



Leader Guide

A Love Story

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Big Idea:

Christmas is the story of the greatest love relationship of all time, the love between the Father and the Son, and how that love overflows into love for us.

Scripture:

Nehemiah 8-10,
Malachi 1, 3, and 4,
Ezra 7

Memory Verse:

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

It’s becoming Christmas time! Here at Kids’ City we are learning the next few weeks that the Christmas story isn’t just one story, but a number of stories within a story! The kids are going to experience four often untold stories and the meaning and impact they had on the birth of Jesus.

Leader Info: Story-Formed People

Jesus was a GREAT storyteller!

The disciples came up and asked, “Why do you tell stories?” Jesus replied, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn’t been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understanding flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That’s why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight.” *Matthew 13:10-13 (The Message)*

Stories are the most powerful form of communication we have. Stories speak to the mind, the body, and the emotions —our spirits. In a story, we can identify with situations we have never been in. Every culture and society of people that have ever existed has been this way. We are all storytellers and we all LOVE stories.

Goals of Telling the Story

-To understand, experience, and intersect with God’s story.

-To become a ‘story-formed’ kids and people whose lives are daily shaped by the truths of the Story.

-To make disciples of Jesus who make disciples.

-To see and experience God’s “Redemptive Arc” throughout history as found in the Bible—seeing the connection between all of the stories— and seeing the Bible as one big story.

-To be moved by a Story that points to a God who constantly pursues us and desires to know us.

-To see the intersection of ours’ and the kids’ stories with God’s Story.

-To understand our identity differently in light of God’s story, who he is, and who he created us to be.

-To “live in the gospel”, seeing the world differently, seeking to further God’s Kingdom - to live missionally.

-To learn to retell these stories and help others to see how they can find themselves in God’s story.

Introduction in Small Groups

Intro

Questions for the Kids about their week and to get them thinking about the lesson they will be going over.

1. What happened this past week that was really awesome?
2. What happened this past week that was a bummer?
3. What is your favorite thing about the Christmas season?
4. What is your least favorite thing about the Christmas season?

Expected Behaviors

Go over the Expected Behaviors for the kids while they are in small group before Large Group begins.

1. Be respectful of others
2. Only one student speaks at a time
3. Listen quietly when others are speaking
4. Keep hands and feet to yourself
5. Follow the directions given by your leaders

Large Group

Game

Have the kids play a game of rock, paper, scissors, but this time use Santa (say Ho-ho-ho and hold your belly), a grandma (walk hunched over with a cane), and reindeer (make antlers on your head). The reindeers run over grandma, grandma kills Santa with her unhealthy cookies, and Santa overworks the reindeer forcing them to retire early. Make it fun and change up the characters whenever!

Prayer, Offering, and Communion

Pray for the kids as they begin a new lesson, and ask the kids if they have anything specifically they would like to pray about! Pray for their requests during the week. Collect the offering if the kids have any, after the prayer. Remind the kids that this week the offering goes help people who are suffering or hurting. For the kids that have been baptized they can take communion at this time. Explain to the children that communion is a time for us to remember the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross and thank Him for all He has done for us!

Story Time (Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)

The next four weeks at Kids' City we are going to learn that the Christmas story isn't just one story, but a number of stories within a story. We are going to experience four often untold stories and

the meaning and impact they had on Jesus being born.

Read from the Jesus Storybook Bible the story- Get Ready! From Nehemiah 8-10, Malachi 1, 3, and 4, Ezra 7 p. 170-175.

Dialogue about the Story

What did Ezra and Nehemiah do?

God's people had returned from being slaves and had forgotten how God wanted them to live.

They read the rules God had given Moses to them.

What happened as Ezra and Nehemiah read the rules?

They got really sad.

Why did God's people become sad?

They saw they had not been living the way they should.

They saw that they were cruel and selfish.

They thought God was going to punish them.

What does Ezra's name mean?

"Help is here!"

What about Nehemiah's name?

"God wipes away our tears"

What did Ezra do as he saw God's people crying over how they had blown it?

He shut the book and stopped his sermon mid-sentence!

He started a party!

He said, "God wants us to be happy!"

How long did the party last and what did they do?

It lasted a week

They listened to stories about all the wonderful things God had done for his people.

They listened to story after story of God's Never Stopping, Never Giving Up,

Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love!

What did God tell his children?

I can't stop loving you.

You are my heart's treasure.

But I lost you.

Now I am coming back for you.

I'm going to send my Messenger- The Promised One.

The One you have been waiting for.

The Rescuer.

He is coming, so get ready!

Ezra and Nehemiah helped to guide God's people back to Him. Even though God's people had messed up and blown it, God still loved them a whole, whole lot! God wants his children to know him and obey him because he knows what is best for us. As Ezra and Nehemiah told stories about from Abraham and Joseph and how God spoke to Moses and showed them how to live, they realized how time after time and over and over God rescued them! He rescued them because of his Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreakable, Always and Forever Love!

God loves his children so much. Everything he had done in the past with the rules he gave to Moses and how he rescued Moses and his children from slavery and defeated enemies was only a temporary rescue though. It had taken centuries for God's people to be ready, but now the time had almost come for the best part of God's BIG Plan.

God himself was going to come. Not to punish his people, but to rescue them. God was getting ready to wipe every tear from every eye. The true party was about to begin...

Story Time: Tell this Story to the Kids

Once upon a time, there was a man who thought Christmas was a bunch of silly, nonsense. He wasn't a Scrooge or a really mean man. He was nice and giving and good to his family. He didn't lie or cheat or do bad things. But, he just couldn't believe all that stuff about God coming to earth that churches talk about and Jesus being God's son. He thought it was just a stupid, made-up story. His wife loved Jesus, but he was too honest to pretend that he did. He told her, "I just don't understand why God would want to come into the world as a human. It makes no sense."

One Christmas Eve, his family went to church to celebrate Jesus' birth. He didn't want to go. He told his family, "I would feel dishonest going and pretending I believed in what you all did. I'm going to stay at home, but I'll wait for you to get home."

As his family starting driving away, it started to snow. He went to the window of his house and watched the flurries fall harder and harder. "If we have to have Christmas," he thought to himself, "at least there will be pretty snow outside." He went back to his chair by the fireplace and began to read his newspaper. A few minutes later he heard a big BANG, and a THUD, and a BOOM! And another and another.

He thought to himself, "I guess someone is throwing snowballs at my living room window. He went to the front door to check it out. What he found was a whole flock of his birds huddled scared and cold in the snow. They were caught in the storm and needed to find shelter as soon as possible before they froze. They tried to fly through his window to find warmth. "I have to help my birds before they get too cold and die" he thought. "I love them like they were my own kids and have to rescue them. How can I save them though?" He then remembered the barn where the horses and ponies were. It would keep them warm and safe.

He put on his coat and boots and jumped into the snow that was growing taller by the minute. He went to the barn and opened the door and turned on the lights. His birds didn't come in. "Food will bring them to the barn!" he thought. So he ran to the house and got bread crumbs. He sprinkled them on the snow to make a trail for his birds into the barn so he could save them. Sadly, his birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued flipping and flopping around everywhere helplessly in the snow. He tried to shoo them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms, but nothing would work. They moved out in every direction- except into the warm, lighted, and safe barn.

"They think I'm a weird and scary creature," he said to himself, "I can't think of any way to let them know they can trust me and know that I love them so much and only want to rescue them and save them! If only I could become a bird for a few minutes, perhaps I could tell them how much I love them and lead them to safety. . . ."

Right at that moment the church bells began to ring. The man stood silent for a while, listening

to the bells ringing Christmas songs as the snow fell around him and the birds flew around everywhere. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. "I understand now," he whispered. "Now I see why You had to come to earth!"

You see God had to come to earth as a human in order to his children how much he loves them and to direct them back to him. He came to earth as Jesus to rescue us! That was the only way he could keep us safe and show us the way to live with him forever. God loves us so much that even though we were bad and had messed up big time, he sent his own son Jesus to earth to show us the way and to die for the bad things we had done. Jesus's birth is a love story showing us God's Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreakable, Always and Forever Love!

Activity

The kids are going to be singing in the Family Service that wraps up this series on the 18th. They will sing the last song of the service that day- Go Tell it on the Mountain. We are going to practice the song this week and next week several times. Also, the kids will need to be at the practice on Wednesday the 14th from 7:30-8. There is a slip of paper telling the parents about this. Please make sure they get this!