



Fairy Tales, Fantasy & Parables

Is it a lie to read and enjoy fairy tales, fables and fantasy? Can fiction even be “more true” than facts? Fairy tales and fables are not literal, factual or historical. However, that does not mean the stories they tell are *untrue*.

Of course, we know the *Three Little Pigs* never existed, but the story teaches children to be industrious, that plans are important and that play should follow work. These values help overcome adversity, symbolized by the wolf in the story.

The race between *The Tortoise and The Hare* teaches children (and adults) to never give up. Though the tortoise is overmatched and outclassed, he prevails in the end against the hare, who is the odds-on, obvious favorite. “Keep on keeping on! Slow and steady wins the race.”

In *The North Wind and the Sun*, the elements stage a contest over who can cause a traveler to take off his coat first. The wind blows hard but the traveler merely tightens his coat, while the sun slowly and gently increases its rays until the traveler finally removes his coat. The moral? Kindness and gentle persuasion are more likely to bring about lasting change than extreme measures.

Fairy tales and fables are forms of storytelling, and Jesus used a similar genre called parables. He was the greatest storyteller to grace our Bible. The parables are not factual accounts about actual people or events—they are not breaking news.

Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son is not about an actual father and two brothers—no, the story is greater than that. The father is our heavenly Father. And all of us, at some point, find ourselves in the role of the prodigal or his older brother. The truths in Jesus’ parables are truths that last long after we forget the lessons of historical events.

Up to one-third of the Bible is written in poetic style—but who would dare abandon its poetry as untrue because it lacks literal authenticity?

Great contemporary fantasy writers like C.S. Lewis and J.R. Tolkien illustrate how fiction can effectively proclaim the gospel, often more so than lectures and sermons. Many child development experts believe the fantasy world of children is a healthy and productive stage of their maturation.

What about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy? Many parents perpetuate these magical myths, pretending that an old man from the North Pole breaks into the house each year, leaving presents, eating cookies, and returning home on his sleigh, pulled by reindeer parked on the roof.

Some say Santa Claus is a blatant lie and that once children discover he doesn’t exist, they will be disillusioned and lose trust in their parents. But nothing I’ve seen leads me to believe that magical myths lead to long-term damage. Revealing that Santa doesn’t actually exist is a minor obstacle for parents as they prepare children for the greater

challenges of the world at large.

On the flip side, there is no evidence that families who observe Christmas and Easter without Santa or the Easter Bunny will raise children more well-adjusted to life. What matters is that children learn at a young age about the hard work and self-sacrifice of their parents to providing them with special gifts, as well as the mundane necessities of life. Eventually, children will learn to attribute credit to their parents rather than to mythical characters and creatures.

Having watched five grandchildren mature beyond Santa Claus, then watching how they and tens of millions of others can be entranced, deceived and manipulated by social media fantasies, if I had a choice, I would much rather abolish social media and retain old Saint Nick. □

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