



## When a church library reaches outside by Jenn Burwell

Pastor Justin had my attention. Not that I didn't usually pay attention but this was action time. He was saying something about how we were to use what God gave us to reach the lost, the needy, the broken. His final statement of his sermon was a challenge to us: Find a way to take whatever ministry you are doing outside the four walls of our building. Before I left that Sunday, God put an idea in my head.

How could the Church Library go outside the four walls? We have story time, winter and summer reading clubs, and our pastors' shelf. All of which reached...our members. Members take books out so that is out of the walls of the building but not necessarily reaching the unreached. And I really felt that the idea of "outside our four walls" didn't just mean the building. It meant outside of our church family too. I felt God saying "Listen. I have your answer." I thought, "Ok, Lord." So I prayed.

Then it all happened so fast. What I felt God leading me toward was the local pregnancy center. The church could put Bibles there, in particular, Jesus Storybook Bibles (see image above). With each mother getting this book to read to her children, both mother and child would get the Gospel! Yes, I knew this would be something that God would love.

My friend, Cindy, and I drafted a few lines to put in the bulletin on 11/23. If this was going to happen, we needed funding. And soon, since those books were going to be on sale 11/28-29 for \$5.00. Normally, those books are \$16.99 each. We could get them for less than 1/3 the normal cost! By that Tuesday at our covered dish Thanksgiving meal, we had enough to purchase 21 Bibles. That was in only 3 days!

But how many did the pregnancy center need? Oops! What if they need more? I quickly contacted them and their requested number was around 20! God was moving! I called the local bookstore that was running the sale to ensure that they had enough books on hand. And then I purchased 21 Jesus Storybook Bibles at \$5 each!

First Thursday in December was delivery day! And you would have thought Christmas had come early to the workers at the pregnancy center. They oohed and ahed over the great pictures and easy to read stories. And then they prayed for us. They specifically prayed that we might be able to continue this ministry to their ladies and their children.

So now it's February. I wondered how many books they still had. Do we need to restock? The reply? They are down to just two. So they had given out 19 Jesus Storybook Bibles! And the Bibles are on sale again. Not as good a deal as the first time but still on sale, just when we needed to replenish them.

Because you took the time to read this, here is my challenge to you: Please take your ministry outside your church building to the needy, the lost, and the broken. If Church Library Ministry can do it, you can too!

The ladies who work and volunteer at the Wilson Pregnancy Center gave me some feedback on what happens after the Bibles are dropped off:

"The Jesus Storybook Bibles have been a source of great joy for each of our pregnant mothers as she received one for her soon coming child. Brilliant smiles broke out as they opened the packaged gifts to find God's Word in such a creative and comprehensible manner. In receiving the Jesus Storybook Bibles, we talked about the importance of reading the Bible stories to their children so that from early ages the children begin to understand God's love and faithfulness. Some of those pregnant mothers affirmed their desire to share God's Word with their children. Some of our young ladies who have felt that they have not "measured up to what God would have wanted" began to realize that God still loves them and has a plan for them and their children. Receiving the Bibles with the encouragement to daily read to their children has empowered Moms in their own spiritual walk with the Lord. Hope has been given through the gift of these Bibles. Thank you for giving the Bibles to WPC! They are making a positive difference!"

"Some of the greatest moments for me have been bringing the Jesus Storybook Bibles wrapped up in decorative paper to the young children accompanying their pregnant Moms for classes. They attend the classes and go with Mom through the Baby Boutique to get needed items for the soon coming baby. As we passed out a wrapped Jesus Storybook Bible to the children, the children's faces lit up brightly at the unexpected gift especially for them, and they each began looking through the Bible and asking Mom to look with them or to read to them. Every child who has personally received a Jesus Storybook Bible has been elated by a gift coming to them personally, and they each have received the Bible with great excitement and interest. Lives of children are being touched and encouraged by the gift of these Jesus Storybook Bibles. Thank you for giving the Word of God to them!"

"As a client advocate at the WPC, I see firsthand the need for the Jesus Storybook Bible. I have personally had clients ask for more child friendly Bible material. The book itself is a perfect balance of theologically and child appropriate stories. My clients not only read it to their children but also receive the message in this wonderful book. It is a delight to see the hand of God working through this Bible donation. This book reaches from child to mother the very essence of how God loves them. From one generation to the next the awesome word of God is being brought into their homes and lives. Thank you for showing in a powerful way the hands and feet of Jesus with every book you give to WPC."

This last one is a great book review:

" As a mom of 4 precious little ones, I love every aspect of this Bible. The illustrations by Jago are both charming and intriguing. There are about 50 stories, a good balance. The text itself is exactly what I want my children to hear, theologically. I love this line from the very first chapter, "The Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what He has done." AMEN.

The subtitle is "Every Story Whispers His Name" and indeed, every story does. "No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasures. It's a love story... You See, the best thing about this Story is -- it's true. There are lots of stories in the the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them."

She goes on to say that the center of the story is a baby who is like the missing piece to a puzzle that makes all the other pieces fit together, and to reveal the beautiful picture. She stays true to this aim, pointing to Christ with every story, helping children to see the whispers of redemption through it all. If you buy just one Children's Story Bible, I'd commend this one to you"