



# Picture Perfect GIFT BOOKS

By Linda Sattgast

## Picture Perfect Gift Books—Action & Imagination

### Lesson 07-01: Action Books

Action books are fun and easy to make. Just what is an action book? Anything where there's action—the child doing something! Some of the book ideas in this lesson will work best for younger children, but other ideas can be applied to children in late grade school or middle school. So let's start with a very simple example.

#### Danny Walks

The quintessential action book is the one I demo in the printing section—Danny Walks. Talk about simple! You say the child's name and an action he does:

- Danny crawls.
- Danny stands.
- Danny walks.
- Danny eats.
- Danny reads.
- Time for bed, Danny! Night, night.

Isn't that simple? But really, you can do this for any age. The older the child, the more you can say about the actions they do, but you don't have to be wordy. Simply show a photo and say what's happening:

- Allison swims.
- Caleb plays badminton with Uncle Don.
- Cousins play computer games.

These are more like captions than journaling, and that's perfectly fine. The kids will be more interested in the photos than the words.

Now that you understand that an action book is about doing things, let's look at some great possibilities for action picture books.

#### Where is Colby Going?

Here's an idea that's easy to do: Follow a child from one spot to another taking photos along the way. For example, show the child going out his bedroom door, down a hall, down the stairs, across the living room, into the kitchen, and finally to the table to eat his breakfast. You could have two or three of these treks in one book, e.g. going outside to play in the sand box, getting into the car to go to the library, etc.

#### Time for Bed, Samantha

Take pictures of the night-time ritual of going to bed, from bath time to brushing teeth to putting on PJs to reading a bedtime book, to prayers, to kisses good night, to turning out the light. End with: Good night!

## Look at Me!

One of my published books is called *God Made Me Most wonderfully*. My original title when I submitted it to the publisher was *Look At Me!* Each page of the book has a poem about things a child can do with a specific part of his or her body—like the eyes, nose, mouth, arms, etc. This is an easy and fun book to create for kids. You don't have to write poems like I did. Simply go through the different parts of the body to say what the child can do.

For example, think of all the things you can do with your eyes:

Watch Sesame Street, look at flowers, look at picture books.

What do I do with my ears?

Listen to stories, listen to crickets.

What do I do with my mouth?

Eat a banana, smile at Mommy, talk to Daddy, sing or shout.

What do I do with my arms?

Hug Mommy, carry my teddy bear, hold a big ball.

What do I do with my hands?

Count my fingers, brush my teeth, hold my spoon, build a tower of blocks.

What do I do with my legs?

Jump, splash in puddles, dance, run, ride my tricycle, climb the stairs.

What do I do with my toes?

Wiggle, stand on tip toe, splash in the water.

I can do so many things!

With this book idea, you can keep it simple or you can go hog wild and include all kinds of actions! Some of that will depend on the age of the child. For the really young children you'll probably want to keep it simple, but if they're old enough to cooperate you can include a lot of actions in the book—and they'll have fun creating the book with you!

## Where's Molly?

This is a fun book idea for ages 2–5 because they'll enjoy playing the game of hide and seek with you. Have them hide in various places with just a small bit of them showing, or even have them cover their face like they're playing peek-a-boo.

You could just take photos of them hiding or you could show them hiding first and then show them in the same spot completely visible.

There are all kinds of places a child can hide—under covers, in the bushes, in a box, behind a door, under a table, etc., so be creative, and they'll enjoy doing it with you.

On the first spread say:

Molly likes to hide.

And then each subsequent page says "Where's Molly?"

They'll love it!

### **Library Book Inspiration: *Maisy Goes Swimming***

You can get a lot of inspiration by browsing through books in the library. One of my favorite books for young children is *Maisy Goes Swimming*. In this book Maisy takes off each item of clothing, one per page, puts on her swim suit and then goes swimming.

Is there an activity your child or grandchild does that you can break down into individual actions and feature one action per page?

For example, when my kids were little, we used to walk to the local pharmacy where I would mail letters and they would each get gum from the gum ball machine. This is an activity that I could break down into a series of actions to photograph.

Instead of a store you could walk to a local park. Take photos of the child getting ready to go to the park—maybe putting on play clothes and socks and shoes and gathering anything to take along. Then take photos of the child crossing certain streets or passing certain landmarks on the way.

The satisfying ending is that they have reached their destination, so end the book with that:

Now I can play in the park. Hooray!

### **Tony Plays in the Park**

The next book idea is similar to the previous idea, but whereas the last idea was a series of preparations to do something, this is a series of things the child does at certain locations, like the park.

In this case you would take a series of photos of the child playing in the park and pair them with simple words. Here are some example sentences that would work for most parks, and I've included a satisfying ending for the book.

For example:

Tony digs in the sand.

Tony swings high in the air.

Tony chases the ball.

Tony finds a twig.

Tony goes around and around. (Merry-go-round)

Tony climbs up the slide.

Down he comes. Wheeee!

Ding-a-ling! Here comes the ice cream man.

Yum, yum! (Eating the ice cream cone)

It's time to go home. Good-bye Park.

(show child waving good-bye to the park or simply leaving the park or in the child seat in the car.)

Other ideas would be:

Tony At The Beach

Tony Goes To Daycare

Tony Goes To Church

Etc.

## What Do You See?

(or What Does Brian See?)

Show the child looking places, then show what he sees. Each item will take two spreads.

Left side:

What does Brian see?

(Photo of Brian looking out a window)

Right side:

Brian sees a snowman.

Here's another example:

Left side:

What does Brian see?

(Brian looking over the edge of the kitchen counter)

Right side:

A tray of muffins.

Continue on in the same way with various examples:

In the refrigerator—big red apple

Under the table—cat

Behind the chair—book

Etc.

Last spread: Who does Brian see?

(show a photo of the child looking in a mirror.)

The caption would say:

I see MYSELF!

## Where Is Trevor?

Take a photos of the child in various locations.

Show a close up photo of the child and then back up and take a photo showing the child in his/her surrounding.  
Feature places like:

Closeup of the child in a car seat.

Then zoom out and show the car with the child visible through the window.

Closeup of the child in a grocery cart.

Zoom out and show the shopping cart and store aisle in the background.

Closeup of the child all dressed up.

Zoom out and show a place of worship or other location.

Closeup of the child eating.

Zoom out to show the dining room.

Closeup of the child sleeping.

Zoom out and show the bedroom. Shhhhh.

## Now I Am One

Start the book with a photo of your child next to or behind his or her birthday cake with one candle and the words:  
Now I am One.

In the following spreads, show pictures of the child doing the various things he/she can do as a one year old:

I play with my truck.  
I hold my spoon.  
I splash in the bathtub.  
etc.

On the last page, show a photo of your child actually eating a piece of birthday cake—perhaps with the cake all over his or her face—and use the same words you started with: Now I am One.

This could be applied to other birthdays as well. The fun thing about this kind of book is that it's a snapshot of your child at that age along with the kinds of things he or she likes to do. When my children were growing up I wrote a journal entry about them every year summing up what they were like and what they were interested in. This was before digital, but now there's so much more you can do!

## Time To Eat, Jason!

This book starts with a photo of your child at the table ready to eat. Then in the following spreads show different kinds of food you feed your child. You might include some food your child doesn't like.

It's time to eat.  
What will Jason eat?  
Does Jason like Cheerios? (Let the child respond verbally rather than writing it in the book.)  
Does Jason like applesauce?  
Does Jason like carrots? (Our daughter hated carrots, so she would have responded with a resounding, "No!")  
etc.  
End: What does Jason like best?

Put his or her favorite food on the last page.

## Holly's Tea Party

Bake some special goodies and then write a brief description on each spread with one photo:

Someone special is coming to a tea party. Who is it?  
Mommy gets ready. She mixes batter.  
She pours the batter into a muffin tin.  
She puts the muffin tin into the oven.  
The muffins are done. (Show taking out of oven)  
Mommy puts icing and sprinkles on the muffins.  
Yum! They look good.  
She sets the table.  
She pours juice into tiny tea cups.  
Guess who came to Mommy's Tea Party? (the child)  
Yum! (the child eating a muffin)

## **Johnny's Very Fine Day**

(a day in the life of a child)

Johnny wakes up in the morning.

What a fine day!

Johnny wears his favorite blue shoes.

What a fine day!

Johnny eats cheerios and blueberries.

What a fine day!

(etc. through the day all the way to bedtime)

Johnny goes to sleep. (photo of child sleeping)

Shhhh. Johnny is dreaming

about his very fine day!

## **Older Children 4-12**

This is the age when children can help you tell the story, which can be a lot of fun! Sometimes you'll want to create the book the way you want to do it. Other times, you can discuss your plan with them and let them participate.

### **Samantha Turns 10**

As children grow they often have fairly involved birthday parties with a theme and friends. Capture the before birthday preparations, the guests, the stack of presents, the cake, etc.

You can photograph each gift and make a page with a grid of gifts on it with titles such as "From Angie." It will be a fun book for them and will be a snapshot of them and their friends at this point in time.

### **Jenna and McGuff (A book about pets)**

Show the interaction between a pet and your child. Include minimal text and sometimes no text. Let the photo speak for itself.

### **Sleep Over**

Sleepovers: Capture the fun of your child getting together with friends at your house.

### **At The Playground**

Catch the high energy of a child at a playground. Ham it up with hand stands and hanging upside down from bars or swinging high in a swing.

### **Other Action Themes for Older Kids**

Sports: Water park, baseball game, swimming, gymnastics, dance, karate

Traditions & Holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah , Halloween

Vacations

My Friend(s) and Me

Special Interests: Collin's Garden, Lilly's Tree House

Day Trips

Elliot's Trip to the Library

Jessica's Trip to the Zoo

## Misc. Ideas

Funny things kids say paired with cute photos of them

Jonathan's House: A tour of your house at this point in time with special emphasis on the child's room and favorite spaces.

Take your cue from the child as to what would be most meaningful in a book!

## Lesson 07-02: Middle School Action Books

Let's take a look at a group of kids that's older than the picture book age but younger than the high school age. They are the middle schoolers.

The key question you must ask about middle schoolers is this: What do they like to do?

It's really no different than any other age group—they have certain things they're excited about and enjoy doing. Capture those things and you'll have a fantastic gift book!

In preparation for this lesson I thought back to when my kids were in middle school, and the highlight of the year was the backpacking trip our family took to the Goat Rocks Wilderness in central Washington. If you're a parent or one of the adult leaders of an outing or expedition, think of what might make some terrific photos for a book about the trip that focuses largely on the kids in your group.

Of course you do want photos of the location—the trail, spectacular views, the campsite, etc. But you also want photos of the child doing different things—carrying a backpack, playing in a stream, setting up camp, helping fix dinner, building a fire, arranging sleeping gear.

If you weren't involved with the activity but you receive photographs, look through them for clues about what to ask the child in an informal interview either by person or by phone.

Ask questions such as, "Where did you go on your backpacking trip?"

"We went to Goat Rocks."

"Did you like it?"

"Yeah!"

Notice that yes or no questions tend to get short answers. So most of your questions should be open ended:

What did you like about Goat Rocks? (See how that's open ended? To answer that question she has to actually tell you something.)

- What did you eat?
- What's the favorite thing you like to do when you backpack?
- Did you have any adventures?
- Were there any scary places?
- Did you see any animals?

The answers to these questions become the journaling.

One of the best things you can do to know what interests a child is to listen to them talk. So often we don't really listen to our kids or grandkids. We tend to be on a different wave length as they chatter away. But if you listen, you'll find out what they're interested in. You might even discover some new areas to explore as possible photo book subjects.

Let's say a son or grandson likes to skateboard. Start to pay attention to when he does it. Ask him questions about it. Ask if you can take some photos of him with his skateboard. Sneak in some photos of him when he isn't looking.

The key concept here is: Pay Attention! Be a detective to find out what your kids or grandkids enjoy. Talk to them. Any hobby or interest is fair game as are family adventures and travels.

## Story Planners

There's a certain golden age when kids are old enough to read and write very well but young enough that they aren't self-conscious and the hormones haven't kicked in yet. They still have enthusiasm and imagination!

Use that openness and excitement to your advantage. In fact, you can even throw out a challenge: "Let's have an adventure and write a book about it!"

Let them brainstorm with you for some ideas. Get everyone involved taking pictures.

One year at a family reunion we had a photo contest. This was back before digital, so we gave each of the cousins a disposable camera and had them take pictures. We got some great photos!

Most kids these days have a cell phone and take lots of photos, so offer to put a book together with his or her photos. Let him choose the topic! Let her help you with the production. If the topic is something they like, they'll probably be willing to help you out. It doesn't have to be a total surprise to be affirming for them.

Even if you plan to give them the finished book for a birthday or holiday gift, it's OK for them to help you with production.

So when it comes to photo books about middle schoolers, you can bet they'll love a book about anything that interests them. All you have to do is listen and pay attention!

## Lesson 07-03: Story Planning

Here's how to plan a picture book story from start to finish. I'll demo using my book about a Pumpkin Harvest Party.

I created this book in 2004 for a family with five kids. I was already a published author, so it wasn't a big leap to think about creating family picture books. Even way back then I was toying with the idea of teaching a class on picture books.

If you're a grandparent, you're especially well suited to be the photographer and create a photo book, because the parents will probably have their hands full managing the children and the event.

If a grandparent isn't handy or capable, you can also invite a friend to take photos, as long as you tell her exactly what you're hoping to get and know she can pull it off.

If you can afford it, you can also hire a professional photographer that specializes in unposed photos.

There are several stages to planning a picture book.

### Stage 1: Plan the story

Mentally imagine what you think will happen. I'm not saying this is what will happen! But it helps to have some kind of plan in mind.

My event was a harvest party involving pumpkins. After talking with the mom about what they were planning, here's how I envisioned the story:

- Choose the pumpkins: The kids had already chosen their pumpkins, so the step of visiting the pumpkin patch or store, which would have been fun, was left out. Instead I decided I would photograph each child with their pumpkin and photograph the entire family together.
- Extract the pumpkin seeds
- Cut up the pumpkin

- The mom would cook and bake goodies using the pumpkin
- Harvest dinner—giving thanks, a nice dinner, and finally pumpkin for dessert!

There would be a break between the cooking and baking and the actual harvest dinner, so I knew I would need to come back later to get the final photos.

When you're planning an event, be sure that at least the older kids know that there will be picture taking for a storybook, so they aren't surprised when you show up with camera equipment, and also so they'll cooperate.

## **Stage 2: Attend the event and take the photos**

- Gather photo and survival equipment. Here's what I used:
  - camera (At the time I was using a Nikon D70.)
  - tripod
  - white and/or black sheet to use as a backdrop
  - reflectors (optional—I didn't have any at the time)
  - If you're going to be outside, make sure you have a hat and appropriate clothing, water bottle, snacks, etc.
  - a way to carry the equipment and supplies
- Show up on time and get to know the kids if you're a friend.
- Check out the lighting for the best places to photograph.
- Set up a photo shoot place, if applicable.
- Take individual photos.
- Then be a fly on the wall as the family does the event.
- Take lots of photos from multiple angles. Be aware of the lighting and what's in the background.

Not everyone may cooperate. Don't worry about it. Respect their wishes. If they say they don't want you to take their picture, do your best to help them past their reticence.

Enlist the help of other children in the family. If they continue to resist, then respect their wishes and ignore them completely. Take everyone else's photo. They'll soon realize they're going to be left out, and sometimes that will bring them around.

Another idea is to show them the photos on the camera preview screen. Most kids love to see themselves in the preview, so that can win them over, but whatever happens, just go with the flow and don't let it turn ugly. This is supposed to be a good memory!

I did eventually get a wonderful photo of the youngest boy and his pumpkin and lamb, so be patient and always cheerful, no matter the outcome.

I came back a second time for the harvest dinner. Unfortunately, this was at night, so I didn't have the luxury of natural light. I also didn't have a great camera or much expertise, but I got what I could. Since then I've gotten better at photography, but I'm still not what I would consider really good by any means. Thankfully, you can still tell a good story without having perfect photos!

Photos with lighting or color problems can be greatly improved with Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, which is what I teach how to do in my class Fix Photos FAST using actions.

One photo had an additional problem. The best shot of the family wasn't good of the littlest one who was turned away from the camera and moving, so I composited two photos together to get him looking halfway decent.

### Stage 3: Create the Book

- Download and organize the photos.
- Choose the ones you think will work.
- Edit the photos. It may take awhile depending on the shape of the photos. Mine were pretty bad!
- Decide how you will print your book. The method you use to print your book will make a big difference in how you create the book.
- Use a template to create your book, or make your own simple design. I chose to mostly use one large photo on the right, with an occasional variation from that. I put the copy (the words to the story) on the left and included some spot art below it.

### Stage 4 Finishing Touches

- Figure out what's lacking and deal with it. As you create your book, you may discover that you need something else. For this book, I needed some more photos for spot art that would go with my pages, so I went back to the family's house and photographed a few more items that would make good spot art.
- Finish laying out your book and print it using whichever method you chose earlier. If you plan to keep a copy of the book yourself as well as give a copy away, and if you have the time, print one copy and check it out, because often you won't see a mistake until after you print it. After you fix any mistakes, then you can print the final copy.
- I used a fancy capital letter at the beginning of each text box, but in retrospect, I wouldn't do that. It's easy for an adult to read, but children learning to read have a harder time with it.
- And finally, give the book away to the recipient! That's the most exciting part!

### Lesson 07-04: Trip to the Zoo

Here's another example of planning and creating a book. The topic is a trip to the zoo.

The story is about a grandma who takes her grandkids to the zoo. If you're a grandparent, I would urge you to create picture books or photo books that show you doing things with your grandkids. A child's memory of his early life and his grandparents is going to fade as he grows, but having something concrete like a picture book will help cement those memories, and it will mean a lot to them.

This grandma happens to be a friend of mine, so I came along to take the pictures and create the picture book. Let's review what I did for the different stages.

#### Stage 1: Plan the story

Get photos of:

- Grandma and the kids leaving for the zoo
- Grandma driving and the kids in their car seats on the way to the zoo
- Zoo entrance, buying tickets
- Riding the zoo train
- Seeing lots of fun animals.
- Waving good-bye to the zoo.

#### Stage 2: Attend the Event and Take Photos

- I took my Sony NEX 7 camera and my iPhone, a tripod, a white sheet, just in case I needed a white background, and I also took a water bottle and a hat because it was hot and sunny—and a tote bag to carry my stuff.
- When I got to the house I spent some time getting to know the kids, who turned out to be really terrific.
- I managed to get a really good photo of the three of them on their front porch and of Grandpa waving good-bye.
- I also got some decent photos in the car.

At the zoo my careful plan fell apart, so I just went with the flow, which is all you can do anyway. For example, the kids loved climbing on the rocks at the zoo entrance more than seeing the animals!

We no sooner had entered the zoo than Owen declared he was hungry, so we stopped to eat. This happened three times! It's a good thing Grandma came prepared with a basket of food and treats!

Because we spent so much time eating, there wasn't enough time to ride the train.

But the most difficult part was that the zoo had gotten a lot more careful about separating people and animals. Most of the time we were behind high plastic walls, and if they were dirty or spattered with water, good luck getting any decent photos of animals! You may need to take some alternative photos, like I did where I photographed the kids playing with the penguin display.

In all the dark places my iPhone took the best photos, so I was really glad I had it along.

### **Step 3: Create the Book**

This is where I downloaded and edited the photos. One thing that helped tremendously was adding an artistic effect, which I'll tell you more about in another video. It gave the photos a bit of a painterly look suitable for a children's picture book.

When I zoom out to a normal viewing size, it's not even that noticeable, but it definitely improved the photos.

I kept the design simple with one or two pictures per page.

### **Stage 4: Finishing Touches**

After creating the book I did the step where I looked at it to see if there was anything lacking or if there were problems with it.

The only thing I really didn't like was a few of my animal photos, but I really don't think I could have gotten better shots with the equipment I had and the plastic barriers. Because of that I made the decision to use stock photos for a few of the animals—specifically the lions, monkey, and bats.

Really, either way would have been fine. The kids wouldn't have minded the poor photos of the animals, but I did. There's nothing wrong with using a stock photo.

Don't feel bad about using someone else's photos for certain things. If you're looking for free photos to augment your story, try <http://www.morguefile.com>. They have some great animal photos!

## **Lesson 07-06: Toys & Imagination**

In this lesson you'll use your own imagination, or take your cue from your child or grandchild, or even from beloved children's books, to capture some of the wonder of a child's early years. We'll focus on stories about a child's toys and also imaginary stories that involve the child or his or her toys.

For older children, we'll explore ways to help them tell their own stories, which they are quite capable of doing!

### **Little Lost Lamb**

The first book idea we'll look at is called Little Lost \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the name of the child's favorite toy).

My book is called Little Lost Lamb because the main character is a Beanie Baby lamb.

The book starts out with the toy where it should be. It could be on a shelf, on a bed, in a toy box, etc. My lamb sits on the bookshelf in my office. Years ago, when I went on a book signing tour around the USA, I would take this very lamb to book signings, and I would hide it somewhere in the bookstore beforehand. Then I would tell the Bible story about the lost lamb and have them hunt for the lamb. It was a lot of fun, and the kids loved it.

So this is a slightly different version of that. I'll use my own house as an example, but, of course, you'll need to modify your story to fit the child's home, or, if you're a grandparent, you can do this in your home with the child.

Here are the words to my Little Lost Lamb story::

Little Lamb sat on the bookshelf and thought about the great wide world. "Here I sit," he thought, "when there is so much to see and do. Perhaps I'll go exploring."

He hopped down one shelf and said hello to his friend Maisy. "I'm going to explore the world," he announced.

"All by yourself?" said Maisy. "What if you get lost?"

"I won't get lost," said Little Lamb, and he hopped right down onto the floor.

"Be careful!" called Maisy from high above. "Watch out for the cats!"

Little Lamb skipped across the floor and out the office door he went.

It was dark in the next room, but he could see a door and a light. "That's where I must go," he thought. (Just an aside here—my office is a room we built in our garage, so the garage is the dark room.)

The door led to the living room, but Little Lamb could see the kitchen ahead. "I'm hungry! Maybe I'll find something to eat in the kitchen."

But all he found were two cat bowls and two very curious cats.

"Meow!" said the cat. "Eeek!" said Little Lamb.

Off he scampered down the hall...

And into the closet.

But Mr. Cat was still curious.

So Little Lamb slammed the closet door shut, and now he was truly alone in the very dark closet.

"Oh, dear, oh me, oh my! What shall I do? No one knows I'm here in this dark closet, and I can't get out!" A big tear slid down Little Lamb's nose.

To be continued!

I'm going to have to leave you hanging here because I don't have any small children or grandchildren in my house. I suppose I could have had Charlie open the closet door to get a towel and come across the lost lamb.

But instead, I'm going to let YOU finish the story!

If you have a child or grandchild, tell him to look for Little Lost Lamb. Take pictures of him looking in various places and finally finding the Little Lamb. He hugs him, and then climbs up on a chair to put Little lamb back on his shelf in the office.

You can end the book by saying:

Little Lamb was glad to be home in his own special nook on the shelf. "The world is a fine place," he thought as he snuggled down to sleep, "but my home is even better!"

Of course you can modify the story in any way you choose for the outcome you want. Also, if you have kids or pets around, be prepared to change the story line. I didn't originally plan to include my cats, but they were so curious and wouldn't leave Little Lamb alone for me to photograph him, so I decided to include them.

## Other Ideas for Imaginative Books

Make a book called: My Goodnight Book

If you've ever read the popular *Goodnight Moon* book, you'll know what needs to happen with a Goodnight book

In the book set the stage for going to bed, and then help the child say goodnight to familiar objects. As an option, you can also add sounds. Here are some examples, but adapt as needed for the child:

It's time for bed.

Milly puts on her pajamas

and brushes her teeth.

(Show Milly in her pajamas brushing her teeth in the bathroom mirror.)

Milly puts her toothbrush in the holder.

"Goodnight, toothbrush."

Milly puts her picture book on the bookshelf.

"Goodnight, book."

Milly puts Teddy in the toy box.

"Goodnight, Teddy."

Milly looks up at the clock on the wall.

"Goodnight clock."

Tick Tock says the clock.

Milly looks out the window.

"Goodnight, Tree."

"Swishhhh," whispers the tree.

Milly pats Fido

"Goodnight, Fido."

"Woof!" says Fido.

Milly pets Fluffy.

"Goodnight, Fluffy."

"Meow," says Fluffy.

Here's one possible ending to the book:

"Goodnight, lamp," says Milly

as Mommy turns out the light.

"Goodnight, Milly, says Mommy.

But Milly is already fast asleep.

## Where's My Blankie?

Does your child love his blankie? Does he try to rescue it from the wash? This is my son Caleb who adored his blankie!

Do a series of pages showing your child and the blankie in various locations—like going up the stairs with his blankie, or sitting in his high chair with his blankie, out in the yard with his blankie, etc., and then, of course, finally in bed with his blankie.

Or you could hide the blankie and have the child look for it. Then show him hugging the blankie when he finds it.

## Caleb & Cement Truck (Favorite Toy)

Another idea is to make a book about a child doing everything with his favorite toy.

Remember the photo I showed you in the last lesson where my son Caleb made a hat for himself and for Cement Truck? Toys become real to children. Make a book showing the toy doing things with the child, e.g. eating, playing, taking a bath, sleeping, etc.

## Brian's Toys

Here's a very simple idea. Show one toy on each page of the book with the name of the toy. The child will enjoy reading about his toys in a book.

## I Like

Another idea is to make a book about all the things the child likes. We have an old picture book by Margaret Wise Brown, a beloved children's book author. One of the stories in this book is called *The Friendly Book*, and it's all about the things a child likes.

You can do the same with all the things that fascinate your child. It doesn't have to be as fancy as this book. You can simply say:

I like trains.

I like street sweepers.

I like drains.

Yes, it's true. My son was fascinated with the drains that you see along a street! I know. Kinda of crazy. He also loved business reply cards. Go figure!

But that's what makes a book like this special. It's totally tailored to your child or grandchild.

## Older Children 4-12

Now let's talk about older children, somewhere in the neighborhood of ages 4 to 12. This is a time when a kid's imagination is going wild, and playing pretend is really fun.

I took a series of photos of a six-year-old child and his sister in their play pool, but the boy had something else in mind. He wanted me to take pictures of him pretending to be a zombie, so I did.

He immediately start acting like his idea of a zombie. He started chewing on his flip flop, and of course his mother said, "Stop chewing on your flip flop!"

Then he showed me his secret spot, which you could tell he had already conjured up in his imagination. It just looked like a tree in the yard to me, but I think he called it his castle, or something like that. He'd obviously imagined this before.

He came out of his "castle" with his light sabers to attack me. Thankfully, he was nice about it. He didn't actually attack me.

The kids in your life already have stories in their heads that you can draw out. This kid didn't even need a costume to turn into a zombie. And while I was taking the pictures, he had a running monologue going of what the story was all about. It was amazing!

But if you're having a hard time drawing ideas out of a child, try setting up some fun scenarios.

## Dress Up

Girls, especially, love to dress up. Have a sleep over or party for your daughter or granddaughter and her friends. Provide some fun dress up items like hats, beads, boas, and makeup. Take pictures and make a book of the occasion.

Let the child help you with the story. The story, doesn't have to be real, by the way. The two of you could make up a really fun story.

### **Costumes**

Same with costumes. Especially around Halloween you can find costumes for children. Have a child dress up and help you plan out a story.

### **Tea Party**

Have a pretend story where the child dresses up as a princess or fine lady and plan out a story that you can tell in pictures and words.

### **Treasure Hunt**

Have the child dress up as a sailor, explorer, or pirate and conduct a treasure hunt. Photograph the child or children as they read the clues and hunt for the treasure.

And then, of course, show them with the treasure. The treasure can be anything a kid would enjoy—costume jewelry from a second hand store, marbles, a game of jacks, some legos, candy or snacks—anything a kid would like.

Any of these examples would make a terrific book, so summon up your imagination, or, better yet, encourage your child's imagination, and make a book about it!

The possibilities are wide open when you make a book about toys or imagination!

## **Lesson 07-07: Faith & Philosophy**

Does your family have a faith tradition? If so, you may want to create some children's books that reflect your beliefs. Even if you don't have any particular religious beliefs, do you have a philosophy of life you want to pass on to your kids or grandkids? Whether you're teaching religious principles or your own personal philosophy, you can share those beliefs with children at a very young age.

All the books that I've written and published were books from a biblical perspective. Using my published books, I'm going to demonstrate some ways you can make your own books, using whatever philosophy you want.

### *Teach Me About the Holy Spirit*

My book *Teach Me About the Holy Spirit* is one of a series of four *Teach Me* books that teach biblical principles.

In the Holy Spirit book, I focused on the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in the Bible in the New Testament, specifically in Galatians 5: 22–23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

While the verse comes from a specific faith tradition where the source of the actions are attributed to the Holy Spirit, the qualities themselves are generally accepted as good qualities by most people, even non-religious people.

To teach these qualities, I used the concept of twins, where one twin does the right thing and the other twin doesn't. I named the twins Flora and Flossie. You could almost look at them as two sides of the same person.

For example, Flossie doesn't want to share, but Flora shows kindness by sharing.

I got a fair amount of feedback from parents that their kids loved reading about Flora and Flossie, so when a mom would say, "Are you being like Flora or like Flossie?" the kids knew exactly what she was talking about.

When your child or grandchild is old enough to really think about these concepts—somewhere around four to eight years of age—have them act out each characteristic both positively and negatively as you take a picture. I wouldn't do this during an actual display of poor behavior, but once your child is old enough and can play act, they'll enjoy helping you come up with the right photos for good and bad behavior.

Ask them:

What would be an example of someone being patient?

What would be an example of someone not being patient?

Pick any character quality you want—you might talk about sharing toys, or helping needy people, or not littering, etc. Kids really like to know when they're doing the right thing, and you can help them learn with a special book project like this.

### *My Little Book of BIG Bible Promises*

Another book I wrote is called *My Little Book of BIG Bible Promises* for ages 2 to 5. In this book I wrote a short story about a concept and then ended the story with a Bible verse about the same concept. You can do something similar.

Here is a list of verses that would be a good starting point for a book, but you might have your own verses or proverbs or sayings that you want to feature, like this one, which is just a proverb:

A smile is worth a thousand words.

### **List of Verses**

Psalm 145:13 The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

Isaiah 43:1 I have called you by name; you are mine.

Luke 18: 6 Let the little children come to me.

Isaiah 41:13 For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

Psalm 145:14 The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.

Exodus 33:14 I myself will go with you.

Hebrews 13:5 Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Psalm 145:18 The Lord is near to all who call on him.

Psalm 4:8 I go to bed and sleep in peace. Lord, only you keep me safe.

### *Look What God Made*

This is a rhyming book that features five kids on a farm from the time they get up to the time they go to bed. All through the book, the littlest one is always the one who notices wonderful things that God made.

At one point the little one points to all five kids in the bathroom mirror as they brush their teeth. You can do the same thing with your child in front of a large mirror, like a bathroom mirror.

You don't have to rhyme to make a book where you and the child go looking for things that God made.

There's one additional fun thing about this book. On the second to last spread when all the children are going to bed, the copy reads:

Five tired children crawled into bed  
As soon as all their prayers were said.

Up went the covers and down went the sun  
And no one saw what God had done...  
But the little one.

And here the little one is looking out the window at the moon and the stars—part of God’s creation.

The other thing on the last spread, though, as a lady bug in a circle saying, “God made me, too! Did you find me on every page?”

The first time reading this book, a child may not even notice the lady bug throughout the book, but you can be sure the child will find the lady bug from then on whenever the book is read.

Hiding something on a busy page can be a lot of fun. It wouldn’t have to be a bug. Find a piece of clip art or artistic element—it could be a little flower, or you could select a small item out of a photo. Just make sure it’s small enough that you have to look a little bit to find it.

The book *Goodnight Moon* has a mouse on every spread, so that’s another possibility.

So there you have a few ideas for sharing your faith or philosophy with your children or grandchildren.

And one final thing. I invite you to check out my personal website if you’re interested in learning more about my books. Some of my books are out of print, but I still have a pretty good variety, and I’m always willing to sign a book for a special child.

[LindaSattgast.com/my-books/](http://LindaSattgast.com/my-books/)