

READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

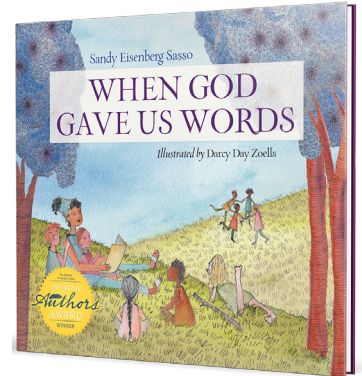
When God Gave Us Words

By Sandy Eisenberg Sasso & Darcy Day Zoells

Words are foundational in our lives. Just like bricks build a house, words are the tiny building blocks of language. Words carry meaning that express a specific idea, object, action, or relationship. We need them and use them to communicate everything from sharing our deepest feelings to telling a story, giving instructions or ordering our lunch.

When God Gave Us Words is an imagined story about the gift of words to humankind. Before you read the story together, wonder what words God gave people. Consider how words can be a gift and how they might not be.

While all children love to hear a story, the concepts in this one might be best suited to older children who have developed a broader vocabulary and understand how words may be used to help or to hurt. Because this is a fictional story, they may be able to stretch their imaginations beyond the literal and consider the possibilities created by this tale.



★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- Why did the angels not want people to have words? Do you think they were right or not? Why?
- What words in the angels' sacks do you know? What words would you like to know more about? What types of words might be in other sacks not shown?
- Why do you think people twisted and turned the words? How did this make God feel?
- What new sound did God hear that made God's mind change? What kinds of words do you have like these?
- Look at the illustrations in the book. What pictures are your favorites? How do the pictures help tell the story?
- What is your favorite part of this story?

★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- Make a list together of words you love to hear and words that make you laugh. Try using one or more of these words each day.
- Choose one of the ways the people used the words that pleased God and the angels, such as telling a story or joke, singing a song, reading or making up a poem, and praying. Do it together. Talk about how using words in those ways makes you feel.
- Identify words that feel like they are twisted, turned, or covered in mud or thorns. Talk about how those words make you and others feel. Try to avoid using these words.
- Do an internet search for "word cloud generator" and make a word cloud for each person in your family using positive and affirming words about that person.

PRAY

Dear God, thank you for giving us words and language to express ourselves in all the ways we can do that. Help us be careful with our words, using them wisely and with love, knowing that words can also hurt. With our words and our whole selves, we praise you, God. Amen.



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Words that hurt can be very powerful. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is a phrase many have heard or used growing up as a response to verbal bullying. We know, however, that words oftentimes cause emotional and psychological harm that can last a very long time. Here are some ways you can help your child when they encounter verbal bullying:

- First and foremost, model loving and kind language. Be careful with your words of harsh criticism, blaming, or belittling. The “silent treatment” is also a form of verbal abuse that purposefully denies communication and needs.
- Talk about specific behaviors so your child can recognize bullying, such as name calling, taunting, teasing or making fun of, purposely ignoring, rumor spreading, insulting, and threatening.
- Practice ways to respond to bullying without responding in kind, such as being assertive without being aggressive. Saying “No,” “Stop,” or some form of “Whatever,” as well as walking away or ignoring the situation, can diffuse a bully from the power they wish to have.
- Encourage your child to tell you when they feel verbally bullied and assure them that behavior is unacceptable and another’s criticism does not define them.

With Older Children: Explore ideas around the “Word” used in our faith vocabulary. Wonder together:

- What do you think the “Word of God” or “God’s Word” means?
Oftentimes those terms refer to the Bible. After a Scripture reading in worship you may hear, “The Word of God for the people of God.”
- Why do you think the Bible is called the “Word of God”?
- Read Psalm 19:7-10. This passage describes God’s Word, or Scripture. Talk together about how these understandings of Scripture might be useful in your lives.
- Jesus is called the “Word of God.” What do you think this means?

MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL BOOKS THAT CELEBRATE GOD IN OUR LIVES

- [*Where Are You Hiding, God?*](#) by Elisabeth Zartl
- [*A Very Big Problem*](#), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Annie Bowler
- [*God’s Big Plan*](#), by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Theodore Hiebert - Also available as a [board book](#)!
- [*God’s Coming to Visit*](#), by Franz Hübner, Angela Glökler, & Rea Grit Zielinski

Guide written by Meg Elliot Rift and created in partnership with PC(USA)’s initiative “[Around the Table](#)” ([pcusa.org/aroundthetable](#)).



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