

date: **4/16/17****Bible Passage: The Big God Story**
(Easter)**The Big God Story****REMEMBER VERSE**

**Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and
believes him who sent me has eternal life.**

John 5:24a

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

I grew up in the church. In fact, I didn't just go to church ... I was a leader in the church. I knew a whole lot about God. However, I'm pretty sure I didn't know God—His character, His voice, and perhaps most importantly, His story. The Bible had always been presented to me as a collection of short stories. I had no idea how Moses was tied to David or what Esther had to do with Jesus. I didn't know they were related.

A few years ago, I started attending a new church. One weekend as I was serving in the children's ministry, I heard something that changed my entire perspective on God. The families pastor was teaching "The Big God Story." Beginning with creation, she started to work her way through biblical history. In just 20 minutes, she had shared the Bible as a complete story, tying all of the characters and events together, leading up to the current day. I was reminded that the story isn't over. It's still being written, and each one of us gets to be a part of it! I was blown away!

My understanding of God and His Word completely changed. The Bible was not just a collection of short stories about human heroes. This was one big story about God and His plan for redemption and relationship with His people. God—Jesus—is central to everything in Scripture. He is present from the very beginning. Everything leads up to His arrival, His death, His resurrection, and the redemption He brings to mankind. From the moment the relationship between God and man was broken, God's plan was in place to restore us and draw us once again to Himself. He shaped the whole of human history to be in relationship with us! What an amazing God we serve.

Matt Barnes
Tru Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

The Passover Feast was a significant celebration during Passion Week. It was the remembrance of when the Lord's judgment "passed over" all those who obeyed Him during the Israelites' final days in Egypt (Exodus 12:1–30). The people of God were instructed by the Lord to take a young, unblemished lamb and sacrifice the animal at twilight. Then, they were to smear the animal's blood over the door posts and on the door frames of the dwelling place where they would be eating the feast. They were to have a meal with the meat of the animal the very night it was sacrificed, and anything remaining was to be burned and disposed of immediately.

This was not to be a leisurely feast, but one eaten with urgency. For later that night, the Lord was to pass over every dwelling place in Egypt. Whoever had the blood covering their home was safe, and God's judgment passed over. However, all who didn't have the covering of a blood sacrifice would lose the firstborn son and male animal of the household in death. The plague of death was the Lord's judgment upon Egypt for their hardened hearts toward Him.

Many years later, God Almighty stepped down into the humanity of this world. He took on a human nature and became fully man. He willingly became the unblemished lamb and would be the sacrifice whose blood would cover all who believed in and chose to follow Him. Under His covering, death would pass over and there would be freedom from slavery to sin and death.

In the hours that followed Jesus' death on the cross, His followers gained permission to take His body and prepare it for a traditional Jewish burial. His body was wrapped in linen and placed in a tomb. Since the people refrained from any form of work on the Sabbath, and it was getting close to sundown when Sabbath would begin, they needed to wait one day to return and prepare His body for burial. When they arrived at the tomb, all they found were the linens. God knew the body wouldn't need to be prepared, for Jesus wouldn't be permanently buried—He was alive. He had risen just as He said.

The Son of God gave Himself; He sacrificed Himself on our behalf. He sacrificed the position that rightfully belonged to Him—for a season—in order to be the fulfillment of The Promise made to redeem and restore humanity to Himself. There is no greater sacrifice. There is no greater love.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

God the Son, the God of all creation, humbled Himself in order to be confined to a human body and offer Himself as the sacrifice on your behalf. He chose to be bound within a body for all eternity, with you and me in mind. God made an eternal sacrifice so you may know the depths of His love.

As you dwell on this truth, take some time to respond to what God's Spirit is speaking to you. Be still for a moment. What are you feeling? What are you thinking? Is He calling you to respond in a way that is out of your comfort zone? How can you respond in a way that is of service to others, asking God, "What needs to be done?" How can you be a bigger part of the lives of others? How will you answer?

EXPLORE::: 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

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

The Big God Story Eggs

Today children will have the opportunity to hear The Big God Story in its entirety, including Jesus' resurrection. This activity allows them to begin their review in an engaging way.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [The Big God Story Eggs images \(see Resources\)](#)
- Scissors
- Plastic eggs (12)
- Egg carton (empty)
- Permanent marker

PREPARE AHEAD

Print and cut out The Big God Story Eggs images. Number the eggs 1 through 12 on the bottom of each. Place each image in its corresponding egg and place eggs in carton.

RELATE

Welcome children. **Today is a very special day, and we're going to hear something very special in storytelling later. There are some pictures inside each of these eggs that have something to do with that special story. I would really like it if you would help me explore them!** Encourage children to take turns opening each egg in order and identifying the picture. **What part of The Big God Story is this from? What did God do during that part?** Continue until you've finished opening each egg in the carton.

Leader Tip

Separating from Mom and Dad can be tough for a little one—especially visitors on a holiday weekend. To help lessen the stress a child may feel, invite parents to stay long enough to lead their child into worship in an activity. Small Group Leaders should engage in the activity alongside the child and parent. As parents say good-bye, acknowledge their departure while remaining focused on the activity with the child for the smoothest transition possible.

DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

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

Ponder Point

The Big God Story

Chloe's Rules

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)

RELATE

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. *Tech: Cue preschool program theme song.* Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

Mail Time

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Mail Time envelope art \(see Resources\)](#)
- Envelope (large)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

PREPARE AHEAD

Print or copy the Mail Time envelope art and attach to a large envelope. Print or copy one Remember Verse card and put it inside the envelope.

RELATE

Tech: Cue the Mail Time intro clip and image. Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with children.

Lead children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

REMEMBER VERSE

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

John 5:24a

REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

Eternal: Lasting forever and ever

REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

Very truly I tell you: Nod head in affirmation, cup hands around mouth.

whoever hears my word: cup hands around ears.

and believes him who sent me: Point index fingers to the sky.

has eternal life: Point right index finger outward and make a circular motion.

Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [What'sIt: Empty Wardrobe](#) (see optional image in Resources)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

What'sIt: Empty Wardrobe

Jesus' followers had taken His body, wrapped it in linens, and placed it in a tomb. They needed to wait until Sabbath ended to return and properly prepare His body for burial. When they arrived at the tomb, all they found were the linens used to wrap His body. The tomb was empty—Jesus had risen just as He said!

RELATE

Tech: Cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder* intro clip and image. Invite a child volunteer to “spy” on the What'sIt by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder* sound effect. Have him whisper the identity of the What'sIt in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What'sIt. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What'sIt from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

ASK

(Insert child's name), **did you see what's inside the Wardrobe of Wonder?** Encourage him to whisper it in your ear. **It's empty? What do you mean? Are you sure?** Allow child to answer. **Why don't you check one more time?** Child will check the wardrobe and again see that it's empty. **Okay,** (insert the child's name), **now tell everyone what you saw in the Wardrobe of Wonder.** Child will announce that it's empty. **Empty?!** Open the wardrobe to show children. **Friends, what do you think? We'd better find out why the wardrobe is empty. Do you know what time it is?**

The Big God Story

Easter

The Big God Story

Storytelling Technique: Script and Props

SUPPLIES

- [The Big God Story intro clip and image](#) (see Resources)
- [The Big God Story images #1–13](#) (see Resources)
- [Sound effects: Garden, Royalty, Angel](#) (see Resources)
- Easter basket (small)
- Plastic eggs (empty)
- Box (large, colorful)
- Props: Bible, crown, royal robe, scepter
- Worship song (suggestion: “Rainbow” by Hillsong Kids)
- Optional: Easel, card stock

Leader Tip

The Big God Story images #1–13 will be used as visuals during storytelling today. You may use the images provided to create slides and project them onto a screen as you storytell (if a screen, projector, and stage/natural lighting will allow). Or, consider printing each image on card stock and use an artist’s easel to create a flip chart of pictures. Each picture is cued in the story.

There are optional sound effects for some pictures. If the sound effect is music or nature sounds, allow it to play quietly in the background while the Storyteller is speaking. Once he’s moved on, gradually fade the effect out. Some effects such as “Royalty” are short and will play only as the picture is revealed. Consider having at least one run-through with your storytelling and tech team before the actual service to sync the storytelling with the sound cues. The storytelling today may take longer than usual, so plan accordingly.

RELATE

Actor enters from the back of the room carrying an Easter basket filled with plastic eggs. As she enters, she is singing or humming while placing/hiding eggs in various places around the room (perimeter of the children). While hiding the eggs and making her way to the front of the stage, she begins her opening dialogue about Easter. The Storyteller will be sitting in the audience with the children.

Actor: **Hi, everyone! I’m so excited to be here with you all! Today is such a special day! Do you know why?** Pause for response from children while continuing to hide eggs. **That’s right!** Arrive at front of stage, stop, turn, and face children. **Today is Easter!** Begin to pick up tempo of speech, then slow down toward the end and make a dramatic stop to catch your breath. **I love Easter because today we get to eat candy, and search for eggs, and ... and ... and ... well, I think that’s it, but isn’t it great?!**

Storyteller: **Wait, wait, wait just a minute.** Walk up to stage. **You’re forgetting the most important thing! You’re forgetting the reason we celebrate Easter. Friends, let’s all pray and ask God to be the one to teach us today.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. Actor sits on small stool onstage next to Storyteller, actively listening—ready to engage.

Before we jump into The Big God Story, I want to show you something. Reach into prop box and pull out Bible. **Do you know what book this is?** Pause for responses. **Yes! It’s the Bible. It’s filled with God’s Word for us and helps us to know God. The words inside the Bible are all true. We call all the stories we read from the Bible “The Big God Story” because God is big, His story is big, and He wants us to be a part of it! Now, we need to**

start at the very beginning of the Bible. Reveal image #1: The garden. As image is revealed, *Tech: Cue Garden sound effect.* **The true story I'm about to tell you began in a beautiful garden that stood between four grand rivers. God made the very first people to live in the garden of Eden. They were named Adam and Eve.** Reveal image #2: Adam and Eve in the garden.

It was wonderful in the garden until they sinned. Sin is what happens when we make bad choices and do something that doesn't please God. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God and made a bad choice, they weren't allowed to be in the garden anymore or be as close to God as they once were. Reveal image #3: Adam and Eve leaving. **But, God is such a good God, He never leaves His people alone. God made a promise that someday there would be a Savior. This promised Savior would be able to forgive us, and all people, of our sins so we can know God and be with Him forever. And so it began ... all the people on earth began to wait for The Promise to come.**

After the creation and Adam and Eve, there was Noah. Reveal image #4: Noah and the rainbow. **There was a big flood that covered the earth with water. The only people who were left alive were Noah and his family. After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah. A covenant is an extra-special promise. When God makes promises, He always keeps them! God made a covenant with Noah and all the creatures on earth that would ever live. It's a promise for me, for you, and for all our friends here. He promised He would never flood the whole earth again. And to remind us that He always keeps His promises, God puts a rainbow in the sky after it rains to show that we can trust Him.** Storyteller invites Worship Leader to come lead a song of praise. *Tech: Cue music* (song suggestion: "Rainbow" by Hillsong Kids).

Noah's family began to grow and grow. The earth was once again filled with people and new nations. God always stayed very close to His people, protecting them when they fought with other countries. He guided them through the desert to lead them to a new home, and He sent them prophets. A prophet is someone to whom God gives a special message that He wants shared with all of His people. It was a way for God to always be with His people, even before the promised Savior came.

God told His people that He wanted to be their King and show them the best way to live. But the people of God didn't listen. They wanted to have kings just like all the other countries and nations. Reveal image #5: The kings. *Tech: Cue Royal sound effect.* Storyteller reaches into prop box while talking and pulls out crown, royal robe, and scepter. Begin to dress Actor. Once in costume, Actor walks back and forth as a noble king. Walk among children; place crown on child's head and scepter in another child's hand, then sit in front row with them. **So, God gave them kings. There were good kings—like King David and King Josiah—and there were bad kings. Because of some bad choices the bad kings made, God's people were taken to lands that weren't their own and were forced to leave their homes.**

God never left His people alone. He remembered His promise. God used faithful people who listened to His words and obeyed His directions to bring His people back home to Israel, where the Savior would be born. And then something happened ... (reveal image #6: God was silent)—**God was silent.** Pause and wait in silence for a beat or two; lower voice for next couple of sentences. **He didn't say anything to the people through a prophet, a priest, or a king—not one word. And so the people just waited for The Promise. There were almost 400 years before the people heard anything from God. God was quiet, but that didn't mean He forgot His promise. We can trust God, because we know He always keeps His promises.**

One night, God ended His silence. Reveal image #7: Mary and the angel. *Tech: Cue Angel sound effect.* **God sent an angel named Gabriel to a young girl named Mary. He told her she was going to have a baby—God's Son—who would be the Savior for all people. God gave us The Promise when He told Mary she would have the baby Jesus. Jesus was the Savior God had promised in the garden with Adam and Eve many years before!**

Reveal image #8: Angels and shepherds. **On the night Jesus was born, God sent angels to announce His birth to shepherds in a field nearby!** *Tech: Cue Angel sound effect.* **God didn't send just one or two angels. The Bible tells us He sent too many angels to even count. The shepherds were so excited they went to see the baby Jesus right away.** Reveal image #9: Shepherds sharing the news of Jesus' birth. **Then, they went and told everyone what they'd seen and heard. The promised Savior had been born in Bethlehem!**

Through the years, Jesus grew up in a way that was pleasing to God. He never made a bad choice or did anything wrong. **Not even once!** Jesus lived His entire life teaching people the best way to live. Reveal image #10: Jesus and the people. **He cared for people who were hungry, healed people who were hurt or sick, and even brought people who had died *back to life!* Jesus really showed His power and showed that *He was God!***

God sent Jesus to be the Savior and bring us back to God so we could live closely with Him again. Remember ... people hadn't been able to experience being really close to God because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Jesus was the Savior God promised to send. Jesus made the way for us to be forgiven of our sins and be in relationship with God. **Can someone tell us what Jesus did for us?** Invite a few children to tell what happened on Good Friday and Easter. **He came to earth to give up His life on the cross so we could be forgiven of our sins and live forever.**

He didn't stay dead, did He? Children answer. **No!** After He died, Jesus' friends took His body, wrapped it in linen cloth, and placed Him in a tomb. Reveal image #11: The tomb. **Then they closed the tomb by rolling a very large stone in front of it. When they came back on the third day, Jesus wasn't there!** Reveal image #12: Tomb and angel. **The tomb was empty! An angel was sitting on top of the tomb and told Jesus' friends He had risen!** Reveal image #13: Risen Jesus. **He came back to life, just like He promised. He was on earth for 40 days teaching His disciples. Then He went back up to heaven! Jesus is alive! *That's what we celebrate on Easter morning!***

And that's why the Wardrobe of Wonder was empty—our clue to The Big God Story! Jesus isn't dead; ***He is alive!*** He came to earth to give up His life so we could be forgiven of our sins and live forever. When we choose to believe that Jesus, God's only Son, died for our sins and decide to follow Him, we get to be with God forever! I'm so thankful Jesus came so I can know God and be close to Him. And that's not the end of the story. **We get to be a part of God's big story! The story continues with us. Isn't that exciting?**

Actor: I can be part of God's big story? That's amazing! I want to learn more about what it means to be part of God's family *and* about my part in His story!

Storyteller: **Deciding to be a part of God's family is a *big* decision. When you see your mom and dad, ask them all about it. I know they'll be so excited to talk with you about Jesus!** Storyteller and Actor exit as Worship Leader enters to lead response.

RESPOND:: 20 min.

Small Group Leaders

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

Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages \(see Resources\)](#)
- [TruWonder Small Group Enhancements timeline and images \(see Resources\)](#)
- Crayons

RELATE

Today in our storytelling time, we heard The Big God Story the whole way through! God loves us so much that He promised to send a Savior for us.

I wonder ... What's my favorite part of The Big God Story?

I wonder ... How do I know God better today?

I wonder ... What sins or bad choices do I make?

I wonder ... How do I know Jesus died for me?

I wonder ... How can I be part of The Big God Story?

BLESS::: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

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.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)
- heart stickers (1 per child)

RELATE

Friends, Jesus is the promised Savior. He loves you! He died for your sins, and He died for my sins. But Jesus is stronger than death! He didn't stay dead. He rose and came back to life! Because of Jesus, we can know God and live with Him forever and ever. The Bible tells us that God chose us to belong to Him. He decided to choose us long ago so that everything would work according to His plan and purpose (paraphrase Ephesians 1:11).

Give each child a heart sticker as you bless her:

(Insert child's name), **may you know and experience God's great big love for you. May you see in each day the special way you're part of The Big God Story.**