MARK & FRIENDS

Would You Rather? Helping Families Explore God’s Word Together

Thursday, November 19, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Donna Leland | Speaker: Brock Eastman

Program Summary

Donna Leland welcomes author Brock Eastman, who grew up in Eureka, Illinois, to discuss Would You Rather Bible Challenges, coauthored with Marianne Hering. The book uses surprising questions to invite children and families into Bible reading and conversation. Brock describes a simple pattern: choose an answer, explore the biblical accounts, reconsider the choice, and put the lesson into practice through discussion or an activity. Examples include the prodigal son and John the Baptist, the fiery furnace and the lions’ den, and the fruit of the Spirit alongside the armor of God. Donna and Brock emphasize that the people in Scripture were real people whose experiences can help children think about faith, courage, wisdom, and consequences. The conversation encourages busy parents, grandparents, and church leaders to make intentional space for God’s Word, while also welcoming children who may read the devotional independently.

Key Takeaways

- A thoughtful or surprising question can open the door to meaningful conversation about Scripture.
- Short, intentional moments together can help families engage with God’s Word amid busy schedules.
- Read the biblical account before deciding what lesson to draw; an initial answer may change as understanding grows.
- The people in Scripture were real people, not invented characters, and their choices invite reflection on our own.
- The fruit of the Spirit and the armor of God belong together in the believer’s life; the game’s question does not require choosing only one.
- Conversation can lead to practical response through prayer, an activity, or an act of service.
- Parents can learn alongside their children rather than feeling they must already know every answer.
- Grandparents, Sunday school leaders, and other caring adults can encourage children’s faith, including those with limited support at home.

Scripture References

- Luke 15:11-32 - The prodigal son account behind the question about pig food.
- Matthew 3:1-4 - John the Baptist and locusts, paired with the prodigal son discussion.
- Galatians 5:22-23 - The fruit of the Spirit, discussed by Donna and Brock.
- Ephesians 6:10-18 - The armor of God and standing firm, discussed alongside the Spirit’s fruit.

- 2 Peter 1:3 - Echoed in Donna’s statement about receiving what is needed for life and godliness.
- Daniel 3; Daniel 6 - The fiery furnace and the lions’ den, used as paired conversation prompts.
- Esther 4:12-16; 1 Samuel 17 - Accounts recalled in examples about courage and facing intimidating situations.
- Jeremiah 36:1-8 - Baruch writes Jeremiah’s words on a scroll; background for the parchment discussion.
- Genesis 19:15-26; Acts 12:20-23 - Lot’s wife and Herod Agrippa I, referenced in the discussion of choices and consequences.

Quote of the Day

“God continues to give us another chance to engage with his word. And this is a really, really fun way to do it.” — Donna Leland

Broadcast Notes

Host: Donna Leland. Guest: Brock Eastman. Featured resource: Would You Rather Bible Challenges, by Brock Eastman and Marianne Hering, from Moody Publishers. The publisher describes it as a devotional for ages 8-12; Brock discusses 52 entries that can be used at a family’s own pace. He describes Bible stories, follow-up questions, activities, prayer, and interesting facts as ways to support discussion. Suggested settings include the dinner table, independent reading, Sunday school, and a resource sent home with children. The ‘would you rather’ comparisons are conversation starters, not a requirement to accept only one biblical truth or practice. The full spoken conversation is preserved, including humor and the speakers’ historical suggestions. Read the cited biblical passages directly when exploring those suggestions with children.

Practical Applications

- Choose a short, realistic time for a Bible conversation instead of waiting for a perfectly quiet schedule.
- Ask an engaging question, then read the relevant biblical passage together before discussing it.
- Invite each person to explain an answer and listen with curiosity rather than rushing to correct.
- Ask whether anything in the passage changed the first answer and why.
- Look for one practical response: a prayer, a kind action, an activity, or a way to serve someone.
- Help a child notice the feelings and choices of the people in Scripture while keeping the account’s actual details in view.
- Let children see that adults are still learning and can return to familiar passages with fresh attention.
- Consider how to encourage a child or family through a book, a shared conversation, or consistent personal interest.

Today's Challenge

Set aside ten or fifteen minutes with a child, grandchild, or family member. Read Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 6:10-18, then talk about how the Spirit’s fruit and God’s armor can shape a response to a difficult situation. Choose one trait or practice to focus on this week and pray about it together.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me Your Word and inviting me to keep learning. Help me make room for meaningful conversations that point to Jesus. Give me patience to listen, humility to learn, and wisdom to explain Your truth with clarity and kindness. Grow the fruit of Your Spirit in me and help me stand firm in the strength You provide. Show me how to encourage a child, a family, or someone who needs support in faith. Let my words, example, and practical care draw others closer to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Brock Eastman

Author and coauthor of Would You Rather Bible Challenges

Brock Eastman writes books for children and families. His work includes picture books, middle-grade stories, and faith-focused resources. A father of four who grew up in Eureka, Illinois, he joins Donna Leland to discuss Would You Rather Bible Challenges, coauthored with Marianne Hering, and ways to help families explore Scripture through curiosity, conversation, and practical response.

Featured on Mark & Friends - Listen anytime under the Mark & Friends tab at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org.

About Today's Host: Donna Leland

Donna Leland has served listeners through Moody Radio since 1988, sharing music and encouraging messages that point people to Jesus. Her radio ministry includes hosting Saturday music programming, contributing short features, and helping Christian stations connect with listeners during SHARE events.

Donna also writes radio scripts, hosts music and talk segments for the WLUJ Family of Stations, and hosts the Thursday edition of Mark & Friends. She brings warmth, humor, and a love for God's Word to her conversations, seeking to encourage listeners in their everyday walk with Christ.

A veteran homeschool mom of four graduates, Donna and her husband, Tom, a retired Chicago police officer, moved from Chicago to a 40-acre farm. She enjoys country life, tending chickens, raising monarch butterflies, and caring for God's creation.

Additional Ministry Resources

- Mark & Friends Program Resource Library
- Great News Radio
- WLUJ
- Would You Rather Bible Challenges - Moody Publishers
- Galatians 5:22-23 - the fruit of the Spirit
- Ephesians 6:10-18 - the armor of God

Complete Proofread Transcript

Welcome to Mark and Friends. I'm your host, Donna Leland. And today we're talking with Brock Eastman.

He, along with Marianne Hering, have written a wonderful children's devotional. This would be for parents who are just longing for ways to draw their kids into God's Word and help equip them with God's truth. You know, kids today competing with the devices, over-committed schedules, time-consuming sports, extracurricular activities.

So, where do they find the time for the family devotion, and how do you raise that bar to make reading the Bible interesting and exciting? Because it is interesting, and it's way exciting. And Brock, you're from central Illinois. I sure am.

I grew up right there in Eureka, Illinois. Lived there my whole life until moving here to Colorado with my wife. Still have a lot of family there.

And every summer, my wife and kids, we travel back to Illinois and spend a couple months there. Go swim at our cousin's lake and my sister's lake, and just have a good time with family. Celebrate Fourth of July in Eureka over the lake there.

It's really a lot of fun. So, what was it that, you have four kids, so of course that's always tugging on your heart. Yeah, yeah.

You know, Donna, my, you know, I have four kids. Like I said, 17 all the way down to 11. Three girls and a boy.

And they really influence a lot of what I do. In fact, most of what I write, even before Would You Rather, they're all really kids' books. I write a lot of middle grade, a lot of picture books and board books.

My kids have actually been co-authors in several of my books, picture books and board books. My best-selling book, Donna, is a board book inspired by my son, when I was teaching him how to brush his teeth. And so, to say my kids helped me determine what to write is just an understatement even, Donna.

So the Would You Rather book, it is very much that. You know, I am finding, my full-time job is I'm a kids publisher for a publisher called David C. Cook. And as we do research around this generation, Gen Alpha, the group that's coming up, you know, there's been a lot of concern about, you mentioned earlier, media.

You know, social media, lots of video, gaming and so forth. And so, the family is becoming semi-fractured unless parents are very intentional about spending time with their kids. We're seeing that families come home, they probably don't eat dinner together anymore.

They're busy with sports and activities and homework. And the family kind of goes their own separate ways and sometimes on their own devices. And I think there are parents who intentionally are concerned about this.

I know my family, my wife and I are, how do we keep spending time together as a family? How do we center around each other and how do we create conversations that are interesting and engaging? And as a Christian, we would love those conversations to be around who Jesus is and what God has done for us in our lives and the great world he created. So, this idea of the would you rather devotional is really about creating time for families to have conversation together, to create moments that are simple and quick in a busy schedule, but very intentional and could be very deep depending on the family's style of conversation. You know, I envision Donna, and this is part of Mary and I's heart is, you know, a family is coming home on a Saturday and they're like, you know, let's, we're gonna sit down and have dinner together.

And, you know, we've got 15 minutes or half an hour and they want to have some conversation. And so while they're in that short time together, they pull this book out and it is so turnkey for parents to simply ask a question. Would you rather eat pig slop or a locust? And the kids, yes, that's exactly right.

And the kids look at their parents like, what mom and dad are you talking about? But this intriguing question draws them in and it's a real question. It's a real question for them to answer and they answer it without context. And the next step is, hey, let's go in deeper on the stories.

Let's unpack what that means. And each devotional has a story about a real Bible person or a real Bible story for each of these two questions, eat the pig slop or locust. I'm guessing you can know the eat the pig slop is the story of the prodigal son.

Yeah. And eat locust is about John the Baptist, right? And so they're put with these questions of which one would you choose? And so the devotions break those stories down and put the, put the kid into the story and they hear both sides of the story, both sides of the question. And at the end, the parents asked the question again, they reframe it and said, did you change your answer? Why or why not? And so the discussion begins, not only in the beginning, when you answer why you chose something, but then did you change your mind? And then we apply it with three simple things.

And some of these applies are questions to go deeper. Some of them are actual activities that the family can go to do together, or a craft project or art project, or even something to impact your community. And the idea here is if the family wants to go deeper beyond that conversation, here's something you can easily do together, like take that next step.

And then each one has a prayer, of course, to kind of round it out and an incredible fact, because if you are like me at all, I love learning new facts. And so we've built the devotionals to really create time for families to engage together. This is kind of playing off that one game people play, would you rather, and then of course the question itself, questions get people thinking.

So this is so much that they can launch off of and then get the story in their own brain. Because don't you believe Brock, we always try to find ourselves in the story. We do, we do.

And that's how these are written, to make you feel as though you were there experiencing that story. You said, you know, we try to see ourselves in the story. And what I love to think about when I talk to kids and families is we sometimes use the word character, Bible characters.

These weren't characters. These aren't like Mickey Mouse or any Disney character. These were real people that lived in a time and they dealt with situations and feelings and emotions that actually mirror the same feelings and emotions that kids today experience.

And so by drawing you into these stories, you begin to see yourself in a Bible person. You might identify with a certain story in the Bible and hopefully you learn from God's word on how to walk through that story with grace or courage or, you know, or wisdom in some way. Or you might learn the consequences of stories that didn't go the way in favor of the person in the story because they disobeyed God.

Really identify with a person. That's why history never worked for me. It was just who shot who and what date did they shoot each other? And then, okay, it just never connected, but I do think you have to go in and grab people, real people.

And I think this also helps them see these were real people. These, like you said, were not just drawn characters. Yeah.

And I think often today our kids, you know, we, especially here in the United States, in our culture, we really raise up celebrities, right? And those celebrities may or may not have our worldview. They may or may not believe the things we believe. They may be singing songs or doing other activities that just don't align with what parents want.

Yet we allow our kids to continue to highlight these people as their celebrities, as their heroes and put them on pedestals. And if we can just help kids see people from the Bible, people who were broken, David was not exactly a saint, right? We know he had a lot of struggles, but if we can point our kids to heroes from the Bible and say, hey, what if you took on that situation at school, like Esther did when she had to speak up for her people and intervene, even though it was very scary and there could be consequences for what she did. What if there was a bully at school and he was just really rough and you had to take him on like David and you feel smaller? You know, I think, what if you had to seek wisdom? What if you had to go into the desert on your own and seek God because you felt so alone in the world and you didn't know what to do and you needed his wisdom? Well, we can point to people in the Bible who went through those exact stories, trials, and yet came out honoring God with what they did.

And then God rewarded them in some way or blessed them. Reward is probably the wrong word, but he blessed them in different ways, not because of their actions were successful, but because of their faith. Now, can you give us one of your favorite would you rather challenges from the book? We're going to pose this to our listeners, get them to think about it.

Now, which side would they personally choose? So give us up. Would you rather? Yeah, this is one I really love for parents and kids both to think about. So would you rather bear biblical fruit or suit up spiritually? So would you rather grow the fruit of the spirit where everyone can see it or put on God's armor for a spiritual battle? I'm going to go fruit.

You go fruit? I'm going to do fruit. Can you tell me why, Donna? Why? I just feel like, you know, if you have the fruit of the spirit, you are always going to be armed for battle because if someone comes at you with hate, you've got your love. If someone comes at you with, you know, anger, you've got your joy, peace, you know, you can handle anything with patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control, you know? And so when you do want to take your sword and ram them through, and you're not supposed to, you've got self-control.

Donna, that is, that I, okay, you have reframed. This is, okay, this is why this discussion is so much fun, okay? I had come at this with, I'm going to do it spiritually for the reasons you just said so that you're ready to battle. I hadn't thought of bear the biblical fruit as something that I could also use in battle in that way.

And so I love how you reframe that because you spoke to exactly the reason why I wanted the fruit, the armor of God. And now I'm like, well, which one do I want? Because they can both accomplish the same thing I was after. That's amazing.

Yeah, so really there's a third way, and that's, we get both, you know? We get the power of the Holy Spirit. We've got it all. You know, we have everything we need for life and godliness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can I read you the prayer then? Because the prayer, just what you just said is exactly right. God, help me put on your armor so I can stand firm against the enemy. Holy Spirit, grow your fruit in me so everywhere I go, my life looks like Christ's.

Amen. You're exactly right. Both can be used to build up.

And the truth is, there are some would-you-rathers in here that you might not want to choose either one, but there's a lot of would-you-rathers. Okay, well, I mean, okay, let's just be honest. Well, I have to find, there's so many to flip through.

Oh man, give me a second. I'll come back to it. But even the one of the eating locust and eating pig slop, that raised a lot of questions.

Well, I wouldn't want to either. Locusts are crunchy and pig slop is gross. How about fiery furnace or lion's den? Oh, I don't know.

I mean, but we know through the story, they both make it through. I'm going to go furnace because I feel like you just, you know, hope that you were like one of the guys that threw them in and you are instantly, you know, vaporized. We posed that question on Facebook and that's what most people said was, I just want to get close to that fire and just be gone.

I don't want to experience the other, you know, and obviously the part of that question is making kids really think about that without knowing what the story results in, right? And then seeing how God worked through it is pretty, pretty amazing. You know, that would be true because if they've really never engaged with either one of those stories, then it's like a scary thing. But that's kind of neat.

I never thought about kids not knowing, you know, both those stories. You think that these could be used in a Sunday school setting or? Yeah. And I know I've mentioned a lot about parents using this with their kids, but this is meant to also be used as an independent study for kids.

And I don't know about you, Donna, but if I give my kids a joke book or something really fun, they will read every part of that book. And so I hand this to my son, Declan, and there's 52. So you can do that however you'd like to, but typically 52 is like, you know, one a week, right? He started buzzing through, I think we got through 12 in the first day he had this book.

I'm like, okay, buddy, let's save some for later, you know, because there's so much fun. And my co-author on another series called Paraport, his name is Shawn Stevenson. He's a children's pastor.

And he wrote me just yesterday. He goes, I'm always looking for good devotionals to recommend. And I have told this about to everybody.

And we're getting this at our church because what you just said is it gives something turnkey for children's pastor to turn to on a weekly basis. And even if it's not the core of the whole lesson, it's a great icebreaker. It's a great ending.

It's something great to send home with your families to say, hey, do this together this week. And I'm thinking of children who just don't have the support at home. You know, they don't have parents who are going to sit down with them.

This would be a great devotional to send. Maybe a grandparent wants to get their children for Christmas because they know there's not a lot of spiritual support coming from them. Now you talk about these facts that you also sprinkle in these incredible facts.

Now, without giving the whole book away, can you give us one of these incredible facts? Okay, I will. This one is from number 44, pen a doomed prophecy, moonlight as a missionary and the parchment. It's called parchment perspectives.

Kitchen parchment paper keeps cookies and whatnot from sticking to a baking pan. Newsflash. This is not what Baruch used.

Old Testament scroll parchment wasn't really paper. Ancient parchment was made from untanned animal skins. So if you find an ancient piece of parchment in your grandma's attic, we recommend you take it to museum and refrain from putting it in the oven.

You're welcome. So they're just fun little moments, right? That was that they wrote on an animal skin. Yes.

Right. And so it's just fun to help kids see deeper in history. And there's others, you know, that point to like the Bible is real.

And so there's facts that historians that aren't even believers will point to because it is in Roman history. It's in Greek history. And we know it to accurately say, yeah, that really happened.

That's pretty amazing. Yeah. So you feel like some of these, what incredible facts could make that connection.

I do. I think that can help kids really. My favorite Bible that I had growing up, even though I was a kid was the archeological Bible.

And I love that when I would turn the page, there'll be all these factoids and a lot of factoids were not from Bible scholars. They were like the Mesopotamian King said this. And from this, we found this.

I found it fascinating, but I grew up loving history and things like that. So I thought it was really cool. You asked me though, I didn't want to say you asked me what would be one that I think was a bad choice and I found it.

This is what I was looking for. It's number 43. Would you rather turn to salt or explode with worms? Yeah.

So you know, Lot's wife gets homesick and Herod Agrippa I falls down dead. I'm going to go salt. I just am.

I just feel like. I think you're right. Yep.

That's a little bit quicker. Although they do think the salt came from this volcanic eruption that took down the entire area by God's command. And it was the basalt.

I think it was raining down on her that then. Can you imagine? So there are bad ones in there, Donna, that are not bad ones. There are ones that really make you think, I don't think I want either one.

But then that leads you to the response. And really what this is helping kids push them to is their own choices, right? Absolutely. Absolutely.

This city's going down, you run, you run, you don't put yourself up as being God of the universe and be worm food. So this is showing real time consequences to real time decisions. And then you want the kids then to make better choices.

That's exactly right. We end that whole set of devotionals by saying, Lot's wife ignored the angel's instructions and was turned into a salt pillar. Herod tried to worm his way out of obedience and failed.

Neither Lot's wife nor Herod Agrippa I took God at his word. They proved they weren't worth their salt. That was a little joke at the end, but they didn't take God at what he said was true.

And he is true to his word always. He's never not. Absolutely.

So this is a great tool if you're thinking about getting a kid something that will stand the test of time and get them to start thinking about God's word. Donna, I really appreciate that you said this is a great gift to send home to families or kids who may not have that intentionality. And I never want to shame any parents.

We are busy. Parents are busy. My hope is simply that something like this tool, this book will just make it easy because I think often parents are busy, but in their heart, they want to have the opportunity.

And sometimes it's, Hey, you know, we don't have time. Sometimes it's honestly, we're intimidated. We don't know these Bible stories ourselves as well as we'd like to admit.

And even growing up in Sunday school and my whole life growing up as a child, there are stories that we researched in here and wrote that I had maybe heard, but I had no idea the depth and the theme behind that. And so this devotional is meant to equip parents with all the information they need. So they don't have to go do extra study, but they can look like the hero in that moment with their kids and have a really good discussion without being intimidated by these Bible stories.

So I just want parents to know this is meant to be a tool and something useful for them to make and equip them to really impact their kids and their families. But if you don't have that, you can send this to a kiddo and they can do it all on their own. And there's nothing in here that will be too far from them to understand or to enjoy as they read through it.

Now, one thing is being a parent. I really loved the chance for a redo. We homeschooled our kids and I tell you what, history was one of my favorite subjects as I was leading them.

And so for a parent, you know, I got a chance to go at it again and really learn what I never learned the first pass. You know, we all have like these first passes. It's like drinking out of fire hose in school.

You know, you just get it done, get it for the test, get it down. And, you know, and maybe as a kid growing up in church, you felt the same way. You really weren't interested.

You, you know, wrote down the right things. You colored the sheet. But as parents, this again is another chance.

God continues to give us another chance to engage with his word. And this is a really, really fun way to do it. Yes.

Well, I really want to thank you so much. We've been talking with Brock Eastman and he, along with Marianne Hering, have written a book called Would You Rather Bible Challenges. And it's a great 52 stories.

52. That's right. 52.

Epic Bible stories. It's devotion with a lot of hands-on practical as well. Well, thanks again, Brock.

This has been a delight. And I just love introducing our listeners to wonderful resources. And this is from Moody Publishers.

Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate you having me in the time you took to talk to us about Would You Rather. Thanks for listening to Mark and Friends.

We're a ministry of Great News Media. Have a great day.