



story[®]
inspire. equip. support.



How It Works

The TruStory Large Group/Small Group Edition



Schedule

Explore

Small Group
10 minutes

Discover

Large Group
30 minutes

Respond

Small Group
15 minutes

Bless

Small Group
5 minutes





TruStory reveals God's incredible plan to elementary-age children and invites them to be a part of it!

The How It Works Document

This document has been developed to walk through a typical TruStory lesson, explaining how each section is designed to function most effectively and to attempt to answer all your questions as you lead and learn the ins and outs of the Tru philosophy, giving you tips on how to most effectively transition into using Tru with your kids' program.

Tru Mission Statement

Tru helps leaders, children, and their families connect to God, find their place in His Big God Story, and respond to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Tru lesson, resource, and product is created for this purpose.

Tru Philosophy

The Holy Spirit is God's chosen teacher. He is the One who makes spiritual growth and formation happen when and as He chooses. Our role, as ministry leaders, volunteers, and parents, is to create space for the Holy Spirit to meet with our children. How do we do that? Dr. Michelle Anthony spent a lot of time in prayer and combing through God's Word to see the kinds of ways He has interacted with His people throughout history. What emerged were 10 distinct ways—or, as we refer to them, environments—that God clearly uses to form His followers:

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

IDENTITY: "I belong to God, and He loves me!"

FAITH COMMUNITY: "God's family cares for each other and worships God together."

SERVING: "Asks the question, 'What needs to be done?'"

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE: "God transforms me when I step out in faith."

RESPONSIBILITY: "God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me."

COURSE CORRECTION: "When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."

LOVE AND RESPECT: "God fills me with His love so I can give it away."

KNOWING: "God knows me, and I can know Him."

MODELING: "I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."

God uses these environments as ways to meet with us. The 10 environments provide language that helps support the Ponder Point of each lesson, and the Ponder Point focuses on the character and nature of God.

In addition, each issue of **HomeFront Magazine: A Spiritual Parenting Resource** focuses on one of the 10 environments. This valuable resource equips parents to create the environments in their homes as they seek to be the spiritual nurturers of their children's faith. The 10 environments provide a common language to create a bridge between church and home.

For a more in-depth look at each environment, read *Spiritual Parenting* by Michelle Anthony or visit truminsty.com.



Parent Resources

The Vision for Spiritual Parenting: The Class

In *Spiritual Parenting*, Dr. Michelle Anthony unpacks the 10 environments and their role in creating room in our homes and families for God to beckon our kids to Him. Spiritual parenting encourages parents to place their dependence upon God for raising their children and calls the reader to a heart posture of obedience and faithfulness. The end goal is a vibrant faith that is passed on from one generation to another. As Tru subscribers, available for download are the first video session and the digital leader guide of the *Spiritual Parenting DVD* series.

The Vision for At Home Weekly

Provided as a parent resource with each week's lesson, At Home Weekly is designed to help your parents intentionally spend time in God's Word with their children before they come to church. This way, parents will be the first to introduce their children to the Bible content they'll hear at church, preparing them for the upcoming lesson. By providing this resource, the church is supporting parents as they spiritually nurture their children. There are six main sections to At Home Weekly that mirror the lesson and equip parents: Just for Fun, Did You Know?, developmental pieces for parents, the Remember Verse, Teachable Moments discussion questions, and a blessing to pray over their children. Just for Fun gives parents ideas for a practical setting where they can dive into God's Word with their kids. Teachable Moments are engaging questions to process through God's Word together as a family; encourage them to see where the Holy Spirit leads them! Did You Know? and the developmental pieces are for parents to read on their own. They give the vision for the Scripture story as well as some background. And finally, parents conclude their time with a short blessing to pray over their child. Children will come to church prepared to receive and learn more from God's Word.

At the end of your lesson, be sure to send out the At Home Weekly resource for the next week's lesson, so parents can intentionally create space for God to meet with their families. The At Home Weekly can be emailed to parents or printed and distributed.

Leader Prep

The Vision for Inspire, Equip, Support

Each week you'll find Inspire, Equip, and Support articles that will help you and your leaders personally and/or corporately engage with God and His Word and take time for yourselves before beginning your prep.

- The **Inspire** article contains personal stories of how God has worked in the lives of fellow ministry leaders, along with insights into that week's God Statement.
- The **Equip** article gives perspective and context as it introduces the lesson's Bible passage.
- The **Support** article provides a time of reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word as you prepare your heart to present the lesson to your kids.

Navigating Tru on Disciplr Lessons

Tru lessons are now delivered on our digital platform, Disciplr. This technology saves time and money as files and resources no longer have to be downloaded. Customers have direct access to interactive, digital lessons that facilitate better planning, scheduling, and mobile-ready access. Planning lessons and coordinating with volunteers is a snap with the built-in teacher management and scheduling features. Other features include customizable materials lists, simple printing of leader materials, and Word documents, for ease of customizing and sharing of lessons. Videos and music included in Tru can be streamed to any device via Disciplr's reliable and fast media service. No more need to download and manage large files!



- **Lesson Overview:** Provides an easy-to-understand outline of each lesson.
- **Resource Library:** All lesson pieces, visual aids, and videos placed in one easily-accessed feature, including sort and simplified downloading of custom file bundles.
- **Materials List:** Shopping checklist pulled from lesson supply lists, allowing account admins to customize and share changes with volunteers.
- **Print Lessons:** Quickly print a professional-looking lesson while taking it easy on the ink, including customized information for your church!

To access Tru lessons on Disciplr, go to: <https://disciplr.com/app/signin>

To reach the TruStore on Disciplr, go to: <https://disciplr.com/app/tru-ministry> For questions or to give feedback, refer to the blue Help button in the lower right area of the site.

Additional TruStory Resources (see Resources)

- [Tru Master Timeline with Characters](#)
- [Scope and Sequence](#)
- [Salvation Path for Children](#)
- [The Big God Story Timeline](#)

Lesson Language

These are descriptions of the terms found throughout TruStory lessons:

Leader Tip, Note, Suggestion, and Helpful Hint: Suggestions for modifying or adjusting portions of the lesson to best fit your own church and group of kids.

Partner Church Comments: Insightful comments, suggestions, and variations offered for activities and programming provided by our national network of children's and family ministry leaders.

Programming Note: Suggestions for modifying or adjusting programming to best fit your service schedule.

Lesson Path: Seeing the Mission Statement in a Tru Lesson

Connects leaders to God ...	→	Inspire, Equip, and Support
Connects kids and their families to God ...	→	At Home Weekly and EXPLORE
... And His big story ...	→	DISCOVER
... And invites them to respond to Him ...	→	RESPOND
... Through the power of the Holy Spirit.	→	BLESS



Optional: Suggestions of ways you can adapt the activities and games to best fit your own church and group of kids.

Roles

Host: The Host welcomes kids into the large group room, may run Connect activities, and introduces the storytelling time. After worship response, the Host dismisses kids to their small group rooms. The Host offers the same spirit of hospitality, generosity, and inclusiveness to the kids that the host of a party would offer to guests at her home or gathering.

Small Group Leader: The Small Group Leader shepherds the children through questions about The Big God Story and biblical truth, engages them in community-building activities, helps them create a remembrance of their experience, and blesses them before they leave. Ideally Small Group Leaders work week after week with the same group of kids, giving them the opportunity to develop lasting relationships with each child.

Worship Leader: The Worship Leader facilitates individual and corporate worship by listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit and inviting others into the worship experience.

Storyteller: The Storyteller shares the day's portion of The Big God Story in a fun, engaging way. He encourages kids to follow along in their Bibles and gets them interacting with the narrative. The Storyteller leads out of an overflow of his own life, telling personal stories as prompted and guiding the kids into a time of natural worship response.

AV Technician: This person facilitates the "behind-the-scenes" aspects of programming, including music, lighting, drama, sound, Power Point, etc. The AV Tech makes sure things run smoothly and is willing to help with anything—including stepping into any of the other leader roles. There will be cues for this person indicated in the lesson in italics.



Sample Service Timing Outline

This sample outline is based on a 60-minute service (the short end of each window), allowing a few additional minutes for parents to pick up their children. Always feel free to adjust the lesson to fit your service schedule. If your service is longer or shorter, you can add or remove a couple of minutes from EXPLORE Stations and Reflect, Create, or Engage as needed. You may also find it helpful to open the EXPLORE Stations as an early check-in option. This will allow children to get the full experience if you need to shave a couple of minutes from the stations to balance your service schedule. In addition, you may choose to reopen the EXPLORE stations at the end of your time together in the event that service runs long.

Programming Note: Always feel free to adjust the lesson to fit your service schedule. If you run out of time, consider cutting an activity. To fill time, consider adding a game to EXPLORE or adding more worship time to RESPOND. If you need to end the lesson early, consider jumping ahead to the BLESS section to ensure kids are released with a sense of peace so they can be a blessing to others.

Sample Service Timing	Minutes	Experience/Lesson Section
9:00–9:10	10	EXPLORE Small Group (Check-in) • Activity Options
9:10–9:40	30	DISCOVER:: Large Group • Welcome & Traditions • Remember Verse • Connect: Question and Activity • The Big God Story • Worship as Response
9:40–9:55	15	RESPOND:: Small Group • Reflect • Create or Engage <i>Small Group Enhancements are also available for this time of RESPOND.</i>
9:55–10:00	5	BLESS:: Small Group • Bible (for the Blessing) • At Home Weekly

Components of a TruStory Large Group/Small Group Lesson



EXPLORE //

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

The Vision for EXPLORE

As your children come into your room, you're inviting them into a place where they'll explore the mysteries of God within the faith community. What could be better than welcoming them into this atmosphere with an experience to pique their interest and immediately draw them in? This is what EXPLORE is designed to do.

Isn't it fun to anticipate something or watch a movie you've never seen before? The activities offered during this time will not necessarily be overtly connected to the Bible narrative because we want to spark curiosity and engage the children before revealing the whole storyline.

Have fun with this time, and whether you do it in a large group setting or in small groups, be sure to connect personally with the children. Remember to model the activities for the kids so they know what to do, but then let them venture out on their own. Ask open-ended questions as you go. This is a great opportunity to welcome kids into a safe atmosphere where people care, where there are interesting things to do, and where there is space for them to be intrigued by God.

Programming Note

The activity option in EXPLORE is designed to take place during your check-in time. Your time frame may range from five to ten minutes, depending on your church's facility and service-time setup. You can choose the option provided or add an idea of your own.

This section is also created to be flexible according to your facility. If it works best to direct kids and their parents to individual small group rooms for this time, set up activities in each room. And if you check kids directly into your large group space, arrange your EXPLORE activities accordingly.

Encourage parents to join their children in the activity. This helps with transition, introduces parents to the lesson, and supports parents as the primary nurturers of their children's faith.

Allergy Alerts

Throughout the lessons you'll see items marked with a red exclamation point (!). These are items we're flagging as potential allergens. Before using these items in activities or potentially exposing children to them in your room, be sure to check with parents as they drop off their children. You may want to post a sign noting the items that will be served or used in activities for that week's lesson. If you're able to post allergens ahead of time, parents will be able to provide alternative snacks or materials for their children as necessary.



DISCOVER//

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible Verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

The Vision for DISCOVER

The DISCOVER section brings all the children together as a large group for Traditions, getting-to-know-you activities, a creative storytelling of the day's portion of The Big God Story, and a time of responding to God in worship. Take five minutes to open your DISCOVER time by engaging in Welcome and Traditions.

Ponder Point

The lesson begins with and is centered around a Ponder Point, or statement, about God. An example is, "The Lord Will Provide." Although the Bible passage may be familiar, the Tru approach is unique. What does this part of The Big God Story tell us about God, and further show how He is going to fulfill His promise to redeem mankind?

Welcome and Traditions

Host/Storyteller

After everyone gathers as a large group, open with Traditions. During Traditions, you're helping the children work toward a common goal and giving them mementos to celebrate accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse, inviting friends to church, or bringing their Bibles. If you already have a common-goal Tradition in your program, we encourage you to continue it here as part of the large group experience.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

Mementos can be any object, but some examples include rocks, marbles, gum balls, and connecting blocks. Once the children receive their mementos, have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure they're building. If you have multiple services, use separate containers or building stations for each service. Once the kids fill their container or finish their structure, hold a celebration! (For an example of a structure perfect for common-goal Traditions, see the instructions for building a Rock Wall on page 11.)

You may also choose to do an optional Group Tradition, which changes every quarter. This option will be listed in the Connect section right before The Big God Story.

After Traditions, if you have time, choose one or two child volunteers to share praise reports, testimonies, or funny or intriguing events. Or sing familiar worship songs with corresponding motions.

Remember Verse

Host/Storyteller

Each month's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in The Big God Story. Scripture memorization is a spiritual discipline, so we've carefully selected verses we feel disciples of Christ, even the youngest among us, are able to understand and memorize to contribute to our spiritual maturity. Year after year, kids, parents, and leaders will build a foundation of Scripture that will help define their faith (memorizing one verse per month in order to effectually know core verses, rather than not mastering dozens).



SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards, slide, and animation (see Resources)

It's important to help plant biblical truth, in the form of the Remember Verses, in the lives of children. These verses are promises from God that the children can draw upon as they build a relationship with God they will carry with them throughout their lives. (Remember Verse cards will be available in the Resources for you to print and send home each week along with the At Home Weekly.)

Connect

Host/Storyteller

Connect gives children time to laugh, play, and enjoy one another's company. Engaging questions, energizing games, and creative activities encourage the members of your community to get to know one another. Invite the children to ask one another the provided question—or one of your own. Encourage them to branch out and ask someone they may not know. After a minute or two, ask several children to tell the group their friends' answers. The Connect Question slide is located with the Resources.

Then move into the Connect activity to further engage the children. Further supplies may be needed for the activity.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Connect Question slide (see Resources)
- Connect Activity slide (see Resources)

Rock Wall

The Rock Wall can be used as part of your church's common-goal Tradition. Children receive rocks (or other small items) as their weekly mementos and put them in the clear encasement of the Rock Wall. Follow the instructions below to make your church's own Rock Wall.

SUPPLIES

- 1½' x 4' sheet of OSB (oriented strand board) or plywood
- 1" x 2" wood trim (17')
- 1½' x 3½' sheet of Plexiglas
- Wood screws
- Saw
- Bolts
- Drill
- Sandpaper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut the wood trim into six pieces—two pieces one and a half feet long and four pieces three and a half feet long. The wood trim will form a kind of three-sided frame or border around the OSB (see photo to the right). Each side will have two "layers" of trim, or two stacked pieces of trim.
2. Stack the two shorter pieces of trim and screw them along one of the short ends of the OSB. Make sure the two-inch side of the trim is flush against the OSB.
3. Stack two of the longer pieces of trim and screw them along one of the long sides of the OSB (so they butt up against the short pieces of trim). Repeat with the other long side.
4. Place the Plexiglas over the trim and drill holes where you want to attach the bolts. Then secure the Plexiglas with the bolts. If any trim sticks out beyond the Plexiglas, cut it off. (Note: It might be easier to cut off this excess trim at Step 3, *before* you screw down the Plexiglas.)
5. Sand any rough edges, and then attach it to the wall (so it won't fall over).





The Big God Story

Storyteller

In The Big God Story segment, a TruStory lesson shares portions of the Bible in the context of their original chronological storyline, keeping the smaller story in the context of God's grand narrative, with the thread of salvation at its core. Over the past 80 years or so, "Christian Education" has tended to tell Bible stories in isolation and often failed to tell the bigger story where God is central. Instead, baby Moses is the key figure one day, Noah is the key figure the next, and Jesus is the key figure another day. By putting each story in context of the main story—God's big story—we begin to elevate Jesus, the Redeemer, to His rightful place in the storyline.

It's beautiful to know that God, the Author of the story, is still writing it—and it includes all of us! If we consistently tell kids The Big God Story and help them to see the bigger story that has been lived out for thousands of years, they have the privilege of catching a glimpse of the wonder of it all: who God is, that He has a plan to redeem us, and how He has chosen a part for each of us to play. A way to bring this concept home each week and to build continuity would be to begin your time in storytelling by playing that week's Timeline animation provided with the Resources.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Bible (1 per leader and 1 per child)
- Timeline slide and animation (see Resources)
- Optional: Storytelling video (see Resources)

Prayer of Release

Before you get into the main portion of what you'll storytell each day, begin with a prayer of release. A prayer of release allows children and leaders to pause, be still, release distractions, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. Before you pray, you might ask the kids to hold out their hands, palms up, in a spirit of releasing their worries and distractions in order to better receive what the Holy Spirit might have for them today. Then encourage the kids to quiet their voices, take a seat, and pray with you

The importance of The Big God Story is that it demonstrates how much God loves kids and wants to know them. It's in this time that the Ponder Point is further explained through a portion of God's big story from the Bible. Teach from a Bible so kids understand what they're hearing is from God's Word and is true. Kids will learn from the beginning with the creation story, on through time in a clearly linked, sequential way, that God has been working throughout history. And the great news for them is that He is still working today!

Storytelling is the perfect time for your team to pull out all the stops in creating a captivating atmosphere for kids to engage with the narrative. Whether it's dimming lights, incorporating sound effects, projecting images on a screen, using movie clips, or just being a vivid storyteller, these things can lead to kids being impacted by God's Word in a completely new way. Although great efforts are made to incorporate multiple storytelling techniques and resources into each lesson's telling of The Big God Story, each leader should make the narrative their own and be intentional about preparing and storytelling from an overflow of what God is doing in their own life. It's a great opportunity to impact the next generation with God's transforming Word.

Take time to familiarize yourself with the lesson so you'll be able to share it with confidence. The text provided is meant as a guide for what to share with your children and will be much more engaging for them if the storyteller is freed from reading it to them. Invest in preparation so you can share naturally and with enthusiasm. Feel free to adapt your storytelling to the needs of your ministry. Add props, adjust lighting, and move around to keep children engaged. Encourage all your leaders to model an interest in what is being shared; the kids will pick up on an atmosphere of excitement. Have fun and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to make the lessons come alive.

Storytelling Videos

Optional storytelling videos are available for three lessons per quarter. You may access these videos with your lesson Resources. You may want to play the video at the beginning of The Big God Story, or determine a place to show it during the storyline.



Worship as Response

Storyteller/Worship Leader

After you've learned something amazing about God, what do you feel like doing? Worship Response invites children to explore that very question. Whether it's by writing a prayer, singing and dancing with instruments, worship through music, listening in the silence, or speaking Scripture out loud, this is the kids' time to respond to God personally in the context of the faith community. The worship response time in large group varies from week to week. Some weeks children will respond in worship through music, while other weeks are designed for more specific interactive expressions of response. This time is intended for children to freely express their worship as the Holy Spirit leads them.

As children think about how what they've heard has impacted them, the Holy Spirit has space to move and touch each child. The way the kids reach out and respond to God allows them to truly meet with Him. It's about the encounter—not just the information. Make plans for your worship time, but prepare yourself and your team to hold them loosely if the Holy Spirit leads the group in a different direction. As your team plans for times of response, try to create an atmosphere without expectations. This may mean pausing for what feels like an uncomfortably long time after you ask a question. It may mean spontaneously prolonging a time of singing or carrying on a discussion that seemingly has little to do with your curriculum notes. Be flexible and sensitive to how God's Spirit is moving in your group. You will most likely be blown away by what He does with and through your kids.

Worship Response Stations

Worship response stations give kids the opportunity to worship God corporately and individually. In addition to stimulating godly worship and praise, response stations also spiritually affirm who the kids are in Christ, further developing their awareness that they too are a part of The Big God Story. There are endless designs for creating spaces that encourage and support spiritual formation and response, some as simple as string tacked up on the wall with nails, yarn tied between chairs, or index cards in front of a box. (For ideas and examples of additional worship response stations, go online to www.truministry.com/worshipresponsestations.)

The following examples will appear in TruStory lessons, or create your own worship response stations. You may choose to have them as fixed or mobile features in your large group space, and you may opt to set up several response stations throughout your room. This will help create sacred space by giving kids enough room to respond without being hurried. You may also want to display the stations during Remember & Celebrate weekends.

As a leader, part of your role is to help the children understand the freedom they have to choose how they're going to respond—whether that's encouraging, modeling, or leading them into participation. When inviting them to participate at the stations, be sure your tone remains the same as it is when singing and praying, and doesn't transition to that of a directive voice.

Here are a few suggestions for Worship Response Stations to get you started:

Prayer Wall

The Prayer Wall physically represents the prayers of the faith community. Kids and parents write or draw prayer requests on sticky notes or small squares of colored paper and secure them to a corkboard, magnet board, whiteboard, or other memo board. Another option: Using a simple frame, small nails, and string, create a web effect (see photo to the right) and have kids tie strips of cloth or pieces of ribbon to the web to represent their prayers. Use colors of fabric or ribbons to correspond to different types of prayers—for example, prayers for your church, prayers for your city, etc.



Prayer Journals

Children and parents express their thoughts and prayers by drawing or writing in journals or notebooks. You can make the notebooks available at the Prayer Wall or create a separate station or box called Prayer Journals.



Blessing Wall

Similar to the Prayer Wall, the Blessing Wall encourages kids and parents to express their gratefulness to God for His blessings in their lives by writing or drawing on sticky notes. Then they stick the notes to a designated wall, poster board, or whiteboard. Consider creating the outline of a particular shape on the wall or board (such as a heart or cross) and have the kids stick their notes inside it.

Encouragement Cards

As an act of worship and service, kids and their families write notes of encouragement, love, or affirmation to one another, their friends, and others. Cards can be colorful index cards, leftover blank greeting cards, or handmade cards with the words “An Encouraging Note” at the top. Create an Encouragement Cards station or box with these cards and some pencils or pens.

Partner Church Comment

To help create a more reverent atmosphere, start dimming the lights at the beginning of this time of response. Changing the lighting within your gathering space will help the children quiet themselves, allowing them to more easily engage in this time of worship. (With thanks from The Gathering)

IT'S OKAY IF ...

Help kids understand that God speaks to us in many ways—mostly through His Word, but also through prayer and other ways including people. Encourage them to ask God for the ability to hear His voice, but also give them the freedom to know that it's okay if they do not always experience Him in the ways that other people do.

RESPOND //

SMALL
GROUP
SECTION

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

The Vision for Small Group RESPOND

The opportunity for response continues as kids break into groups for small group RESPOND. Here, children can share openly about their personal thoughts and experiences in a relational setting.

With **Reflect**, the kids will discuss questions based on what they just heard in The Big God Story. They'll also be encouraged to look up the corresponding Scripture passages in their own Bibles. TruStory lessons provide two sets of Reflect questions. Direct your kids to the set of questions that are the best fit for their age and spiritual maturity. Although the questions start out similarly, older kids will enjoy being challenged to go deeper with discussion questions and will spend more time investigating Scripture for themselves.

With the next activity, kids will respond further to what the Holy Spirit has been teaching them. Sometimes they'll create individual pieces of art they can take home, and sometimes they'll work on group art pieces that can stay in the room and remind them in the coming weeks about what they know to be true about God. It's a time for creating a meaningful reminder or physical expression of what God is doing within them. As they create, allow kids to share freely about their personal response times with God. Lead them in a time of reflection about what God is doing in their hearts. You may want to display these projects during the upcoming Remember & Celebrate weekends as a physical reminder of time spent responding to God.



The Vision for Small Group Enhancements

Corresponding to each week's lesson, with the Resources you'll find optional Small Group Enhancements. These additional games and activities are provided along with discussion questions to assist you as your small group continues to go deeper in its exploration of how God was working in that particular part of The Big God Story. After the fun, the provided questions will prompt further conversation about what kids have been experiencing. The types of enhancement activities rotate quarterly and include things such as Classic Games, Drama Options, Finish the Sentence, Twenty Questions, and Build It. Be sure to check out what additional supplies or materials you may need for these if you find you have time in your schedule to include them.

BLESS//

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

The Vision for BLESS

Every Tru lesson concludes with a blessing. The word benediction means to speak well over someone. This is a time for parents and leaders to speak truth over and into children's lives. The children have just had the experience of encountering God and His Word; the idea of the blessing is to bless them and what God is doing in them. Allow them to receive this. As they've been blessed, they will in turn be used to bless others. Allow them to receive this. As they do, they will in turn be used to bless others. It's also important for kids to understand the concept that everything that comes from God is a gift to us. As the blessing ends, remind the kids they can freely share with others the joy, love, truth, and grace they've received from God.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Bible (for the blessing)
- At Home Weekly (see Resources)

This time of blessing provides another great opportunity to integrate your use of the Bible into the worship experience, reinforcing to the children that these words come straight from the Word, God's Word. Be sure to send home the At Home Weekly with the kids each week, or better yet connect directly with parents, so they'll have time with their families in God's Word, preteaching the content, before the children return to church. This is also an opportunity to send home the Remember Verse cards.

To help kids feel comfortable with the concept of blessings—and some may have never been blessed or rarely receive words of encouragement—explain that a prayer is talking to God while a blessing is speaking to a person. Each Tru lesson ends with the biblical concept of blessing so the children leave from the strength of being encouraged and built up with Godly words of life and truth spoken over them. (Though the lesson places BLESS at the very end, you might prefer to bless your kids after the worship response portion of large group DISCOVER. Find what works best for your group.)

There are many ways to physically express a blessing over your children and will feel more natural the more you bless. Also, the more intentional you are about your blessings, the more powerful they will be. Ask your leaders to be sure to model how you envision the blessing working in your church so your volunteers, children, and parents feel confident doing them.



Ideas for Ways to Bless

- Encourage the children to hold their hands open as if cupping water, in a posture of receiving—expecting to hear and receive from God.
- If parents are able to join in at this time, suggest they put their hands on their child's head ... or kneel and look him in the eye as they bless him. Always make parents feel welcome during this time; encourage any early arrivers for pick-up to come and join.
- Try a call-and-response, where you as the leader pronounce a short blessing over the children and have them repeat it back to you several times.
- Have the kids assemble in a circle, say the blessing to the child on your left, and then have that child turn and repeat it until it spreads one-by-one around the entire circle.
- Encourage parents to continue to bless their children throughout the week.

Components of TruStory Large Group/Small Group

Remember & Celebrate//

Children pause and look back at what they've discovered about God during the past several weeks in The Big God Story. They celebrate who God is and what He has done, participate in storytelling, and connect through fun and engaging worship.

The Vision for Remember & Celebrate

How often do we really take time to contemplate the things God has done and praise Him for them? How often do we make prayer requests but fail to follow up on how God answered them? So many of us live our lives full speed ahead with little time for looking back. But looking back is biblical—and Tru tries to build that kind of rhythm into the lives of children with Remember & Celebrate every 6th and 13th lesson.

The goal of a Remember & Celebrate weekend is to remember God's faithfulness as we take a look back at what He has showed us about Himself from The Big God Story. Offered twice per quarter, REMEMBER & CELEBRATE lessons invite children to pause and look back at all they've discovered about God and the ways they've experienced Him in the past weeks. Each lesson focuses on one of the seven annual feasts and festivals celebrated by the Israelites, exploring its origin and what it still shows us about God today. This provides a biblical context for the importance of remembering and celebrating God's goodness to us as His people. (The feasts and festivals covered are summarized on the following page.) Take this time to remember the awesomeness of our God and celebrate who He is!

Kids and leaders will have numerous opportunities throughout the gathering to share stories about what God has done in—and through—their lives. Through the fun game ZONK! in each Remember & Celebrate lesson, kids look back at what they've been learning about God in the past several weeks. In this spirit of reflecting and celebrating, children will participate in traditions by connecting with one another and God through music, dance, singing, eating, and art as they worship together.



Remember & Celebrate: Feasts and Festivals

Old Testament Significance

Several times a year, the Israelites gathered for a festival. In Leviticus 23, the Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed feasts ... which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.’” The seven annual festivals are Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First Fruits, the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). In addition, the Israelites celebrated the Festival of Jubilee on the 50th year, the year following seven cycles of seven Sabbatical years. They also gathered weekly to celebrate the Sabbath. During these celebrations, the Israelites took time to remember what God had done for His people and to celebrate His goodness. The entire faith community gathered without the burden of work to simply worship and celebrate. They ate, danced, sang, played instruments, prayed, and offered sacrifices to God.

New Testament Significance

The Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of the Messiah, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by His sinless sacrifice, and the Feast of First Fruits was fulfilled by His resurrection. The Feast of Harvest began with a great harvest of three thousand souls by the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, who continues to harvest souls today. The Feast of Trumpets will announce Christ's return, the Day of Atonement will usher in His judgment of the nations, the Feast of Tabernacles will begin the journey to our new home in a new heaven and earth, and the Feast of Jubilee symbolizes our eternity in heaven with our Lord and Savior—living in perfection, free from the debt of sin.

The Seven Annual Feasts and Festivals

Passover: *A Feast Celebrating God as Deliverer*

During Passover, the Israelites celebrated their deliverance from the Egyptians as well as God as their deliverer. Each portion of the Passover feast symbolizes a part of the narrative of the Israelites' escape from Egypt. The meal includes lamb to symbolize the slain lamb whose blood marked the Hebrews' doorposts on the night of the 10th plague so that death would “pass over” those homes. In the New Testament, Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb of Passover to offer deliverance from sin for people from every age.

Feast of Unleavened Bread: *A Feast Celebrating God as Redeemer*

The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt and, ultimately, His deliverance of our bondage to sin. Beginning with the day after Passover, the Israelites were to take seven days to eat bread without yeast and to cease working on the first and seventh days. The unleavened bread represented their quick departure from Egypt, not having time for the yeast to make their bread rise. In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of yeast (or leaven) symbolically, as sin. Jesus broke unleavened bread with His disciples and said, “This is My body.” Jesus was without sin as His body was “broken” during His crucifixion.

Festival of First Fruits: *A Festival Celebrating God as Trustworthy*

The Festival of First Fruits celebrates the trustworthiness of God. First fruits represent the joyous occasion of the first grain harvest of the spring. One sheaf of grain was taken to the temple as an offering. These offerings were made on the day following the Sabbath, or Sunday, and marked the beginning of the two-month spring harvest. In the New Testament, Jesus resurrected as the “first fruits” offering on Sunday, the day after the Passover Sabbath.

Feast of Harvest: *A Feast Celebrating God's Abundant Provision*

This festival, also known as the Feast of Pentecost or Weeks, corresponded with the nation's harvest season. Pentecost, which means “50 days,” lasted for the 50 days after Passover and recognized when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. During this festival, the Israelites celebrated a season of gladness and thanked God for abundantly providing for their physical and spiritual needs—including a way into relationship with Him.



Festival of Trumpets: A Festival Celebrating God's Faithfulness

This feast is the first of the fall feasts. The Jewish people call this feast Rosh Hashanah, which literally means “head of the year,” as it's observed as the start of the civil year on the Jewish calendar (in contrast with the religious year, which starts with Passover). This celebration focused on the faithfulness of God. It consisted of a time of rest, “an offering made by fire,” and the blowing of the trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets would occur at the new moon when only the slightest crescent would be visible. Watchfulness was a critical ingredient of the feast. This need for watchfulness and preparedness with the Feast of Trumpets is echoed throughout the New Testament in connection with the Lord's second coming.

Festival of the Day of Atonement: A Festival Celebrating God's Righteousness

This reflective and often-solemn festival consisted of fasting, prayer, and repentance. The festival celebrated God's righteousness and lasted 25 hours. Today it's known as Yom Kippur. During this time, the Israelites rededicated the temple to the Lord and repented of their sins. The high priest passed through the veil of the Holy of Holies with sacrificial blood to make atonement for the sins of the people. The New Testament significance lies in Christ, our High Priest, who shed His blood once and for all to make atonement for our sins before God.

Feast of Tabernacles: A Feast Celebrating God's Abundant Blessings

God's people celebrated this festival with thanksgiving to remember God's many blessings. For seven days they lived in tents or temporary shelters they decorated with colorful ornaments. The New Testament significance of this feast reminds us that this life is temporary, and that all of our lifelong dreams, hopes, and aspirations will one day be fulfilled in our future home and inheritance with Jesus.

Sabbath

The Weekly Feast of the Sabbath

The weekly observance of the Sabbath is a time to refrain from anything considered to be work. This celebration occurs on the seventh day of each week and often consists of reflection, study, relaxation, and festive meals shared with families and friends of the faith community. “This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy” (Exodus 31:13). Through the Sabbath, God instructs His people to remember who He is and that He calls them to a life different from any other.

The Seventh-Year Sabbath

When the people entered the land of Israel after their time of exile in the desert, the Lord directed them (through Moses) to tend the fields, vineyards, and all of the crops for six years. God said that on the sixth year, or the year preceding the Sabbath year, He would bless the harvest and yield a large enough crop to provide enough food for three years. But on the seventh year, the land would have a Sabbath for an entire year to allow the land to rest. Whatever the land produced during this year would be food for the people and their livestock.

Some scholars believe the year of rest for the land gives us lessons of faith and humility. It shows us how we depend upon God for all things, knowing that God's blessing alone provides for any success. Because of His great provision, the blessings we receive aren't for us alone—they're to be shared with others. Knowing that God provides for us brings us freedom as we release our entire lives to Him.

The Year of Jubilee

Festival of Jubilee: A Festival Celebrating God's Gift of Freedom

The year of Jubilee occurred on the 50th year following the seven cycles of seven Sabbatical years. This festival celebrated God's gift of freedom. It was a consecrated year set aside to proclaim liberty and restoration for all of the inhabitants of the land. Debts were forgiven and those who had sold themselves to settle a debt were set free. Through this festival God reminded His people that He would always provide for them and that He “held the deeds” to everything they held as possessions. Because of this, God commanded His people to provide for the redemption of land and housing lost due to poverty or other similar circumstances.



EXPLORE (Small Group)

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's biblical feast or festival.

The celebration begins with a brief introduction to the feast or festival being highlighted that week, along with an activity to build excitement. Younger and Older activity options are given in the lesson. Set up both options and allow the kids to go where it works best for their interests. Supplies will vary by activity.

REMEMBER (Large Group)

Through a sequence of traditions and play, children are given the opportunity to pause and remember who God is.

A Remember & Celebrate weekend is a fun time of reviewing the previous weeks' Ponder Points and what the kids have learned about God. After everyone gathers as a large group, open with **Traditions and Remember Verse**, learning about the **Feast or Festival**, and then **Remember and Play**. At the Jewish feasts and festivals, the people would eat special foods, see special people, and engage in special dances and ceremonies. It's easy to imagine that the Jewish children might have been so excited about the upcoming festivals that they couldn't sleep for days in anticipation. The feasts and festivals were both fun and meaningful. God's people reveled in how good it was to be together as they remembered what God had done in their lives. During this time, we will seek to remember in a spirit of fun and celebration—making the experience exciting and interesting as well as meaningful, community building, and spiritually forming. In TruStory large group lessons, playing the ZONK! Wheel during Remember and Play is a lively and engaging way for the whole community to be involved in the fun. (Note: See the following pages for detailed instructions on how to play ZONK! and how to build your own wheel.)

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

Traditions and Remember Verse

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, gum balls, building blocks, etc.)
- Remember Verse cards, slide, and animation (see Resources)

Remember and Play

- Index cards (30)
- Marker
- Bag, basket, or bowl (big enough to fit 30 index cards)
- Paper (1 sheet)
- Pen
- ZONK! Question and Answer slides (see Resources)
- Optional: ZONK! Wheel; additional index cards (at least 3)

CELEBRATE (Large Group)

Through interactive games and activities, children will share how God is working in their lives.

My Experience with God

CELEBRATE begins with a purposeful time of review and reflection. From the Worship Response, Create, and Engage pieces, choose three or so you might want to discuss and have them available. Talk and pray about this with your team, and choose the pieces that most impacted your group. Place the Worship Response, Create, and Engage pieces around the room in lesson order. Invite children to look back at how they've experienced God during the past several lessons. Optional: Discuss the Worship Response, Create, and Engage pieces and encourage kids to share memories of those response experiences or activities. Questions are provided from each lesson to help with reviewing.



Storytelling

This is a time to build tradition into your community celebration through a time of sharing and storytelling. Storytelling allows members of the community to tell about what God has been doing in their hearts—at church and at home. Set up your storytelling time like an experience of telling stories around a campfire. Have kids sit in a circle and invite sharing through the use of an open mic, gathering stories ahead of time by asking parents through email, or inviting someone up and chatting interview style. Be creative with ways to create the cozy feel of being around a campfire by using sound effects of a crackling fire or crickets, onscreen pictures of a fire, real wood, etc. (For an image of a campfire and sound effects, see the Resources.) Note: If you plan to video or photograph your kids, make sure their parents first sign a release form. Whether you choose to experience storytelling with high energy or in a more restful way, remember to continue in a spirit of celebration for what God has done in the lives of your kids, leaders, church, and families.

STORYTELLING IDEAS

• Set up open mics around the room and allow kids to tell their stories

- How God answered their prayers
- How God used the Remember Verse in their lives
- What God did in their hearts during the last few weeks (such as what they learned about God and how that changed them)
- How they saw God with their families or outside of church

• Gather stories from the community

- Ask parents for stories about their experiences with God at home with their children
- Ask parents to email pictures of spiritual experiences with their children (such as a baptism)
- Take pictures of family church experiences
- Show a video or picture collage gathered during the last few weeks

• Interview someone about what he experienced, discovered, or learned about God

- Someone who has recently come home from a mission trip
- A parent who had a God experience with his child, or a child who experienced God with her family
- Someone who recently accepted Christ

Celebrating Together

Breaking Bread

Continue the celebration by feasting together as a community. Ask parents ahead of time to bring food, drinks, and supplies. Explain that eating together is one of the ways people celebrate today and one of the ways the Israelites celebrated together during their festivals. You can break bread many ways. Suggest food related to the feast or festival, or to the particular season you're in. Options include having parents bring food and eating with the kids, assembling the food as a group, or having a potluck after church. This is all about community.

Music

What's a celebration without music? Play upbeat worship songs and encourage the kids to sing along and dance. Music is suggested in the lesson, or invite kids and parents to contribute their favorite worship tunes. There may also be an activity idea offered.

Celebration Station

Rocks are a symbol of remembrance in Scripture (for example, Samuel setting up an Ebenezer pile of stones). At this station (used only during REMEMBER & CELEBRATE weekends), kids and parents write a word or phrase they want to celebrate (for example, "new job," "God is faithful," "God has a plan for my life," etc.) on the rocks. You can find an image and instructions for building your own Celebration Station on the following page. There may also be an activity related to the feast or festival offered.



RESPOND SAMPLE SUPPLIES

My Experience with God

- Bibles (1 per leader and 1 per child)
- Worship Response, Create, and Engage pieces from previous weeks

Storytelling

- Bibles
- Campfire video (see Resources)

Breaking Bread

- Food, drinks, plates, utensils, cups, and napkins

Music

- Worship music (suggestions: “Celebrate” or “Remain,” TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

BLESS (Small Group)

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide. Similar to a regular lesson, the time of remembering and celebrating comes to a close with an opportunity for the leaders to assist the children in blessing each other, and reminding them they can freely give away the joy, love, truth, and grace they've received from God. Be sure to include parents and make them feel welcome to participate in this special time with their kids. Encourage them to bless their children throughout the week.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES

- Bible (for the blessing)
- At Home Weekly (see Resources)

If you're finding it hard to make time for BLESS, try doing it earlier in your program. This is an amazing time that you don't want to miss!



Celebration Station

Follow the instructions below to build your own rocks Celebration Station.

SUPPLIES

- OSB or plywood
- Saw
- 1" x 2" wood trim
- Wood screws
- Casters (4)
- Metal hooks (4)
- Metal baskets (2, medium size)
- Permanent markers (at least 4)
- Rocks (medium size)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Use the OSB or plywood to build a three-foot-high by eighteen-inch-wide box (with all sides enclosed).
2. On one of the small ends of the box, attach four casters to make the box mobile.
3. On the other small end of the box, use the trim pieces of wood to create a border/frame that will hold in the rocks and prevent them from falling off the box.
4. Mount two hooks on each "long side" of the box and hang a basket from each pair of hooks. Put the rocks in the baskets.
5. Put two permanent markers in each basket.





Building a ZONK! Wheel

ENGAGE

1. Take the plywood round and measure to find the center. Secure a temporary nail to the center.
2. Tie one end of the string around the nail and the other end of the string around the pencil.
3. Pull the pencil toward the edge of the plywood round, so the string is pulled tight, and draw a circle about one inch from the edge.
4. Remove the center nail and set aside.
5. To make eight sections on your wheel, take a protractor and line up 0 degrees with the center point.
6. On the plywood round, along the edge of your protractor, make pencil marks at 0, 45, 90, 135, 180, 225, 270, and 315 degrees.
7. Remove the protractor and line up the yardstick or straight edge with the marks for 0 and 180 degrees. Draw a line all the way across the plywood round. Repeat with 45 and 225 degrees, 90 and 270 degrees, and 135 and 315 degrees.
8. Take the hammer and nails. Secure one nail at the intersection of each straight line and the line that circles approximately an inch from the edge of the plywood round. Make sure the nails stick out at least 2 inches from the plywood. Optional: Secure additional nails, spacing them evenly, to create more friction when the wheel is spun.
9. Flip over the plywood round and screw the Lazy Susan hardware to the center.
10. Return the wheel to the front and paint the wedges using four bright colors. Evenly space the colors. (Optional: Use black paint or black electrical tape to draw distinct lines between the wedges.) Assign one color for "Sword Drills" and paint the word "DRILL" in each wedge of that color. Select another color for "Remember Verse" and paint "VERSE" or "RV" in each wedge of that color. Select another color for "History" and paint "HISTORY" in each wedge of that color. Select the final color for "Leader Trivia" and paint "LEADER" in each wedge.
11. Set the wheel aside to dry.
12. Cut the wood or plywood sheet to 42" by 18". Also cut three other pieces out of the sheets: One triangle with a 24" base and 25" height, and two triangles with a 12" base and 12" height.
13. Optional: Paint these wood sheets to fit the color scheme of your wheel.
14. Take the 42" by 18" sheet and the 24" by 25" triangle piece, and secure this triangle vertically and perpendicular to the back of the 42" by 18" sheet. Attach the two smaller triangles so the tops of the smaller triangles align with the hypotenuse of the larger triangle and are parallel to the rectangular wood sheet.
15. Attach the wheel to the stand by screwing the Lazy Susan into the stand, centered, so the top of the wheel is about three inches from the top of the stand.
16. Attach a nail or screw to the top or bottom of the stand, above or below the wheel. Zip the zip tie securely around the nail or screw, so that the excess zip tie comes in front of the wheel as the marker for the wheel.

SUPPLIES

- Plywood round (24" across, 3/4"–1" thick)
- Tape measure
- Nails (3")
- Pencil
- String
- Protractor
- Yardstick or straight edge
- Hammer
- Paint (5 colors; 4 bright plus black)
- Paintbrushes (5)
- Wood or plywood sheet
- Saw
- Lazy Susan hardware
- Drill
- Screws (2 1/2"–3")
- Zip tie (large, brightly colored)
- Optional: black electrical tape





For pictures and other construction methods, consult the following sites:

wikihow.com/Make-a-Prize-Wheel
wikihow.com/Build-a-Wheel-of-Fortune-Wheel

How ZONK! Is Played

Engage the children by playing the game of ZONK! to help them remember what they've discovered during the past several weeks. Ask them questions about the Scripture portions covered by the lessons. For example:

- 1) Why did God give Abraham a covenant promise?
 - a. Because He loved Abraham
 - b. Because He had a plan for Abraham's life
 - c. Because He had a plan to save all people
 - d. Because Abraham believed and obeyed
 - e. All of the above

ANSWER: E.

When playing ZONK!, keep in mind the main purpose of spiritual formation rather than memorization. Ask questions that remind the kids of the narrative of The Big God Story and their place in it, what God did in their hearts during the past few weeks, or what they learned about who God is.

SUPPLIES

- Index cards (30)
- Marker
- Bag, basket, or bowl (big enough to fit 30 index cards)
- Paper (1 sheet)
- Pen
- ZONK! Question and Answer slides (see Resources)
- Optional: ZONK! Wheel and additional index cards (at least 3)

PREPARE AHEAD

Write point values (such as "1,000" or "200") on 10 index cards. Write "ZONK!" on 10 index cards.

Use the remaining 10 index cards to make 10 "Challenge Cards," each with a challenge and its point value. (See the Challenge Card Ideas list on the following page for some examples.)

Ask one leader to share a random fact about himself (such as his birthplace or his favorite food). Write "Leader Trivia" on one side of an index card, and on the other side of the card, write the leader's fact and a question that corresponds with this fact (such as "Where was Miss Susie born?"). Set this card aside to be used if a child gets the "Leader Trivia" category on the wheel.

SET UP

Put all 30 index cards in the bag or basket. Choose someone to keep score, and give her the paper and pen. Optional: Set out the ZONK! Wheel. Write "The Wheel" on one index card and put them in the bag or basket.





Challenge Card Ideas

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must clap their hands 30 times as quickly as possible.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must act like Spiderman crawling up a wall of butter.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must high-five 10 other members of your team as quickly as possible.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must act like a Tyrannosaurus rex that's dancing in a ballet.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must copy every movement of the person who drew this card.

THE PERSON WHO DREW THIS CARD must dance for one minute.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must sing, "What Does the Fox Say?" If a person doesn't know the song, she must act like a fox.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must do the wave, going from the front of the room to the back of the room, three times

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must be completely silent for 30 seconds while making the funniest faces possible

THE PERSON WHO DREW THIS CARD must tell a joke, and EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM must laugh at it like it's the funniest thing ever.

RELATE

To play, divide the children into two teams (for example, girls versus boys). Ask one team a question (while showing the corresponding slide) and have the kids from that team raise their hands to answer. If a child answers correctly, have him pull a card (or cards) from the bag. He can grab as many cards as he (and his team) wants, and the point values will be added to the team's score. But if the player pulls a "ZONK!" card, his team loses all of its points!

If the child draws a "Challenge Card," the whole team must act out the challenge to get the amount of points written on the card. Everyone on the team must participate in the challenge or the team loses the amount of points written on the card. Optional: If the child draws "The Wheel" card, she gets the chance to spin the ZONK! Wheel. The wheel will stop spinning at one of the following four categories: "Remember Verse" (recite the current Remember Verse perfectly from memory), "Leader Trivia" (answer a question about a leader in the room), "History" (answer an old ZONK! question), or "Sword Drill" (locate a specific passage in the Bible in 30 seconds or less). After successfully answering the question or completing the challenge, the player's team will either double its points or earn a very large number of points (such as 15,000). The ZONK! Wheel can only be used once per round. After you've asked all of the questions, the team with the most points wins!