

# home|front

M O N T H L Y

ENVIRONMENT

## story telling

God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!



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# How to Use this Resource

## It's as easy as 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...

**1** Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening, afternoon, or morning. Just commit to building this time into your family's natural rhythm. It's usually best to build this time around a meal!

**2** Look through the HomeFront Monthly and see what stands out. Choose one or two experiences you would like to incorporate into your family times this week. Don't feel burdened to complete all the activities at once, but carefully select which ones will fit your family best. Each month of curriculum provides more than enough experiences to last you throughout the month.

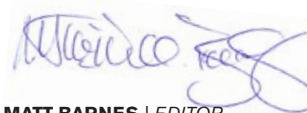
**3** Remember to **HAVE FUN!** Strive to make each gathering unique to your own family as you enjoy spending time with God and each other.

## Editor's Note

I love a good story. I love to hear stories. I always have. I think it's because there's something about a good story that helps us better understand people by giving context to who they are and why they do what they do.

The realization that we are all part of The Big God Story was a huge one for me. It gave context to my life, how God wanted to use me in His story, and how He was working all around me. It also helped me to know how He wanted to share His story with the world through me.

God's story is epic. It encompasses all of history and time. It is the story of all of us who love and know Him. It unites the faith community across time and space. It has the power to change the world. Don't we owe it to Him, and ourselves, to get to know His story and find our place in it? ●



**MATT BARNES** | EDITOR  
the Tru Team | Costa Mesa, CA

## ENVIRONMENT

# STORYTELLING

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It further compels us to see how God is using every person's life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God's glory.

Think about what it will be like to sit around for eternity and to read about all those other people and all the other stories that are continually being written. When I view it that way, I realize that I have a purpose, a mission ahead of me. I am a part of The Big God Story, and it's still being written.

We desire to inspire kids with this truth. The truth that each of us has been given certain gifts and that we've been born during this time in history, to a particular church, with these particular people, for a very specific reason. We tell them, "Now, go discover why and be faithful!" How exciting is that?

We all have weaknesses, and we all have sins. We have impure thoughts. We get selfish. We react in anger. To let our children "in" on these things so that we are not an unattainable example, helps guide them in their own story line. We get to share how God is renewing us and transforming us day by day. We do this by telling our ongoing story. ☺



**MICHELLE ANTHONY** | FAMILIES  
ROCKHARBOR Church | Costa Mesa, CA

## VERSE OF THE MONTH

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words that transforms. We come to know God more when we are willing to open our hearts and receive His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with these verses and think of creative ways to invite your family to open up to God as they commit these verses to memory.

### ELEMENTARY VERSE

"He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name."

Psalm 111:9 (NIV)

### PRES/KINDER VERSE

"The LORD causes his miracles to be remembered. He is kind and tender." Psalm 111:4 (NIV)

# FAMILY FOOD TIME

## RECIPE

Stone soup is a hearty recipe intended for a group of people to enjoy. The best part about this soup is that it tells a story.

Before you begin the recipe, take a look at the story of stone soup on the next page. This enduring old fable tells of how rich a feast we can share when we all work together. This recipe is quick and simple and can include many family members or friends in the preparation.

## Stone Soup (SERVES 6-8)

*Prep Time:* 20 min. *Cook Time:* 30-40 min.



- 1 stone, big enough so it won't get lost in the soup (because it won't break down, quartz is a good choice)
- 1 tbsp. butter or vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, trimmed and finely chopped
- 1 large carrot, cut into coins
- 3 medium red-skinned potatoes (unpeeled and halved)
- ½ sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, pressed
- 6 cups chicken broth (or broth and water)
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- 1 medium yellow squash, diced
- ½ cup corn kernels, fresh or frozen
- 2 cups cooked tubettini or ditalini, or other soup pasta
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- grated Parmesan cheese
- croutons

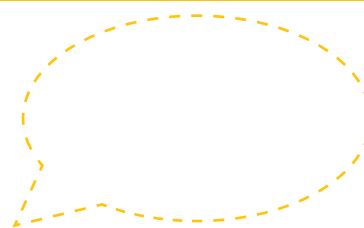
1. The first step is for your children to thoroughly scrub and wash the stone. Then, for an extra cleaning, they can drop it in a pot of water to boil while you prepare the rest of the soup together.
2. In another large pot, melt the butter or heat the oil, then sauté the onion on medium-high for 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in the celery, carrot, potatoes, and red pepper, sautéing for 6 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for about 30 seconds, then add in the broth. Using a spoon, fish the stone out of the other pot, add it to the soup, and bring to a boil. Add the zucchini, squash, corn, and pasta, cooking another 8 minutes, or until the zucchini is the desired softness. Season to taste with the salt and pepper. Before serving, sprinkle on the cheese and croutons, then ladle, minus the stone, into individual bowls. 🍴

**The story of stone soup** comes from an old fable that has been told and retold to children for centuries. In the story, a hungry stranger enters a small village with only an empty pot and a stone. As the curious villagers watch, he places a pot of water over a fire and slips in a stone. After a time, he tastes the “soup.” Smacking his lips, he says, “This stone soup is delicious! But it would be so much better if I had a cabbage to add to the broth.” A reluctant villager offers him a cabbage to add to the pot. Again and again, the stranger tastes his soup and suggests additional ingredients to make it better. One by one the once-reluctant villagers provide the “missing” ingredients until the pot is full of a rich and hearty soup that they all share together.

by Faye Morley

# FAMILY FOOD TIME

## DINNER ACTIVITY



### Conversation Starters

When my children were young, the dinner table was a raucous and exuberant place filled with stories of the day, silliness of shared jokes, interesting things learned at school, and sharing.

As the kids grew older, the table grew quieter, and the conversations needed a seed to get them started. A few questions to get the conversation started can even be placed in a bowl or box on the table—and a different family member can choose one each night.

- **What was the nicest thing you did for someone else today?**
- **What was the nicest thing that someone else did for you today?**
- **If you were writing a newspaper article about your day, what would the headline be?**
- **How did you see God at work today? In your life? In others' lives?**
- **Share one thing that you learned today that you didn't know before today?**
- **What or who makes you giggle and why? ☺**

by Angelina Pavone

# GAME TIME

## YOUNGER GAMES

### Build a Story

Little ones often have much better imaginations than us adults! They can remind us to be fun and to embrace our silly creativity. Try this storytelling game that allows your kids to use their fun and wild imaginations.

Supplies: 1 large sheet of paper or construction paper, crayons, markers, or colored pencils, egg timer.

Start by giving a sheet of paper and something to color with to one person. Have the rest of the family sit around the table and start the timer. Give the first person 30 seconds to start drawing whatever he wants. When the timer goes off, he passes the materials to the next person, and the rest of the

group sets the timer. Continue doing this until each person has had a turn (or two or three if you are having too much fun to stop).

Once you are finished with the drawing portion, hand the picture back to the person who started it, and let him begin to tell a story based on what he sees. At any point, he can pass the picture on, and the next person continues the story. Have fun laughing together as a family as you weave a crazy story! 🎨



by Susan Kliment

# GAME TIME

## OLDER GAMES

### Charades

Did you know you can tell a story without using words? Play a game of charades as a family, using parts of The Big God Story as the theme.

Start by putting your favorite Bible people's names in a hat and drawing them out, one by one. Using no words, see if the rest of the family can figure out what part of the person's story you're acting out! Once the hat is empty, fill it up again with parts of your own story ... memories you share as a family!

Because The Big God Story gives us cause to feel awe (and lots of other things), try to give facial expressions and have your family guess what expression you're showing. Once they get it, explain what part of The Big God Story makes you feel that way.

Have fun laughing and playing together as a family. Those are memories your kids will remember for a lifetime, and you're creating an environment where The Big God Story is enjoyed! 🎭



# STORYTELLING

## GOD'S STORY

There's just something about hearing a good story. Stories have the ability to capture us in ways that are almost unexplainable. They draw us in. They inspire us. A good story can actually change a life. God's story is one of those stories.

Several years ago, I was leading a group of elementary kids through the book of James. At the end of our 8-week study I asked them, "How can you put your faith into action? You've heard these things from God's Word. What are you going to do about it?" At first there was silence ... the kids just stared back at me as if to say, "Uh, ... I dunno." I kept pressing. I asked them to ask God how they might respond to what they had heard. Soon, there was one courageous hand raised in the back. The young girl said, "We could help the homeless people." Soon more children began to chime in with ideas that ranged from eliminating global hunger to knitting sweaters for dogs.

After some hearty brainstorming, we finally landed on a great idea. Our church had a relationship with a local motel ministry that helped provide resources to the residents, who had been displaced from their homes or were in some kind of transition. The children thought we should pack sack lunches for the children who lived there, so they would have a healthy lunch for school.

In order for them to further flex their faith muscles, I asked the kids to come up with a way for us to mobilize this, how we would gather the lunch supplies, and even what items would go into the lunches. They were all working together and making great decisions ... and then one little boy said, "We can't forget the note." Ah, ... the note. This one child stated that his favorite part of packed lunches was the note from his mom. So we started thinking about how the note could be written from God.

The day came to assemble the lunches. At one station, kids wrote the notes from God. I printed note cards that read, "Dear One," on the top, then blank below for the note, and closed with, "Love, God." I urged the children to pray and ask God what they should write. I told them God knew who was going to get their note. I told them there was something He wanted to say to each child. I remember watching these little kids earnestly praying. We packed over 400 lunches that night, and we stuck a little note in each one.

As our representative to the motel went from door-to-door passing out the lunches to each child, he came to a room where a mom cautiously opened the door and peeked out. She accepted two lunches for her children, but also humbly asked if she could have one. So he handed her another lunch, and she closed the door.

Early that morning, this mom had woken up in total desperation. She had just gone through an ugly divorce. She had lost her home and her job. She had nothing. She was now living in this motel with her two kids, and life felt pretty bleak. She was crying out to God that morning lamenting, "You've forgotten me, you've forgotten me." Then she decided she was going to take her own life. She had arranged for her children to go to school, to be picked up by her sister, and in the meantime she would take her own life in order to end the suffering.

After her two children left, she saw the lunch bag sitting on the counter. Some of the girls had decorated the outside of the bags, and this one had a beautiful cross with a heart on it. This mom remembered being a little girl who went to church and heard about Jesus, but she had long since felt forgotten, used, and abused. But something in her reached out and grabbed the lunch. The very first thing she pulled out was the little note. It said, "Dear One, I have not forgotten you. Love, God." She decided not to take her life that day and ended up becoming a part of our church!

God told a child to write that, and then God made sure that note got placed in that lunch for that mom on that day. That's the kind of God we serve! He is a God who never forgets and always redeems! His story is one of redemption, and we have the opportunity to play a part in it. Our children's faith story is not simply telling them what to do; rather it's giving them the opportunity to respond to God and create their own story. How are you flexing your faith muscles today? How is God continuing to write His story in you? 🙏

# GOD'S WORD

## THE BIG GOD STORY

The Big God Story begins in a beautiful garden nestled between four grand rivers. God created this garden and named it Eden. Adam and Eve were created by God to be in relationship with Him and live in this beautiful garden together with all of God's creation.

Adam and Eve sinned against God and therefore were instructed to leave the garden and the intimate relationship that they once shared with Him. Shortly after the fall of Adam and Eve, God promised that one day, a Redeemer would come. This promised Redeemer would be the salvation for sin and disobedience. And so ... mankind began to wait in expectation for the promise to be fulfilled.

Within just 10 generations, the world had become so evil and corrupt that God decided to destroy all of mankind, except for Noah and his family, with a global flood. God gave Noah specific directions to build a large boat, called an ark, on which he, his family, and the animals God would bring to him where to be protected from the flood. After the water subsided, Noah's family began to repopulate the earth, and nations were birthed from each of Noah's three sons. The nation of Israel would eventually arise from Noah's son, Shem. Following Shem's lineage, Abraham was born and eventually given a unique promise from God. This promise was that through Abraham's son, God would set apart a nation that would demonstrate the relationship between God and mankind. As other nations would see this love relationship, they too would want to know the one true God. God also told Abraham that the promised Redeemer would be born out of his family heritage. This chosen nation would be called Israel.

Abraham and Sarah began to doubt God's promise. They would eventually grow weary of waiting for God's timing and unfortunately feel the need to "help God out" by having a son through their maidservant, Hagar. This son was named Ishmael. The lineage of Ishmael would grow to become the Arab nations. However, the promised son given to Abraham and Sarah late in life, 25 years after God made that promise, was named Isaac. Next, Isaac had a son named Jacob, and his name

would later be changed to "Israel" (which means, "one who strives with God") after wrestling with the Angel of the Lord in a dream. Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons, each son representing a tribe of Israel in the nation's future. One of the sons, named Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers and taken to Egypt. There, God allowed Joseph to rise to power under the Pharaoh. Eventually his entire family would move to Egypt where Joseph was able to keep his family alive during the seven years of famine in the region. Later, these Israelites would become enslaved by the Egyptians and cry out for a redeemer.



Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land so they could worship Yahweh God alone. However, due to their disobedience and grumbings, that generation would spend the next 40 years wandering in the desert wilderness. A new generation would grow up in the wilderness with a new respect for God and His power. This generation did not grow up being seduced by the powers of thousands of Egyptian gods, but rather seeing the one and only true Yahweh God daily in

the provision of food, water, and guidance. In fact, the food they had eaten was supplied in the form of manna each day by the hand of God Himself. Led by God, in the form of a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night, this new generation grew to know and trust Yahweh God alone. Joshua was the anointed leader of this young, new generation in order to conquer and take ownership of the Promised Land that God had set aside for His people.

Through years of battle, the Israelites would take claim to their land and settle down to raise families. Today, this is the nation of Israel occupying the land east of the Mediterranean Sea and northeast of Egypt. Eventually these people would cry out to

## GOD'S WORD CONTINUED ...

God asking to have a king like all the other nations, and God said, "No." They would disobey and wander away from Him, and so God raised up other nations to bring punishment against their sin. Israel was governed by different judges during these times to help them prevail against their enemies, and for a time they would remain faithful to God.

Soon they would return to their wicked ways, until calamity struck again. This time of the judges, which included such leaders as Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and Samuel, lasted for over 450 years. Ready to have a king, despite God's warning, the people were

became the Queen of Persia and was used to save her people from death during captivity. Also under the Persian rule, Nehemiah (a Jewish cupbearer for the Persian King Artaxerxes) was convicted to return to Israel to rebuild the Jerusalem City and its walls. The Persian king not only allowed for this to happen, but he paid for it too! In all, one of the greatest construction projects of the ancient world was completed in a mere 49 days, even in the midst of a great opposition in the land. The lineage of the promised Christ was now back in the motherland of Israel, and the Old Testament comes to a close.

**"The exciting part is that the story doesn't end with us! It is much bigger than that! Jesus does return."**

positioned to have what would eventually take their money through taxes, take their daughters as wives and slaves, and take their sons off to war ... a monarchy instead of theocracy.

Saul was first to reign as king, but God quickly rejected him because of his pride and disobedience. David, who was a humble shepherd boy, who knew and loved God, followed as the second king. He would sometimes stumble and fall, but remained "a man after God's heart" because he was humble and loved to worship. His son, Solomon, would become the third and final king of the united 12 tribes. Solomon's son soon found rebellion in the land and the tribes split in two: the Ten Tribes in the north (Israel) and two tribes in the south (Judah). The line of the promised Christ would now follow the tribe of Judah in the south.

Israel (the Ten Tribes in the north) had only evil kings who led their people into great sin. Israel would eventually be taken captive by Assyria, even after many prophets pleaded with them to repent. Although Judah (the two tribes in the south) had a few good and righteous kings, and even several revivals, they too ended up in captivity by the hands of the Babylonian Empire because of their disobedience. Soon, the city of Jerusalem, the home of God's people, was utterly destroyed.

Faith was kept alive in some of the people of Judah, even in Babylon. We know of Daniel and his righteous acts of prayer in the midst of hungry lions, and of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and how they stood strong in the face of compromise. Eventually, Babylon would fall to the Persian Empire, and Esther (who was a Israelite now called a Jew)

Then something strange happened ... God was silent. The promise was still alive, but it was hidden and still. Nearly 400 years passed before the opening words in the New Testament. The lineage that was recorded for us through the pages of Matthew and Luke showed us that the same promise that began in the garden remained true throughout the passing of over four thousand years. Despite Satan's efforts to



eliminate the race, and the people of God, they had prevailed, and the appointed time in history, that was prophesied hundreds of years before, was about to make itself known in the obscure town of Bethlehem.

Jesus was born. The awaited Messiah promised in Genesis, predicted throughout history, was here on earth in the flesh. He was born of a virgin named Mary, who raised Him in the town of Nazareth with her carpenter husband, Joseph. Jesus grew up living in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and men. It was at this time that John the Baptist, a voice in the wilderness, was preparing the way for Jesus and His ministry. Soon after, Jesus called Peter, James, John, and the remainder of the 12 apostles. He began to minister to the poor, heal the sick, raise the dead, and redeem the outcast. Jesus lived and proclaimed the kingdom of God. He demonstrated His divine power over creation, and taught His disciples and the world a new, radical way to live.

He grew to become a man, entirely for the purpose of being the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice that would satisfy a holy God for our sins. The Jewish people were well aware of sacrifices. They remembered their traditions. They were instructed to make offerings of pure, undefiled lambs for the sins committed against God, just as it was outlined in the law of Moses. Jesus would be the once-and-for-all sacrifice that would give every man, woman, and child access to God for all time. This would be the final sacrifice. This would be the sacrifice that would satisfy God's wrath for all time, should anyone accept it.

His death gave way to the forgiveness of sin. His resurrection gave way to the victory over death. His

ascension into heaven gave way to the coming of the Holy Spirit, and His Spirit gave way to the power to live out the message of salvation detailed in the book of Acts. This book highlights the activities of God's people throughout the first century, especially detailing the apostle Paul's missionary journeys. Today, the Holy Spirit continues to work in each of our lives for the glory of God, allowing each one of us to be a part of His big story, until He returns.

The exciting part is that the story doesn't end with us! It is much bigger than that! Jesus does return. He returns in all of His glory, not shrouded by His humanness, but completely unveiled, riding in victory on His white horse to proclaim that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, forever. He will judge the nations and eventually send Satan and his followers to an eternity of suffering and separation. Those who love God and who have accepted His Son, Jesus, will live with Him in the new heaven and new earth forever, in relationship with God ... the way that it all began in the garden. The way that it should be. And from that day on ... for all of eternity, we will be with the promised Lord and Redeemer forever, and ever. Amen! 🙏

“TODAY, THE  
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*CONTINUES  
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OF GOD ... ”

# WORSHIP

## GATHER GOD'S STORY

I recently had the opportunity to see Hillsong United in concert. I went into this fully expecting to be entertained and hear some of my favorite worship songs performed by one of my favorite worship bands.

To my surprise, they came on stage rather quietly, then the lead singer opened a Bible and started reading about the amazing works of our God and Creator! No fancy introductions ... no special effects ... simply beginning with the Word of God as our inspiration to worship. We then went into what was one of the most powerful worship services I have ever experienced!

Throughout the entire concert, though I would not necessarily refer to it as that in hindsight, different members of the band continued to open God's Word and bring the crowd back into a focus on the majesty of God. The Scriptures were simply read, without aid of projection or dramatic emphasis. As Joel and Brooke, the leads of Hillsong United, read, I took time to close my eyes and let God's Word pour into my ears and weigh heavily on where I was in that moment. The God of the universe loves me, and my response should be unending praise! God's Word is powerful, and the redemption story that unfolds throughout the Bible is amazing!

Something I have spent time doing in the last few years, is taking time to read Scripture, reflect, read again, reflect, and often read again with more reflection. Often times, the more I read through the passages, the more I learn about God. I believe that God reveals more to me than I would have ever noticed had I just breezed through Scripture.

Take some time as a family to read through Psalm 111. Pray as a family that God will open your eyes to see more of Him through your reading. When you are done reading, talk about what stands out to you each as individuals. Repeat this process two or three times, each time intentionally looking further into the Psalm for what God might have to say to your family. When you are done reading and talking about your observations, have another time of prayer thanking God for what He has shown you! 🙏

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**“TAKE SOME  
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# CREATE

## REDEMPTIVE TRASH

Have you ever had a really bad day or experience that made you stop and wonder ... why is this happening to me? You may even ask, what good could ever come out of this situation? I recently had one of those experiences when I felt like things were just falling apart, and there was no way something good could come of it. But God is a God of redemption.

We may not see it at the time, but He faithfully works to make something good out of even the worst situations.

When one of our missions teams came back from Uganda, they told us how the kids there used water bottles and sticks as toys. So in light of this, we gave the kids different items that may be seen as trash. Then we asked the kids to use these items to create something fun to play with. The kids created robots out of water bottles and paper cups. Other kids made parachutes out of plastic trash bags. It was amazing to see how kids took what was trash and redeemed it by making something new out of it.

As a family, collect things that you'd consider trash. Use your creativity to create something new from the items that are old! ♻️



### SUPPLIES

- empty water bottles
- rubber bands
- empty cereal boxes
- glass jars
- plastic grocery bags
- string
- old newspapers

# TRADITIONS

## REMEMBER

Did you ever stop to think of your life as a story? You are daily writing your story, and as you and your family interact in the busyness and business of life, you are writing your family's story. Some stories get passed down from one generation to the next, becoming part of the family lore, even to generations who never knew the original individuals. I still remember summer afternoons sitting on the good dining room chairs, out under the cherry tree, pitting cherries for canning, and listening to Grandpa chuckle as he told stories.

Stories can be funny, sad, scary, inspiring, informative, or simply entertaining. The Bible is full of stories recorded over thousands of years. But it is also one continuous story—God's story. I grew up hearing individual Bible stories, but it wasn't until I was an adult that I realized they were all connected from start to finish. And that's when my love of Bible study really caught fire.

Everybody likes a good story. Jesus knew that. I think that is why He did much of His teaching through the use of stories—parables. His parables always had a point that left His hearers thinking. While it isn't labeled a parable, this passage shows His consideration of children and teaches us much about our own family dynamics.

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13–16)

Do we pay attention to our little ones, "listening with our eyes," as one child put it? What will your children remember about their childhood years? I was shocked to hear that my son told a friend our home was "boring." What? Our home, full of books, music, and quiet? Perhaps his child's vocabulary was grasping for a word, but that was his perception. The other boy's mother, also surprised, admitted to being a bit jealous of the atmosphere of our home.

Many years later, I see the fine contemplative man my son has become and know he benefited from that atmosphere in spite of himself!

Are you a storyteller? You may not think so, but try this. Choose an evening every week for your entire family to sit down to dinner together. Call it "Family Story Night" or any creative title you want, perhaps using your family name in the title.

Have one parent start by telling a short "Once upon a time ..." anecdote. You can give made-up names to the characters if you want. Subjects could vary from a childhood memory, a teen escapade, or something that happened just that day. Even negative things, told in story form, can let your kids know it's okay to talk about them.

Next, let the children each tell a story. It can be total fantasy; it's their story. You may be surprised what their stories reveal about their lives. You may gain good insight, but this isn't the time to "fix" some situations. No analyzing, correcting, or scolding. Just tell stories.

Start with short sessions. You may want to set a timer so one child doesn't monopolize the time. Choose response words carefully: great, funny, sad, interesting (for those indescribable ones). As your family catches on, vary the routine. Pick a topic for the night: pets, friendship, hobbies, dreams, or let the children choose. This can become a memorable time of sharing, laughing, weeping, and learning about creative conversation. One day your children might establish a family story night in their own homes. 🍷

# PRAYER

## RESPOND AS A FAMILY

In the Storytelling section of this month's issue, we give you "The Big God Story" to read together as a family. This story is the narrative account of God's redemptive story throughout history. One of the coolest parts of His story is that we are also a part of it! God has included us in His huge, amazing story of redemption.

For prayer this month, respond to this incredible story as a family. When we see the great lengths God has gone to to love and redeem us, we can't help but be grateful! Prayer can be a great way to respond to God and tell Him how grateful we are that He has included us in His story.

After you have read The Big God Story, take some time to talk about it together. What was everyone's favorite part? Was anything surprising? What parts, specifically, make each of you want to praise and thank God? Does anyone have any questions? After you have talked for awhile, explain to your family that you are going to take some time to respond to God and thank Him for authoring such a great story! Begin by praying a simple prayer, acknowledging God's presence. Now explain to everyone that, as a way of worshipping God for all He has done, you are going to write a psalm of praise to Him. This psalm can simply be a collection of praise words you as a family would like to offer to God. 🙏

# MARRIAGE

## PERSONAL STORIES

Marriage is one of the clearest ways you are a part of The Big God Story. From creation, to procreation, to forgiveness and redemption, marriage shows God's love story. A few years ago while speaking at a marriage conference, the local news media interviewed me. They asked what I believed to be one of the most important aspects of marriage.

The first thing that came to my mind was the need for forgiveness. I shared that because no matter how much I love my wife, Becky, no matter how much I try to do the right thing on a daily basis, I always manage to fall short. Becky is amazing in how she forgives me day after day. By forgiving me, she reminds me that God forgives me as well. Our marriage of 32 years is successful because we experience God's redemptive work.

We try to ask each other every day, "Is there any way I hurt you, irritated, or frustrated you today?" After we share the hurt, we ask each other's forgiveness. I would encourage you to step into a

redemptive relationship every day by asking your spouse the same question, "Is there any way I hurt, irritated, or frustrated you today?" Don't go to bed angry, but allow yourself to be part of The Big God Story by showing His redemptive work in your marriage today. Why not start tonight! 🙏

# BLESSING

Being a part of The Big God Story changes the way we see our lives. All of history is God's story, and He invites each of us to play a part in it. Imagine if you were led to understand this monumental Truth from the youngest age. How would it change your understanding of God? How would it change your understanding of your place in the world? I bet the impact of such Truth would be transformational. Our prayer is that your kids will grow up with this understanding as a foundation for their lives.

This month, as you bless your children, remind them that they are a part of The Big God Story. He wants to use each of them to tell His story to the world, and it is the greatest story ever told. Let them know God wants to show them their part in His story, and pray they will begin to hear from Him on a daily basis.

Each month, you will see a different blessing in HomeFront Monthly. This will be your blessing for the entire month. Take the time to speak this blessing into the lives of your children at different times throughout the month. You can do this on

the way to school, before bed, or while you eat as a family. Just make sure you have your children's attention. Look them in the eyes as you pray the blessing over them. Affirm your love for them by placing a hand on their shoulders or holding their hands. Remember, God's Spirit is at work; He will bless and care for the growing and tender hearts of your children. ☺

## BLESSING

"Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." Psalm 105:1-4



# home|front

**Don't forget the HomeFront Weekly:** A resource to get parents and kids talking about God's Word together.