



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Discussion Starters in Christian RE

The following are ideas per chapter that can be used in discussing the adventure of Eloise from a Christian perspective with children. Many biblical concepts will be recognized but are not referred to chapter and verse. As the ideas involve major themes in theology and Christian living the educator should have no problem in finding biblical references, if so desired. The story of Eloise allows for discussions on a wide variety of topics. The educator may well find further ideas in addition to those suggested or may wish to make some modifications. The language used keeps in mind that the discussion will be with children. If considered beyond their capacity of understanding, depending on age levels, please adapt the presentation accordingly.



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 1 Eloise has had enough!

RE Discussion Starters

Teasing

Eloise is teased by her brothers. Why does teasing give such a bad feeling? Does God ever tease? How come?

Hiding

When people are not very kind, it may make you wish to hide. You can creep away somewhere out of sight or you can hide within yourself. How might you do the second? Who can see you there? Yes, God and yourself. What might God see, you think? That you're hurt, and why you're hurting. God knows everything about us. How do you think God will respond? Should you stay in hiding?

Land of Beginnings

Eloise comes to the Land of Beginnings. Where do you think the world began? With God in Heaven, who had an Idea and made it happen. That Idea comes from Heaven you might say, which is the Land of Beginnings. The Idea is still being worked out today. Could you give some examples? (All life comes from God; the world holds its future in God, who has a good plan; etc.)

The Throne

Most important in the Land of Beginnings is a Castle. What is the most important place in Heaven? Yes, it is God's Throne. Do you know what is around the Throne in heaven? The Bible tells us it's a rainbow.

Darkness

Eloise comes to a dark forest. Are you afraid of the dark? Do you think God is close when you are in the dark? How do you know? Some people like darkness. Why might that be?



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Chapter 2 Eloise finds a Password and uses her Imagination

RE Discussion Starters

Password

Eloise needs a password to get to the Castle. Do you need a password to get close to God? No, you don't. By prayer you can get as close as you like. When one day you will die, would you need a password then to get into Heaven? Jesus is our password. He has made entry into heaven possible.

Promise

As you know, there are lots of words in a dictionary, which give names to all the things and ideas in the world. God made that possible and in that sense God is a Keeper of the Words. One of those words is Rainbow, the password Eloise selected. Do you know what a Rainbow represents in the ideas of God? Yes, a promise. Eloise walks into the Land of Beginnings with a promise, a very beautiful and colorful one. Do you think God has a promise for your life also? Why would that be and what might your promise perhaps look like? Eloise keeps Rainbow, her promise, close to her. Should you do the same with your promise and how might that be done? You must believe that Jesus loves you and always helps with your promise, even if sometimes it doesn't at all look that way. Can you give an example of when you feel that Jesus is helping really well? Might you have an example of when he seems not to be interested? What might you do when he seems far away? Yes, it is best to just believe that He is near, even if you can't see or feel it much.

Imagination

Eloise is asked to use her imagination. Why is it that you can never think what Heaven might look like, if you don't have imagination? Because you've never been there, of course. Why is it so important to have imagination? Otherwise you cannot think of any place you haven't been or anything that hasn't happened to you. Why is it good to use your imagination? Well, if you can imagine what it would be like falling off the stairs you will make sure it won't happen. Imagination also helps us to create art, do science and all sorts of other exciting things.

Company

Eloise imagines a soft furry animal and it was a beautiful cat. What kind of animal might you have imagined going into a dark forest to lead the way? If you had to imagine a person to guide you into the darkness, what kind of person would that have been?



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Chapter 3 Eloise learns about the Doors

RE Discussion Starters

Keeper of the Words

The Keeper of the Words is fitting words and ideas where these are best suited. Who, as we discovered before, is doing a similar thing? Yes, it's God.

Anxiety

Rainbow was very anxious about going into the forest. Are you ever anxious about living and what could make you anxious?

Apprehension

Eloise finds her journey not at all comfortable. It is cold and eerie and Jackdaws attack Cat. Can you think of things that happen in life that could make you feel that way? What is Eloise carrying with her though? It is a Rainbow – a promise. What might that mean? That God is always there, also in the scary times. The darkness will not last forever.

Attitude

Rainbow is a great promise, but loves her colors rather too much and thinks she is ever so smart. Could you put some words to Rainbow describing this attitude? Words like pride and selfishness come to mind. Why are these not qualities to be admired? Do you know what the Bible tells us about it?

The Door

Eloise will only reach the Castle if she can find the Doors and get through. Let's for a moment think about the stories in the Bible that tell us about a person who says that he is the Door. Who might that be? Yes, it's Jesus. Now if the Castle of Eloise is like Heaven, and the Doors represent Jesus, what does it tell us about getting into Heaven to be with God?

Wisdom

The Owl is a beautiful bird. What does it look like? Do you have any idea what in stories it often speaks of – what word would you connect with the owl? It is the word wisdom. What is wisdom actually? Why is it so helpful to have it as a helper? The Bible tells us that wisdom is one of the most important things for people to have in their lives. Can you give an example of when you would have used wisdom?



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Chapter 4 Eloise is confused about Time

RE Discussion Starters

Time Next

Eloise learns that there is a time before the universe and the world came into existence and it's called Time Before. Nobody knows what that was like, only God, who at that time kept the idea of having a universe solely in his mind. But that was before.

Today, in the world we're living in, we know very well what things are like and we have clocks to keep our time. The world takes a full day to turn around against the sun. So that makes the length of a day. That's the time we live in – Time Now.

Then there is a time to come, which we enter when we step out of the world's time into another reality, into the Next Time. When does that happen? Yes, when we die. In the Next Time things are very different, but quite fantastic, and just as real in their own way. Nobody is sure what it all will look like and what kind of time is kept there. It's rather mysterious and exciting. Now, why might stepping out of our Time Now into Next Time not be something you have to be afraid of? What is this Next Time reality called? Yes, it's Heaven. Do you know what the Bible tells us about it?

Stepping into Next Time

Eloise learns that she needs to be at the clock at the right time if she wishes to step through the doors. People step through the door of time at different ages, some are young and some are old. When your time is up, you will arrive at the door to the Next Time. That can seem very unjust, particularly when you're young. It only makes sense if the Next Time is really a good place. As humans we do not understand some things very well. Do you have any thoughts about going to Heaven?

Believing

Eloise cannot find the doors at all; she definitely cannot see them. Cat told her to point her finger straight ahead and follow it. That would only be of help really, if Eloise believed she was pointing it in the right direction. Any idea in what direction would you like to point your finger in life? What do you believe in and would like to find?



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Chapter 5 Eloise meets the Owl and the Clock and chooses a Door

RE Discussion Starters

Doubt and Fear

Do you know what it means to be troubled by doubts and fears? Can you give some examples? Such negative feelings and thoughts are like the Jackdaws. They keep attacking you and try to limit you in doing the good things you are capable of. The Bible encourages us to have faith, to know that God is our helper. God helps us deal with the Jackdaws of doubt and fear. That is a good promise, but do you have any idea what faith is and how it works?

Time Now

The Jackdaws try to make us doubt about God and Heaven. They wish to take away the certainty from our minds of Heaven even being there. They wish us to believe that the clock is broken and we are stuck in Time Now with seemingly no way out into Next Time. What kind of people may think that way? Do they seem to care much? Do you remember what the Owl represents in the story? Yes, it's wisdom. That's what is needed for the clock of time to work best for every person. Where do you think real wisdom comes from? It comes from God's Spirit – the Holy Spirit. What is God's kind of wisdom like?

Faith

Eloise didn't think the two doors were leading anywhere. They were standing in Time Now with more of Time Now showing all around them. The secret of the doors is that they are leading into another time, which cannot be seen. Eloise is told to *believe* that there is something behind those doors. Perhaps we too may miss stepping through a door God places before us, a door into the good things of God. We may refuse to believe in those good things simply because we don't see them as a possibility. It is called unbelief. Can you explain what unbelief actually is? Would you have some examples?

Merriment

Eloise has to make a choice between two doors. Neither door shows where it is leading. The one she enters first brings her into rather a silly place. It leads to nothing significant and helpful. Many people step through that door and get quite lost in the merriment. They spend most of their time making life as much fun as possible. They don't mind much that it is leading nowhere. What do you think will be missing in those people's lives?



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Chapter 6 Eloise meets Mr Henry and enters the Castle

RE Discussion Starters

Doubt and Faith

Eloise believes, as best she can, that the door with the frosted window will lead to the Castle. The Jackdaws try to sow confusion till the last moment, but finally don't succeed. What do you think? Is it a bad thing to have doubts? No, not at all! Doubts are normal. Every person has doubts. We must decide to ignore our doubts and have faith instead. Do you have any idea how that might be done?

Memory

When Eloise looks back the door has simply disappeared as if the whole event was an illusion. Believing in God is a little like that. You positively decide that you will believe and feel that it is good. Then you look back a few days later and your decision may seem not that real anymore, as if it never happened. But Eloise did pass through a door, and your decision was a real and important one. So what might you do to reaffirm what happened some days ago? You say to yourself: It was real then - it is real now. I believe.

Talking with God

Isn't it strange that Eloise is taken up in a bubble and drifts along till she sees the Castle? Eloise doesn't have to take much effort at all getting to the Castle once she is in the Next Time. When you pray to God it's just like that. Why is praying similar to Eloise in the bubble, you think? Because your prayers always arrive with God and you have to do nothing to get them there. Do you think that all your prayers go to Heaven or only the good ones? What do you think is a good prayer? Does it have to be long to be good? What is more important in praying, your words or your attitude?

Titles

Mr Henry finds titles rather impressive. Why do many people think just like him, you think? When may titles be important perhaps? Do you think God cares much for titles?

Rainbow

Rainbow is thrown into the sky and shines there beautifully. Do you know when the Rainbow appeared in the sky for the first time in the Bible? It was with Noah and the Ark. The Rainbow speaks of God's care towards people. That God will find an answer to their lives that will be a real spiritual answer, in which their wrongdoings do not have to count against them. The Lord Jesus, and what he has done for us, is God's answer. Eloise's password Rainbow is a good password for everyone.



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Chapter 7 Eloise is all alone and meets the Girl-with-no-Name

RE Discussion Starters

Questions

Eloise meets all these question marks but never gets an answer from them. I'm sure you have questions as well to which you do not get an answer. There are many questions in life, which may not be answered. People have questions with God to which no answer is given. Can you think of some of these perhaps? Yes, there can be sickness in our family; the world looks in trouble with wars and famines etc. It is true that bad things can happen to good people. There is little we can do about it. We are living in a world in which the bad is very much present. The Bible calls it the power of sin. However, that doesn't mean that God is not also present and much more powerfully so. As people we are exposed to both the good and the bad. We simply have to accept that and do the best we can to make the world a better place. And if a question doesn't get an answer, also not from God, then we need to trust that God does know and is working it all out for the better in ways we do not understand.

Self-confidence

How about the Girl-with-no-name? When Eloise meets her she is looking at herself, it seems. What would you feel like if this were to happen to you? But in a sense you could say it *is* happening to you. There is a Girl or Boy-with-no-name in your life. It is the person of promise, the person you can become. Every young person has a promise in his or her life. If you believe in Jesus, than he will help that promise come to pass in ways that will reflect what he himself is like. Won't that be wonderful? You may have thought of some promises for your life, who you would like to be, or where you would like to go. Could you perhaps tell us about that?

Trinity

Eloise notices three paths to follow and three towers to aim for. The figure three has particular significance in the Bible, the most important being the idea of Trinity meaning threesome. Do you know what we are talking about when we refer to the Trinity? Yes, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are God and together in total unity and harmony without any disagreement. They so perfectly agree together in all that they are and do, that they are One. God is One, even though there are three divine Persons in that unity. It's a mystery, how that works. People like us, who can be easily in disagreement, find it hard to understand. But that's why God is God and we are people. Also, the total difference between God and people is that we are created beings, while the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are uncreated, they have always been. Don't ask me how that can be, for I don't know. It's a good reason for believing in God. It would be no help at all if God were a person like us. Why not, do you think?



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Chapter 8 Eloise visits the Towers and finds the Book Room

RE Discussion Starters

Heaven

The Girl-with-no-name tells Eloise that where Eloise comes from everything has an ending but where the Girl-with-no-name lives everything has a beginning. What do you think she is talking about?

Deception

Eloise meets quite a beautiful lady, but is she really beautiful? Appearances can be deceiving. Have you come across people or things that are not what they look like? You may even come across ideas that are not what they seem, like – if only I am rich, I will definitely be happy. Could you think of an idea that seems okay, but isn't perhaps?

Spiritual Darkness

The Witch locks Eloise up with the characters of the stories she has captured. What do you know about witchcraft; is it still practiced today? Yes, it is and perhaps it's better not to talk about these spiritual practices much. We don't have to know everything about something before we can decide we will have nothing to do with it. The Bible tells us there is a spirit world in which there are both God's good angels and the dark angels that are up to no good at all. God's angels help us, even when we do not see them. They are looking after us. The dark angels do quite the opposite. They are responsible for much of the pain in the world, for wars and selfish ideas like, greed is good. Again, we don't fully understand all this, but it would be foolish to think these forces are not real. It's best to concentrate on Jesus, and trust in God.



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Chapter 9 Eloise learns about the Great Witch

RE Discussion Starters

Missed Potential

Everyone's life has a story that gets written as we live through the years. Your life too is a story and, as we have discussed before, a story of promise. But what happens if the story isn't written as well as it could; if the characters, the possibilities in your life, are being bound up? What happens then? Your life will then not become what it could be. Now, none of us know what the future will bring; only God knows that. God also knows what our lives may be like if we follow Jesus. And that's the real question. We may not know the future, but will we bind up our possibilities like the characters in the story, if we forget to believe in Jesus and his help to us? If we decide to do things our own selfish way instead of trying to live as the Bible tells us? Could you mention a few of the good things the Bible tells us to live our lives by? What might happen if we don't?

The Future

The characters who Eloise finds in captivity talk about an invitation by the Wordsmith to receive new stories for another year. Without new plots there cannot be further stories. Who brings good stories into our lives? Jesus does. Does that happen automatically? Sometimes. However, if we consciously ask for it life works much better. Like the characters we also need to receive our good stories all the time by going to the Wordsmith, who is God. How can we best do that?

Stolen Stories

The Wordsmith knows that one day the Witch will try to take over the Castle and the handing out of stories. Likewise, God knows that the dark forces in the world would like to steal the best stories that are available for our lives. It would be a great pity if those forces succeeded. What might I myself, and my life, look like if my best life stories would be stolen? I would be selfish, unkind, unhappy, greedy, tired etc. How can I prevent that? Eloise decides that she is not going to be a prisoner for long. What decision would you like to make about your life story?



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 10 The Great Witch and the Treasure Hunter

RE Discussion Starters

Attitudes

The Treasure Hunter is greedy and looking for treasure. But what he finds is no treasure anywhere. He has been duped. What looked a great idea in becoming rich ended up in emptiness, worse than he had before. After all, he had become a liar and a bully in the process. Jesus tells us to store up good treasures that will not turn sour on us. He also explains that where my heart is, that's where my treasure will be. He talks here about our attitudes and how we think. What really are we talking about when we speak of attitude? Why is the right attitude in life so important? Have you got any idea what our thinking has to do with this? The Bible tells us to think on the good things of God and not on the negative ones that my selfishness tells me of. And warns against the deceptive ideas in our world that aren't at all helpful. Like, unless you're beautiful and smart you cannot amount to much. Those thoughts are wrong and not from God. Can you think of other ideas that the world tells us are needed to get happy and which are not from God?

Bad Ideas and Habits

The Witch has real power over the Treasure Hunter who thought he could just walk away. When you begin to follow bad ideas and habits, these can get real power over you. Let's see whether we can find some examples. How about drugs, what do you know about that? Can you mention some? How about being unreasonably competitive? What would that do to you and your friends? How about wanting to have everything without sharing? What will that do? Can *you* come up with some suggestions of where you can become enslaved to a bad idea?

Imprisonment

The Witch is very sure that Eloise and the characters have been very well locked up and cannot escape. She has good reason, because their prison room looks rather solid. In the same way the dark forces in our universe thought that they had a sure stranglehold on all people with no way for them to escape from their enslavement to the negative powers that live inside of them. However, those forces, as we know, were wrong. For who came to deliver, to set people free into a life that offers healthy stories? Yes, our Lord, the Lord Jesus.



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Chapter 11 An Escape Route is Discovered

RE Discussion Starters

Revision

Today we are not discussing all the characters from all kinds of stories Eloise discovered in that prison room. They are so busy trying to find a way out that we'll leave them to it. Instead let's have a look briefly at the things we have discussed in the first 10 chapters of the Eloise adventure to date. See whether you can remember and what further comments you might wish to make. (The educator can select what seems most appropriate for revision.)



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 12 Eloise stays with the Gentle Giant

RE Discussion Starters

Getting Stuck

The Gentle Giant gets stuck in the trapdoor. There is no way for him to go through. Have you ever felt stuck in a situation? Would you care to talk about that? How did it make you feel? Did you find an answer to the problem? Sometimes in life we do get stuck and it isn't always our fault at all. When that happens perhaps you can find someone to talk with, someone you trust. Who would you go to for some help? Would you have someone in mind perhaps?

Courage

Isn't it brave of Eloise to stay with the Gentle Giant? It's never good to let your friends down and Eloise makes up her mind that she won't do so. That requires courage. What exactly is courage? Do you know the difference between courage and being naively brave? If you live your life without courage what might happen? Everybody needs courage at times. Have there been times when you needed to be courageous? What happened? The Lord Jesus had lots of courage. Could you think of an example of his courage?

Challenges

The Gentle Giant is also very courageous. He refuses to open the trapdoor once the Witch has discovered it. He is condemned to dwell with the Jackdaws. That's when Eloise challenges the Witch, a challenge she cannot possibly win. Can you think of some difficult challenges that life may bring? When faced with challenges you cannot seemingly win, what sort of things can you do? You can pray and trust God to deal with the situation. Or, you can try to think of another way forward that does not include quite the same challenge. If there is no way out, then you should know that Jesus is close even if you cannot see him. The Bible promises us that he will never leave us or turn his back on us. It is also always very good to talk with someone you can trust, like your parents or grandparents.



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 13 Eloise makes a Plan

RE Discussion Starters

Evil

The prisoners find out how to deal with the evil Witch from something the Wordsmith wrote. If in our lives we need to find out about evil and some answers, where would we go? We would go to God's Word.

Light

How can you change a dark room into not being dark? You let the light in. How can that be done? Draw back a curtain, switch the light on or a torch, or light a candle. Any sort of light will do, when you are dealing with darkness. Darkness simply has no answer to light. That's why Eloise is to expose the Witch to the Fireflies. The Bible has a lot to say about light. Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.' What exactly did he mean by that?

Walking in Light

It is also written that whoever is of the light will not walk in darkness. That's quite a statement. When are we of the light and how does that help us? Jesus is the light of our lives, if we love him. He writes in our heart what are the good things to think and do and what is not good and needs to be avoided. That's called our conscience. Do you have any idea of the meaning of that difficult word? Why is it good not to ignore your conscience? How does it feel, when your conscience begins to speak to you? How does that happen – as a warning in your mind, in your feeling or your intuition perhaps? What can happen if you do ignore it? The Bible has quite a lot to say about this and considers our conscience to be very important. Do you think animals have a conscience? It is the very fact that people have one, that makes us beings created in the image of God with a knowledge of good and evil.



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 14 The Great Witch meets her End

RE Discussion Starters

Being Let Down

The Witch had sent the Treasure Hunter to go and wait for the Wordsmith in the book room and arrest him. That doesn't seem to be an instruction he could have carried out easily. It's gone from bad to worse for him and all because he has betrayed his friend the Gentle Giant of Oorlappy. Have you ever let a friend down? How does that make you feel? Some people, who let you down, don't seem to feel much about it at all. They may even laugh about it. What might you do in such a situation? If you can, tell them you don't appreciate it at all. But then, try to forgive and forget. If you don't, who will be the loser? They don't care, so it's you who is left with all these negative emotions. What sort of thoughts might go through your mind? How might you feel? How might Jesus help?

Pride

Proud and arrogant people usually think themselves more capable than they really are. They get away with it most times, but not always. It's better not to be proud and overly pleased with yourself. It's a real trap to get caught into. What is the difference between being proud and being properly self-confident? The first sets itself off against other people – I am better than you. The second is a healthy belief in your own abilities. It's not good to be proud, but good to have confidence. Jesus was very confident about what he could do. Much of it was because his Father in Heaven was helping him and of that he told everyone. Jesus was very powerful, but not at all proud. So it's quite OK to be really good at something. It's wrong to think that you are a better person than someone else.

Victory

The Witch was proud and overreached herself. She was so set on becoming the most important person at the Castle that she never properly considered the dangers of going into the Castle grounds. That was her downfall. She was defeated by the light of the fireflies. Eloise then decided that the Witch should not be able to get her hands on stories anymore. Her power was finished.

In a similar way the powers of darkness in our world thought they had overcome Jesus on the Cross. But how mistaken they were. Jesus conquered them completely and now is ruler over everything - good as well as bad; although Jesus would never initiate anything bad. We cannot as yet see the full reality of this victory but one day we will, when we go to Heaven. Also, the Bible talks about Jesus coming back one day though nobody knows how that is to happen exactly and when it will be. It may take years, it may be soon. In the meantime it is best to live good lives with his help.



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Chapter 15 The Party

RE Discussion Starters

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Exciting Words

The Wordsmith tells Eloise of the many good words that are available to write stories with. He mentions words like Wonder and Mystery, like Love, Longing, Goodness, Adventure and Peace. What do you think about these words? What do they mean and would you like to see them in your own life. Why might that be so? What do you think would be God's thoughts about these words? Can you think of other suitable words?

Psychological Needs

Mr Henry was ever so wrong letting the Witch into the Castle. What made him do so? He obviously had a great need to be called handsome. That's fair enough. However, it can be that our deep needs become a stumbling block to others and us. Can you think of some ideas here, like needing to win and then you begin to cheat?

Forgiveness

Fortunately the Wordsmith forgives Mr Henry and he is ever so happy thereafter. Who does that willingness to forgive remind you of? How many things will God offer forgiveness for, you think? Who made this forgiveness possible and how?

Promise

The Wordsmith explained to Eloise that her password Rainbow speaks of the promise Eloise can become. We have talked about that before. What do you remember about that discussion? It's easy to say that you have a promise on your life but how can you begin to believe that yourself?

Parties

The Castle has a great party. What do you think God thinks about parties? God loves celebrations and is never a spoilsport. But of course parties can go wrong and often do. Can you think of reasons why parties go wrong? What kind of party would God like best?

My Story

Eloise finds out that the Girl-with-no-name now has a name, and it's Eloise. While Eloise wasn't too sure about herself and the promise on her life, the Girl-with-no-name was waiting for Eloise to find out who she is. Once Eloise discovered that, the Girl-with-no-name can be called Eloise as well. It's all about each of you having the promise on your life to become the best person you can be – to feel happy with yourself and with who you are. Eloise has learned a lot during her adventure, which made her far more assertive and sure of the person she would like to be. The Wordsmith has a story for her life that is a truly excellent one, if she will follow his guidance. The Lord Jesus has a perfect story for your life too. It will happen, as you stay in contact with him all your life.

The End

Well, Eloise is back home with her brothers and future challenges no doubt and we have come to the end of her adventure. Is there anything you have learned that has been particularly helpful?