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Check This Out: *The Jesus Storybook Bible*

Isn't it great to be aware of the Trinitarian love, life and plan that God shares with all humanity? If you're like me, you're reading the Bible with new eyes, seeing hints, stories, parallels, metaphors, history, and prophecies that tell an amazing interlocking Story. Wouldn't it have been great to be introduced to these concepts when we were kids, during those critical formative years when children and adolescents learn foundations that shape the rest of their lives? What if there were a children's Bible book that parents, grandparents and Sunday School teachers could use to introduce and inspire kids with God's Trinitarian Master Plan?

I've been involved in children's and youth ministry for over 30 years, and I just discovered the best children's Bible book I've ever read. It's called *The Jesus Storybook Bible—Every Story Whispers His Name*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones and published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 2007

What makes this book special?

While some Bible story books end each chapter with a good moral lesson, it's been frustrating to me that the authors missed the opportunity to tie in each specific story to God's bigger Story: the Trinitarian love of God from eternity and into eternity personalized in the humanity of Jesus. I was excited when I read the back cover of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* that explains the universal picture the author shares:

The Jesus Storybook Bible tells the Story beneath all the stories in the Bible. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby, the Child upon whom everything would depend. From Noah to Moses to King David, every story whispers his name. Jesus is like the missing piece in a puzzle—the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together. Beautifully written and illustrated, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* invites children to discover for themselves that Jesus is at the center of God's great Story of salvation—and at the center of their story, too.

Did you catch that? "Every story whispers his name." Each chapter gives a clear reference to God's Son, the Lamb, the Prince, the Rescuer to come. Even with all the disobedience by man and disappointment of God recounted in the Bible stories, the author of this book repeats the refrain of the "Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love" of God.

For example, As Adam and Eve left the garden after sinning, God whispered a promise: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you! And he would. One day, God himself would come."

How about this ending to the story of the Tower of Babel? "You see, God knew, however high they reached, however hard they tried, people could never get back to heaven by themselves. People didn't need a staircase; they needed a Rescuer. Because the way back to heaven wasn't a staircase; it was a Person. People could never reach up to Heaven, so Heaven would have to come down to them. And one day, it would."

And in the New Testament, the stories continue to echo the Jesus-centered Story. This book

tells about the apostle Paul's mindset and teachings near the end of his life: "God loves us! He wrote from prison. 'Nothing can ever—no, not ever!—separate us from the Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love of God he showed us in Jesus!' And so it was, just as God promised Abraham that dark night all those years before, the family of God's children grew and grew. Until one day, they would come to number more than even all the stars in the sky."

Wow! What an amazing Story! And to think that my story, your story, everyone's story are all integral parts of God's Big Story.

The book is recommended for ages 4-7, but I believe adolescents, teens, middle-aged and senior adults will appreciate the simple but profound telling of the Story in a fresh way. And the illustrations are eye-catching and sumptuous. This is a great book for parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers and youth ministers to read to young people, and it makes a great gift for anyone who has or interacts with children. And not only for kids, I've read some of the stories (3-4 minutes long) in church worship services, and everyone relates to the beautiful narrative of God's wonderful Story in Jesus—the Story that is truly Good News!

~ Lee Berger