Blessing Little Children	13	42	55
5. The Lord's Supper	30	23	53
6. Feeding the Five Thousand	25	24	49
7. Jesus Walking on the Sea	10	27	37
8. The Resurrection	18	18	36
9. The Finding of Moses	13	21	34
10. The Raising of Lazarus	8	24	32
11. The Transfiguration	10	21	31
12. Jesus before the Wise Men	5	20	25
13. Jesus' Triumphal Entry	12	13	25
14. The Woman at the Well	15	10	25
15. The Stilling of the Tempest	12	12	24

<sup>20</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 78.

Interest in David is greatest in the pre-adolescent period. Its peak is reached at age twelve with the girls, remaining constant until fifteen. Then it declines rapidly. The boys' interest in David ranks highest at age fourteen, when it also declines rapidly.<sup>21</sup>

Interest in John the Disciple seems to be a major interest of boys and girls in the Junior age. From nine to thirteen it increases rapidly as far as the girls are concerned. With the boys, interest in John moves more slowly to a peak of interest at sixteen.<sup>22</sup>

The fifteen most popular Bible characters, chosen from a total of forty-five, together with the distribution of choices according to sex, are listed in Table II.

Of the thirty-eight Bible stories, listed in Dawson's questionnaire, five most popular are from the Old Testament. These stories possess the heroic, dramatic elements that appeal strongly to boys and girls of Junior age. The fifteen ranking highest in popularity may be found in Table III.

An interesting sidelight of the investigation is the fact that only one story of the fifteen most popular is based upon a miracle. Few boys and girls expressed a preference for miracles.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

TABLE II

CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES OF BIBLE CHARACTERS<sup>24</sup>

Scenes	Boys	Girls	Total
1. John the Disciple	48	104	152
2. Peter	48	77	125
3. Jesus	48	66	114
4. David	49	65	114
5. Moses	44	59	103
6. Paul	31	63	94
7. Joseph	32	43	75
8. Daniel	19	36	55
9. Samuel	13	17	30
10. Ruth	7	17	24
11. Elijah	16	8	24
12. Abraham	10	11	21
13. Solomon	11	9	20
14. John the Baptist	8	7	15
15. Mary the Mother of Jesus	4	11	15

<sup>24</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 81.

TABLE III

CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES OF BIBLE STORIES<sup>25</sup>

Scenes	Boys	Girls	Total
1. The Selling of Joseph	48	99	147
2. David and Goliath	50	50	100
3. Daniel and the Assyrian Kings	43	41	84
4. Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter	25	44	69
5. The Story of Ruth	10	41	51
6. The Prodigal Son	20	29	49
7. Story of Noah's Ark	15	23	38
8. Story of Jesus' Birth	20	18	38
9. The Calling of Samuel	16	16	32
10. Samson and the Philistines	20	7	27
11. The Flight into Egypt	3	15	18
12. Jonah and the Whale	10	7	17
13. Story of Esther	5	12	17
14. Changing Water into Wine	5	11	16

<sup>25</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 80.

Biographical elements rank high with children of all ages. About fifty per cent of the boys from age nine to eleven express a preference for characters. Scenes were next in their choice, then stories. Most of the scenes, as well as the stories, have their center of interest in persons. The girls preferred characters more than stories and scenes, the latter two being ranked about the same.

Development of interest in Jesus. At age nine, ten per cent of the boys expressed a preference for Jesus. This is the first indication of their interest in Jesus, the Adult. This interest increases to age fourteen and then declines. The interest of the girls' in Jesus as an adult begins at age eight with twenty per cent expressing a preference for Jesus. It reaches a peak at fifteen, with sixty per cent. Interest in Jesus as an adult seems to be an adolescent rather than a Junior interest.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 88.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE JUNIOR AND READABILITY

A fairly recent trend in public school education is the more careful grading of children's books according to level of difficulty. A number of techniques have been constructed for this purpose. Most of them are based upon word counts. The grader, in checking a given book, notes how frequently common and uncommon words are mentioned. He then attempts to determine at what grade level a child will be familiar with most of the words.

#### I. METHODS OF GRADING MATERIALS

Word books. The best example of a word book and the first comprehensive listing of words is Edward L. Thorndike's The Teacher's Word Book. The volume has been an outstanding reference for the grading of literature texts for more than thirty years. The book first appeared in 1921 with a list of 10,000 words. The revision of 1931 contained 20,000 words, while the edition of 1944 by Thorndike and Lorge included 30,000 words.

Other techniques. Various other techniques have been devised for use in evaluating the probable grade placement of reading materials. Vogel and Washburne made a detailed study of the vocabulary difficulty, sentence structure, parts of



of speech, paragraph construction, and physical make-up of 152 books chosen from the "Winnetka Graded Book List." A statistical evaluation of their results pointed out the fact that certain elements had strong predictive value: "number of prepositions (including duplicates) occurring in a 1000-word sampling," "number of different words occurring in a sampling of 1000 words," "number of different words (including duplicates) in a 1000-word sampling not occurring in Thorndike's lists," and "number of simple sentences in seventy-five sample sentences." A formula which was based upon this data was then constructed. This was later revised by Washburne and Morphett (1938).<sup>1</sup>

Lorenz reported in 1929 a method of measuring reading difficulty that was based upon the percentage of words beginning with w, h, b, i, and e. Johnson developed one of the simplest measures of difficulty based upon the percentage of polysyllabic words.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the studies on word counts, publishers exercised much care in the vocabularies of textbooks from the period of 1925 to about 1940. As a consequence, words of

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Gray, "Teaching of Reading," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1952, p. 994.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 993.

basic vocabularies would be repeated so often in a text that the child would lose interest in the stories he was reading. It became evident also that it was practically impossible to build new concepts on the limited vocabularies of these textbooks. Recent studies in the field have shown that restricted vocabulary in textbooks can have dangerous effects in learning.<sup>3</sup>

## II. FACTORS IN READING COMPREHENSION

One authority has pointed out that a word which appears infrequently in print is not necessarily a difficult word. Thorndike did not say that the common words are the easiest to understand, that the uncommon words are the most difficult. Words appearing at the bottom of the lists as more difficult, such as "bumblebee," "popcorn," etc., are well-known to most children. Other words found commonly in print, such as "according," are rather difficult for the child to understand.<sup>4</sup>

Learning words from context. In spite of the application of readability formulas to books, children will some-

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<sup>3</sup>Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Rudolf F. Flesch, The Art of Plain Talk (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 173.

times read with ease what has been rated "difficult" and sometimes have difficulty in understanding what is suppose to be easy for them. It was found that ninth-grade boys read and liked Ivanhoe, The Call of the Wild, and Treasure Island books that are rated on the reading level of 16-years olds. Flesch believes that the people who produce textbooks mainly from the standpoint of vocabulary level fail to recognize that boys and girls are likely to grasp from the context the meanings of most difficult words. He asserts that this contextual understanding is actually the most natural way of learning new words, and of enabling the child to expand his vocabulary.<sup>5</sup> Thorndike and Lorge endorse this practice when they say that older children learn new words mainly from the context, the dictionary, or through explanation, as needed.<sup>6</sup>

Readability formulas. Extensive work has been done in the field of readability measurement during recent years by Dale and Tyler, Gray and Leary, Lorge, Flesch, and Dale and Chall.<sup>7</sup> Most investigators recognize that not all factors which have a bearing on readability have been isolated.

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<sup>5</sup>Flesch, op. cit., p. 172-77.

<sup>6</sup>Edward L. Thorndike and Irving Lorge, The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 words, 1944, cited by Witty, Loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>William S. Gray, op. cit. p. 994.

There are some groups, however, who are attempting to create materials for various levels of ability on the basis of experimental findings thus far.

Such a guide as Flesch's The Art of Plain Talk has been used to improve the readability of materials. Several authorities have found Flesch's formula the easiest one to apply; it is limited to the upper grades and to adult materials.<sup>8</sup> Flesch bases his measure for readability upon factors other than a vocabulary count.

Factors in readability. Investigations have been carried on for the past twenty-five years to discover factors in measuring readability. Lorge's list of some of the elements in readability measurement is as follows:

1. Some measure of vocabulary (always used)
  - a. Number of running words
  - b. Percentage of different words
  - c. Percentage of different, infrequent, uncommon or hard words
  - d. Percentage of polysyllabic words
  - e. Some weighted measure of vocabulary difficulty
  - f. Vocabulary diversity (related to b)
  - g. Number of abstract words
  - h. Number of affixed morphemes (prefixes, inflectional endings, etc.)

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<sup>8</sup>Lester R. Wheeler and Edwin H. Smith, "Practical Readability Formula for the Classroom Teacher in the Primary Grades" Elementary English, November 1954, p. 397-99.

<sup>9</sup>Irving Lorge, "Predicting Readability" Teach Col Rec 45:404-19; 1944.

2. Some measure of sentence structure of style (usually used)
  - a. Percentage of prepositional phrases
  - b. Percentage of indeterminate clauses
  - c. Number of simple sentences
  - d. Average of sentence length
  
3. Some measure of human interest (much less frequently used)
  - a. Number of personal pronouns
  - b. Number of words expressing human interest
  - c. Percentage of colorful words
  - d. Number of words representing fundamental life-experiences
  - e. Number of words usually learned early in life (related to b)<sup>9</sup>

The elements which make up, to a great extent, Flesch's "Yardstick formula" are here reviewed briefly.

Abstract words. One measure of readability, so far as vocabulary is concerned, is the number of abstract words in a passage. Scientific and literary prose is harder to read than other types of writing, because the character of its language tends to be abstract--complex. The use of root words, and verbs in particular, makes reading more simple. Flesch contends that one of the greatest weaknesses of modern English writers is the failure to make good use of verbs.<sup>10</sup> He points out that the power, movement, and beauty of a speech by Brutus and a passage from the Book of Job come from the

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<sup>9</sup>Large, Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Flesch, op. cit., p. 67.

Book of Job come from the succession of active verbs. In the latter passages referred to the ratio is twenty active verbs to eleven passive verbs.<sup>11</sup>

The Bible becomes more readable in proportion to the number of concrete, root words employed. Although the Hebrew people were possessed of lofty ideas and spiritual concepts, they expressed these thoughts in a simple, pictorial manner. They did not use abstract words or analytical terms. The nature of the Hebrew language, of course, helped to prevent this, for its vocabulary lacks abstract terms. Compound words, moreover, are almost unknown to the early Hebrew tongue. Even the adjectives are derived from the names of the objects which possess or produce them. The verb occupies a place of major importance in the Hebrew language. Action is predominate in Hebrew speech. In comparing the proportion of words to their roots, it was estimated that the Greek has fifty times as many words as it has roots, while the Hebrew has only five times as many. Hebrew words have never advanced much beyond their basic, root stage.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Flesch, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>12</sup>George Adam Smith, The Early Poetry of Israel in Its Physical and Social Origins (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 7.

Affixes. Another measure of word difficulty employed by Flesch in his readability formula is the number of affixes. He considers parts of words, or affixes, to be "language gadgets." The more affixes there are in a portion of material, the more difficult it is to read. According to Flesch, thirty-seven per 100 words is the standard number of affixes for the average reader. The King James Version of the Bible has about twenty affixes per 100 words, the usual number for very easy prose.<sup>13</sup>

Short sentences. The average sentence length, measured in terms of words, is to be considered in measuring readability. Very easy prose is usually written in sentences of about eight words. The average reader will find materials readable in which sentences average about seventeen words.<sup>14</sup>

Human interest. A fourth standard of readability, which Flesch emphasizes, is the measure of human interest. It has been found that material which contains many personal references is much easier to read than that which does not. Although modern languages have moved toward abstraction, many of them have retained the male and female genders for impersonal objects. Human interest is an important ingredient for

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<sup>13</sup>Flesch, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

easy reading. "The name of a person in a sentence is like a guide through a strange building."<sup>15</sup>

Flesch found that there are approximately six personal references per 100 words in the feature articles of popular magazines; and that very easy prose, such as love stories in pulp magazines, runs about twenty personal references in 100 words, meaning that about every fifth word in this type of fiction refers to a person.<sup>16</sup> Yet difficult scientific writing may not have any personal references at all. Interest in persons was definitely a contributing factor to the readability of the Scriptures. On the whole, the number of personal references in the Bible was found to be twenty per 100 words.

Flesch gives an example of how the Reading Ease Score and Human Interest Score may be obtained on a given passage. The passage which he treats in this way is Matthew 6: 25-29:

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on./ Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?/"

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<sup>15</sup>Flesch, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 56.



"Behold the fowls of the air:/ for they sow not,  
neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;/ yet your  
heavenly Father feedeth them./ Are ye not much better  
than they?/"

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit  
unto his stature?/"

"And why take ye thought for raiment?/ Consider  
the lilies of the field, how<sup>100</sup> they grow;/ they toil  
not, neither do they spin./

"And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all  
his glory was not arrayed like one of these."/17

The Reading Ease score is determined, says Flesch, on the basis of two factors: the average sentence length and the average word length. The average sentence length is found by dividing the total number of words in the sample (129 words in this sample) by the number of sentences (in this case, 11), which gives the average words per sentence (12 words per sentence in this passage).

The average sentence length is determined by dividing the total number of syllables by the total number of words and multiplying the result by 100. Flesch found 122 syllables per 100 words in the sample passage from Matthew. When

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<sup>17</sup>Rudolf Flesch, How to Test Readability (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 11.

the words per sentence and syllables per 100 words have been obtained, the Reading Ease score may then be figured on a chart devised for this purpose in Flesch's How to Test Readability.<sup>18</sup> The Reading Ease score of the passage given as a sample is 91 or "easy to read." A score of 90 to 100 would be rated, by Flesch's criteria, on the level of the fifth grade.

The Human Interest score of a passage is figured on the basis of the number of "personal words" per 100 words and the number of "personal sentences" per 100 sentences, when using the method devised by Flesch. Personal words include all pronouns referring to persons, all words with a masculine or feminine gender, and group words which refer to people. The number of personal words in the passage just considered (those that are underlined) is seventeen. Personal sentences include spoken sentences; questions, commands and requests; exclamations; and incomplete sentences or sentence fragments of conversation. The number of personal sentences in the sample given from the Bible is eleven. The Human Interest score, figured on the basis of personal words and personal sentences, is fifty-one, or "very interesting" according to Flesch's chart, "How Interesting?"<sup>19</sup>

Flesch's Reading Ease and Human Interest measures

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<sup>18</sup>Flesch, How to Test Readability, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

constitute a type of device teachers may use to determine for a given passage its approximate reading level or difficulty and its degree of interest.

Background orientation. A factor of prime importance in comprehension is the reader's background of related experience. Unless he is able to relate his own experiences in some way to the concepts or situations presented by the author, it is impossible for an individual to comprehend fully the material read. Since most of the Bible's background is foreign to the child's experience, it is necessary for the Junior to be orientated, particularly in the realm of Old Testament ethical standards and Oriental customs.

When such orientation is given, the child's understanding of Bible passages will be increased. Background orientation may be enjoyable as well as instructional; for Juniors are interested in the customs and lives of other people. Since children of this age are learning to use reference books in school, they will like to participate in a project of learning for themselves the customs of the Oriental people. Explaining the background of the Bible, moreover, will help to make the people and events of the Scriptures real to boys and girls. Betts tells of one lady who did not realize until she was in her teens that the stories of the

Bible dealt with actual peoples and places.<sup>20</sup>

Failure to find reality in Bible stories may be due to the child's lack of ability to see the relationship of Bible history to the total picture of world events. The events of the Bible are generally studied only at church, whereas the events of secular history are studied only at school. This writer feels that although the child of Junior age is not yet ready for the teaching of Biblical history in a large chronological setting, he can be helped to correlate smaller units of sacred history with units of secular history.

Scriptural accounts in the Old Testament of natural or personal ethics which do not seem to be in harmony with the teachings of Jesus should be explained to the child. He can be brought to appreciate the Bible as a Book that honestly records life as it was lived as well as a Book that both by precept and example points to the highest ethical standards. Juniors do not respect a "goody-goody" hero; they are interested in stories of real men and women who overcome great obstacles.

Importance of proper selection. Dora Chaplin tells of helping an eight year old child pack her trunk for camp.

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<sup>20</sup>George H. Betts and Marion O. Hawthorne, Method in Teaching Religion (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), p. 179.

When the little girl was asked if she wanted to take the Bible she had recently received at Sunday-school, she confided in a grave manner: "I don't want to hurt God's feelings, but the Bible is an awfully long book, isn't it?"<sup>21</sup>

The Bible is long. Not all parts of the Bible are of equal value in the teaching of children. This is illustrated by the fact that the entire Bible has never been covered in a series of Sunday-school lessons. A survey of the International Uniform Lessons over a period of forty-two years shows that only thirty-five per cent of the Bible was incorporated into lessons for teaching in the Sunday-school. This is true not only of the Uniform Lessons but of the International Graded Lessons as well. The latter series has used a little more than sixty-two per cent of the Bible over a period of fourteen years.<sup>22</sup>

The proper selection and adaptation of Bible materials for use with various age groups calls for a great deal of study. As yet, there has not been a careful, scientific study of the value of various parts of the Bible for children. Betts, however, suggests certain tentative principles

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<sup>21</sup>Dora P. Chaplin, Children and Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 109.

<sup>22</sup>Betts, op. cit., p. 144.

of selection:

1. For childhood and youth, who do not yet possess critical ability or the historical sense, biblical materials (especially those drawn from the OT) should be selected to represent a distinctly Christian point of view. Do they represent a Christian idea of God? Christian in standards of social living? Of personal morals and conduct?

2. Biblical materials should be so selected as to set forth the great lives (especially that of Jesus) which define Christianity in the concrete. We are not to forget that life responds to life, and that character is seldom formed or reformed on the basis of abstract truth or general theory.

3. Among Biblical materials chosen should be those that stimulate, nourish, and guide the devotional life.<sup>23</sup>

Some authorities suggest that the parables of Jesus may best be taught to children beyond the Junior age. Until they reach the age of twelve, children generally may have difficulty comprehending the parables. The child is likely to interpret them too literally, yet the parable story itself is very concrete. Under wise guidance a number of these stories can be made the basis for solid ethical instruction. One study found that the parable of "The Good Samaritan" is understood at least five years earlier than the parable of "The Sower."<sup>24</sup> Care is to be exercised that the parable

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<sup>23</sup>Betts, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel P. Franklin, Measure of the Comprehension Difficulty of the Precepts & Parables of Jesus (Vol. II, No. 1 of the Uni. of Iowa Studies in Character, ed. Edwin D. Starbuck, Iowa City: Uni. of Iowa Press, 1924), p. 42.

chosen is not too involved in its teaching implication.

The precepts of Jesus should be used with regard to the maturity of the Junior in this stage of his ability to comprehend relatively difficult material. It has been found that the precepts are more difficult to understand at all mental ages than the parables.<sup>25</sup>

The teaching of miracles to the Junior involves some adaptation too. Powell at this point suggests:

"It is probably well not so to stress the miraculous element during the Junior period as to leave the impression that the laws which God has made for his world are easily set aside. The Junior can understand too that life holds some miracles which no one has yet understood."<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, Porter believes that if stories of miracles are presented as a departure from natural law through divine power, the child will accept this without serious doubts.<sup>27</sup>

This writer feels that it is important that the Junior be brought to accept the fact of the miraculous without question. When it is pointed out to him that nature is God's

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<sup>25</sup>Franklin, Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Marie Cole Powell, Junior Method in the Church School (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1923), p. 74.

<sup>27</sup>Edward Porter St. John, Stories and Story-Telling (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1919), p. 61.

ordinary way of doing things, and miracle his extraordinary way of doing things, he need not be bewildered over the question of miracle.

In the matter of selection for Juniors, passages which can help the child to a better concept of God are particularly desirable. Those portions of Scripture which might be difficult to explain to Juniors should be reserved for a later period of youth. Psalm 35:1 is an example of a difficult passage for Junior boys and girls:

Strive thou, O Jehovah, with them that strive:  
Fight thou against them that fight against me.  
Take hold of shield and buckler,  
And stand up for my help.  
Draw out also the spear and stop the way against  
them that pursue me.

There are a number of Psalms which may be used with young people of Junior age. Psalm 84 is an example of a passage which teaches the concept of God as One in whom we can put our trust:

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!  
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts  
of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the  
living God.  
Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swal-  
low a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,  
even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.  
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will  
still be praising thee. Selah.  
Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in  
whose heart are the ways of thine.



Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Other Psalms to be recommended for use with Juniors

are: 8, 19, 23, 24, 67, 93, 100, 104, 121, 125, and 148.

## CHAPTER V

### GUIDING THE JUNIOR IN THE USE OF THE BIBLE

It is not enough that Juniors reverence the Bible as the Word of God; if the Word is to function effectively in their religious education they must study it and seek to apply its truths to their own experiences. The present chapter has to do with this problem of the Junior's studying the Bible.

#### I. GUIDANCE IN STUDY

Owning a Bible. Juniors as well as children in other stages of development take pride in possessing things. Many children acquire their first Bible or Testament while in the Junior department of the Sunday-school. This personal ownership of a Bible can do much to foster reading interest. It is true that in the latter part of the Junior period many boys feel embarrassed to carry a Bible to Sunday-school. A small-size Bible may often remedy this situation.<sup>1</sup>

Workers in one Junior department of a Sunday-school discovered that an attractive cover for the Bible did much to increase the child's interest in reading it. When the group was presented with Bibles, they were given material with

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<sup>1</sup>Emma A. Robinson, The Junior Worker and His Work (Chicago: Jennings and Graham, 1911), p. 73.

which to make Bible covers. The boys in general chose pictures of their favorite Bible characters for covers; the girls chose brightly-colored scenes.<sup>2</sup>

Children like Bibles that contain pictures. Studies have revealed that the skillful placement of good pictures in a text can be a contributing factor to reading comprehension.<sup>3</sup> The influence of Biblical art is disclosed by the fact that the child's conception of a story is often determined more by a picture than by the words.<sup>4</sup>

Importance of Bible knowledge. Many boys and girls have almost no foundation in elementary Bible knowledge. But this condition is not surprising when it is learned that among adults the lack of even a rudimentary acquaintance with Scripture is decried by church leaders generally. A Bible test was given to a group of college graduates who were planning to enter the ministry. The questions were not difficult. Some were as simple as 'What baby was found in a cradle by a stream?' and 'Who sang the Magnificat?' The highest percentage scored by these pre-ministrial students was forty; one of the scores was as low as three per cent.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Alfred L. Murray, Psychology for Christian Teachers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1953), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>William S. Gray, "Factors Related to Growth in Comprehension" Encyclopedia of Educational Research (1952), p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Murray, Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Dora P. Chaplin, Children and Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 115.

In order to read the Bible intelligently, Juniors should know how the Bible was written. They will be interested in the heroic struggles of those who prepared and preserved the Word through the ages. This information will generate attitudes of respect and reverence for the Book. Boys and girls of this age should also know the names of the books of the Bible and their classification. An opportunity to examine and to use, under supervision, a few different versions of the Scripture would be of value even at this age.

Since children of Junior age begin the study of history and geography in their secular education, they are ready to begin the study of the geography of Bible lands. They are by now also eager to know about manners and customs of peoples of far-off times.

Goals. Children of the Junior age like to initiate and carry out their own study projects. In this connection the teacher must see to it that from the beginning a specific teaching aim is settled on. Murray adds, "A goal is important in that it gives the pupil the needed incentive for doing his utmost. One can toss a weight farther when he is striving to reach a mark."<sup>7</sup> Often boys and girls are capable of choosing their own goals. They do need guidance, however,

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<sup>6</sup>Lillian Moore Rice, Better Bible Teaching for Juniors (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup>Murray, op. cit., p. 86.

in the manner of achieving goals.

It is to be remembered that children are motivated more by present than by future goals. They want their immediate needs to be met through the activities of today. They are little concerned about the responsibilities of tomorrow.

The teacher may suggest several projects or topics for study, permitting the pupils to select the one that appeals to them most. He may then help them arrange for the actual working out of their project. If the children decide to study the life of Moses for the purpose of dramatizing it or with the idea of compiling "a book" of pictures and stories on the life of Moses, the children may themselves agree on who will read those portions of the Bible that are to furnish necessary information. Such a cooperative venture will give Junior boys and girls excellent experience in the planning and execution of purposeful activity.

Making assignments. In order to establish the habit of reading the Bible at home, reading assignments for Juniors must be made. Comparatively few Sunday-school teachers ever assign home study. Because some pupils dislike the idea of studying at home, the teacher assumes that making assignments is useless. But an assignment, effectively given, can "stimulate learning and guide the learning and guide the

learning process."<sup>8</sup>

Betts has suggested five steps which the teacher should regard in the making of an assignment:

1. Plan the work in sufficient detail to make possible clearly defined tasks for the pupils to perform in connection with each lesson.
2. Go over with the pupils the assigned task, raising in it new problems, making clear to them the aim and scope of the lesson, pointing out its difficulties, and relating the work to that which has preceded and that which is to follow.
3. Provide the pupils with adequate directions as how to fulfill the assignment.
4. Make use of the assigned task in the planning and execution of the following lesson. Frequently teachers fail at this point, and their pupils lose interest in performing elaborate assignments that are never made use of or reported on.
5. Supply adequate motivation for study. When the lesson is presented and the assignment made from the standpoint of the pupils' needs, the pupils will find satisfaction and pleasure in performing the assigned task.<sup>9</sup>

Juniors are more apt to be interested in carrying out home study if they have a part in planning the work and if they are helped to see the fun and value of the task. Teachers who appeal mainly to the pupil's sense of duty, and who fail to arouse pupil interest and cooperation will meet rebellion in assigning home tasks. The teacher's own enthusiasm for a

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<sup>8</sup>Joseph M. Gettys, How to Teach the Bible (John Knox Press: Richmond, 1949), p. 69.

<sup>9</sup>George H. Betts and Marion O. Hawthorne, Method in Teaching Religion (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), p. 297.

project is likely to be contagious. It can very materially help to condition the pupil to a desire to wholehearted participation.

## II. MOTIVATION IN BIBLE READING

Choric speaking. One way of stimulating children's interest in reading the Bible is to have the group read passages aloud in concert. This may be of particular benefit to those boys and girls who have difficulty in reading individually. The teacher may submit several Bible passages to the pupils for their consideration. When a new passage is chosen to use for choric speaking, the teacher should go over it carefully with the boys and girls, discussing its meaning and pronouncing unfamiliar words.<sup>10</sup> The time that the teacher spends in helping the pupils become familiar with the Scripture portions before practice is started will do much to insure wholesome participation. After the group has had some practice in choric speaking, they may present their 'concert' to parents or to other departments of the Sunday-school.

The contrast of boys and girls voices may be used to good advantage in choric reading. Solo work too can be used effectively.

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<sup>10</sup>Mary Alice Jones, Training Juniors in Worship (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1927), p. 126.

As an example of a passage that may be used, the writer submits Psalm 24, a piece that in her opinion lends itself admirably to choric speaking. Presumably, this Psalm was used when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Temple. The children could be encouraged to discover for themselves what the Temple was like, how the Temple services were conducted, and what the work of the priests, Levites, and others consisted of. Some might like to learn about the types of musical instruments used, what they looked like, and how they sounded. Those children with artistic ability could draw pictures of the various kinds of instruments. Some could make a diagram of the Temple chambers. Still others might discover the type of costumes worn by the participants in the services. Juniors would be interested in learning about the Ark of the Covenant and its use in the services of the Temple. The obtaining of such information should encourage further reading of the Scriptures. In point would be read such passages as Exodus 25, Joshua 3 and 6, I Samuel 4 and 6, II Samuel 6 and 15, and I Kings 8.

Psalm 24 itself might be treated for choric speaking as follows:

**PRIESTS:**

1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.

**LEVITES:**

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established  
it upon the floods.



PRIESTS:

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or  
who shall stand in his holy place?

LEVITES:

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who  
hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn  
deceitfully.

CROWD OF PEOPLE AROUND AND ON THE WALLS:

5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and  
righteousness from the God of his salvation.

PRIESTS:

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that  
seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

LEVITES:

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up,  
ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall  
come in.

PRIESTS:

LEVITES:

8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and  
mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

PRIESTS:

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up,  
ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall  
come in.

LEVITES:

ALL:

10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he  
is the King of glory. Selah.

In the interest of variety in choric reading, several kinds of voices could be used in speaking certain Psalms. For instance, Psalm 23 and Psalm 1 may well be rendered by using three kinds of voices: light, medium and deep. Again, for variation Psalm 121, the Pilgrim Psalm, could be spoken by two groups journeying toward Jerusalem.

Story dramatization. If Juniors are given opportunities to present some of the Bible stories in dramatic form, they are likely to find reading the Scriptures an interesting exercise.

They could be helped in preparing their own dramatic

versions of Bible stories. If most of the speaking lines are taken from the Scriptures, the stories and events will become more fixed in the mind than in the case of a mere casual reading of the lines.

In playing the roles of admirable Biblical heroes, Juniors will gain insight into what constitutes worthy character traits and desirable behavior. Stage costumes and properties will challenge the child's powers of invention and give orientation to Bible backgrounds.

Dramatization of a favorite Bible story may be the culmination of several weeks of interested and intensive Bible and may be the means of encouraging desire for more work in kind.

Story-telling. Another instructional activity which may well motivate Bible reading is the telling of favorite stories by Junior boys and girls themselves. This would involve less time and preparation than in the case of choric speaking and dramatization. It can, moreover, be easily adapted to the regular Sunday-school hour.

Favorite Bible story titles (cf. page ) and their references may be printed on slips of paper and folded and placed in a box. Juniors will enjoy the suspense of drawing a story to tell. These may then be scheduled for several weeks in advance, each child relating a story a Sunday. A

brief true-false or completion quiz based upon the story will motivate the rest of the class to listen carefully. The teacher may use the quiz to emphasize the significant truths of the Bible story.

Maps, charts and pictures. Since Junior boys and girls will be using maps in their secular study of geography, the Sunday-school teacher may stimulate Bible reading by capitalizing on this new interest and experience. A simple outline of Palestine with its major divisions could be drawn on a white window shade or other large type of paper. Rivers, lakes, mountains, and related cities and towns may be indicated. A small picture or symbol might be drawn along the border of the map and connected to the related area by lines or corresponding numbers.

If the children choose to make individual notebooks based on a certain series of lessons, each could draw a smaller map. These maps may be referred to again and again in the course. The experience of locating areas about which they are reading and relating events to these areas will make the Bible come to life for them.

Charts of daily or weekly Bible readings will serve to remind pupils to be faithful and regular in reading. A large chart for the classroom may be used to record each member's weekly reading achievement. Charts of smaller size, to be placed in the child's Bible or notebook, could serve as a

motivating factor in daily readings at home. When seals are used and the color or type changed periodically, variety will be added to the mechanics of procedure.

Pictures will add interest to Bible reading. They can be used in presenting a story to be studied. The teacher presents a number of pictures, asking the class to relate the stories they represent. They can also be used in a review of the Bible stories read.

Most Juniors enjoy illustrating Bible stories. Pictures depicting Oriental life and customs are a valuable teaching device in clarifying the child's concepts of the people who lived in Bible times. Such pictures, and perhaps some handwork, could be displayed at the end of a unit of study.

Competition. The spirit of rivalry, characteristic of Juniors, could be used widely to encourage participation in a program of Bible reading. The Sunday-school teacher may provide occasions for the Junior to compete either with himself or as a member of a group. A Junior class of boys might compete with a Junior class of girls in the faithfulness of its members to participate in daily Bible reading. Small awards might be offered to each boy or girl who improves his or her reading record of a previous month.

### III. SUGGESTED PASSAGES FOR JUNIORS

Old Testament Stories. As we have seen from the

material previously presented on children's preferences in Bible stories, the Junior chooses his stories more frequently from the Old Testament than from the New Testament. Just why this is so is not altogether clear. Certainly Old Testament stories are absorbingly interesting narratives connected with the lives of many Old Testament saints. A study of Junior-age preference of Bible characters found these names to be most popular: David, Moses, Daniel, Samuel, Ruth, Elijah, Abraham, and Solomon.

Among stories from the Old Testament which were found to be most popular with Juniors are "The Selling of Joseph," "David and Goliath," "Daniel and the Assyrian Kings," "Moses and Pharoah's Daughter," and "The Story of Ruth" (cf. p.23 ).

A check of the readability of the story of "The Selling of Joseph" according to Flesch's measure gives the following information:

Reading Ease Score	Description of Style	Syllables per 100 Words	Average Sentence Length
83	Easy	14	130

The story of "David and Goliath," the second most popular Old Testament story, is rated according to Flesch's measures as follows:

Reading Ease Score	Description of Style	Syllables per 100 Words	Average Sentence Length
85	Easy	11	130

The measure of human interest in these two most popular Old Testament stories would be graded by Flesch's formula in this way:

	Human Interest Score	Description of Style	Percent "Personal Words"	Percent "Personal Sentences"
Joseph:	100	Dramatic	28	35
David:	40	Interesting	11	0

These and other passages may be used to help Junior boys and girls to see the consequences of right and wrong choices. They are valuable also in teaching lessons of kindness, gratitude, unselfishness, love and forgiveness.

New Testament Stories. In the New Testament there are adventure stories from the life of Paul and from the life of Jesus. Though it is not advisable to relate the life of Christ in sequence to Primary children, the connected story of His life may be presented to Juniors.

Jesus as leader of the Twelve appeals strongly to boys and girls of this age. He is seen as Lord and Master in His power over the elements, in His kindness to those in need, in His sternness with the dishonest, and in His ability to command the love and respect of multitudes. Since the Junior's life is one of constant activity, he will be impressed with the amazing activity of the life of Christ. He will see in Jesus' life the pattern for his own.

The most popular characters of the New Testament, according to one study of Junior preferences (cf. p. 22), are John the Disciple, Peter, Jesus, Paul, John the Baptist, and Mary the Mother of Jesus.

The same study reports the most popular stories of the New Testament as chosen by Juniors to be the story of "Jesus' Birth," "Changing Water into Wine," and "The Good Samaritan."

The readability scores of the two most popular New Testament stories, "Jesus' Brith," and "Changing Water into Wine," are given as follows:

#### READABILITY SCORES OF TWO NEW TESTAMENT STORIES

	Reading Ease Score	Description of Style	Syllables per 100 Words	Average Sentence Length
Jesus' Birth:	88	Easy	120	17
Water-Wine	79	Easy	130	11

A 200-word sampling of each of these four favorite Bible stories indicates that the stories are on sixth grade reading level (cf. p. 23). In terms of human interest they rate from medium to high, according to the measure devised by Flesch.

The work of specialists in Bible reading comprehension should alert Sunday-school teachers to the importance of using a guided study plan in directing the Bible readings of Junior boys and girls.

Suggested Bible passages for worship services. Several writers have suggested certain passages for use with Juniors in worship and devotional reading. Betts recommends the following portions:

Psalm 19:1-6 The works of God in nature  
 Psalm 121 God the Protector  
 Psalm 100 A song of thanks  
 Luke 2:8-15 The coming of the shepherds  
 Matt. 2:9-12 The story of the Wise Men  
 Luke 10:25-37 The good Samaritan<sup>11</sup>

Passages relating to particular worship topics are furnished by Jones:

1. God's love, care and good gifts--  
     Psalm 65:9-13  
         95:1-6  
         104:10-14, 16-20a, 22-27, 33  
     Matthew 6:25-33  
     Psalm 23  
         121  
         147:1,4,5,8,9,12
2. God's power, majesty and holiness--  
     Psalm 96:1-10  
         113:1-5a  
         135:1-3, 5-7, 13, 15-19a  
         136:1-9, 25, 26  
         148:1-13
3. God's universal reign--  
     Isaiah 2:2-4  
     Psalm 67:1-7  
         97:1,6,7,9-12
4. The Church--  
     Psalm 15:1-5  
         84:1,2,4,10-12  
         100  
     Isaiah 40:28-31

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<sup>11</sup>Betts, op. cit., p. 469.



5. World brotherhood--
  - Matthew 25:34-40
  - 28:18-20
  - Luke 2:8-16
  - 10:25-37
  - 19:1-10
  - Romans 10:11-15
  - James 2:1-5,8,9
  - Luke 17:11-19
6. Showing loyalty to Jesus--
  - Matthew 5:43-47; 7:12
  - John 14:21,24; 15:12,14
  - Ephesians 4:25-32
  - James 1:16,17,22,26,27
7. The life of Jesus--
  - Matthew 2:1-20
  - Luke 2:8-20
  - Luke 2:40-51
  - Mark 1:21-42
  - Luke 22:39-42, 32-49
  - Luke 24:1-12<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 190.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

The Junior age is highly significant for establishing the habit of regular Bible reading. It is the verdict of many who guide the religious education of youth that if the habit of reading the Bible is not developed during this period, the likelihood of its later acquisition is remote.

Sunday-school teachers should not expect Junior boys and girls to read the Bible from a sense of duty alone. Motivation is the key factor in fostering habits of daily Bible reading. Devices such as choric speaking, dramatization, story-telling, activities for service, directed competition, maps, charts, and pictures can help the teacher in fostering motivation. To make the Bible meaningful, regularly assigned Bible readings, built on Junior interest can be correlated with project and other type activity units.

To promote the Bible reading habit among Juniors, the teacher must be able to guide them to those passages that are related to their interests and reading comprehension at this age. Investigative inquiries into children's interests and into their ability to comprehend reading materials, and the public school's attempt to grade children's books according

to word difficulty have alerted workers in Christian education to greater possibilities in using the Bible with Juniors.

There are several questions arising out of this study that remain to be answered by future investigations.

The fact, as shown by several studies, that Juniors prefer stories from the Old Testament to those from the New should cause educators in the field of religious instruction to speculate on the reasons for this. Is it due wholly to the fact that the Old Testament is intrinsically interesting to children of the Junior age? that it contains more stories of the "blood and thunder" type which appeal greatly to Junior boys and girls?

It would be interesting also to know whether or not further studies of children's preferences of Bible characters would be similar to the order arising out of Dawson's investigation referred to earlier in this paper. Why were John the Disciple and Peter chosen in preference to Jesus? Does our teaching of the life of Christ neglect to emphasize for Juniors those courageous, daring qualities which should make Him most appealing to older children generally? Or does it tend rather to present Jesus as a mild, meek-mannered "Shepherd of the lambs"? If this is the Juniors' impression of Christ, then are not we failing to give Juniors a true picture of One in whom they can find all the qualities of character on which the Christian life is to be built.

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