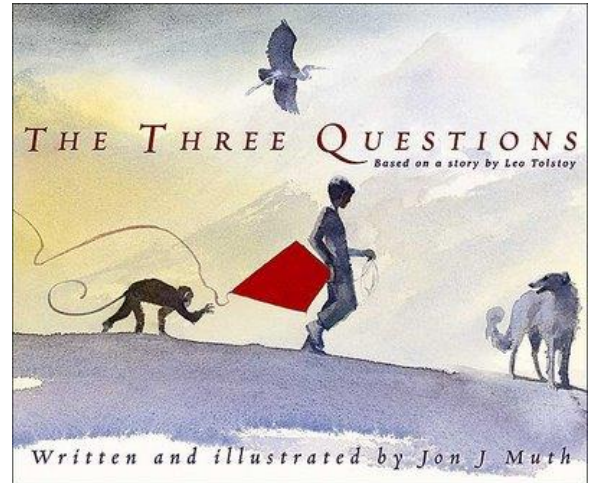


# The Three Questions

By Jon Muth

Based on a story by Tolstoy

**Summary** - Nikolai is a boy who believes that if he can find the answers to his three questions, he will always know how to be a good person. His friends--a heron, a monkey, and a dog--try to help, but to no avail, so he asks Leo, the wise old turtle. "When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do?" Leo doesn't answer directly, but by the end of Nikolai's visit, the boy has discovered the answers himself. Muth based his story on a short story of the same title by Leo Tolstoy.



## **Sunday Morning:**

■ **Introductions** -- *Around the room with names and a seasonal ice-breaker type question. In May/June you might ask: What are your plans for the summer? What's your dream vacation destination? Etc. After you've heard from everybody – including the adults in the room – ask:*

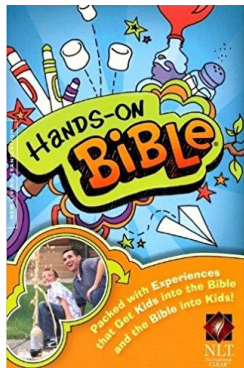
Is there anybody in the group that can remember everyone else's names?

■ **Read the Book** – *Briefly introduce the book, show the cover and mention the title, author and illustrator. Read it "librarian style" with pictures out. Make sure everyone gets a chance to observe the pictures before turning the page.*

■ **Wondering Questions** – *Respond to the children with affirmation. No wrong answers here!*

- I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?
- I wonder what part of the story is the most important?

## ■ **Hands-On Bible**



*You can do this in any way that fits your group and timeframe. A smaller group may work together to find one Bible verse. A larger group can be broken into small sub-groups. Have the slips of paper on page 3 in this document ready to go – see below.*

*Let's break into three groups (make sure at least one older child/adult is in each group). Each group will get one of the three questions from the book. You will be searching for the Bible verse that answers the question on your slip of paper...*

*Once the children are in three groups, hand them the Bibles (the kid-friendly one pictured is just a suggestion) and then each group gets one slip of paper with their Bible citation on it. **Remind the kids to start in the Table of Contents...** If this is a new practice, go step-by-step with the kids, waiting for*

everyone in the group to catch up as you find the Table of Contents, the page number for the book, the book, the chapter and then the verse. While they are looking for their verses, write the three questions on the flip-chart paper:

- 1.) ***When is the best time to do things?***
- 2.) ***Who is the most important one?***
- 3.) ***What is the right thing to do?***

[When all three groups have found their Bible verse, go back to the flip-chart page.]

1.) ***When is the best time to do things?*** [Ask group 1 to share the Bible verse they found out loud and then write it on the flip-chart page under question 1.]

**“Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.”**  
[2 Corinthians 6:2]

2) ***Who is the most important one?*** Who’s the most important one according to the Bible? ...” [Ask group 2 to share the Bible verse they found and then ask a volunteer to write it on the flip-chart page under question 2.]

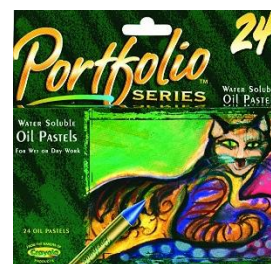
**“Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.”**  
[Mark 9:35]

3) ***What is the right thing to do?*** Let’s see what the Bible has to say... [Ask group 3 to share the Bible verse they found and then ask a volunteer to write it on the flip-chart page under question 3.]

**“[The Golden Rule:]  
Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.”**  
[Matthew 7:12]

## ■ Craft

Jon Muth is both the author and illustrator of this book and he’s known for his amazing watercolors. Why not try some watercolor painting but take it to the next level? You will need watercolor paper and regular watercolors are fine, but check out these “water soluble oil pastels.” With them you can make a definitive line (like with crayons) but then come back over it with a wet brush for some cool effects. The colors are a lot more vibrant than those of regular watercolors which is kid-pleasing. Finally, coarse salt can be sprinkled on the wet areas for some added texture. You could ask the kids to paint a scene where they were “doing the right thing” or just let them choose their own expression.



## ■ Snacks

Here are the slips of paper for the kids below:

***1) When is the best time to do things?***

**FIND:** 2 Corinthians 6:2

[Hint: Note that there is a 1 Corinthians too!]

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***2) Who is the most important one?***

**FIND:** Mark 9:35

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***3) What is the right thing to do?***

**FIND:** Matthew 7:12