

THE BEGINNING OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Timeless Truth: Humans are God's crowning creation.

Bible Basis: Genesis 1–3:24

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 1: "The Beginning of Life as We Know It"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **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 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."

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 tissue 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 tissue 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 children 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.

GOD BUILDS A NATION

Timeless Truth: What sin changes, faith overcomes.

Bible Basis: Genesis 12:1–15:21

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 for Children*, Chapter 2: "God Builds a Nation"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

Abraham trusted God and obeyed. I can trust God, too.

TABLE TALK

- **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 same 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?** (Gives you new friends, love of a family, etc.)

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 their 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 failed 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.

JOSEPH: FROM SLAVE TO DEPUTY PHARAOH

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

Bible Basis: Genesis 37:1–36; 39:1–28; 41:1–45:7

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 Children*, Chapter 3: "Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **Can anybody remember a funny or weird dream you've had recently?** (If no one 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.)

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?**

If there has been any favoritism shown (or felt) in your family, take time to discuss the issue and apologize to the child who felt slighted. 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 you 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.

OUT OF EGYPT

Timeless Truth: God is the ultimate Deliverer.

Bible Basis: Exodus 1:1–2:10; 3:9; 12:31; 13:21–22

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 Children*, Chapter 4: "Out of Egypt"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

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?**

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 children), 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.

NEW RULES

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

Bible Basis: Exodus 19:1–8; 20:1–17

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 5: "New Rules"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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 children to be different. Plus, a fun game will help your family memorize the Ten Commandments.

GET THE POINT

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

TABLE TALK

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

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 Ten 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 Ten 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 they 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?

WANDERING

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

Bible Basis: Numbers 13:1–3, 17–33; 14:1–11, 22, 34–38

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 NIRV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 6: "Wandering"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

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?

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 ten times, putting your forehead on a bat and spinning

around ten 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?**

THE BATTLE BEGINS

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

Bible Basis: Joshua 1:1–11; 2:1–14

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 7: "The Battle Begins"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **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?**

LIVING FAITH

Gather a glass bowl filled halfway with water and a pepper shaker 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 children 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 bag of 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.

A FEW GOOD MEN ... AND WOMEN

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

Bible Basis: Judges 16:1–31

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 8: "A Few Good Men ... and Women"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **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?**

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, 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:** _____

THE FAITH OF A FOREIGN WOMAN

Timeless Truth: God rewards unselfish love.

Bible Basis: Ruth 1–4

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*: Chapter 9: "The Faith of a Foreign Woman"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **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?**

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 children's bathroom. Your daughter can organize the garage. Your son could offer to babysit 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, call your church and ask for the name of a child who needs to feel loved and encouraged. 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!

MESSAGES FROM GOD

Timeless Truth: God uses willing hearts to serve him.

Bible Basis: 1 Samuel 1:1–2:2, 21; 3:1–10

Key Verse: The Lord has filled my heart with joy. He has made me strong. —1 Samuel 2:1 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 10: "Messages from God"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- Hannah made a very big promise to God by telling him that she would give her first son to serve him. Do you think it was hard for Hannah to hand over her young 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?

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 other 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 the 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?

FROM SHEPHERD TO KING

Timeless Truth: Total trust in God brings great courage.

Bible Basis: 1 Samuel 17:1–50

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 11: "From Shepherd to King"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **Goliath's enormous size (about nine 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 weapons?**

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 kabab. 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 about 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.

A KING MAKES BAD CHOICES

Timeless Truth: God is just ... and forgiving.

Bible Basis: Psalm 32:10–11; 51:1–12; 1 Chronicles 29:1–20

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 12: "A King Makes Bad Choices"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- King David was called a man after God's heart, but he 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 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?

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.

THE KING WHO HAD IT ALL

Timeless Truth: God's faithful love continues forever.

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 3:1–15; 4:29–34; 2 Chronicles 9:1–9

Key Verse: Don't be wise in your own eyes. Have respect for the LORD. —Proverbs 3:7 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 13: "The King Who Had It All"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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 more familiar with Proverbs.

GET THE POINT

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vinegar and $\frac{1}{4}$ 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 ½ cup of vinegar and 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!

A KINGDOM TORN IN TWO

Timeless Truth: God detests idol worship.

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 11:4–6; 12:1–33; 14:22–23, 26–28; 15:11–14, 16–24

Key Verse: Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. —1 Kings 15:11 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 14: "A Kingdom Torn in Two"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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	Using 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.**

GOD'S MESSENGERS

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

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 17:1–6; 18:1–2, 17–19

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 15: "God's Messengers"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

God encouraged Elijah in hard times. God encourages me.

TABLE TALK

- Elisha was an awesome man of God. He did many miracles, including making the blind see and raising a child from the dead. 2 Kings 2:23–24 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 others make fun of you?
- Is it ever a good idea to make fun of people?

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. Set 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 for God's provision.**

At the end of the drought, 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 gets to a predetermined point first.

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.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Timeless Truth: God's saving power is great.

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 NIRV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 16: "The Beginning of the End"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 are 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 10^{17} , 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.

THE KINGDOMS FALL

Timeless Truth: The Lord's plans always come through.

Bible Basis: Jeremiah 1:4–10; 2:21–28; 5:1–2; 16:17–19; 2 Chronicles 36:11–16

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 17: "The Kingdoms Fall"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 his 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?

GOD WATCHES OVER DANIEL

Timeless Truth: The Lord's plans don't harm, but bring hope and success.

Bible Basis: Daniel 6:1–23

Key Verse: [Daniel] went to his room three times a day to pray. He got down on his knees and gave thanks to his God. —Daniel 6:10 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 18: "God Watches Over Daniel"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity encourages you to have a family sleepover. The Extra Mile looks at a video about God's protection through his angels.

GET THE POINT

Daniel is loyal to God and God protects him. I can be loyal to God.

TABLE TALK

- **Daniel followed God's rules instead of the king's and got in trouble. Have you ever gotten in trouble for doing the right thing? If so, what happened?**
- **Daniel prayed even though he knew it could cost him his life. What are some things you pray about?**
- **Daniel's punishment for praying to God was to be thrown into the lions' den. Everybody take turns doing their best lion's roar (even parents). Who protected Daniel from the lions?**
- **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?**

LIVING FAITH

Daniel was forced to have a sleepover with some hairy, scary friends. Follow his example—sort of—by planning a family sleepover. You can do it in your bedroom, a living room, or family room. Pick either a Friday or Saturday night and plan ahead to make it fun. At the beginning you can pray,

"God, you protected Daniel during his sleepover with the lions, and we know you'll be with us tonight, too. Amen." Try these ideas or make up some of your own to create some family memories.

- Play Simon Says.
- Play one of your kids' favorite board games.
- Put together a puzzle.
- Rent a video and pop popcorn.
- Have everybody write down a tongue twister (or make one up). Fold up each paper and put it in a hat. Take turns drawing one and trying to say the tongue twister five times fast.
- Play charades. Have family members act out the title to a favorite song, movie, or TV show.
- Hide the thimble. Take turns hiding a thimble (or other small object) in the room with nobody looking. As everybody searches, the "hider" gives clues by saying, "You're getting warmer" (if a person is close to finding it) or "You're getting colder" (if a person is going the wrong direction).
- Share characteristics of each person that you appreciate.
- Make a yummy dessert or snack as a family.
- Go to bed a little later than normal (for younger children); then wake up in the morning, cook breakfast, and clean up as a family.

EXTRA MILE

God's protecting angels show up a couple of times during this chapter of *The Story*. First, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are thrown into the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar sees four people in the flames—instead of three. He exclaims, "The fourth man looks like a son of the gods" (Daniel 3:25). Then when Daniel is thrown into the lions' den, he tells King Darius, "My God sent his angel. And his angel shut the mouths of the lions (Daniel 6:21). Ask:

- **Do you think God sends his protecting angels today?**

Watch "The Divine Protector" video at www.tangle.com/view_video.php?viewkey=93f193e8811f1b2e9090.

Angels are specially created beings by God. They serve the wishes of their heavenly father. Look at these other verses about angels: Exodus 14:19–20 (with Moses and the Israelites fleeing Egypt); Judges 6:12–22 (with Gideon); Matthew 2:13–20 (with Joseph, to help protect the baby Jesus). God's angels are mentioned throughout the Bible!

THE RETURN HOME

Timeless Truth: Putting God's business first brings prosperity.

Bible Basis: 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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 19: "The Return Home"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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 Land regarding the third temple and peeks back at the second temple.

GET THE POINT

God's people promise to follow his ways. God wants me to follow him.

TABLE TALK

- 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?
- Do you believe God controls everything?
- 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?
- How does it make you feel when you give something of value to another person?

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 with a hand mixer 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 more 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 note 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 Land, it becomes very apparent that the Bible is more than just a story—it's God's truth.

THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY AND COURAGE

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

Bible Basis: Esther 1–9

Key Verse: What if you don't say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like this. —Esther 4:14 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 20: "The Queen of Beauty and Courage"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?
- The king granted Esther's wish because she was respectful and humble. 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?

LIVING FAITH

Persian kings were famous for 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 when 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 to 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"?**

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 NIRV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 21: "Rebuilding the Walls"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 wall breaker 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 whomever 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.

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 1:26–2:20

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 22: "The Birth of a King"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?
- 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?

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=lAckfn8yiAQ
- 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.

JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS

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

Bible Basis: Matthew 3:1–17; 4:1–11; 4:24–25; Mark 1:31–2:12; 3:9–15; Luke 8:1–3; John 1:19–34

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 23: "Jesus' Ministry Begins"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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/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?**

NO ORDINARY MAN

Timeless Truth: Jesus' teachings have earthly benefits and heavenly rewards.

Bible Basis: Matthew 5:2–12; 6:5–15; 14:22–32; Mark 4:30–34, 35–41; 6:30–44; Luke 10:25–37; 15:1–7; John 6:66–71

Key Verse: We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. —John 6:69 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 24: "No Ordinary Man"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- **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 differently. 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 for 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 walk 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?

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 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?**

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.

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

Timeless Truth: Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Bible Basis: Matthew 19:13–15; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17

Key Verse: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." Matthew 19:14 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 25: Jesus, the Son of God

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

Jesus, the Son of God, told the children to come to him. I am important to Jesus.

TABLE TALK

- Jesus loves children. In this chapter of *The Story*, the disciples try to keep little children from coming to Jesus. Jesus got angry 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?

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 patronizing 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

A parent's blessing was an important part of Jewish culture throughout the Bible. One of the most famous blessings in the Bible is when Jacob steals his father Isaac's blessing from Esau. Spend time this week speaking a blessing out loud over each of your children every day. You may want to use a blessing from Scripture to pray over your children. As you bless your child, place your hand on his or her head or shoulder. If this is a new activity for your family, you and your children may find this a little awkward or uncomfortable at first. As you keep doing this, you may find your entire family looks forward to this part of your day. Blessings from grandparents and other family members can also be powerful.

THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

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

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

Key Verse: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in me also. —John 14:1 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 26: “The Hour of Darkness”

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity guides family members to 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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 pinching each other have 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?

LIVING FAITH

In a poignant act of service, 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 children the way you want to serve them (i.e. by providing food and a 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 children 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=rIBAf_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?

THE RESURRECTION

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

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

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

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 27: “The Resurrection”

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 as 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 children 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.

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 28: "New Beginnings"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 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?**

PAUL'S MISSION

Timeless Truth: Without Jesus, all fall short of God's glory.

Bible Basis: Acts 16:1-40; 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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 29: "Paul's Mission"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

Jesus saves us if we believe in him. I can choose to believe.

TABLE TALK

- 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.

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 time 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 they're 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!

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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 30: "Paul's Final Days"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table during the week. The Living Faith activity leads your family to 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

Paul served God with his whole life. God wants me to serve him, too.

TABLE TALK

- 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 you think God usually shows you his plan one step at a time?

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 is 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>

REVELATION

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

Bible Basis: Revelation 1:1–20; 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 NIV

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 31: "Revelation"

PARENT TIPS

Read the key point from the Sunday school class your child(ren) attended. 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

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

TABLE TALK

- 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?

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 is that 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.