

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 1

The Beginning of Life as We Know It

Timeless Truth: Humans are God's crowning creation.

Bible Basis: Genesis 1-9:17

Key Verse: When God created man, he made him in his own likeness. -Genesis 5:1, NIV

Resource: *The Story*, Chapter 1

Parent Tips:

Read through the key points from the Sunday school classes your child or children attended. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table at some point this week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your child know that he's perfectly created by God. The Extra Mile idea will help your family spread God's love in the community.

Get the Point

Preschool: God made everything. He made me in His likeness.

Elementary: God made everything there is. He made me to know him.

Middle School: God made a perfect creation. We messed it up. Jesus offers us grace to fix that.

High School: God made a perfect and ordered creation. Man's sin brought suffering to earth.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- If you could live a day as any animal, what animal would you be? What are some of the good and bad things about living as that animal?
- What are some ways people and animals are different?
- Are people or animals more important to God? Explain that people are worth way more than animals, because we're the only part of Creation made in God's image. We were made to have a relationship with God. Even Jesus said in Matthew 10:31 that we're "worth more than many sparrows."

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 1. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

1. What were the key events from this chapter?
2. What was most meaningful/stood out in your mind for this chapter?
3. In your own words, what does it look like for human beings to take care of God's creation like Adam and Eve were instructed to do?"
4. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? How can you more fully live out that image in your everyday life?

Middle/High School

- What are some things you really like about yourself? (Could be eyes, hair, clothes, sense of humor)
- Hollywood actors and models always talk about how they'd like to change their appearance, yet they're considered the pretty people. Is there anything you'd change about yourself?
- Do you think God would change anything about you?
- Why do you think the culture is so consumed with looks and fame?

Living Faith

Spend a few moments one evening going on a family treasure hunt around your house. You can write your own clues or use the ones given. End your hunt at a mirror (either handheld or in a bathroom) so your family can discover God's greatest creation—you!

Clue No. 1

I'm no simple box with doors and a light.
I will keep your food cold, both day and night.

Clue No. 2 (hide in refrigerator)

Yawn. If you're tired, you're coming to me.
For safety and warmth, I'm the place to be.

Clue No. 3 (hide in a bed)

I'm pretty and make oxygen for you.
Give me water—it's the right thing to do.

Clue No. 4 (hide in a plant)

With four wheels and an engine, I go fast.
But without any gas, I cannot last.

Clue No. 5 (hide in car)

Your search is almost over, so be glad.
You wipe your eyes with me when you are sad.

Option 1—takes you to bathroom

Clue No. 6 (hide in Kleenex box)

This is the last clue. Hope it has been fun.
Always wash your hands in here when you're done.

Option 2—takes you to couch where you’ve put a mirror under the cushions

Clue No. 6 (hide in Kleenex box)

Come to me when you want to sit around.

Lift up my cushions and treasure you’ve found.

When you find the mirror, ask your kids to identify the treasure. (They should say it’s them.) Remind your children that they are created in God’s image. Let them know how proud you are of them. Talk about some of the things you appreciate about them and tie that into how those characteristics are from God. Tell them you expect a lot from them and have high standards because they are God’s perfect creation. Encourage them to always follow God and His will for their lives.

Extra Mile

For added emphasis on this week’s themes, try one of these activities.

1. Grab a family photo album that has some shots of you enjoying the outdoors.

Ask: • What do you remember most about this experience?

- What are some of your favorite things about God’s creation?
- How can you see God’s handiwork in the outdoors?
- Where are some places you’d like to visit?

If the conversation leads, plan a fun family outing or your next family vacation.

2. Remind your children that all people are important to God by taking some food to a local food bank or going through your closets and making a donation to a homeless shelter. Remind your kids that helping the less fortunate shows them God’s love.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 2

God Builds a Nation

Timeless Truth: What sin changes, faith overcomes.

Bible Basis: Genesis 12–35

Key Verse: [God said,] "I will give you all of the land that you see. I will give it to you and your children after you forever. I will make your children like the dust of the earth." -Genesis 13:15–16, NIV

Resource: *The Story*: Chapter 2

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your child understand the importance of listening to God's voice even when he can't see the next step. The Extra Mile idea will help you drive home the concept of authentic faith.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Abraham trusted and obeyed God. I can trust and obey him, too.

Elementary: Abraham trusted God and obeyed. I can trust God too.

Middle School/High School: God often encourages movement to follow His will. We have to be willing to make sacrifices to follow God.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- How do you see God working in your life? (Could be finding something that was lost, feeling better after being sick, answered prayer.)
- What are some of the ways God worked in Abraham's life? (Giving him land, children, etc.)
- Would you have had the faith Abraham displayed by moving to a place you knew nothing about?
- Why is it so hard to move or adjust to new things? What does God do to help you feel better when things change? (Give you new friends, love of a family, etc.)

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 2. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

1. What were the key events from this chapter?
2. What was most meaningful/stands out in your mind for this chapter?

3. Tell about a time in your life when God overcame a difficult situation or an evil or sinful thing that happened? How did that affect your faith in God?
4. Faith in God brings changes to our life. Sometimes those change come through wrestling matches with God over our attitude or life choices. Share something which you have or are currently wrestling with God over. (Maybe it's a fear of something? A frustration in your life? An injustice in the world? A bad habit?)

Middle/High School

- According to Genesis 18:12, Sarah laughed when she overheard that she would have a baby, because she was so old. What would you do if you believed God was leading you to do something and people laughed?
- Have you ever read something in the Bible and thought, *That's impossible!* Is anything impossible for God?
- How does our faith play a role in God's "impossible" plans for our life?
- After Abraham passed God's test, did God give Abraham "descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand" (Genesis 22:17) right away?
- What can you learn from Abraham about waiting for God's plan to come true?
- Why is it so hard to wait?

Living Faith

Gather your family outside or in the living room. For this activity you'll need something to mark boundaries and items to set up an obstacle course. You can use pillows, empty 2-liter plastic bottles, stuffed animals, baseball bats, etc. Break family members into pairs. If there's an odd number, have one person rotate in. Explain that one member from each team will stand on one side of the obstacle course wearing a bandana so he can't see anything. The other team members will stand on the other side and call out verbal directions to guide her partner. Only verbal directions, such as "Two small steps forward," "One step left" or "Lift your foot really high and take a big step" are allowed. All teams go through the obstacle course at the same time, so it can sound pretty chaotic. If the blindfolded person steps on an obstacle, knocks one down (you can lean two bats together to create a teepee) or goes outside the boundary, then he has to be guided back to the beginning and start again. Take turns being blindfolded and giving directions, and always rearrange the obstacle course once a person has made it through.

When you decide to stop playing, ask these questions:

- What was the hardest part about being blindfolded? (Couldn't see; hard to hear directions from teammate because of all the noise.) Explain that the blindfolded person had to totally trust the directions to stay safe and make it to the destination.
- Do you think Abraham may have felt the same way when God called him to go to Canaan?
- Is it harder to obey when you can see the destination or when you're walking blind?
- How does faith help you trust God in your life, even when you can't see the next step?
- What was the hardest part of giving directions? (Had to shout; had to put yourself in other person's shoes to guide left or right.)
- Does God ever mess up in the directions He gives us?

- Because we can always trust God, what should we do when we hear His leading?

Extra Mile

For added emphasis about living out a real faith, bring your family around a computer and do a search for “Stained Glass Masquerade video.” Then click on the YouTube video from Casting Crowns that’s three minutes and 54 seconds long. You can also search for the songs lyrics if you want to read along.

After watching the video, ask:

- What do you think the song means by “happy plastic people”?
- According to the song, is it OK to fail?
- How should the church treat people who fail?

Explain that the Bible is filled with people who fail and didn’t have the faith to fully trust God. But God forgives and gives us a second chance. He doesn’t want us to be plastic and pretend everything’s OK when it isn’t. We need to be real with God and each other. When we have faith in God, His love can help us live authentically as the person He’s created us to be.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 3

Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh

Timeless Truth: Though man fails, God's plan prevails.

Bible Basis: Genesis 37–47:11

Key Verse: Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. ... You planned to harm me. But God planned it for good." —Genesis 50:19–20, NIV

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 3

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family discuss the pitfalls of favoritism. The Extra Mile idea will get your family into your neighborhood as you meet the needs of hungry people in your community.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God took care of Joseph. God also takes care of me.

Elementary: God worked things out for Joseph's good. God knows what's good for me.

Middle School/Confirmation: Through the difficult times in life, God is with me and has an ultimate purpose for my life.

High School: Joseph's life shows that good decisions don't always result in positive earthly consequences. Following God is its own reward—but sometimes these rewards are limited to spiritual rewards.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Can anybody remember a funny or weird dream you've had recently? (If nobody remembers one, share one of your own to get the conversation started.)
- Do you think that dream has any chance of coming true? Would you like it to come true?
- What do you think is the difference between your dreams and Joseph's dreams?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your life? (Let children share and then tell them some of your hopes: that they'll always follow God; that you'll always have a strong relationship and love them; that they'll use their talents to serve God.)

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of The Story (pp. 473-487) for chapter 3. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

5. What were the key events from this chapter?
6. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
7. God trained Joseph to be a good leader. How might it be possible that God is training you when bad things happen?
8. Discuss ways that you can improve your family dynamic by being a good sibling. In what ways do you contribute to rivalry? How can you better respect your parents, even if your parents are wrong?

Middle/High School

- Has anybody told lies about you and gotten you in trouble, like Potiphar’s wife did to Joseph?
- What did it feel like? Did you do anything to get even?
- Has anybody made promises to you and then not followed through, like the drink-tester did to Joseph?
- How did that make you feel?
- What can you learn from Joseph about patience and continuing to believe in God’s plan during difficult times?

Living Faith

Instruct each family member to bring his or her favorite possession to the living room. It must be only one thing, such as a toy, golf club, stuffed animal, photo, Wii gaming system or car (of course, this would require a trip outside). Once everybody has chosen something, start with the youngest family member and have her explain why that item is her favorite. Continue around the room until each person gets to share about his possession.

After everybody is finished explain that it’s natural to have a favorite thing. Some items just fit your personality and specific tastes better than others. Some things have more sentimental value and mean more to you. But when it comes to families, favoritism can cause some problems.

Ask:

- How did it make Joseph’s brothers feel that Jacob “loved Joseph more than any of his other sons” (Genesis 37:3)?
- Were Joseph’s brothers justified in selling him into slavery?

- Who was more at fault—Jacob or Joseph’s brothers—for what happened to Joseph?
 - If Jacob would’ve acted differently, do you think Joseph’s life would’ve been different?
 - Have you ever been in a group or team where somebody else was the favorite?
 - Have you ever been treated as the favorite? How did that make you feel?
- At the end, pray for God to give your family the wisdom and ability to love each other fully and unconditionally without showing favoritism.

Extra Mile

God gave Joseph wisdom to prepare for the coming famine. Through God’s provision, people were saved when there was no food. Take an evening as a family to go door-to-door in your neighborhood to gather nonperishable food for a community or church food bank. Have your children explain to the neighbors exactly where the food will go and who it will benefit. Make sure to visit houses of people you don’t know. Bring a wagon or shopping bags to collect food donations. After to deliver the items to the food bank, write a thank-you note to the neighbors that contributed and revisit those homes to let them know the results of your family food drive.

PARENTS' PAGE: The Story LESSON 4

Out of Egypt

Timeless Truth: God is the ultimate Deliverer.

Bible Basis: Exodus 1—16:15

Key Verse: Moses answered the people. He said, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm. You will see how the LORD will save you today" (Exodus 14:13, NIV).

Resource: The Story for Kids: Chapter 4

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family look to God during hard times and follow Him. The Extra Mile idea will help your family relate to the Israelites and benefit your church.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God sent Moses to bring his people out of Egypt. God will always help his people—including me.

Elementary: God watched over Moses and his people. God watches over me, too.

Middle School: God is the God over all gods. He sees and hears everything. He can overcome any power on earth to help me.

High School: Jesus is the new Passover sacrifice.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

Say: God provided for Moses through his entire life, and He provides for our family today. Share a story of God's provision in your life and then ask

- How did God care for Moses when he was a baby? (Pharaoh's daughter finding him in Nile River; being raised by his own mother as an infant; growing up in the palace)
- How did God provide for Moses when he was asking Pharaoh to let the Israelite people go? (He protected Moses and gave him his brother Aaron to speak.)
- How did God provide for the Israelites when they left Egypt? (Guiding them with a pillar of fire or cloud; parting the Red Sea; manna in the morning.)
- How does God provide for you?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of The Story (pp. 473-487) for chapter 4. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

9. What were the key events from this chapter?

10. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
11. What similarities can you identify between the events of the last plague and Jesus' death and resurrection? Was the cross a terrible thing or a good thing? Explain your answer.
12. During the last plague, "The Passover", God made a clear distinction between Israel and Egypt. Many people in our culture lose their Christian faith because they don't want to believe that God will make a distinction between people who believe in Jesus and ask forgiveness for their sins and those people who don't believe in Jesus. Why do you think that is such a difficult concept for Christians to deal with?

Middle/High School

Say: Pharaoh was very stubborn and hardened his heart against God. Share a story where God was working in your life or trying to get your attention, but you didn't see it until later. Ask

- Do you know a friend, teacher or relative who's hardened their heart against God and refuses to see Him?
- Why do you think people stubbornly refuse to see God when He makes himself known in creation and everyday circumstances?
- What can you do to open people's eyes to the truth about God? (Share the good news about Jesus with them; pray for them; be their friend.)
- If somebody totally refuses to acknowledge God, what should you do? (Pray that the Holy Spirit softens their heart; continue to show them God's love.)

Living Faith

Grab a flashlight and bring your family to a dark room or into the basement. This activity can also be done outside on a dark night. Explain that according to the Bible, God led the Israelites at night with a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). By following the pillar of fire at night and the pillar of cloud during the day, God's people always knew exactly where to go. Tell your family that you're going to play a game of "Reverse Hide and Seek." Instead of one person counting and everybody hiding, the person holding the flashlight will hide and everybody else will count. Have a parent hide first. After everybody counts to 20, let them search for the person hiding. Once that person is found, let him hide again. This time after everybody has counted, wait a couple minutes and then turn on the flashlight before anybody finds you. With the flashlight on, allow every family member to get to you. Let other family members take turns hiding.

When you're finished, ask:

- Were you ever scared being stuck in the dark and not knowing where to go?
- Was it easier to find the hidden person when the flashlight was on or off?
- How does God shine His "flashlight" today, so it's easier for us to follow Him? (He gave us the Bible; instruction from parents; youth leaders at church.)
- How does God's light deliver us and keep us safe?
- God's "flashlight" is on all the time. How does it make you feel to know you can go to Him whenever you're in need?
- The Bible says, "You are in the light because of what the Lord has done. Live like children of the light" (Ephesians 5:8). What are some ways we can live as children of the light?

Extra Mile

On a Sunday night (or early on a Monday morning if you wake up before your kids), tell your family that you're going to eat breakfast like the Israelites did when they escaped Egypt. The Bible says that thin flakes of bread appeared on the ground every morning (Exodus 15:15-16). The Israelites would gather up enough for their family and eat it throughout the day. The next morning a whole new crop of manna, which comes from the Hebrew words "What is it?" would be waiting for them to eat. Instead of manna, explain that your family will eat oatmeal every morning. Calculate the cost savings of eating oatmeal instead of cereal, doughnuts or eggs (whatever is your family's normal breakfast food) and have your children donate that money to the church the following Sunday to do God's work.

At some point during the week, ask your family what the Israelites must've felt like after eating manna every day for years.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 5

New Commands and a New Covenant

Timeless Truth: Following God's laws results in righteousness.

Bible Basis: Exodus 19-25:22

Key Verse: "[God's people] answered with one voice. They said, 'We will do everything the Lord has told us to do' " (Exodus 24:3).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 5

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family discern what a lie is and always strive to tell the truth. The Extra Mile looks at current teen ethics trends and encourages your kids to be different. Plus, a fun game will help your family memorize the 10 Commandments.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God gave us rules so that we can know him. I can know God by learning his laws.

Elementary: God gave us rules so we can know him. I can know God by learning his laws.

Middle School: Following man's ideas leads to selfishness and death. Following God's laws leads to life.

High School: The 10 Commandments allow us to have true community with the one true God, instead of following our disobedient tendencies.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- Why did God's people need rules?
- Those rules are pretty old now. Do they still apply today? Why?
- Which one of the 10 Commandments is the hardest for you to follow?
- What are some other important rules that the 10 Commandments don't cover?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 5. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

13. What were the key events from this chapter?

14. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?

15. God said to the Israelites, “you will be a kingdom of priests”? What do you think of when you hear the word priest? If God is saying, “All of you are now priests”, what do you think that meant for the Israelites? What could that mean for us?
16. What do you think it means to live in God’s ways? What are some of the characteristics of someone who is doing this?

Middle/High School

- What do you think is the most important of the 10 Commandments? Why?
- When Jesus was asked that same question, what did He say? (Read Matthew 22:36-40) Why did He answer this way? Do you agree?
- The third commandment talks about not misusing God’s name. Does that apply to words such as “Gosh”, “Geez” and “OMG”?
- What do the 10 Commandments show us about God’s character? (He’s a jealous God; He cares about life; He wants us to look to Him for our needs.)

Living Faith

Play the “Two Truths and a Lie” game as a family. In this game, each family member has to think up two real things and one falsehood to say out loud. Then everybody guesses which thing is the lie. Try to make the lie sound believable. Parents will have an easier time stumping their children, but be aware about what you reveal about yourself. Also, try to have the true statements sound outrageous, then you can share the story behind your “truth.” (Example: “I never had detention in high school; I once hit a golf ball and broke a car’s windshield; I made my little brother drink pickle juice.” In this case, if the lie was about detention, then the truths could lead to interesting stories.)

Ask:

- What was the hardest part about this game?
- Did you learn anything new about your family?
- Was it easy to disguise a lie in the truth?
- How come it’s easy for little lies to slip out in everyday life?
- What are some ways that we can always strive to be truthful.

Extra Mile

Use these ideas to drive home the importance of the 10 Commandments.

1. In the Cards—get a deck of cards and remove all the face cards (jacks, queens, kings and jokers). Shuffle the deck. Bring out a Bible and review the 10 Commandments in order. For younger children, you can paraphrase the Commandments like this: 1. God is the one true God; 2. Do not worship anyone or anything but God; 3. Do not misuse God’s name; 4. Rest one day a week; 5. Respect your father and mother. 6. Do not kill; 7. Husbands and wives should keep their promises to each other; 8. Do not steal; 9. Do not lie; 10. Do not be jealous of others.

Put the deck on the table. Have the youngest family member start by drawing a card and trying to say the corresponding commandment (example: 8=Do not steal). If the person says the correct commandment, he gets to keep the card. If it’s incorrect, the card is put face up next to the deck. Go through the entire deck of cards. The person who ends up with the most cards gets a prize, such as being able to choose a special dessert the following night.

2. Teen Scene—Look up “The Ethics of American Youth—2008 summary” online. Based on a random survey of 30,000 high school students, this study found that 35 percent of boys and 26 percent of girls stole from a store in the past year. Twenty-three percent stole from a parent or relative, and 20 percent stole from a friend. Lying was an even bigger issue. Eighty-three percent admitted to lying to a parent about something significant. Cheating is also a problem that appears to be getting worse in that 64 percent of students cheated on a test in the last year. High schoolers couldn’t even be totally honest on this anonymous survey—26 percent said their lied on one or two questions.

Ask:

- Do these numbers on lying, cheating and stealing seem about right in your school and among your friends? Would you say the problem is larger?
- Why do you think so many students lie, cheat or steal?
- Have you ever cheated on a test or been tempted to cheat?
- Is cheating the same thing as lying? Why or why not?
- What’s one way that teenagers could be encouraged to lie, cheat and steal less?
- Can you think of the underlying cause of this behavior? (Selfishness, fear of getting bad grades, etc.)
- What can we do as parents to help you not lie, cheat or steal?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 6

Wandering

Timeless Truth: Faith in God's promises will be rewarded. Doubt will be punished.

Bible Basis: Numbers 13-14, 20:1-13, Deuteronomy 34

Key Verse: [Joshua and Caleb] said, "If the Lord is pleased with us, he'll lead us into that land. ... He'll give it to us" (Numbers 14:8).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 6

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family understand the importance of knowing and following God's promises. The Extra Mile will build trust amongst your family.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Joshua and Caleb were confident in God's promise. I can be confident in God's promises, too.

Elementary: Joshua and Caleb were confident in God's promise. I can be confident no matter what.

Middle School: God will always come through on His promises, but disobeying God's plan leads to suffering.

High School: Stand up for God against the majority, like Joshua and Caleb did, and you will enjoy the fullness of God's promises.

Table Talk**Preschool/Elementary**

Say: This week *The Story* tells us how 12 spies went in to look at God's promised land and 10 came back scared. Only Caleb and Joshua were excited about going into the Promised Land. Ask:

- Why were Joshua and Caleb so confident they could defeat people who were bigger than they were and lived in strong cities? (They trusted God; they had faith in His promises.)
- Were the other 10 spies focused more on God or on the situations?
- By focusing on earthly things, the 10 spies were too scared to trust God. What are some things in your life that scare you?
- Does your fear ever keep you from doing something you want to?
- How can you overcome that fear? What are some of the benefits of overcoming that fear?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 6. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday

afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

17. What were the key events from this chapter?
18. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
- 19. How did troubles shape the lives of the Israelites? How do troubles shape your life?**
- 20. Why do you think it is often easier to grumble and complain than to be thankful and remain grateful?**

Middle/High School

- The Israelites chose to listen to the 10 fearful spies, instead of Joshua and Caleb—who trusted God. Because of that, they missed out on the fruits of God’s promises. Name a time that you followed worldly advice. What was the consequence? Talk about a time where you followed God despite strong opposition. What happened?
- What was God’s punishment to the people, because of their lack of faith? Do you think God’s punishment was too harsh?
- What are some of the punishments or judgments people face today because of an unwillingness to stand strong for God?
- How can you live more boldly for God? Name one way that you want to trust God more in your life.

Living Faith

Set up two obstacle courses in your living room, backyard or a park. Be creative in using items around your home. Make one course long and difficult. Keep the other course rather simple and short. Ideas include: doing a hula hoop 10 times, putting your forehead on a bat and spinning around 10 times, jumping rope, running around a trash can, crab walking, climbing over the couch or fence, crawling on your hands and knees, skipping, etc. Once the courses are set up, bring a Bible and ask the first racer a question based on this week’s reading from *The Story*.

Sample: Who buried Moses in Moab when he died? Answer: God.

Where did the Israelites want to go, instead of going into the Promised Land?

Answer: Egypt.

God made water pour out of what object? Answer: A rock.

If the racer gets a question correct, allow them to race the short course. If he misses the question, have him run around the longer course. Let each family member try to answer a question and complete a course. Try to make the questions age appropriate using the chapters mentioned in the above “Bible Basis.”

When everybody’s finished, ask:

- Which course was faster to complete? (the short one)
- What allowed you to run that course? (Knowing God’s Word)

- In what ways do these obstacle courses compare to the Israelites in the desert? (God has a more direct plan for your life, but allows for you to choose. Sometimes those choices lead to a harder path and punishment. Knowing God's plan and following it makes life better and results in fewer roadblocks.)

- Why is doing something God's way the first time important?

Extra Mile

Do trust falls with your family (just make sure your children are big enough to catch you). Have one person stand facing away and with their arms crossed in front of them. Instruct them to close their eyes, remain stiff and fall backwards. Have another family member or two "catch" that person before they hit the ground. Take turns falling backwards and catching each other. Ask:

- What was the scariest part?
- Was it hard to trust that you'd be safe when you fell backward? Why?
- Why is it hard sometimes to trust God and His Word?
- Can you always trust your family to be there for you?
- Can you always trust God to be there for you?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 7

The Battle Begins

Timeless Truth: God's power, not our own, wins the battle.

Bible Basis: Joshua 1-6

Key Verse: "Be strong and very brave. Make sure you obey the whole law. ... Then you will have success everywhere you go" (Joshua 1:7).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 7

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family understand how God's power can accomplish things that we can't on our own. The Extra Mile will get your family involved in encouraging someone in your community.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God sent help for his people. God sends me to help, too.

Elementary: God sent help for his people. God sends me to help, too.

Middle School: God's power can break down any wall—literal walls and personal walls in your life.

High School: God is strong. He wants His followers to be strong and not make compromises in their lives. He wants them to fight and win the battle within.

Table Talk**Preschool/Elementary**

- Why do you think the Israelites had more faith this time than when the spies were sent into the Promised Land years before? (All of the people from before were dead; God showed His consistent power in the desert as they wandered.)
- Read Joshua 3:15-17. How did God show His power before the Israelites even got to Jericho? When did God show His power to part the water before this?
- Do you think God's people felt silly walking around Jericho for six days while being completely silent? How does this show they had faith in God?
- What do you think the people inside Jericho were thinking as they watched the Israelites march around?
- How much confidence do you think God's people had after they watched the walls around Jericho tumble down under God's mighty hand?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 7. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday

afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

21. What were the key events from this chapter?
22. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
23. Throughout the book of Joshua, there are times when Israel “gets it,” following the Lord faithfully and time when they do not. List a few examples of each. Where do you see yourself in these examples?
24. The ending to Joshua’s famous speech is “Now fear the Lord and serve him in all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” After this closing, the people promised (again) to serve and to obey God. Joshua’s household is going to serve the Lord, but our culture is different now. Each one of you will separate to a degree from your families in the next few years. What are your plans for “choosing” God? What will that look like or how do you think that will play out for you?

Middle/High School

- God used Rahab, a woman with a sketchy background, to help His people in a big way. What does this tell you about God?
- Rahab lied to the king’s men to save the Israelite spies. Was it wrong for her to lie? (Yes, lying is always wrong. Rahab was not a Jew, but she did have faith that the God of Israel was the one true God—read Joshua 2:11.)
- Will God forgive past sins, such as lying?
- God blessed Rahab for her faith and for helping His people—not for lying. What are some ways you can show your faith in God and help other Christians?

Living Faith

Gather a glass bowl filled halfway with water and a peppershaker or pepper mill. Make sure the bowl is totally clean and free from soapy residue. Put the bowl and the pepper on the kitchen table. Hide some liquid dishwashing soap near the table. Bring your family together at the table and ask one family member to sprinkle pepper on the entire surface of the water.

Say: The pepper is like the wall around Jericho. It protected the city by holding out enemies and couldn’t be broken.

Have a child dip their finger into the bowl. Did anything happen?

Say: There was no way that the Israelite army could break through the wall by its own power. Only with God’s help could they take the city.

As you say this, secretly put some liquid dishwashing soap on your finger and dip it into the bowl. Watch as the pepper is immediately slammed against the sides of the bowl, leaving much of the water clear.

Explain how you did this trick by getting a new bowl or thoroughly washing out the one you used. Show how the detergent lowers the surface tension of the water and forces the pepper to the side. Allow your kids to sprinkle pepper on the water and then watch it being drawn to the sides by adding detergent.

Say: *From the beginning of time, God designed the water to react the way it does in this trick. He knew exactly what the reaction would be when the detergent hit the water. In the same way, God's power brought down the wall around Jericho. He knew it would crumble when the Israelites blew their horns and shouted out to Him.*

Extra Mile

God brought people together to help the Israelites. In Jericho, Rahab helped the spies and encouraged them by saying, "Everyone in this country is weak with fear because of you." God used one person, Rahab, to make a big difference for the Israelites. Rahab even shows up in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5), which demonstrates how God had a great plan for somebody who the world may have viewed as a castoff.

As a family, decide to make a difference in one person's life by showing him God's love in a tangible way. If you don't know of anyone to help, talk to your pastor, friends, neighbors, a local charity or community organization to find an individual who needs help. Maybe it's an elderly person who needs yard work (grass cut, sidewalk shoveled or weeds pulled). Perhaps it's a single mother who could be blessed by a bagful or groceries or a gift card to a grocery store. Maybe it's a military family who has a spouse overseas who would delight in a card of encouragement and dinner out. Be creative as you seek to serve one person in your community. Make sure this person knows that God cares for him or her.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 8

A Few Good Men . . . and Women

Timeless Truth: Spiritual compromise can be overcome by turning back to God.

Bible Basis: Judges 2:7-8, 4 and 16

Key Verse: [Samson] said, "LORD and King, show me that you still have concern for me. God, please make me strong just one more time" (Judges 16:28)

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 8

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to help your family understand how following God's commands keep us safe. The Extra Mile will get your family to laugh as you discuss the importance of discipline.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God helps those who turn to him. I can depend on God.

Elementary: God helps those who turn to him. I can depend on God.

Middle/High School: Just like the Israelites, God calls us to be set apart. Live that way.

Table Talk**Preschool/Elementary**

- Why did God have to raise up judges such as Deborah and Samson? (Because the Israelites weren't following God.)
- How does this show God's love? (God gave Israel a second chance—actually lots of chances—to come back and follow Him. He didn't give up on the Israelites.)
- How does God show His love to us today? (By sending His Son to die for our sins; by forgiving the bad things we do and allowing us to have a relationship with Him.)
- God gave Samson great strength. What are some gifts God has given you?
- How can you use these gifts to help others follow God?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 8. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

25. What were the key events from this chapter?
26. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
27. The people of Israel fell into a "sin cycle", a pattern of sin, God's judgment, repentance and deliverance. Why do you think we too often take God's blessings for granted and slip into indifference, complacency, or even sin?

28. Everyone has character flaws. Many of the judges were seriously flawed. Do you believe God can use you, even with your flaws? What do you think matters most to God?

Middle/High School

- When God allowed the Midianites to rule over His people and treat them badly, he raised up Gideon to get the Israelites back on track (Judges 6-8). What kind of man was Gideon? (He was the least important person in his weak family.)
- Gideon wasn't popular, strong or a natural leader—he didn't even trust God at first and made God prove himself. What does this tell you about God?
- Gideon raised an army of 32,000 men, but only 300 went to attack the Midianites. Why?
- How would you like to be more like Gideon? Does he have any character traits that you wouldn't want to emulate?

Living Faith

Break your family into two teams. Gather masking tape, a package of 100 straws and several eggs. Work in teams to create a casing that will protect an egg when it's dropped. Each team can only use tape and straws. When you've finished your designs, go outside and see which egg protector works best. You may need to get a ladder or chair to stand on as the eggs are dropped on a hard surface. The losing team has to clean up the mess.

Explain that the Israelites followed God as long as Joshua and the elders lived (Judges 2:7). God's people were like the egg surrounded by the protective casing of God's commands. The casing protects the egg. Without protection, the egg breaks. Chapter 8 of *The Story* shows what happened to the Israelites after they strayed from God's commands by worshipping idols and following the world's customs instead of God's. God judged His people and they had to suffer the consequences of their actions.

Ask:

- Could the egg survive the fall without the protection of the straw casing?
- How does God's Word protect us?
- Why is it important to know and follow God's commands?
- What happens to us when we decide to get outside the protection of God's commands? (We sin and have to suffer the consequences.)

Extra Mile

Go to godtube.com and search for Bob Smiley's video on spanking. It's only a minute and a half long. If you want to watch more of Bob's comedy, look for a 14 minute and seven second video that talks about being a father and other issues. When you're done watching the videos as a family, discuss these questions about discipline.

- How is God judging the Israelites like a parent disciplining a child?
- What was God's purpose in the judges? (To bring His people back to Him, to stop them from sinning and to help them live a more abundant life.)
- Did God's judgment seem harsh or loving? Was it both?

- Why did God's children disobey so frequently? (They forgot what God had done. They followed the world's practices, not God's.)
- What can your family learn from this chapter of *The Story*?

Write down one thing your family will do differently after studying the judges:

_____ .

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 9

The Faith of a Foreign Woman

Timeless Truth: God rewards unselfish love.

Bible Basis: Ruth 1-4:17

Key Verse: "May the Lord reward you for what you have done. May the God of Israel bless you richly" (Ruth 2:12).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 9

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity is designed to show your family the benefits of being kind, even when nobody knows about it. The Extra Mile will get your family involved in the life of a child who's having a difficult time.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Boaz and Ruth were kind to others. I please God when I am kind.

Elementary: Boaz and Ruth are kind to others. I please God when I am kind.

Middle School: By loving God first, you can better love your family.

High School: God calls us to go beyond ourselves to serve other people, even when it appears that it won't profit us.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- When Naomi's husband and sons died, why did she want to move to Bethlehem? (That's where she was from. She had family there and had heard the Lord was helping his people.)
- Did Naomi want Ruth and Orpah to come with her? (No, she encouraged them to go back to their parents' homes and marry different men.)
- Why did Ruth stay? (She loved Naomi and wanted to serve her and her God.)
- How did God bless Ruth's actions? (He provided food for her and Naomi. He allowed her to marry Boaz.)
- How does God bless us when we do nice things for people?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 9. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

29. What were the key events from this chapter?

30. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?

31. How does God use Ruth (a non-Jew) and Boaz to bless and continue God's plan?
What might this tell us about God?
32. What could this mean for how we treat people in our world? ...for how you treat people in your life?

Middle/High School

- Boaz and Ruth's relationship teaches a lot about dating and the characteristics of a future spouse. What first attracted Boaz to Ruth? (She was hard-working. He had heard about the kindness she showed Naomi.)
- What attracted Ruth to Boaz? Was it his awesome biceps? (No. He offered her protection by having her glean in his field. He provided for her.)
- As parents, tell your children what first attracted you to your spouse. Ask them what characteristics are most important to them in a future mate.
- How does Boaz marrying and redeeming Ruth mirror what Jesus did for us?

Living Faith

Have a kindness competition. Depending on the ages of your children, you may have to make teams of two. If every family member is old enough, make it an individual competition. The idea behind this game is to show kindness to each other without expecting anything in return. Ruth showed great love and kindness toward Naomi, even though she couldn't give her anything in return. In a similar way, Boaz showed amazing kindness toward Ruth. God blessed both Ruth and Boaz for their actions.

Encourage your family to show kindness to each other in tangible ways. Maybe it's a kind word or a back rub. Maybe it's something done in secret. You can tape special notes to the mirror in your kids' bathroom. Your daughter can organize the garage. Your son could offer to baby-sit for free or drive a younger sibling somewhere without complaining. A child could clean up the family room or vacuum without being asked. A husband could buy flowers for his wife. The ideas are endless. At the end of a week, reconvene as a family and talk about what meant the most. Discuss what it was like being the giver and what it was like being on the receiving end of the kindness.

- Did being kind to each other change any family dynamics?
- What was the best part?
- How can kindness and unconditional love be shown all the time?
- How does intentionally showing kindness improve family relationships?
- Read Ephesians 4:32. What does it teach about kindness and how we should treat each other?

Extra Mile

Get together as a family and look at the lives of your neighbors and your children's friends. Chances are you know another family that's going through a difficult time, whether it's divorce, serious illness, job layoff or death. If you can't think of anybody who's struggling, ask your church. Once you find a child who's going through a hard time, come up with a plan to show him love and acceptance—just like Boaz showed Ruth love and acceptance. Invite this child over for dinner. Offer to pick him or her up and pay for him to join a sports team or club with your child. Bring her to the amusement park with your family. Make him a consistent part of your family during a difficult time in his life. Be Jesus with skin on for this child. Boaz changed Ruth's life forever, and your family can do the same thing!

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 10

Messages From God/Standing Tall, Falling Hard

Timeless Truth: God uses willing hearts to serve him.

Bible Basis: 1 Samuel 1, 3, 8-10:9

Key Verse: "The Lord has filled my heart with joy. He has made me strong" (1 Samuel 2:1).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 10

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity will help your family learn to listen for God. The Extra Mile has your family watch a video about God's lost ark and understand that the Bible isn't filled with stories—it's filled with truth.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God answered Hannah's prayer. God hears me pray, too.

Elementary: God answered Hannah's prayer. God hears me pray, too.

Middle School: With God on the throne of your life, you'll be able to avoid a multitude of sin and live for Him.

High School: Knowing *about* God leads to failure. Knowing God helps you stand tall.

Table Talk**Preschool/Elementary**

- Hannah made a very big promise to God by telling him and she would give her first son to serve him. When Samuel was born, do you think it was hard for Hannah to hand over her son to Eli at the temple?
- Have you ever made a promise so big that you didn't want to keep it? What did you do?
- How did God reward Hannah? (She had three more sons and two daughters. Plus, she got to see Samuel grow up to mightily serve the Lord.)
- Later in chapter 10, it says the people of Israel wanted a king, even though God was supposed to be their king. God let Samuel anoint Saul to be king. If you were king, what decisions would you make? Would you order dessert to be eaten before dinner? Would you outlaw tests at school?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 10. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

33. What were the key events from this chapter?
34. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
35. Read the following statement: *“Sometimes God gives us what we ask for to teach us a lesson.”*
Based on the events in this week’s lesson, would you agree or disagree with this statement?
36. Saul ran into problems when he decided to do things his way instead of obeying God’s commands. Share what typically happens when you try to “take matters into your own hands” instead of obeying instructions. In what areas of your life might God be calling you to be more obedient to him?

Middle/High School

- Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas grew up in the temple, but didn’t honor God. They took for themselves what was God’s. Is there an area of your life that you’re holding onto, instead of giving it to God?
- Hophni and Phinehas knew a lot *about* God, but didn’t truly know, love and fear him. How can you show God that you know, love and fear him?
- What do you think it means in 1 Samuel 10:9 when it says, “God changed Saul’s heart?” How has God changed your heart?
- Saul was 30 years old when he became king of Israel. Is that too young to be king? Do you think his age played a part in Saul sinning against God?

Living Faith

God calling Samuel in the middle of the night is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. When Eli finally figures out that it’s the Lord speaking to Samuel, he tells Samuel to say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9). What great advice! The Lord wants us to be ready and eager to hear him anytime—day or night.

Construct an old-school “telephone” by using plastic or paper cups, string and tape. Kite string or yarn works well. Once you gather the needed materials, poke a small hole in the bottom of each cup with a pencil. Thread the string through each hole, tie a large knot and then tape the knot on the bottom of the inside of the cups. When you pull the string tight, you’ll be able to hear each other when one person speaks softly into the cup and another person listens with the cup to his ear. See if you can say special messages to each other around the corner of a wall or down the stairs. Put the string under furniture or through the banister and see if it works. How long can you make the string and still communicate with each other?

When you’re done experimenting, ask:

- What was the hardest part of communicating using the old-fashioned telephone?
- God doesn’t speak to us through cups (although he could). What ways does God speak to us today? (Through the Bible; through godly advice from parents or pastors; through our prayers; through circumstances.)
- Because of the way that God communicates with us today, does it make reading the Bible and going to church more important? How can you make these two activities more of a priority in your life?
- What do you think you’d do if you heard a voice in the night calling your name?
- What do you think God wants you to do for him?

Extra Mile

In this part of *The Story*, the Philistines defeat Israel in battle, kill 30,000 soldiers (including Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas) and capture the Ark of God (1 Samuel 4:10-11). Although King David brought the Ark back to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), it was eventually lost. Movies, including *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, have been made regarding the quest to find God's lost ark. Go to YouTube.com and search for "Ark of the Covenant." Then watch the History Channel special that goes into detail about the Ethiopian Orthodox church having the Ark of Covenant. The video is in four parts and takes about 35 minutes to watch. Discuss as a family what you learn. Does this video give you more faith that what the Bible says is real?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 11

From Shepherd to King

Timeless Truth: Total trust in God brings great courage. / The Lord accepts according to the heart.

Bible Basis: 1 Samuel 16-17; Psalm 59:1-5, 9-10 and 16; 2 Samuel 2:1-6

Key Verse: "I am coming against you in the name of the Lord who rules over all" (1 Samuel 17:45).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 11

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity will help your family understand how God's hand helped guide David's stone. The Extra Mile encourages your family to watch classic "David versus Goliath" moments.

Get the Point:

Preschool: David fought in God's strength. God gives me courage when I am afraid.

Elementary: David fought in God's strength. God gives me courage when I am afraid.

Middle School / High School: God give us great courage and accepts according to the heart.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Goliath's enormous size (about 7 feet tall) and strength intimidated Israel's army. Why wasn't David afraid of this big bully?
- Would you have been afraid?
- Are there any bullies at school that scare you? What's the best way to treat a bully? (Note: The correct answer isn't to hit him in the head with a rock.)
- Saul thought David should fight Goliath in the traditional way and dressed David in his armor. Why was that a problem?
- How did David show faith by facing Goliath wearing his regular clothes and using rocks as a weapon?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 11. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

37. What were the key events from this chapter?

38. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
39. David is called “a man after God’s own heart”. We know that David did some incredible things and at times showed great faith. However, we also know that David committed some horrible sins. What do you think it means to be someone after God’s own heart?
40. If David, who was not perfect and had a flawed character, could be used by God to accomplish incredible things and is seen as a great man of faith, what might that mean for you and me?

Middle/High School

- In King Saul’s eyes, Goliath was a massive, immovable force. What are the Goliath’s in your life? In other words, what areas of your life do you need God’s power to help you overcome?
- Are there any things in your life that mock God? Maybe you’re focused more on video games than God. Perhaps it’s the music you listen to.
- How can you defeat these Goliaths?
- What’s the main lesson you walk away from after reading about David’s faith and trust in God?

Living Faith

How could a teenager defeat the greatest warrior of his era? Two words: God’s power. David trusted God to give him the strength to defeat Goliath. He knew he couldn’t defeat the ultimate soldier in his own power; David needed supernatural power, not to mention great aim.

Goliath was decked out in more than 125 pounds of armor. David probably weighed just a little more than that. Goliath had a 15-pound spear. David had five smooth stones. Odds were David would end up as a shish kabob. Instead Goliath ended up on his back.

Have your family practice its aim by playing this game. Collect eight to ten 2-liter plastic bottles. Put a couple of inches of water in the bottom of each bottle for stability and set them up as bowling pins. If you’re playing the game inside, take turns throwing a pillow at the pins. Each person gets one throw. Count how many pins are knocked down. If you play outside, take turns kicking a soccer ball at the pins. Play several rounds, keep a running score and declare a winner.

When you’re finished, talk about the difficulty of knocking down the pins. Now think how difficult it would’ve been for David to sling a stone into Goliath’s forehead. According to historians, military equipment was pretty advanced at this time. Goliath most likely wore a helmet with a thin slit or visor. The giant probably underestimated David and didn’t lower his visor or failed to wear a helmet. With God’s help, David made a perfect shot to give Israel the victory. Ask:

- Do you think people still underestimate God’s power today?
- What are some ways to show God’s power to the people around you?

Extra Mile

The contents of the Bible often make their way into the fabric of society. Nearly everyone knows the Golden Rule, which can be found in Luke 6:31. This week’s story also has made it into the English lexicon, especially when it comes to sports. Announcers love to talk about a “David versus Goliath” scenario as an underdog team faces a seemingly unbeatable opponent. The NCAA men’s basketball tournament,

better known as March Madness, is famous for its upsets. Watch videos of two of the most well-known David-like victories.

- The 1985 finals featured Georgetown and Villanova. Georgetown came into the game ranked No. 1 as the defending National Champion. Villanova was just an eight-seed and had already lost to Georgetown twice during the season. But the Wildcats shot an amazing 78.6 percent from the floor—missing just five shots all game—to win 66-64.

Watch highlights at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=woDd5erJtbQ

Perhaps an even more unlikely victory came in the 1983 finals when North Carolina State beat No. 1 Houston. With the game tied at 52-52, the Wolfpack wound down the clock and saw Dereck Whittenburg launch a shot into the air. If you haven't seen the result, check it out now at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQ6jZpjdTY

After watching these two videos, talk about what it took for a "David" to beat a "Goliath." Ask members of your family if they still believe God gives Davids the ability to do the impossible today.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 12

The Trials of a King

Timeless Truth: Sin has its consequences, but redemption is always near.

Bible Basis: Psalm 51:1-12 5, 1 Chronicles 29:1-20, Psalm 23

Key Verse: "Wash away all of the evil things I've done. Make me pure from my sin" (Psalm 51:2).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 12

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity will help your family understand the problem with sin (as you eat cookies). The Extra Mile exposes your family to two worship songs based on Psalm 51 and encourages you to get to know the Psalms.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God forgave David's sins. God forgives me when I'm sorry for doing wrong things.

Elementary: God forgave David's sins. God forgives me when I'm sorry for doing wrong things.

Middle School: David made huge mistakes. But when he asked God for forgiveness, David did it from the deepest part of his soul. God forgave David and used him in huge ways.

High School: David lived to the extreme. He messed up extremely bad, but also had a heart extremely committed to God. God loved and blessed David.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- King David was called a man after God's heart, but made a huge mistake and tried to cover it up. Is hiding sins ever a good idea? Why?
- The prophet Nathan came to let David know that God knew about David's sin. David was totally embarrassed and felt awful. Have you ever sinned and tried to hide it? What happened? (As a parent, if you have a story to tell about your childhood, please share it here.)
- Talk about what it feels like when you're trying to hide something bad that you've done. How does it make you feel?
- What wrong actions do you battle with the most? (Stealing, lying, anger.)
- What's the best thing to do when you mess up?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 12. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

41. What were the key events from this chapter?
42. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
43. God tells Nathan to call King David on the carpet. Who is the “Nathan” in your life? Who do you trust to tell you when you’re heading down the wrong path or when you’ve already driven so far down you’ve wrecked the car?
44. What is the proper way to apologize when you have been caught in a mistake? How do you typically react when you are called on the carpet? Do you have certain expectations when you want people to apologize to you?

Middle/High School

- God forgave David, but there were still consequences for his sin as David and Bathsheba’s first son died. Can you think of any consequences you’ve faced after doing something bad?
- Later, David’s son Absalom rebelled against him. Absalom was very proud of his hair, which ended up getting caught in a tree and led to his death (Can anyone say, “Pride comes before getting your hair stuck in a tree”?) Why is pride such a big deal to God?
- Are there any areas of pride that you need to look at in your life?
- Talk about some of David’s greatest accomplishments and mess-ups. What can you learn from his life?

Living Faith

You’ll need waxed paper, a tube of frosting, a rolling pin and sugar cookie dough for this activity. The slice-and-bake dough from the store will work or you can make dough the night before and have it chilling in the refrigerator.

When you’re ready, gather your family in the kitchen and ask: “Have you ever done something and then said, ‘I wish I could take that back’? David certainly did. Sometimes he did bonehead things and wished he could turn back time.”

Put out the waxed paper, tube of frosting and rolling pin. Ask for a volunteer. Have that family member try to get all the frosting out of the tube and onto the waxed paper. He can squeeze it, crush it and use the rolling pin on it. When he’s finished, say, “OK, now get all the frosting back in the tube.”

Just like it’s impossible to reverse time and take back sin, it’s impossible to get the frosting back in the tube. Talk about the importance of thinking before you act and trying to always follow God’s will and teaching with your words and actions. As you talk, take out the cookie dough. Roll and bake cookies, using the frosting to decorate them. Point out that God can use the mistakes in our life to make something sweet. God will always forgive when we honestly ask him for forgiveness. He wants us to serve him with our whole heart.

Extra Mile

Idea #1: David did everything with gusto. He served God with passion, and when he messed up—he did it big time! After one especially painful mistake, David poured out his heart to God in Psalm 51.

Go to YouTube and look at these two videos that feature songs based on Psalm 51.

- “Create in Me a Clean Heart” by Keith Green

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzTMnDQFMgw&feature=related

- "Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Donnie McClurkin

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILRjmPGvVB8&feature=related

- Are any specific lyrics especially meaningful to you?
- Have you ever journaled or written a poem about a time you've messed up? If it's appropriate, share it with the family.
- How are these songs different?

Each person's relationship with God is unique, because he knows our hearts. He knows what will work best to sculpt us to be more like him.

Idea #2: Get to know the Psalms better by reading the one that corresponds to today's date. Go the extra mile by reading all the Psalms that are multiples of the date (example: 17, 34, 51, 68, 85, 102, 119 (watch out for this one!) and 136. Do this for an entire week as a family.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 13

The King Who Had It All

Timeless Truth: Complete your walk – finish faithful.

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 3:1-15, 4:29-30, Proverbs 3:1-18, 2 Chronicles 6:12-7:3, 2 Chronicles 9:1-8, 1 Kings 11:9-13

Key Verse: “Don’t be wise in your own eyes. Have respect for the LORD” (Proverbs 3:7).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 13

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity will give your family a glimpse of what it was like when God’s presence filled the temple. The Extra Mile takes your family on a digital video tour of Solomon’s temple. Plus, you can get to know Proverbs.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God made Solomon a wise leader. God can make me wise, too.

Elementary: God made Solomon a wise leader. God can make me wise, too.

Middle School: Man’s wisdom—even Solomon’s—is limited. God’s love endures forever.

High School: Solomon was the wisest man alive, but he failed to follow his own godly teaching and that led to his downfall.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to give him anything he asked for. If God gave you the same offer, what would you ask for?
- Solomon asked for wisdom, so he could be a good king. Do you think that was a good request?
- God liked Solomon’s answer so much that he gave him wisdom, fame and money. What’s the best reward you’ve received for a good answer?
- If you could ask your parents to give you one thing, what would it be?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 13. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

45. What were the key events from this chapter?

46. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?

47. Solomon authored many proverbs that teach general principles of wise and practical living. Some examples are found on pages 179-183. Choose one that you particularly like or one that resonates with you. What is the main point that it communicates? How might your life be different if you applied the proverb?

Middle/High School

- Solomon's wisdom is legendary. Many of his saying can be found in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. He begins Proverbs by writing, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). What does that mean to you?
- Would your teachers and friends agree that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"?
- What would modern-day science say about that statement?
- Is Solomon's wisdom out of date or does it still apply today? Why?

Living Faith

This activity requires a 20-ounce plastic bottle, warm water, vinegar and baking soda. It's best to complete this activity outside or in a sink. As you watch the baking soda and vinegar react and fizz out of the bottle, think about what it would've been like to watch God's presence come down and fill the temple.

Start by putting about two tablespoons of baking soda in the bottom of the bottle. Quickly add a ½ cup of vinegar and ¼ cup of warm water. Step back and watch the bottle fill with foam that bursts out of the top.

When Solomon prayed for the temple, God's presence came down. Second Chronicles 7:2 says, "the priests couldn't enter the temple of the Lord. His glory filled it." Can you imagine God's tangible presence filling a building? It was so powerful that people who witnessed it, dropped to their knees and worshiped God.

For a bonus activity after discussing God's powerful presence at his temple, get a plastic zipper bag to demonstrate that God's glory can't be contained. Be careful as the bag will explode and may create a mess.

This time put a couple of tablespoons of baking soda in a paper towel and fold it up. Pour a ½ cup of vinegar and a ¼ cup of water into the plastic zipper bag. Drop in the paper towel and quickly zip the bag closed. Give a quick shake to start the reaction, then put the plastic bag on the ground and step away. The bag should puff up and pop with a loud bang.

Extra Mile

Idea #1: Money wasn't an issue for Solomon. God blessed him with such vast riches that the Bible says silver had little value in Solomon's kingdom and that the king drank out of a gold goblet. So when Solomon built God's temple, he spared no expense.

Even though Solomon had 180,000 workers and 4,000 supervisors on the project, the temple took seven years to complete. It was one of the most majestic structures of the day. Nearly 500 years after the Israelites left Egypt, God's temple was complete.

Take a digital video tour of the temple by going to YouTube. Read 1 Kings 6 as you watch:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFnWTz-7I0E

- Did anything stand out to you in the video?

- Is there any part of the description of the temple that seems especially majestic?
- How does Solomon's temple compare to your church?
- Does God's presence still fill buildings today? (Look at Matthew 18:20 for an answer.)

Idea #2: Read the Proverb that mirrors today's date. (So if it's the 10th, read Proverbs 10.) After you're finished, have each family member discuss her favorite verse from what was just read. Encourage each person to memorize one verse from Proverbs. Try this for one day or do it all week!

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 14

A Kingdom Torn in Two

Timeless Truth: God detests idol worshippers.

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 12:1–33; 14:22–23, 26–28; 15:11–24, 16:29–33

Key Verse: “Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 15:11).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 14

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to think seriously about modern-day idols. The Extra Mile takes your family to a song that talks about God and explains why only he is worthy of worship.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God uses bad things to teach his people. I can learn from mistakes.

Elementary: God uses bad things to teach his people. I can learn from mistakes.

Middle School: When you follow the lie that God can't give you what you need, it's easy to turn to idols.

High School: Idol worship isn't limited to golden cows; many things can pull your attention away from God.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- The people of Judah started fighting against Israel and decided to start their own country. Have you ever had two of your friends fight and decide not to be friends anymore?
- What happened because of this fight?
- Was there a way your friends could've settled their differences better?
- In the midst of all these bad kings in Israel and Judah, Asa became king of Judah and “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 15:11). Do you think it was hard for him to do good things when everybody around him was making bad choices?
- Tell about a time when others were making poor choices and you decided to follow God. Was it hard? How did it make you feel?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473–487) for chapter 14. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

48. What were the key events from this chapter?

49. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
50. Why did the Israelites ask for a king in the first place (see 1 Samuel 8: 4-5 & 19) In just a few generations of kings, how were things working out? (see Deuteronomy 17: 14-20)
51. "David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life – except in the case of Uriah the Hittite." (The Story p. 199) Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done." (The Story p. 200) What do you think the writer means? Would you agree?

Middle/High School

- Proverbs 13:20 says, "Anyone who walks with wise people grows wise. But a companion of foolish people suffers harm." Rehoboam's dad, Solomon, wrote those words. But Rehoboam must've been spacing out when Solomon said them, because instead of listening to the counsel of wise elders, Rehoboam listened to his friends when it came to the treatment of the people of Judah. His friends encouraged Rehoboam to tell Jeroboam that bigger whips would be used to beat them. (That's not a good way to make friends.) Jeroboam went back and split off a new country, Judah, where he was king. What do you think was Rehoboam's biggest mistake?
- Could Judah splitting from Israel been prevented?
- Have you ever listened to your friends instead of your parents? (Note: Parents you can share a story here, too, from your growing up years.)
- Do you think Solomon's advice in Proverbs 13:20 is true?

Living Faith

You don't run into a lot of golden cow worshipers at church these days. But the problem of idols still plagues God followers. Anything that comes before God in your life could be an idol, especially if you look to that thing for comfort or satisfaction. Have all family members fill out the chart to see how they spend their time. At the end, answer some questions to see if any idols have crept into your daily life.

On average how much time each day do you spend doing these things?

Activity:	Watching TV	Playing Video Games	Texting/talking on phone	Reading Bible and praying	Shopping	Being on the Computer
Time Spent:						

None of the activities are in and of themselves sinful; however, if they consume all your time and pull you away from God, they could become an idol. In today's society money, fame, possessions, career advancement, popularity and other things rule people's lives. Ask:

- What area in your life do you think has the greatest possibility of becoming an idol?
- How can you prevent that from happening?
- What changes can you make in your schedule to show God that he's first in your life?

Extra Mile

Only the one true God is worthy of our worship. King Solomon opened the door to idol worship, and then Israel and Judah forsook the Lord to follow false gods.

Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhJYN2Hk_FQ and watch the video of Matthew Ward's song "I Will Worship You." Have a pencil and paper ready. Write down all of the characteristics of God mentioned in the song. "My God is faithful, truthful . . ."

- Think about the things people worship today (fame, money, etc.). Can any of those things boast the same characteristics that God possesses?

- One of the lines says, "I will worship you for the things you've done in me." Have family members share something the Lord has done in them.

- Deuteronomy 6:13 says, "Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve." Write that verse on an index card and stick it on the refrigerator. Encourage everybody in your family to memorize it this week. Plan something fun as a family if everybody accomplishes this goal.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 15

God's Messengers

Timeless Truth: God is more powerful than any other god.

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 17:1-6, 18:1-39, 19:3-18, 2 Kings 2:1-15, Amos 3:1-11, 4:2-10, 5:14-15, 9:8

Key Verse: [Elijah said] "I serve the LORD. He is the God of Israel" (1 Kings 17:1).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 15

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity lets your family make rain and thank God for his provision. The Extra Mile encourages your family to get out and run—just like Elijah did.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God encouraged Elijah in hard times. God encourages me.

Elementary: God encouraged Elijah in hard times. God encourages me.

Middle School: God raises up mighty people—such as Elijah and Elisha—in hard times to point people to him.

High School: God raises up mighty people—such as Elijah and Elisha—in hard times to point people to him.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Elisha was an awesome man of God. He did many miracles, including making the blind see and raising a child from the dead. In 2 Kings 2:23-24, it tells of a time that some young people made fun of Elisha's bald head. Elisha called down a curse on them, and two bears came out of the woods and attacked 42 of the young fellows. What do you think is the main point of this story?

- Has anybody ever made fun of you?
- What did you do?
- How do you think God would want you to act when other kids make fun of you?
- Is it ever a good idea to make fun of people?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 15. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

52. What were the key events from this chapter?

53. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
54. Have you ever been the only Christian in a large group? What does it feel like in school when it seems as if no one else believes in God?
55. After a dramatic series of events, God revealed himself to Elijah in an un-dramatic way. Why would God choose to dwell in the whisper?

Middle/High School

- Elijah often felt alone—maybe because Ahab and Jezebel killed all of God’s other prophets and birds fed him when he lived alone in a valley. Have you ever felt alone in your stand for God?
- Have you ever prayed for God to show his mighty power, like Elijah did? What was the result?
- There are a lot of temptations that pull teens and tweens away from God—drinking, drugs, rebellious music, sex—what area is the biggest problem at your school or among your friends?
- What area would you like to make a difference in? Pray to ask God to help you make a difference in your world in one of these areas. Then find teachers, parents and adults who can help you.

Living Faith

When Ahab became king of Israel, he did more evil things than any of the kings who had ruled before him. God sent Elijah to tell Ahab that he was judging the land because of the king’s poor choices. Elijah told Ahab that the living Lord is the God of Israel and to prove it “there won’t be any dew or rain on the whole land” (1 Kings 17:1). For three years it didn’t rain.

Have your family make it rain by gathering a clean glass jar with a metal top and ice cubes. Begin this activity by filling the jar half-full with super hot tap water. Put the lid upside-down on top to trap the heat. Place several ice cubes in the lid. In about 15 minutes, raindrops will start to splash inside the jar.

As it starts to rain, ask these questions:

- What would the biggest problems be if it didn’t rain for three years?
- What was God’s point in stopping the rain?
- What are some ways mentioned earlier in *The Story* where God showed his power in mighty ways?
- Rain is one way that God provides for our needs. What are some other ways that God provides for us?
- Have family members talk specifically about an area of their lives where they’re especially grateful of God’s provision.

At the end of the draught, Elijah had a showdown against the 850 prophets who worshiped false gods. He challenged the false prophets to pray and have their god send fire down to earth. The false prophets tried and tried, but nothing happened. Elijah had the altar doused with water three times. Elijah prayed and God sent fire from heaven that burned up everything—even the water! The people of Israel turned back to God and he sent rain.

Extra Mile

Do you like walking in the rain? How about singing in the rain. Elijah enjoyed running in the rain. In fact, he outran Ahab's chariot from Mount Carmel to Jezreel—and that's over 20 miles!

In honor of Elijah's amazing feat mentioned in 1 Kings 18:46, go jogging as a family. Run around your neighborhood or a local park. You may even want to race each other. God gave Elijah amazing power to beat Ahab to Jezreel. You could put somebody on a bike and have him stay on the sidewalk as another family member sprints across a field. See who wins to a predetermined point.

Make an effort to get outside and exercise as a family a few times this week. It could be jogging, running, biking—anything. And it doesn't have to be for long, even 15 minutes can be beneficial. Maybe it'll become a habit. As you exercise, use the time to talk about what's happening in your life and how you see God moving.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 16

The Beginning of the End

Timeless Truth: God deals with disobedience, but His compassion never ends.

Bible Basis: Isaiah 3:1-13, 14:1-5, 49:8-9, 53:1-12

Key Verse: "When it is time to save you, I will help you. I will keep you safe" (Isaiah 49:8).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 16

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity allows your family to explore the probability of Jesus fulfilling the prophecies found in Isaiah. The Extra Mile looks at a YouTube video about Jesus' sacrifice foretold in Isaiah 53.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God doesn't give up on his people. God won't give up on me.

Elementary: God doesn't give up on his people. God won't give up on me.

Middle School: God punishes, instructs and guides his children to help them grow more like him.

High School: God punishes, instructs and guides his children to help them grow more like him.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Israel and Judah followed other gods and ignored the one true God. The sins of the people of Israel caused God to allow them to be taken to Assyria. The prophet Isaiah warned the people of Judah about what would happen if they continued their bad decisions. He told the people the truth, even though the truth was difficult. Have you ever told the truth, even though it was hard?
- Have you ever stopped a friend from making a bad decision?
- What did you say or do to change your friend's mind?
- Why is it so important to always speak the truth?

Note: Young readers will enjoy hearing this story in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 144.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 16. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

56. What were the key events from this chapter?
57. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
58. Do you think obedience to God guarantees success or freedom from hardship? Why or why not?
59. Sometimes the hardships in our life are caused by our disobedience of God. Why does God discipline us? What does he hope will come from the discipline?

Middle/High School

- Isaiah's name means "God to the rescue." What does your name mean? (Parents share with your children how you chose their name.)
- Isaiah tried to rescue the people by telling them God's truth. What would you have to do to live up to your name?
- How does it feel when people try to change you by telling you things that you're doing wrong?
- Is it easy to take advice? Is it easier to follow if you know it's from God's Word?
- What is the best way to share difficult truths with people?

Living Faith

God gave Isaiah great insight to write about the future and the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Test your ability to predict the future by playing this game as a family. All you need is a coin. Have family members pair up. If there's an odd number of people, the person who sits out automatically wins and advances to the next round. Have one person flip and the other person call "heads" or "tails." The winner is the one who guesses the best three-out-of-five flips correctly. Continue playing until there is one grand champion. When you're finished, read this:

The book of Isaiah is filled with prophecies about Jesus.

- Isaiah 7:14 says Jesus will be born of a virgin.
- Isaiah 35:5-6 says when Jesus comes the blind will see and the deaf will hear.
- Isaiah 53:12 says Jesus will die with criminals.

There more than ten different prophecies recorded in Isaiah. The chances of guessing a flipped coin correctly are 50 percent. That means you have a 1 in 2 chance of being right. Mathematician Peter Stoner figured out the chances of one man in all of history fulfilling just eight prophecies. The probability is 1 in 10¹⁷, or a 1 with 17 zeros behind it. Stoner wrote that if you took 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars and put them in Texas, it would cover the state two feet deep. "Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly," Stoner says. "Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man."

Jesus is truly amazing. He didn't fulfill just eight prophecies written hundreds of years before his birth—he fulfilled nearly 50! That's an awesome God. It didn't happen by chance. It was all part of God's plan.

Extra Mile

Isaiah 53 says a lot about Jesus' sacrifice for us. Watch this video on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=47YiHynliYM&feature=Playlist&p=15AA2F782EF05463&index=17

You can also find it by searching for “Jesus the Messiah Isaiah 53” and clicking on the video that’s 4:49 long. Some of the illustrations may disturb younger children. But if your children are old enough, have them watch the video as you read Isaiah 53 out loud.

The power of Isaiah’s words and the images will bring home Jesus’ sacrifice in a tangible way. God gave his only son and Jesus gave everything for us. And remember, Isaiah wrote these words more than 700 years before Jesus was born.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 17

The Kingdoms' Fall

Timeless Truth: Listen and Live.

Bible Basis: Jeremiah 1:4–10, 2:21–28, 5:1–2, 13:17–19; 2 Chronicles 36:11–16; 2 Kings 25:1–12; Lamentations 1:1, 2:17, 3:21–26; 5:1 and 15–21; Ezekiel 1:1–2:7, 36:22–36

Key Verse: I say to myself, "The Lord is everything I will ever need. So I will put my hope in him" (Lamentations 3:24).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 17

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to have fun drawing some of God's amazing creations. The Extra Mile looks at an all-star baseball player who rejected God, but then repented and found mercy.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God's people suffer because of their sin, but God still loves them. His love for me will never end.

Elementary: God's people suffer because of their sin, but God still loves them. His love for me will never end.

Middle School: God's judgment isn't pretty. But he also stands ready to give mercy to those who show remorse.

High School: God's judgment isn't pretty. But he also stands ready to give mercy to those who show remorse.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Have you ever done something that you were told not to? What happened?
- God told the people in Judah and Israel many times to not worship idols. He sent prophets who warned them about what would happen. So the people turned from their wicked ways and worshiped God, right? Wrong! What did the people really do?
- Do you like it when your parents warn you about your behavior?
- Do you usually change your behavior before you get in trouble?
- God's people got in big trouble. Do you think that was fair?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 17. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

60. What were the key events from this chapter?
61. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
62. When bad things happen, does it mean that God is not watching? Does it always mean that God doesn't love you or is punishing you?
63. Do you sometimes get depressed about the way things are in the world? Is your heart like the "dried up bones" Ezekiel saw in his vision? Where can you find hope? How can your family help you?

Middle/High School

- We've all heard the saying, "Like father, like son." What are some ways that you're like your parents? (Parents share about similarities with their parents.) Be sure to talk about some positive attributes and some negative.
- In this chapter of *The Story*, it's like the kings tried to be the opposite of their parents. It was "like father, not like son." It was good king, bad king, good king. . . . Why do you think that happened?
- Are there any things you're doing to be set apart from your parents?
- Why do some people work hard at not following the positive character qualities of their parents?
- How can you work to embrace the good and reject the bad from the role models in your life?

Living Faith

God opened up the heavens and gave the prophet Ezekiel amazing visions. Gather your family around a table. Make sure to have an assortment of paper, crayons, colored pencils and other drawing utensils. Read all of Ezekiel 1 out loud. When you're finished, take some time to draw the creatures that he described. You can even draw the scene with the heavenly sapphire throne and glowing metal figure (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

Have fun critiquing each other's work. When you're finished, ask:

- Is it possible to describe heavenly creatures or heaven with words?
- Why can't words do God justice?
- What do these creatures say about the creativity of God? Can't you just picture these creatures in a movie or comic book?

- These creatures are called cherubim. God specially made them for a purpose.

Think about other things that God made that might look weird but have a special purpose. What about ears? star-nosed moles?

When you've finished talking, read more about this scene in Ezekiel 10. Make any additions or changes to your illustrations that you want to. Hang the final products on the refrigerator for a week to remind your family of God's power and creativity.

Extra Mile

God's people knew the truth, but they turned their back on it and followed their own ways. But even as God judges his people, he looks to their redemption (see Ezekiel 36:22-36). God is a God of mercy and healing. For a personal, modern example of God's grace, watch *Home Run King Josh Hamilton: From Addiction to Salvation* at: www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=234baa0f4b722059df14

Texas Rangers outfielder Josh Hamilton accepted Christ at 18, and shortly after he was picked No. 1 in the Major League Baseball draft. In the minor leagues, he got

addicted to drugs and nearly lost everything: Money, fame, a beautiful wife. After years of drug abuse, Josh rededicated life to God, and God gave it all back. At the 2008 All Star Game, Josh hit a record-breaking 28 home runs in one round of the home run derby.

Watch Josh's story and then talk as a family about the similarities between his story and what happened to God's people.

- What was Josh's idol?
- How did God give everything back to Josh?
- What does this say about God's character?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 18 & 19

Exile / The Return Home

Timeless Truth: The Faithful prosper while the faithless fall. Putting God's business first brings prosperity.

Bible Basis: Daniel 6:1-23; Jeremiah 30:1-3, 8, 10-11, 31:23-25, 29:10-14; Ezra 1:1-7, 3:10-13; Haggai 1:2-11; Zechariah 8:2-22; Ezra 5:14-17, 6:14-18

Key Verse: "They will be my people. I will be their faithful God. I will keep my promises to them" (Zechariah 8:8).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 18 & 19

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity shows your family how to build an edible temple. The Extra Mile looks at a video about what's happening in the Holy Lands regarding the third temple and peeks back at the second temple.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God's people promise to follow his ways. God wants me to follow Him and He will protect us.

Elementary: God's people promise to follow his ways. God wants me to follow Him and He will protect us

Middle School: God's loving protection and godly relationships carry me through trying times.

High School: God's loving protection and godly relationships carry me through trying times.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Daniel followed God's rules, instead of the king's, and got in trouble. Have you ever got in trouble for doing the right thing? If so, what happened?
- King Darius knew Daniel served God. The king even said, "You always serve your God faithfully. So may he save you" (Daniel 6:16). Daniel showed King Darius true faith in God with his actions (by praying and trusting him for protection) without saying a word. What are some actions you can take to show others you serve the one true God?
- The first people to move back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple became frustrated at its progress and concentrated on building houses for themselves instead. The prophet Haggai told them if they served God first by building his house, then their crops and work would be blessed. Why do you think it's important to put God ahead of your personal needs?
- Name some things that God controls and how that affects your life?
- God's people pitched in their gold and silver to make God's temple magnificent. Talk about a time when you worked together with friends to accomplish a big task. Did it work better when everyone shared?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of The Story (pp. 473-487) for chapter 18 & 19. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

64. What were the key events from this chapter?
65. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
66. Daniel's integrity was so consistent and above reproach that even his enemies could find no grounds to accuse him. Examine your own life. Do any inconsistencies exist between your public life and your private life?
67. Review Zechariah's message of hope and promise. What did God promise the faithful Israelites He would do? List the ways they were to respond to God's grace (p. 268-269.) How do you rate in these areas?

Middle/High School

- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (or Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were taken from Judah and brought to Babylon. But they refused to give up God's rules and follow new customs. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you had to abandon God's standards to fit in?
- Is always doing things God's way a bad thing? If not, why is it so hard to make the decision to always follow God?
- Cyrus, the king of Persia, encouraged God's people to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Lord's temple. About 50,000 people went back to start the project. When the foundation was laid, some of God's people cried and others shouted with joy. Talk about a time when you cried tears of joy. Can you remember a time that you shouted with joy?
- In the ultimate backfire, governors in nearby areas went to King Darius to see if King Cyrus had truly decreed that God's people could rebuild the temple. They hoped Darius would stop the building. Instead he found Cyrus' decree and made these governors give money and supplies to build the temple. Obviously, God's plan trumped the governors'. How do you think the governors felt?
- What does this story teach about God's plans?

Living Faith

God's second temple wasn't as awe-inspiring as Solomon's temple, but its majesty was renowned. As a family, build your own temple using graham crackers and icing. You'll need a small piece of poster board, a couple of boxes of graham crackers, icing and candy to decorate it.

An effective icing consists of one pound of powdered sugar, one teaspoon of cream of tartar and three egg whites. These ingredients need to be beaten on low speed until the mixture becomes stiff.

Begin by setting up the foundation by smearing a lot of frosting on the poster board. Set several crackers in it as walls. Keep adding walls with a good amount of frosting on the bottom until you've finished your base. Now start building up. Look

online for artists' renderings of the second temple or have fun making up your own design. Remember to use plenty of icing as "glue" to hold everything together. Once you're finished building the structure, let it dry before decorating the outside with frosting and candy. You can add food coloring to the frosting to create different colors. Use your favorite candy to decorate the temple and remind yourself of the great worth of God's house.

As you build the temple, talk about your church.

- What is your favorite part of your church?
- What's the most memorable thing you've learned about God in the last month?
- Is there somebody at church that you should send a special thank-you to? If so,

do it.

Extra Mile

Go online and watch the video "Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem" at:
www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=74732766a0f003bcba62

It's about 13 minutes long and quotes some passages from Ezra from this week's chapter of *The Story*. Take special note of the evidence of God's second temple that was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. By digging through the Holy Lands, it becomes very apparent that the Bible is more than just a story—it's God's truth.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 20

The Queen of Beauty and Courage

Timeless Truth: By showing faith, God can change the hearts of rulers.

Bible Basis: Esther 2:10-12, 16-18, 3:1-12, 5:1-7, 7:1-6

Key Verse: "Show me your favor. . . . Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you" (Esther 7:3).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 20

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to make some foods popular in Persia. The Extra Mile highlights a song called "Such a Time As This."

Get the Point:

Preschool: Esther gets her heart ready for a hard job. God helps me when it's hard.

Elementary: Esther gets her heart ready for a hard job. God helps me when it's hard.

Middle School: God elevated Esther "for such a time as this." In the same way, I need to be sensitive to God's plan for me.

High School: God elevated Esther "for such a time as this." In the same way, I need to be sensitive to God's plan for me.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- What do you think Esther made for the big dinner with King Xerxes and Haman?
- What's your favorite food?
- Queen Esther was King Xerxes favorite, but she took a risk by speaking to the king without being invited. Did she just barge in and demand to be heard? Why not?
- By being respectful and humble, the king granted Esther's wish. Tell of a time where respect and humility helped you.
- Have you heard the saying, "Attitude is everything"? How would you describe Esther's attitude?
- If you were in Esther's place, what would you have asked the king to do?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 20. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

1. What were the key events from this chapter?

2. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
3. How was Esther's choice much like that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Do we only obey God when we know for sure it will be turn out alright? How would you describe Esther's Faith?
4. What specific convictions do you think Esther had to maintain as she risked her life in facing the king? What conviction are required for living faithfully in our culture today?

Middle/High School

- Esther kept it a secret from King Xerxes that she was Jewish. Do you think it was good for her to keep that secret?
- When is it okay to keep secrets? When is keeping secrets a bad idea?
- At first Mordecai encouraged Esther not tell anybody she was Jewish, then he told her to go before the king and beg for mercy for her people. Have you ever had a family member tell you to do something for God?
- Esther prepared for her meeting with the king by fasting and encouraging others to fast with her. What does it say about Esther that she went to God with her request first?
- Have you ever fasted?
- Talk about a time when you went to God in earnest prayer before making a decision. What happened?

Living Faith

Persian kings were famous for the lavish banquets. So when Esther invited King Xerxes to a "big dinner" (Esther 5:8), the pressure was on. Make a big Persian dinner in honor of Queen Esther, although you may not want to break out the solid-gold dinnerware. During the Achaemenid empire, Persian kings could get nearly any food they wanted. Fruit was very common, especially cantaloupe. A spinach salad may be an authentic touch for your meal. Fish was also popular.

Have fun as a family planning out the menu early in the week. Set aside one night where everybody can be together to prepare the big dinner. Try something new. Use an exotic spice. As everybody's working together or when everyone sits down, you can go through some of the "Table Talk" questions. Queen Esther's story is truly remarkable, and Esther is only one of two books in the Bible named for a woman.

For dessert, your family may want to bake *Hamantaschen* (ha-man-tosh-en), a traditional Jewish cookie made for Purim (see Esther 9:18-32), a celebration that honors Esther and Mordecai for saving the Jewish people from extermination. These triangular cookies look a little funny, and the name *Hamantaschen* means "Haman's ears." But they're fun to make and taste delicious. Look in a cookbook or go online and search for *Hamantaschen*.

Extra Mile

One of the most well-known verses from this chapter of *The Story* comes when Mordecai tells Esther that God may have raised her to be queen "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

Go online and search for Wayne Watson's song "For Such a Time As This" and click on <http://video.yahoo.com/watch/966307/3739462>.

Have a piece of paper and pencil ready as you listen to the song and watch the lyrics scroll across the screen. Ask family members write down phrases that have special meaning to them. When the song is over, give family members the chance to explain why they chose their specific line from the song. Also ask:

- How does this song relate to Queen Esther's story?
- How is this song meaningful in your life and in your relationship with God?
- How can you "live a mirror of His mercy"?
- What will you do to "change what will be"?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 21

Rebuilding the Walls

Timeless Truth: God keeps his covenant with those who love him.

Bible Basis: Ezra 7:1, 7, 10-11; Nehemiah 1:2-6, 11, 4:4-6, 13-23, 8:1-12

Key Verse: Don't be afraid of your enemies. Remember the Lord. He is great and powerful (Nehemiah 4:14).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 21

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity takes your family to a Web site to play a classic "wall breaker" video game. The Extra Mile encourages your family to do something to make God's people safer.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Nehemiah was sure of God's power. God is on my side.

Elementary: Nehemiah was sure of God's power. God is on my side.

Middle School: When God's people work together for what God wants, they can accomplish amazing things quickly.

High School: When God's people work together for what God wants, they can accomplish amazing things quickly.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- When the walls around Jerusalem were completed, the people celebrated. Ezra, the priest, read God's law to them from sunrise to noon (Nehemiah 8:3). Why do you think he did that?
- Do you think the people got bored?
- What's the longest you've ever been in church? What did you do?
- What's the longest that you've listened to somebody talk about God? What do you remember most?
- After Ezra spoke, the people went away and celebrated with great joy, because they now understood God's word. Why did they react this way?
- Do you react the same way when you hear God's Word? Why?

Note: Young readers will enjoy "Get Ready" in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 170.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 21. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

5. What were the key events from this chapter?
6. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
7. What lessons about being a Godly leader can we learn from Nehemiah?
8. Malachi is the last prophet of the Old Testament. On page 250, the text says, “[God] will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents.” Why do you think family unity is a sign of God’s presence and goodness? Is your family unified in Christ? If not, what can you do to help make that happen? What can the church/youth group do to help you?

Middle/High School

- Rebuilding the wall was a monumental task. God’s people got help from a powerful king and were pestered by nearby rulers. To protect his people and still get the work done, Nehemiah told the workers to carry supplies in one hand and a sword in the other. What does that tell you about the working conditions?
- Does God want you to be helpful, on one hand, and ready for battle with the other? How could you do that in your daily life?
- In the beginning of this chapter of *The Story*, God’s people are making some decisions that go against God’s law. Why don’t they learn?
- Are there areas of your life where you need constant reminders to follow God’s standards?
- Is reminding people through godly role models or writing a new thing or has it been the way God worked with his people for a long time?
- How did Ezra help the Jewish people get back on track with God? Do you think knowing God’s Word better would help you, too?
- How does it feel to know that you’ve just read through the Old Testament? Do something to celebrate.

Living Faith

Nehemiah was brilliant in getting all of God’s people to work together in rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall. By working together, they completed the project in 52 days! Before that, the Jews had languished in their attempts to protect and rebuild Jerusalem. King Cyrus first allowed God’s people to return to Jerusalem in 560 B.C. Then the second temple was completed in 516 B.C., but for 70 years the city was vulnerable to attack. In fact, many of the surrounding rulers made sure to keep the Israelites weak. But when Nehemiah showed up in 445 B.C., it took just less than two months to secure the walls and give God’s people a safe place to live. In all it took 115 years for God’s people to rebuild and fortify Jerusalem.

Have your family pretend to be raiders on Jerusalem by playing a classic “breakout” video game. You can go to www.silvergames.com/game/break-it/ or go to Google and search for “Breakout games.” See which family member is best at breaking down the walls. Let everybody take a couple of turns and then give a prize to who scores the highest.

Extra Mile

When Nehemiah learned that God's people were having a hard time and that people were making fun of them, he wept. He didn't want God's people to suffer. He wanted them to be safe and protected.

Sit down with your family and brainstorm ideas on what you could do to make God's people safer in your area. Maybe there's a project at your church that needs to get done. You could:

- Help build a walkway at church.
- Paint or mark the handicap spaces more clearly.
- Put up signs to better direct people to classrooms or the sanctuary.
- Volunteer to help care for babies in the nursery.
- Shovel snow off the sidewalk in winter.

There are tons of other ideas. Concentrate on ideas that will keep God's people safe, and then ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to make these ideas a reality. You may need to include another family from church or the whole congregation. Dream big. Nehemiah did, and God helped him accomplish his goal extremely fast.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 22

The Birth of the King

Timeless Truth: Jesus coming to earth is God's plan to save mankind.

Bible Basis: John 1:1–18; Luke 1:26–55; Matthew 1:19–24; Luke 2:1–20; Matthew 2:1–3; Luke 2:41–51

Key Verse: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 22

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity has your family listen to an upbeat song and spread some Christmas cheer—no matter what the date. The Extra Mile takes your family to a creative video about Christ's birth.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God sent a Savior for the world. I can believe Jesus is my Savior.

Elementary: God sent a Savior for the world. I can believe Jesus is my Savior.

Middle School: God had to become like us to save us. Jesus is 100 percent man and 100 percent God.

High School: God had to become like us to save us. Jesus is 100 percent man and 100 percent God.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

• God used angels a lot in this chapter of *The Story* to bring his message to people.

Angels spoke to Mary, explained things to Joseph and proclaimed Jesus' birth to the shepherds. What would you say if an angel appeared to you?

• If you saw an angel, you'd probably be scared. That's why the angels always say, “Do not be afraid.” After you stopped being scared, what question would you want to ask an angel?

• Why do you think the angels appeared to shepherds instead of powerful, rich people?

• A couple of times in this chapter it says, “Mary kept these things like a secret treasure in her heart.” What do you think that means?

• Parents share with your children “secret treasures in your heart” about them.

• Not a lot is recorded about Jesus' growing up years. Do you think Jesus was a good kid? Why do you think that?

Note: Young readers will enjoy hearing “The Light of the Whole World” in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 184.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473–487) for chapter 22. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class

(Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

9. What were the key events from this chapter?
10. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
11. In what ways have the traditional Christmas celebrations deviated or gone away from the point of Jesus' birth? How have they stayed to the point?
12. If someone asked you to explain why you believe that Jesus is both fully God and fully man, what would you say? How would the scripture shared in this section of The Story help?

Middle/High School

- Mary was probably a teenager when an angel appeared to her and said, "the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God." She immediately believed and prayed to God. React to these parts of her prayer:
 - She said she was unimportant, but now will be called blessed.
 - She said God scatters the proud.
 - She said God sends the rich away empty.
 - She said God has been kind to his people, like he said he would long ago.
- John writes that life was in Jesus and "that life was the light for all people." What do you think that means?
- Is God's light for all people? If so, why don't all people know Jesus as Savior?
- When Jesus was 12, he ditched his parents and hung out at the temple. Did he seem sorry for his actions?
- Do you think Jesus did anything wrong by not telling his parents that he was hanging back in Jerusalem?
- Why did Jesus have so much wisdom when it came to the Scriptures?

Living Faith

Any time is the perfect time to celebrate Jesus Christ's birth. You don't have to wait until Christmas. If Jesus hadn't come to earth, there would be no forgiveness of sins.

Gather your family and watch a video of the Go Fish song "Christmas With a Capital C." You can find two versions on YouTube:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAckfn8yiAQ
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEojXQHd1DU

One of the videos shows pictures of the Go Fish band members. The other pictures a house that has its Christmas lights timed to go with the song. They're both pretty short, so your family could watch each one as you listen to the song's powerful lyrics.

Society is trying to push out the miracle of Christ's birth from the holidays. But like the song says, "Jesus came down to take the punishment for me. He did it for you, too, so maybe you can see why it's called Christmas."

Fight the trend of taking Christ out of Christmas by putting Christ in everyday. Think of somebody you know who could use a dose of cheer. As a family pick out a present that costs less than \$10. Wrap it and give it to them. Let them know that Jesus has given you so much that you want to give a little away, too. Jesus' love can't be

contained! And when Christmas comes around this year, make sure that everybody around you knows that Jesus loves them.

Extra Mile

Jesus' birth is one of the most highly talked about historical events. Watch this surprising video on Christ's birth:

www.creativepastors.com/product_1764?stream=Upside_Down_MPEG1

The video begins with a person who doubts the miracle of Jesus' birth. But once Jesus changes his heart and gives him hope, the same text is read upside down. The truth is Jesus turns our lives upside down. Instead of being selfish, we become selfless. Instead of wanting earthly treasures, we lay up treasures in heaven. After watching the video, have family members talk about one difference that Jesus has made in their lives.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 23

Jesus' Ministry Begins

Timeless Truth: Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save it.

Bible Basis: Matthew 3:1-4:11; John 1:19-34; Mark 1:31-2:12; Matthew 4:24-25; Mark 3:9-15; Luke 8:1-3

Key Verse: "People brought to him all who were ill with different kinds of sicknesses. . . . Jesus healed all of them" (Matthew 4:24).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 23

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity lets your family do a fun experiment with water as you remember Jesus' first miracle. The Extra Mile takes your family to a video about helping somebody in need.

Get the Point:

Preschool/ Elementary: Jesus shows people the power of God. I can look for God's power in my life.

Middle School/ High School: Jesus shows people the power of God. I can look for God's power in my life.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. He told people that the kingdom of heaven was coming. Some people believed him, but others thought he was weird because he wore camel-hair clothes and ate bugs. What would you think if somebody like that told you the Lord was coming?
- Have you ever eaten a bug? If not, what's the strangest thing you've eaten?
- John the Baptist was also Jesus' cousin. Do you have any funny family members?
- When John baptized Jesus, a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, and I love him. I am very pleased with him." How does it feel when your parents say those words about you?
- What are some things you can do to please your parents?

Note: Young readers will enjoy hearing the stories "Heaven Breaks Through" and "Let's Go!" in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on pages 200-213.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 23. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

13. What were the key events from this chapter?
14. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
15. Where did Jesus get the power to tell Satan to get away from Him? Do you believe you have that very same power available? Why or why not?
16. John the Baptist and Jesus frequently had conflict with the religious leaders. Neither of them was afraid to confront sin when they found it. What lessons should we learn from these encounters?

Middle/High School

- Jesus called a wide variety of people to be his disciples—fishermen, tax collectors, revolutionaries—why didn't Jesus call more powerful people like religious and government leaders?
- Think of the Christians you know. Are they all the same? Why does Jesus call people with different interests and personalities to follow him?
- When Jesus asked someone to be his disciple, he simply said, "Follow me." What can you do to follow Jesus more closely?
- How does following Jesus change the way you act at school or with your family?
- When Satan tempted Jesus, he used Old Testament Scriptures to defend himself. Recite some Bible verses you've memorized. If you haven't already, memorize John 3:16-17 as a family. Talk about how God's Word can protect you today.

Living Faith

Jesus seemed a bit reluctant to perform his first miracle at the wedding feast. But he turned the water into wine, because his mom asked. Do you think Jesus did this at home, because the fact that he could do it didn't seem to surprise his mother? Talk about what it must've been like to grow up in the same house with Jesus as you prepare for a fun experiment. You won't be turning water into wine, but you can add a jolt of color to this clear liquid.

You'll need to gather a clear glass or clear plastic cup, water, cooking oil, food coloring and a pencil. Fill the glass about two-thirds full with water. Now pour a little cooking oil into the glass so it creates a thin layer of oil on top of the water. Add a few drops of food coloring. What happens?

The food coloring should sit on top of the oil in a little glob. Have fun by dropping in other colors of food coloring. Now gently poke the pencil into one of the blobs of food coloring. Watch color streak into the glass. Poke all of the different colors. At the end, gently swirl the glass and see what happens. As you carefully clean up, ask these questions about miracles:

- Jesus did many miracles. Name a few. Do you think those same miracles still happen today?
- If you could've witnessed any of Jesus' miracles, which one would it have been?
- What does it tell you about Jesus that his first miracle happened at a wedding?

Extra Mile

One of the neatest events in this chapter of *The Story* occurred when the paralyzed man's friends lowered him through the roof so Jesus could heal him. For a modern-day

story with a similar message, watch “The Home Run” video at www.tangle.com. It’s at:
www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=569d94ed84155a658623

- Why did the two players decide to help the injured girl?
- Do you think the injured girl would’ve scored without their help?
- Do you think the players did the right thing by helping, even though it made their team lose the game?
- What’s your favorite part of this video?
- Why do you think everybody got so emotional?
- Do you think the friends of the paralyzed man got emotional and started jumping around on the roof of the house when their friend was healed?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 24

No Ordinary Man

Timeless Truth: Neutrality is not an option – Jesus demands a response.

Bible Basis: Mark 4:30-34; Luke 15:1-7, 10:25-37; Matthew 5:3-12, 6:5-15; Mark 4:35-41; 6:30-44; Matthew 14:22-32; John 6:66-71

Key Verse: “We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 24

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to plan a picnic, whether you eat outdoors or inside. The Extra Mile takes your family to a Web site where you can watch a modern twist on Jesus' parables.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Jesus teaches his friends and the crowds. I can learn from God.

Elementary: Jesus teaches his friends and the crowds. I can learn from God.

Middle School: Jesus' teachings have earthly benefits and heavenly rewards.

High School: Jesus' teachings have earthly benefits and heavenly rewards.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- God doesn't like show-offs. In Jesus' time, some people made a big show about how spiritual they were. They'd go outside and make a huge fuss that they were praying. Jesus told his followers to act different. He taught them to pray in a quiet place. Where do you like to pray? Do you pray at a certain time of day?
- The Bible says God “knows what you need before you even ask him.” How can he know that? Since he already knows, why do you need to pray?
- When Jesus teaches us to pray, he says to forgive others the bad things they do to us, just like God forgives us. Is it hard to forgive others? Who are some people you've forgiven recently? Is there anyone you need to forgive right now?
- One of the coolest things Jesus did was water on the water. What do you think that would be like?
- Peter tried to walk on the water, but took his eyes off Jesus and went for a swim instead. What's your favorite part about swimming?

Note: Young readers will enjoy “How to Pray” on pages 222-227 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 24. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

17. What were the key events from this chapter?
18. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
19. Thinking about the Parable of the Sower, which kind of soil are you right now? Are you letting God's message take root? What are the dangers to your spiritual crop?

Middle/High School

- Historians agree, even those who aren't Christians, that Jesus was a great teacher. Some of his most famous teachings came at the Sermon on the Mount where he made a bunch of "Blessed are . . ." statements. Discuss some of them:
 - For many meekness equals weakness, but Jesus says the meek are blessed and will "inherit the earth." How? What does meek really mean?
 - Blessed are the merciful. How can you show mercy?
 - What are some ways you can protect your heart, so you will be "pure in heart"?
 - How can you be a peacemaker?
 - Jesus says you're blessed when people insult you, persecute you and say evil things about you because of your relationship with Jesus. Has this ever happened to you?
- On several occasions Jesus raised people from the dead. In this chapter he raised Jairus' daughter. Talk about Jesus' power over death. Do you think this was Jesus' most amazing miracle? If not, which miracle most amazes you?

Living Faith

Jesus feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle retold in all four gospels. When a young boy's lunch was multiplied to feed a multitude, it showed God's power and taught a powerful lesson about his provision. This week bring your family together for a picnic to remember Jesus' huge impromptu picnic. Have family members choose their favorite foods to include or make a meal that's reminiscent of what happened on that mountainside. Maybe you can buy packages of flavored tuna and a loaf of French bread. Juice boxes or bottles of water work well, because they don't spill as easily. If it's warm enough, eat outside at a park or in your backyard. If the weather's cold, move your picnic indoors. Lay out a blanket in the living room and talk about Jesus' miracle.

- Did you know Jesus actually fed way more than 5,000 people? Back then only the men were counted. When you include women and children that number may double. Does that make this miracle more impressive? Why?
- Do you find it interesting that there were 12 baskets of leftover food? Why didn't Jesus make just enough food for everybody?
- What do you think the little boy thought when he gave up his lunch? Do you think he had any idea that Jesus was going to use it to feed everybody?
- What does this miracle teach you about God's power?

Note: You can read a great story of God's big picnic called "Filled Full" in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on pages 244-249.

Extra Mile

Jesus used stories in about one-third of all of his teachings. That means one out of every three times that Jesus taught, he used a parable.

- Why do you think Jesus used stories so often?

Stories are still a powerful and meaningful way to explain God's truth. But today a lot of stories are told in movies. Watch one of Jesus' parables told in a modern way at: <http://modernparable.com>. You can also search for "Modern Parables" and click on the link.

When you get to the Web site, click on "Try a Lesson" and watch a modern twist on Jesus' parable of the hidden treasure found in Matthew 13:44. After watching the short film, click on "Go to Lesson 2: Living the Parable" where you'll hear a current application of the parable. In all the two videos last less than 20 minutes.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 25

Jesus, The Son Of God

Timeless Truth: Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

Bible Basis: Mark 8:27-30, 34-38, 9:30-32; John 7:11-15, 25-31, 8:12-14, 31; Mark 10:13-16; John 11:55-57; Mark 11:2-10; Matthew 21:10-11; John 12:27-33, 37, 42-50; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:3-6

Key Verse: "They all shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!' "
(Matthew 21:9).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 25

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith encourages your family to think about Jesus' claim that he was God. Theologian C.S. Lewis helps you out. The Extra Mile has your family watch a couple of videos about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Jesus, the Son of God, deserves our worship. I can give him my best praise.

Elementary: Jesus, the Son of God, deserves our worship. I can give him my best praise.

Middle School/High School: Jesus is the Son of God.

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- Jesus loves children. In this chapter of *The Story*, the disciples try to keep little children from coming to Jesus. Jesus got mad and said, "let the little children come to me." How does that make you feel?
- Do you think Jesus understands what it's like to be a child? Why?
- Jesus said, "Anyone who will not receive God's kingdom like a little child will never enter it." What do you think that means?
- What part do you like best about Jesus?
- What's your favorite story about Jesus so far?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 25. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

20. What were the key events from this chapter?
21. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
22. How would you respond to someone who asked, “Who is Jesus?”
23. How would you respond to the question, “How do you know that Jesus is God?”

Middle/High School

- Jesus used startling statements to grab people’s attention. In this chapter of *The Story*, he says “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me . . . will save it” (Mark 8:35) and “many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:31). What do you think that means? Do you think it’s true? Why?
- Why do some of Jesus’ teachings seem so opposite of what society says?
- Which of Jesus’ teachings are the hardest for you to understand?
- Is it possible to follow the Bible’s commands without fully understanding them?
- Talk about how faith impacts your walk with the Lord.

Living Faith

In this chapter of *The Story*, Jesus makes it very clear that he is God’s Son and the Messiah who’s come to save people from their sins. Some people didn’t like his teachings and walked away from him. The same thing happens today as people wrestle with what Jesus said. History records the fact that Jesus walked the earth and taught many people. But Jesus said he was God, and that causes a dilemma for people—or as C.S. Lewis might say a “trilemma” as they decide if they think Jesus was a liar, lunatic or Lord. Figuring out what you think about Jesus is the most important decision you’ll ever make.

C.S. Lewis is best known for writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and all of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but he also wrote some great books about theology, including *Mere Christianity*. In that book he writes: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

After reading the above excerpt from *Mere Christianity*, discuss it as a family.

- What do you like best about Lewis’ thinking?

- Why is this argument so effective?
- What do you think people who aren't Jesus followers would think about these statement?

Extra Mile

Churches love to re-enact Palm Sunday as Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey. Palm branches and jackets paved the way for the coming King. Jesus didn't run from his destiny of dying on a cross. He rode straight into it. Watch these two videos about Jesus' triumphal entry:

- At YouTube—"Jesus entering Jerusalem on donkey. Matthew 21.1-17"
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGYAGRfO3gA)

- At Tangle—"The Triumphal entry of the Only True Remedy for Sin"
(www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=75c295c84a9bfb2fbe79)

Did you learn anything new from these videos? Pray as a family and thank God for sending his Son to die for your sins.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 26

The Hour Of Darkness

Timeless Truth: God gives eternal life to those who know Jesus Christ.

Bible Basis: John 13:21-30; Matthew 26:26-28; John 14:1-15; Matthew 26:33-35;
John 18:4-10; Luke 22:51-62, 23:32-45; Matthew 27:46-49; John 19:30

Key Verse: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in me also" (John 14:1).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 26
[end box]

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity has family members wash each other's feet. The Extra Mile shows your family a couple of videos set to Chris Tomlin's song "Jesus Messiah."

Get the Point:

Preschool: Jesus died for our sins so we can be with him forever. I can accept his love.

Elementary: Jesus died for our sins so we can be with him forever. I can accept his love.

Middle School / High School: It Is Finished!

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- If you didn't know how it was going to turn out, this would be the saddest chapter of *The Story*. A lot of terrible things happened to Jesus. He was arrested, his friends let him down, and he was beaten and killed. When Jesus asked his disciples to pray for him, they fell asleep instead. Talk about a time that your friends let you down?
- Why is it so hard to stay awake sometimes when you're praying at night?
- How do you think the disciples could've encouraged each other to stay awake—would've pinching each other worked?
- After all the miracles they'd seen, why did the disciples abandon Jesus? Don't you think they would've had more faith?
- Will Jesus ever let you down? Why?

Note: Young readers will gain understanding of Jesus' last days by reading the three stories on pages 286-309 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 26. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

24. What were the key events from this chapter?

25. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?

26. Even after spending several years with Jesus, the disciples still misunderstood His purpose and who He truly was. (See Mark 8: 31-32; 9: 31b-32; 10: 32-34 & John 14: 8-11). Is it possible to go to church our whole lives and miss the point God's Kingdom and what it truly means to follow Jesus. If it is possible, how is that a scary thought?
27. In what ways does Jesus' preparation and celebration of his final Passover meal parallel the original Passover? What does this teach us about the purpose of Jesus' death? (Review Exodus. 12:1-13, 21-27, John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Middle/High School

- Jesus talks a lot about being God in this chapter (John 14:9, etc.). Why is it so important that Jesus is God?
- During his arrest, Jesus is asked if he's Jesus of Nazareth. He responds, "I am he" and everybody falls down. Why did those words have so much power? Why didn't Jesus run away when everybody fell?
- Peter got a little bold when Jesus was arrested and cut off the high priest's servant's ear. Jesus told Peter to back off, picked up the ear, and healed the servant. If you were one of the soldiers, what would you have thought about this Jesus who knocks over people with his words and has the power to heal?
- Because Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, the Jewish leaders had to make up false testimony against him. Why was Jesus ultimately sentenced to death? (Blasphemy—saying he was God.)
- What sets Jesus apart from other people who have claimed to be God?

Living Faith

In a poignant act of servanthood, Jesus washes the disciples feet at the Last Supper. He was the ultimate leader and the ultimate servant. As parents, display that same kind of servant leadership by washing your children's feet. You'll need a basin of warm water and a towel. The idea isn't to scrub and clean the person's feet. You just need to gently bathe the feet with water and dry them with a towel. As you wash their feet, tell your kids the way you want to serve them (i.e. by providing food and place to live, by showing them how to serve Jesus, by encouraging them to be their best.)

After you've washed your children's feet, give them the opportunity to wash yours. If they want to, your kids can let you know how they want to serve you.

When you've cleaned up from the foot washing, put on a video or some music and have family members give each other foot rubs. A good-smelling lotion can make this even more enjoyable. Be wary of family members with ticklish feet—they tend to kick when they're rubbed.

You can add to this experience by reading John 13:1-16 and by asking these questions:

- What most surprises you about Jesus washing his disciples feet?
- Do you think it was hard for Jesus to wash Judas' feet, knowing that Judas would soon betray him?
- Do you think it's important for leaders to show they love and care for the people they're leading?
- What are some other ways that Jesus showed the disciples that he loved them?

Extra Mile

Chris Tomlin's song "Jesus Messiah" has a beautiful message that goes along with this chapter of *The Story*. Watch one or both of these videos on YouTube:

- "Chris Tomlin-Jesus Messiah" is better for younger children and can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1BAf_SKwPQ&feature

- "Easter-Jesus Messiah-Chris Tomlin" features more graphic images and a strong message at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcSnYTjHmiY&feature

After you've watched one or both videos, talk about the parts of each video that you liked the best. What lyrics from the song impacted you?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 27

The Resurrection

Timeless Truth: Jesus fulfilled the prophecies by rising from the dead.

Bible Basis: Matthew 28:2-8; Luke 24:36-49; John 21:1-6; Matthew 28:16-20

Key Verse: "He is not here! He has risen, just as he said he would" (Matthew 28:6).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 27

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity shows your family how to bake some special rolls. The Extra Mile has your family watch a couple of videos set to Carman's classic song "The Champion."

Get the Point:

Preschool: God raised Jesus from the dead. God gives me new life, too.

Elementary: God raised Jesus from the dead. God gives me new life, too.

Middle School/High School: He is Risen!

Table Talk

Preschool/Elementary

- Imagine showing up to Jesus' tomb and finding it empty with an angel sitting on top of the stone. What would you have done? Would you have been scared like the soldiers?
- The angel reminded the women that Jesus said he'd rise from the dead—and he did. Jesus always does what he says. What are some of Jesus' other promises?
- Have you ever gone from being really sad to super happy? That's what happened to the women who found the empty tomb. Tell your story.
- When the women told the disciples Jesus had risen, two of them—John and Peter—ran to it. Why do you think the rest of them didn't go too?
- Why is the empty tomb such great news to Jesus' followers back then and today?

Note: Young readers will enjoy "God's Wonderful Surprise" on pages 310-317 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 16. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

28. What were the key events from this chapter?

29. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
30. What parallels can you find between Peter's denial story (John 18:17-27) and His restoration story (John 21:15-23)? What does Peter's restoration reveal about Jesus' heart and how does it apply to you personally?
31. What does Jesus' Great Commission on the mountain in Galilee require of all His disciples? What is involved in "making disciples?"

Middle/High School

- Jesus appeared to several different people after rising from the dead. Each incident was very different. Talk about each one:
 - Mary Magdalene was doubled-over crying at the tomb when Jesus showed up and she didn't recognize him. Why do you think she didn't recognize him? Why did Jesus not want her to hold onto him?
 - Cleopas and a friend were walking to Emmaus when Jesus started talking to them about recent events. Jesus explained what all the Scriptures said about him. When Cleopas and his friend recognized Jesus, he disappeared. How surprised do you think they were? What did they learn from Jesus?
 - When Jesus appeared to the disciples, he asked for something to eat. Why did he do that? Talk about what it would've been like for the disciples to see their beloved Jesus again.
 - Thomas missed Jesus' first appearance to the disciples and said he wouldn't believe unless he touched the holes in Jesus' hands. When Jesus appeared, Thomas believed *without* touching the holes. Why?
 - Jesus said people are more blessed who believe without seeing. How does that make you feel about your relationship with Christ?
- Do you think you'll be able to appear in different places when you're in heaven?

Living Faith

When the stone rolled away, the tomb was empty. Jesus had risen! Make some empty tomb rolls to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. You'll need a tube of prepackaged crescent rolls, jumbo marshmallows, butter, cinnamon and sugar. These rolls make a great breakfast treat or add a sweet taste to dinner.

Get all the ingredients together and gather your family. Have somebody separate the dough into triangles. Overlap two of the triangles and roll them out, so they stick together. Brush a little butter on the dough and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Place a marshmallow inside the dough and pinch all the ends together to cover it. It's important that the dough completely covers the marshmallow, so it's totally enclosed in a "tomb." Follow these same steps with all the dough. Bake the rolls according to the directions on the package. Allow to cool. When you bite into these golden brown "tombs," they're now empty—just like Jesus' tomb on Easter morning! Praise God for raising Jesus from the dead.

Extra Mile

Jesus rising from the dead may be the most history-altering event ever recorded. When Christ defeated death, he also defeated the devil's schemes that started back in the Garden of Eden. By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve created a separation between humans and God. Satan doesn't want us to have a relationship with our heavenly

Father. Jesus' perfect life, death and resurrection make it possible for us to know God intimately again.

Watch these videos that re-enact what this epic battle between God and Satan may have looked like. Both are based on Carman's song, "The Champion."

- "Christian Music Video - The Champion" at YouTube shows regular kids at a church: www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1ogO4tW2ck&feature

- "The Champion by Carman" at Tangle uses three songs to show Jesus' victory: www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=86400c494db7091e402b

After you've watched one or both videos, talk about what it's like to know God personally. Jesus' resurrection dealt the ultimate blow to Satan, but the devil still tries to trap us in sin and make us forget Jesus' sacrifice. Commit as a family to live a victorious life with Jesus.

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 28

New Beginnings

Timeless Truth: The Holy Spirit helps God's people to spread Jesus' love.

Bible Basis: Acts 1:2-11, 2:1-6, 23-24, 32-33, 42-47, 8:4-8, 9:1-9, 17-19

Key Verse: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had not known. The Spirit gave them the ability to do this" (Acts 2:4).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 28

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to plan a garage sale to benefit people who are struggling in your church. The Extra Mile introduces your family to Team Hoyt who epitomize sacrifice and love.

Get the Point:

Preschool: God gives his people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can live inside me.

Elementary: God gives his people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can live inside me.

Middle School/High School: He is Risen – Spread the News.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- When the disciples preached about Jesus and people saw the truth, the believers started eating and praying together. The Bible says they "shared everything." Do you think this was hard for Jesus' followers?
- What would be the hardest thing for you to share?
- Why did the early Christians help each other out so much?
- Do you think Christians still look for ways to share with each other?
- This chapter of *The Story* says Jesus' followers had hearts that were "glad and honest and true." How do you think they showed that?
- Talk a little about being glad, honest and true. If you could always live that way, how do you think people would look at you?

Note: Young readers will enjoy "God Sends Help" and "A New Way to See" on pages 326-341 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 28. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

32. What were the key events from this chapter?

33. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
34. God the Father was the most visible person of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Jesus, God the Son, was most visible in the gospels and now God the Holy Spirit becomes prominent in Acts. For most Christians, the Holy Spirit is the least understood person of the Trinity. List all you learned about the Holy Spirit from this chapter. What did you learn about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for your own life?
35. God intended to teach Peter something even more profound than a lesson about foods through the vision of unclean animals (p. 333-334). What was it and why was Cornelius' conversion such a big turning point in the life of the early church? (See Acts 11:1-3, Acts 11:15-18, Rom. 10:12-13 and Eph. 2:11-13 for further insight.)

Middle/High School

- This chapter contains a powerful verse that says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved." What does that mean?
- People try to earn salvation in many other ways. What are some areas where people try to save themselves?
- As faith grew in the early church, so did persecution. Peter and John were beaten and arrested. Stephen was stoned to death. Why didn't Christ's followers just give up and hide?
- Why do you think faith thrives when there is persecution?
- Saul led the persecution against the Christians until he met (and was blinded) by Jesus Christ. Would you have trusted Saul after he said he was a believer?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to save Saul instead of having him walk off a cliff?
- Do you think being a Christian is too easy where you live? What's the hardest part?

Living Faith

The early church cared and provided for each other. That's an example we can follow today. All churches have families that need a hand. To help your church body, have family members go through their rooms to find items to sell. If you want to take this idea to the next level, coordinate with your church. Encourage your congregation to bring donated items to the church or your home (if you have a place to store them). Help host a garage sale in your church parking lot or your neighborhood. You can put details of where to bring donations in the church bulletin or ask the pastor to make an announcement.

Once you've gathered items, figure out a date for the sale. An ad in the local newspapers, signs on the road or a mention on craigslist can get the word out. Make sure the people buying the goods know that all the money is going to help less fortunate families. Encourage your family to get involved by organizing items and manning tables. Coordinate with other families at church. Many hands make light work, so get as many people involved as possible.

With some planning and a lot of effort, your family can reach out in a tangible way to your church. You can make a difference!

Extra Mile

Believers in the early church sacrificed for each other. Rich people sold their land and helped the poor. Strong people defended and protected the weak. The Hoyt family can teach everybody something about sacrifice. Watch these videos of about Team Hoyt.

- On YouTube, search for “Dick & Rick Hoyt” or go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDnrLv6z-mM

- On Tangle, search for “The Story of Team Hoyt” or go to:

www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=4e7679f8a731d6cce58a

- On Tangle, search for “My Redeemer Lives - Team Hoyt” or go to:

www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=8cf08faca5dd9ea45513

Answer these questions. Is Dick Hoyt a hero? Who benefits more Dick or Rick? What one lesson do you want to take away and apply to your own life? What does their story teach you about unconditional love? What does their story teach you about sacrifice?

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 29

Paul's Mission

Timeless Truth: The Gospel spreads throughout the world.

Bible Basis: Acts 16:16–36; 1 Thessalonians 1:2–5, 3:9–13, 4:16–18, 5:16–28; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 12:12–18, 27, 13:1–7, 15:21–22, 16:23–24; Galatians 5:22–25, 6:18

Key Verse: “He asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus’ ” (Acts 16:30–31)

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 29

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages your family to make a thankfulness chain. The Extra Mile takes your family to an inspirational video that talks about Paul's life.

Get the Point:

Preschool/Elementary: Jesus saves us if we believe in him.

Middle School/High School: Without Jesus, all fall short of God's glory.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Paul and Silas traveled around preaching about God. Some people loved them; others wanted to hurt them. One time they were arrested and chained up in jail. Instead of feeling sorry for themselves, they sang and prayed to God. Why were they doing this?
- How would you act if you were thrown in jail? Would you sing? Would you be scared?
- Why weren't Paul and Silas scared?
- A powerful earthquake opened all the jail doors and made the chains fall off. Why didn't Paul and Silas escape?
- The jailer nearly killed himself when he saw the prison doors open, because his punishment would've been death if the prisoners escaped. But Paul shouted, “We're all here.” The jailer immediately wanted to know how to be saved and how he could serve Paul's God. Talk about how witnessing with actions can sometimes be more effective than telling people about God with words.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473–487) for chapter 29. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

36. What were the key events from this chapter?
37. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
38. What did you learn about the relationship between faith and suffering from Paul's life and the church at Thessalonica? (p. 414-415)
39. Look over 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12: 3-8. Why is the human body a good metaphor for the church and how does it related to spiritual gifts?

Middle/High School

- Paul suffered a lot for Jesus Christ. He was blinded, beaten, stoned, jailed. But he said suffering was good because it creates perseverance, character and hope. Have you ever suffered for something and then come out better in the end? Tell that story.
- Paul warns Christians to stay away from sinful acts, such as sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousy, fits or rage, drunkenness, etc. Do any things in this list stand out as extremely bad or not so bad sins? In God's eyes is all sin the same?
- Looking at the above list, talk about specific ways you can overcome certain sinful behaviors. With all the pornography on the Internet and sexualized commercials on TV, is it harder today to stay pure and sexually moral?
- Paul writes some great things about love. It's patient and kind. It's not envious, boastful or self-seeking. How does this kind of biblical love differ from the love that boyfriends and girlfriends say to each other?
- What's your favorite part of Paul's definition of love? (Look up 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Living Faith

Paul endured many trials for his faith. Through everything he remained hopeful and thankful. For this family activity, you'll need pieces of colored construction paper, scissors, markers or pens and glue. Gather your family and explain that Paul spent a lot of times in chains, but it didn't let anything dampen his faith. Paul said, "How can we thank God enough," (1 Thessalonians 3:9).

Create a thankfulness chain as a family by cutting construction paper into 8-inch strips that are about one-and-a-half inches wide. (Regular white paper would work, too.) Have each family member take five to ten strips of paper. Write down something you're thankful for on each strip. Then glue the ends of the strip together to create a chain link. Make sure the words are on the inside of the link. Interlock the links as other family members write what they're thankful for and watch your chain grow. Try not to say what you're writing down on your chain. When everybody's finished and a long chain is created, hang it over a doorway. Leave it hanging for a few days and then plan a time to get together as a family again. Tear off a link of the chain and read what's on the inside. Have the person who wrote that message explain why their thankful. Keep going until you've totally dismantled the chain. Thank God for breaking the chains in your life and giving you so much to be thankful for!

Extra Mile

God doesn't want us to live half-heartedly for him. He wants our total commitment. He wants us to be passionate about the things he's passionate about. He wants us to have the faith to persevere like Paul.

Go to YouTube and watch “Ray Vander Laan – Run!” It’s at
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cizsb_GE_zc

After you’ve watched this short video, talk about Ray’s message.

- Why don’t we live passionate lives for Jesus?
- Why is it easy to fall into part-time discipleship?
- How can we live as Christian Olympians?

Remember: Don’t hold back in your Christian life. How we live shows others that God is king!

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 30

Paul's Final Days

Timeless Truth: God's saving grace is worth more than any earthly suffering.

Bible Basis: Acts 20:22–28, 36–38, 22:22–29, 27:1, 9–41, 28:1–10

Key Verse: "I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to give witness to others about the good news of God's grace" (Acts 20:24).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 30

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity has your family put on a sock puppet play, featuring the snake that bit Paul. The Extra Mile encourages your family to watch a music video or read a story on the possible discovery of Paul's sea anchors.

Get the Point:

Preschool / Elementary: Paul served God with his whole life. God wants me to serve him, too.

Middle School / High School: Suffering and perseverance are part of the Christian journey.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- Paul says he doesn't care if he has to go to prison, he wants to finish the work that God gave him—which is to witness to others about God's love. What are some ways you can show and tell others about God's love?
- What kind of job do you want to do when you grow up? How can you serve God in that job?
- The Holy Spirit protected Paul many times, but the Spirit also prompted Paul to go to Jerusalem where he knew he'd be arrested. Who also went to Jerusalem even though he knew he'd be arrested? (Jesus)
- By being arrested, Paul got to share about Jesus with a lot of Romans. Do you think that's part of why God allowed Paul to be arrested?
- Can you always see how God's plans are going to turn out? Do think God usually shows you his plan one step at a time?

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473-487) for chapter 16. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for "Middle/High School". After Confirmation class

(Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

40. What were the key events from this chapter?
41. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
42. Paul urged the believers in Ephesus to “live a life worthy of the calling” that they had received (Ephesians 4:1, p. 375). According to Paul’s letter, what does that mean?
43. What makes the marriage relationship a good metaphor for the church’s relationship to Christ? What does Christ do for the church (p. 376, Ephesians 5:21-33)?

Middle/High School

- Paul is clear that salvation is a gift from God—nothing that’s deserved or can be earned. Since the Bible is so clear, why do people still believe they’ll go to heaven because of their good works?
- Why is it easy to get caught up comparing yourself with other people, instead of to God’s standard?
- Paul writes that “all Scripture is God-breathed.” What does that mean?
- God’s Word is powerful and useful. Paul mentions four specific things where the Bible is helpful (2 Timothy 3:16). Look at each one:
 - How is the Bible helpful in teaching?
 - How does the Bible rebuke us?
 - In what ways can the Bible correct us?
 - Why is training in righteousness important?
 - Think of verses where the Bible teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains.

Living Faith

Paul’s shipwreck on Malta is one of the most exciting stories in the Bible. As soon as everybody is safely on land, Paul goes to gather firewood and is bitten by a poisonous snake. Paul shakes the snake into the fire as the Maltese people wait for him to swell up and drop dead. But God saves him, and Paul’s able to share about Jesus Christ and see many people come to faith over the next three months.

Put on a family play by creating a snake puppet from an old sock and two buttons. Sew on the buttons for eyes. If you have any red felt or material, cut out a small piece in a forked shape and sew it on as a tongue. You can create two snakes, have the snake talking to Paul or do a snake monologue. Read Acts 27:13-28:10 for background. Ad lib your lines for the play by using one of these ideas:

1. Have two snakes talking to each other. One snake is kind of singed, since it just bit Paul and was thrown into a fire. This snake is upset because Satan (who once took the form of a serpent) told him to go bite Paul, but nothing happened. In fact, not only is Paul OK, but the islanders think he’s a god and want Paul to tell them about Jesus. The snake is bummed because Satan’s plan isn’t working out. The two snakes get more and more agitated, because God’s power always seems to defeat Satan’s plan.

2. Snake talking to Paul after biting him. Snake is confused because Paul’s not dying. The snake says stuff like, “I put the poison in you, right?” Paul can explain that

God is more powerful than any poison. Paul can explain God's purpose for life. At the end, Paul casts the snake into the fire.

3. Snake monologue. Have the snake give all the details of the day. Again, the snake is singed after escaping from the fire. He retells watching 276 people wash up on the beach and start to build a fire, how he bit Paul, how Paul didn't die, how Paul was taken to the chief official of the island and healed his father. The snake is amazed at God's power shown through Paul.

Have family members take turns playing different parts.

Extra Mile

1. Watch the music video "Audio adrenaline hands and feet" at YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=m36OWibR6nk

- How does this video relate to Paul's life?
- If you could share God's love anywhere, where would you go?

2. Bob Cornuke is an ex-Los Angeles crime scene investigator who now uses the Bible to search for biblical artifacts. You can read about his search for the four anchors from Paul's ship at: www.khouse.org/articles/2002/413

To see a photo of what Bob found, scroll to the bottom of this Web site:

<http://nordskogpublishing.com/publisherscorner/2008/03/anchors-from-apostle-pauls-shipwreck.html>

PARENTS' PAGE: LESSON 31

The End Of Time

Timeless Truth: Jesus wins the ultimate victory; he's coming soon.

Bible Basis: Revelation 1:1–19, 4:1–11, 5:13–14, 19:11–15, 21:10–18, 21–27, 22:7–14, 16–21

Key Verse: “Look! He is coming with the clouds. Every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7).

Resource: *The Story for Kids*: Chapter 31

Parent Tips:

Read the key point from the Sunday school lessons that relate to your children. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity demonstrates how God will separate those who believe in him from those who were never his followers. The Extra Mile has your family watch videos of worship songs based on this chapter of *The Story* and a video about the importance of telling others about God.

Get the Point:

Preschool: Jesus is coming again. I can live in his kingdom forever.

Elementary: Jesus is coming again. I can live in his kingdom forever.

Table TalkPreschool/Elementary

- John says the time that all these things will happen “is near,” but that was around 2,000 years ago. Why hasn't Jesus returned yet?
- It helps to understand that God isn't bound by time. He's infinite. Second Peter 3:8 explains it this way: “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day.” What would it be like if time didn't matter?
- Have you ever wanted to go back in time? If you could visit any point in time, where would you go?
- John describes Jesus in a funny way—wool hair, blazing eyes, metal feet, voice like a river and a sword for a tongue. In your own words, describe Jesus. Why do you think John used these words to describe the Savior?
- Take turns as a family describing each other as John might describe you.
- How does it feel to get to the end of *The Story* and know that God wins?

Note: Young readers will enjoy “A Dream of Heaven” in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 342.

Confirmation

For your main discussion, use the questions in back of *The Story* (pp. 473–487) for chapter 16. If you have time and/or want to go a step further you can use the additional questions listed below for “Middle/High School”. After Confirmation class (Sunday afternoon or Monday at the latest) discuss the following questions to help your child prepare his/her journal thoughts.

Journal Discussion

44. What were the key events from this chapter?
45. What was most meaningful or stands out in your mind from this chapter?
46. What are some ways people “miss the point” when it comes to Revelation?
47. How has *The Story* experience changed your faith life?

Middle/High School

- What do you think Jesus means when he tells John, “I hold the keys of death and Hades”? How has Jesus demonstrated that?
- Jesus warns the churches about their behavior. Look at several of them. Do churches battle these same problems today?
 - Church in Ephesus—forgotten first love
 - Church in Sardis—live according to what you know about God
 - Church in Laodicea—lukewarm; need to live on fire
- Which of the above problems do you deal with the most?
- Now that you’ve completed *The Story* and know more about God, do you think it’s going to be easier or harder to live for him? Why?
 - Are you ready, because Jesus says he’s “coming soon”?

Living Faith

Some scary things happen in this chapter of *The Story*. Battles are fought. Strange looking creatures appear. God judges everybody and separates those who know him and people who never followed him. The Bible says, “Only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will enter the city.” When you pray to accept Jesus into your heart, God’s Lamb writes your name in his book. God knows everybody’s heart, so he can easily separate out his followers.

Do a fun experiment that allows you to separate salt from pepper. You’ll need a paper towel, salt, pepper and a balloon. (If you don’t have a balloon, a comb can work, too.) First, create a small pile of salt and pepper. Make sure they’re well mixed together. Second, blow up the balloon and rub it quickly back and forth against your hair. Rubbing it against a wool sweater works, too. Once you’ve created enough static electricity, move the balloon slowly toward the pile. The pepper should “jump” up and stick to the balloon, while the salt will be left behind. Try the same experiment using a comb. Create your pile of salt and pepper, then comb your hair. Put the comb about an inch from the pile and separate out the pepper.

- Is the pepper better than the salt and that’s why it jumps to the comb? (No, the pepper is lighter and more easily attracted.)
- As Christians are we better than people who don’t believe in Jesus? (No, we just followed the Holy Spirit’s prompting and made the decision to follow Jesus.)
- Because God’s judgment day is going to happen, don’t you think it’s super important to share God’s love with everybody?

Extra Mile

1. According to this chapter, there’s going to be a lot of singing in heaven. Go to YouTube and watch videos about these two songs that are directly based on passages from Revelation.

- Search “To Him Who Sits On The Throne Lyrics Don Moen” at YouTube or go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxQBNJ1ISXY

- Search “Holy Holy Tim Hughes” or go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TM6c_09eJg&feature

When you’ve watched both videos, see if you can find those verses in *The Story*. Talk about what you think heaven will be like.

2. Jesus is coming again. It’s a fact! Only those who believe in him will receive eternal life. Those who reject Jesus will suffer forever. The consequences are huge. This video from illusionist Penn Jillette shows the impact that living a real life for Jesus can have on an atheist. It may not be appropriate for every family, but it has a powerful message. Search “Penn Says: A Gift of a Bible” at YouTube or go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JHS8adO3hM