

*One Such Child: Teaching the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child  
as an Access Point for Child-Conscious Biblical Hermeneutics*

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Recent scholarship in biblical studies has shown that the hermeneutics interpreters apply to biblical texts are reflective of the social location and cultural identity claimed by each. More recently, adult academics in childhood studies and across many disciplines and have begun to focus on the presence and voices of children in their respective fields. Little work has been done to date on the intersection of childhood studies and biblical studies, particularly in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is not to say that children have no presence in biblical texts, nor is it the case that children are not active interpreters of said texts. Rather, their presence and interpretive activity has been largely ignored in scholarly discourse. However, a wealth of interpretive possibilities can be uncovered by bringing attention to children in the text and to children's agency as textual interpreters. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, when used as a biblical intertext, becomes an access point through which students can practice critical examination of the text through a child-conscious lens. In doing so, student awareness of children's rights in the contemporary context is heightened through their attention to children's presence in the ancient world.

The experience can be further enriched when an intergenerational element is integrated either in the classroom or by outside assignment. If it is impractical or impossible for children to be invited to the classroom to participate in class discussion, adult students can be asked to compare their own initial reflection to that of a child examining the same text, noting any further thoughts arising from the intergenerational encounter. Such an exercise is not only illustrative of children's interpretive agency for adult students, but can also be significantly empowering to the children involved when adults take their perspectives on such culturally influential texts seriously and all participants have the opportunity to engage across generational boundaries.

#### Activity

- In preparation, each student should read the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and select a biblical text about or including a child or children to do a close reading. To avoid duplications, students sign up for individual texts.
- In class, Judges 11 is read out loud in several translations for comparison and discussion in light of the UNCRC. Where are these two texts in tension? How does reading each text affect your reading of the other? Can these two texts be creatively and productively reconciled?
- In small groups, students ask the same questions of the biblical texts they prepared for class, bringing results back to class discussion.
- In summation, students list discoveries this juxtaposition brought to light.