

God's Big Story Cards Family Event

A fun family and faith nurture event for kids in K-grade 5 and their families

Do the math. As children's ministry leaders we have about fifty hours a year to influence kids who regularly attend our children's ministry program. Parents, on the other hand, have about three thousand hours a year to influence their kids. So parents are the ones with the most potential to have an impact on their children—something God has known all along, and for which God has established some guidelines (check out Deuteronomy 6:5-9). Problem is, although parents have the most *time* with their kids, children's ministry leaders often have the most *tools*.

That's why sharing tools with families is an important part of our ministry. God's Big Story cards are an incredible faith nurture tool. Hosting a Family Event is a great way to kick off your education year, connect with families, and get everyone excited about the God' Big Story cards. On this event planning page you'll find a variety of ideas and options—choose the ones that will work best in your setting.

1. Get Ready . . .

- Choose the time and set the date. Keep in mind that more people are likely to attend if the event is held when families are already in the church building—before, after, or in lieu of church school. Another fun option would be a midweek potluck dinner or desert night. (We've provided you with plans for a 30- to 45-minute event; adding food will make it last longer.) Choose whatever works best for the families in your setting!
- Choose a location—ideally a room that is large enough for everyone to be seated around tables.
- Publicize your event two to three weeks in advance. Email, send a note, or personally give each family an invitation to the event. Be sure to include a simple way for them to RSVP so you'll know how many people to plan for. Church announcements and bulletin blurbs are also good reminders.
- Order a set of [God's Big Story cards](#) for every family—they'll be using them during the event.
- Photocopy or purchase a set of [story symbols](#) from Wonder, Year 1. *Note:* You'll need a specific symbol from this set ("Jesus and the Thankful Man" from Unit 4) along with three to five symbols per table and some extras to use for decorating the room. There are 37 symbols in the Wonder Year 1 set; if you'd like a more symbols or a wider variety of symbols, you can also download or purchase the Imagine and Marvel symbols.

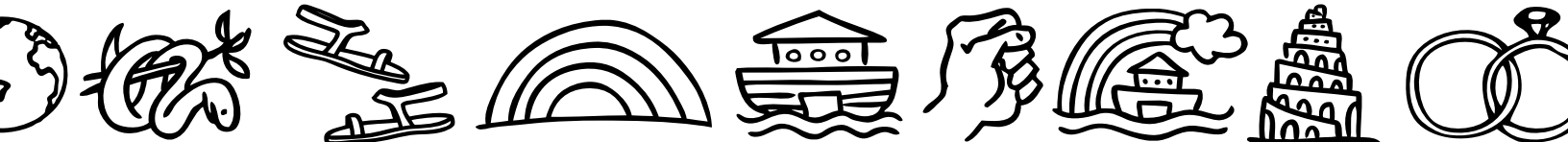
Tip

Want to add food to your event? Muffins or bagels and juice boxes/ coffee/tea are a simple Sunday brunch solution; pizza and/or ice cream are fun for an evening event.

For a "sweet tooth" option, set plain round sugar cookies on each table along with a bowl of frosting, a spreader, and tubes of colored decorating gel. Invite people to decorate a cookie to match one of the story symbols on the table.

Tip

Cover tables with butcher paper and invite kids to doodle and decorate the table with story symbols while you're talking to their parents about the curriculum. Ask them to create a story symbol for their family—they are part of God's story too!



- Gather washable markers, paper,, and child friendly versions of the Bible such the NRSV or the NIrV (one per table). Better yet, add a note to the invitation asking families to bring their own Bible from home so they can practice using it with the cards!
- [Dwell](#) users should plan to briefly introduce the different levels—and the leaders too! Gather samples of the Show and Share papers ([Imagine](#) and [Wonder](#) levels) and the [Storymarks](#) (Marvel level) so you can show parents what kids will be bringing home.

2. Get Set . . .

- Have the God’s Big Story card boxes ready to hand out during the event.
- Place washable markers on each table along with sheet of paper and a Bible.
- Remove story symbol for “Jesus and the Thankful Man” from your set of symbols. Set it aside to use later with the large group.
- Place three to five story symbols on each table. (Make sure you know which stories they represent!)
- Decorate the room with the remaining story symbols—pin them to a bulletin board, string them up along a wall or clothesline, hang them from the ceiling, or create a border of them around the room.



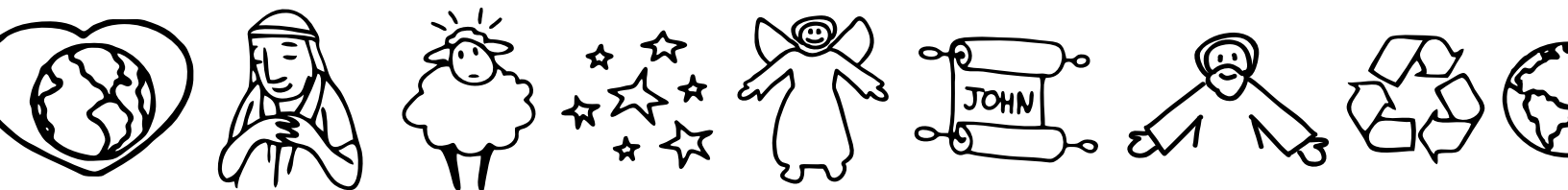
Tip

Take this opportunity to share other practical tools with parents during your event. Here are some great resources to show and tell about:

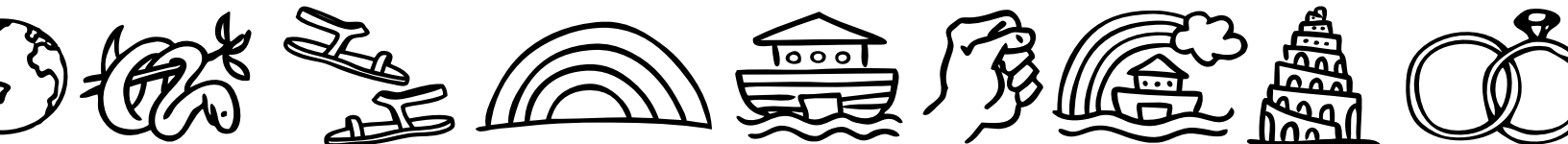
- [Home Grown Handbook for Christian Parenting](#)
- [Home Grown Study Guide](#) (Have a sign-up sheet ready so parents can register to take the course.)
- [God Loves Me Storybook series](#) --these books are perfect for preschoolers!
- [The Jesus Storybook Bible](#) is excellent for family reading.
- [Dive! Devotional](#) is a great devotional for middle schoolers.
- [Christian parenting website](#)

3. Go!

- Greet families as they arrive, and encourage them to sit together as a family at one of the tables you’ve set up. (Smaller families may enjoy sitting at a table with another family.)
- As families settle in at their tables, invite them to look at the story symbols and guess which stories they represent.
- Welcome parents as primary partners in their child’s faith development. Let them know you did some math—although you and the other children’s ministry leaders have their children for about *fifty* hours each year, parents have *thousands* of hours with their kids each year. That means that as parents, they have the biggest influence and the greatest opportunity to nurture the faith of their kids. Tell them that you’re excited at the ways God’s Big Story cards will help them do that!
- If your church is using *Dwell*, explain how every single story in the *Dwell* curriculum has its own story symbol. Point out the features as suggested below:



- First point out the story symbols on each take home piece—families will be able to use these to locate the matching card from their God’s Big Story cards sets as they dwell in God’s story together.
 - Explain that each Show and Share paper contains a version of the Bible story to retell at home.
 - Mention that every six weeks kids will receive a new Memory Challenge—an important piece of Scripture to memorize. They’ll find the text reference under the Memory Challenge icon on all the Show and Share papers and the Storymarks.
 - Talk about the Scripture songs kids will be using at church to help them learn the Memory Challenges; let parents know the songs are available for purchase and download at www.dwellcurriculum.org.
 - Tell about the “On the Way Home” activity on the front page of every Wonder level Show and Share paper for kids to do on the way home from church!
 - Show how the Storymarks become a great Bible bookmark—by the end of the year their child’s Bible should be full of them!
 - Introduce your leaders. Let kids know how excited their leaders are to get to know them and to learn more about God’s story with them. Invite the group to give leaders two snaps and a whoosh on the count of three (have everyone snap fingers twice then point toward the leaders and say “Whoosh!”) as a way to welcome and thank them.
- Ask if everyone has had a chance to try and figure out the story symbols on their table. One table at a time, invite volunteers to come forward with the symbols from their table and have them share what stories they think the symbols represent. If the volunteers are unsure or are incorrect, invite the larger group to suggest story ideas. Give each table group a round of applause when they are finished!
 - Show the God’s Big Story card set, and briefly explain how it works, using the instruction card enclosed in the box as a reference. Tell about the different ways families can use them at home to fit into their lifestyle and the ages of their kids. Some key points:
 - Every story card is connected to part of God’s story in the Bible and every card has its own story symbol.
 - They can read the passages from a regular Bible, from the stories in the kids’ take home papers, or from a children’s story Bible.
 - Every story card suggests six different ways to respond to the story: families might **retell** the story in a fun way, **wonder** together about something from the story, **pray** together, offer **praise**, **share** a story or experience of their own that connects to the story, or do an **activity** together.
 - Families get to choose an activity by rolling a special colored die and doing the activity that it matches.
 - They can choose to read one story and its card over a week and roll for a different response each day or choose a new card each day, rolling and doing one response from the back.
 - If your church is using *Dwell*, families may either select the cards that match the stories their child heard at church school or opt to start at the beginning and work their way through the box.
 - Emphasize how easy, flexible, and fun it will be to use the cards at home!



- You've explained how the cards work: now it's time to try them together! Show everyone the story symbol you've set aside. (But don't give away the story it belongs to yet!) Wonder out loud which part of God's Big Story it might represent and listen to ideas from the large group. Invite people to listen to the story to find out if they were right, and then read (or arrange in advance for someone else to read) the story from Luke 17:11-19.
- Give each family a box of God's Big Story cards. Invite families to find the story symbol for the story you just read (#102). Once they've found it, the youngest child at the table can roll the die and the family can begin by doing the activity that goes with the color that was rolled. Allow enough time for families to do at least three of the suggested responses. Have a different person roll the die each time.
- Show the other great resources you've brought along (see tip box on page * for a few suggestions) and invite families to take a closer look on their way out. Let everyone know how much you look forward to walking alongside them as you nurture the faith of their children together.
- Close with the responsive prayer from God's Big Story card #99. (Ask kids for action suggestions for the words *build* and *guide* and send or plan your own actions in advance.) Teach the actions to the group and then have them repeat each line after you.

