

**echo**  
THE STORY

12 YOUTH

LEADER GUIDE



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# WHAT IS ECHO THE STORY?

Echo the Story is an imaginative way to engage in the Bible using storytelling, creative reflection, and dialogue. This approach helps participants discover meaning and identity in the biblical narrative.

## SESSION FLOW

### ① **rewind** THE STORY [5-10 MINUTES\*]

Watch an animated video to review previous stories.

### ② **prepare** FOR THE STORY [10 MINUTES]

Focus our minds for imaginative listening.

### ③ **imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

Listen actively to a live telling of a Bible story.

### ④ **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]

Record observations by sketching or writing.

### ⑤ **remix** THE STORY [10 MINUTES\*\*]

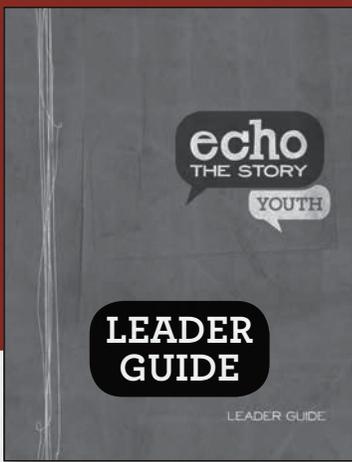
Choose from drawing or writing activities to retell part of story in your own way.

### ⑥ **connect** TO YOUR STORY [20 MINUTES]

Share insights through guided dialogue.

\* Videos increase in length to recap all of the stories told so far.

\*\* Do REMIX activities if time permits.



### Leader Guide

The guide you are holding right now will be your map through each of the twelve sessions of Echo the Story. It details the activities in each session and gives you the prompts, scripts, and encouragement you need to lead well.



### Sketch Journals

The Sketch Journal is a creative logbook of each participant's journey through the stories. Sketch Journals work in tandem with the Leader Guide and are used throughout each session. Make sure every person (leaders and participants) has a Sketch Journal!



### DVD/Video

The DVD/video contains The Story So Far videos and leader preparation videos. At the start of each session, your group will watch The Story So Far video for that session, which includes a group interaction and a fast-paced review of previous sessions' stories.

# ALSO ON THE DVD: LEADER VIDEOS!



## ECHO THE STORY PROMO VIDEO

This **short video** gives a fast overview of the Echo the Story experience, helping **leaders** and **parents** understand and get excited about Echo the Story.



## ECHO THE STORY SESSION OVERVIEW VIDEO

This practical, **six-minute video** is the best way for leaders to understand the elements in each session and how best to facilitate Echo the Story.

**We recommend that before you read any further in this guide, you watch the leader videos. Much of what will be outlined in the next few pages will be more useful to you if you've already viewed these video segments.**



SESSION THREE:

# promise

# SESSION OVERVIEW

## SUPPLIES

- ▶ **Echo the Story DVD/video** for this session
- ▶ **Echo the Story Sketch Journals** for every participant
- ▶ Markers, pens, and colored pencils

## 1 **rewind** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

The Story So Far video begins with an interaction for your group. Following this interaction, the video will show a fast-paced, animated review of the previous sessions' stories.

## 2 **prepare** FOR THE STORY [10 MINUTES]

Participants will draw their own version of this session's story symbol in their Sketch Journals. Then, a participant will read a section from the Sketch Journal that helps ready the group for imaginative listening.

## 3 **imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

The leader will now tell this session's Bible story. A carefully crafted narrative script of the story is provided in this Leader Guide.

## 4 **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]

The leader will ask someone of a different gender to do a second telling of the story. During this telling, participants will use their Sketch Journals to capture aspects of the story that stand out to them.

## 5 **remix** THE STORY \*TIME PERMITTING [10 MINUTES]

Participants will be invited to choose from two REMIX activities (included in the Sketch Journal) that guide them to retell part of the Bible story in their own unique way.

## 6 **connect** TO YOUR STORY [20 MINUTES]

Finally, the leader will guide a group dialogue where participants are asked to share their observations and insights from the story. Dialogue questions are provided in this Leader Guide.

# rewind THE STORY

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## THE STORY SO FAR VIDEO

### Leader Says:

Right now we are going to continue our twelve-part journey through the Bible.

*We are going start with a video.* The first minute of the video gives you a chance to answer a question with a partner.

After the timer finishes, the next part of the video will start right away, giving us highlights from all of the stories we've covered so far. This video moves really fast, so we'll have to pay close attention and listen carefully.

*Are you ready?*

- ▶ CUE: Play The Story So Far video for this session.



Even though this is written like a script, please personalize the "Leader Says" parts.



# prepare FOR THE STORY

## DRAW THE STORY SYMBOL

- ▶ CUE: If you collected the Sketch Journals last session, pass them out to each participant. Give Sketch Journals to any new people joining your group. Provide pens, markers, and colored pencils for participants to use.

Leader Says:

As I mentioned in our last session, our Sketch Journals are an important part of our experience. They'll give each of us a chance to be creative, and to capture the thoughts and ideas that these stories spark in us.

Each of the twelve stories that we'll tell has its own symbol as a visual reminder. Right now, turn to **page 40** and draw *your own version* of the PROMISE symbol [a group of stars] in your Sketch Journal.

You may be wondering why we are redrawing this symbol. Well, this will help embed it in our minds, and also helps get our creativity flowing for the rest of the activities that we'll do later. So you don't need to just copy the symbol—*be creative and make it your own!*

- ▶ CUE: Don't spend a lot of time on this activity—*two minutes or less.*



## SEVENTY FACES OF TORAH

### Leader Says:

Each session of Echo will invite us to experience a story from the Bible. But before we dive into each story, we'll slow down and take time to *prepare ourselves*. To help us do this, we'll read a page that has an idea or metaphor that connects us to the Bible.

Who would be willing to read **page 41** of your Sketch Journal out loud?

- ▶ **CUE:** Ask for a participant to read page 41 from their Sketch Journal.

I think that looking at the Bible like a diamond is a really helpful way to look at the Bible. My challenge to us is to choose now to turn the diamond of scripture, and look deeply within the story—expecting God to illuminate something new to each one of us.

And when you see something in the story—something simple, or beautiful, or profound—I hope you will share it with the group! Each reflection can teach us something new.

## IMAGINATIVE LISTENING

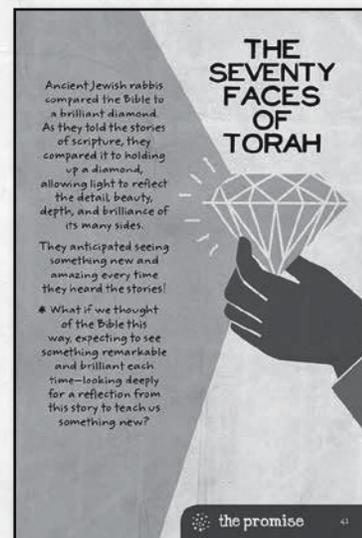
### Leader Says:

Let's take a moment and get ready for imaginative listening. Imagine the story playing in your mind like a movie. Put yourself in the story and try to sense what is going on.

Right now, do what helps you to concentrate the best. That could mean closing your eyes (stay awake!), or focusing on the image on **pages 42–43**.

*Are you ready?* Take a moment in silence to take a deep breath, slow down, and clear your mind. Whisper a prayer asking God to show you something meaningful in this story.

- ▶ **CUE:** After fifteen to twenty seconds of quiet, begin narrating the story.



# imagine THE STORY

Leader Narrates:

## SCENE ONE: COVENANT

Generations after Noah, people filled the land once again.

But humans, just like before, began to follow their own disruptive ways. They conspired to build a brick tower to the heavens to show that they were their own gods. Even in their rebellion, God didn't give up on humans.

In fact, God made a *covenant*—a deep promise and relational bond—with a man named Abram. God promised him:

*“I will bless you and make your name known throughout history!  
Your family will become a great nation that I will bless and protect.  
Through them, I will extend my blessing to the entire world!”* [pause]

This was an amazing promise! But there was a problem . . .

Abram's wife Sarai (sa-RI) wasn't able to have children, and they were both getting very old—*she was sixty-five and he was seventy-five!*

So how would God bless the entire world through *their* family if they couldn't have one?

God told Abram, *“To receive my promise, leave your country and your relatives and move to a new land that I'll show you.”*

Abram and Sarai chose to leave the safety of their homeland and follow God, even though they didn't know where God was leading them.

After many weeks of travel, Abram was standing on top of a hill. God told him, *“Look as far as you can see in every direction . . . I am giving this land to you and your future descendants.”*

Trees and green pastures filled the countryside. Abram and Sarai settled in this place, which would be called the Promised Land. [pause]

A few years later, Abram and Sarai began to wonder if God's promise of a child would ever come true. Abram asked God, *“What good is everything you've given me if I don't have a son to pass it on to? I'm getting old . . . and soon I'll have to give all of this to one of my servants instead.”*

God replied to Abram, *“I've promised you and Sarai a son! Look up at the night sky—try to count all of the stars! That is how many descendants you and Sarai will be blessed with—too many to count!”*

As Abram looked up at the star-filled sky, he chose to trust God, even though it seemed impossible. And God was pleased with him. [pause]

Don't just read this story; bring it to life with your voice!

## SCENE TWO: LAUGHTER

Ten years passed with no sign of a child. So Sarai arranged for Abram to have a child with her servant, Hagar. This kind of arrangement was not unusual in that time and culture.

After Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child, she began to hate Sarai.

Sarai complained to Abram, *"This is your fault! I gave you my servant, and now she treats me horribly."*

Abram replied, *"She is your servant! Do whatever you want with her."* Then, Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that Hagar ran away into the wilderness. [pause]

As Hagar sat by a spring of water, she began to weep. An angel approached her and said, *"Hagar, you must return to Sarai. God will bless you with more descendants than you can count! They will become a great nation of their own. Your son will be called Ishmael, which means 'God hears.' God heard your cries . . . and cares for you."*

So Hagar returned, and soon gave birth to Abram's son, Ishmael. But ten more years passed, and Sarai still did not have her own child. [pause]

Suddenly, God appeared to Abram, who fell facedown on the ground. God said to him, *"My promise to you will come true. I'm changing your names. You'll now be called Abraham and Sarah, which mean 'father and mother of many nations.' Remember—I'll always be your God, and you'll always be my special people."*

Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief. Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at one hundred years old? And how can Sarah have a baby when she is almost ninety?"*

Sarah thought, *"How can a worn-out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"*

But God said, *"Why do you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? You will see—a year from now, you'll have a son."* [pause]

Sure enough, a year later Sarah gave birth to their son. They named him Isaac, which means *laughter*.

After her son was born, Sarah giggled, *"Who'd have dreamed that we'd have a child when we're so old? God has brought us—and everyone who hears about this—laughter!"*

It had taken twenty-five years, but God's promise to give Abraham and Sarah their own son had come true. God promised that their family would become a new kind of people, called to extend God's blessing to the entire earth.

This family would be called Hebrews, and later the people of Israel—a name that means *struggler with God*. Soon, we'll hear more about why they were given this unique name.



# capture WHAT YOU NOTICE

## MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Leader Says:

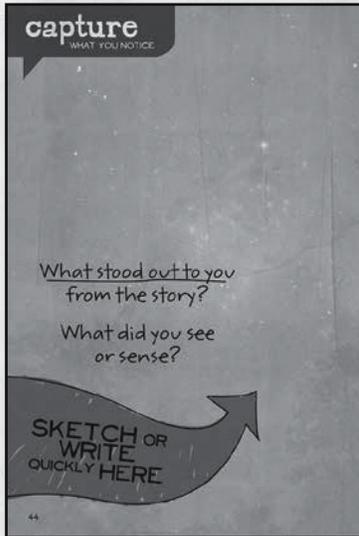
Take a moment to close your eyes and let the story replay in your mind. Pay attention to what stands out to you from the story.

- ▶ CUE: After twenty seconds of quiet, transition to the second reading.

## SECOND TELLING & CAPTURING

We're going to listen to the story one more time, but this time with a **different voice telling it**. During this telling of the story, turn to **pages 44-45** and write or draw the words or images that come to mind. Use these pages to capture anything that you notice—even if it seems like a small detail. You will be surprised—even small things that you notice will spark thoughts and insights from our group.

- ▶ CUE: For this second telling, use a storyteller of a **different gender** from the person who read the first time. *Different voices help people to listen with fresh ears.*



Bring energy and genuine wonder about the story. Remember, questions and curiosity drive learning.

## REMIX ACTIVITIES

Leader Says:

Now that we've heard the story twice and begun to capture what we noticed, let's REMIX the story. There are two REMIX activities, designed to help you retell part of the story in your own unique way.

There is a **drawing activity** on pages 46–47 and a **creative writing activity** on pages 48–49.

**These are not fill-in-the-blank activities!** These activities are designed to help you express yourself and share what *you* see in the story.

**OR** if you'd prefer, you may instead **continue to develop** your thoughts and drawings from the CAPTURE pages you just worked on.

Whatever you choose, take the next ten minutes to **use your imagination** to create your REMIX and then we will share them with each other. Invest yourself honestly in this and you will be surprised at your insight and creativity.

- ▶ **CUE:** After about ten minutes (or less if your group finishes sooner), begin the REMIX sharing.

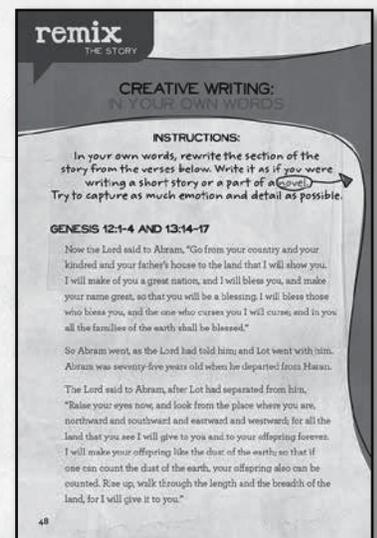
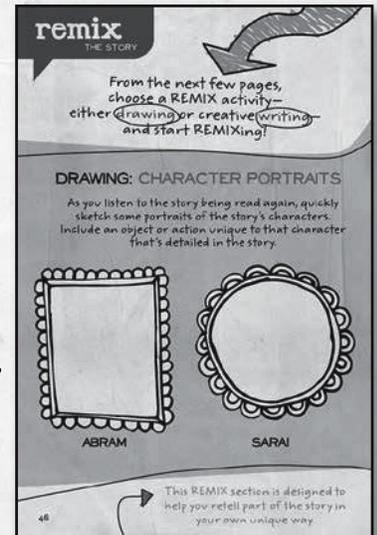
## TURN & SHARE

Leader Says:

In a moment you will share what you've written and drawn on your CAPTURE and REMIX pages. Remember, this is a place where we've committed to respect each other's words, art, and ideas.

Now turn to a person near you and share your CAPTURE or REMIX.

- ▶ **CUE:** After two minutes, begin the CONNECT group dialogue.



### Preview the REMIX Activities

Leaders should read through the REMIX activities before the session begins to be better equipped to help participants who need guidance.



# connect TO YOUR STORY



## GROUP DIALOGUE

Leader Says:

Let's talk more about this Bible story. **I really want to see the story through your eyes.**

Remember, when someone else shares something that that you connect with, write it down on **page 50** of your Sketch Journal.

- + So, what stood out to you from this story?
- + What did this story make you wonder about?

**LEADER:** *Don't give answers to participants' wonderings and questions. In fact, share an example of what you are wondering about the story.*

- + Would anyone like to share more from your CAPTURE or REMIX sections?

*Let me ask you a few questions about this story:*

- + How would you describe Abraham and Sarah from this story?
  - Why do you think God renamed them? Why might this be this significant?
  - How did they try to fix the situation themselves? Why do you think they did this?
- + What did God promise to Abraham and Sarah? [skip if already discussed]
  - What do you think it means that Abraham and Sarah's descendants were to be God's blessing to the entire earth?
- + Why do you think Abraham and Sarah struggled to believe (and laughed at!) God's promise?
  - If you were Abraham or Sarah, how do you think you would have responded to God's promise?

*Share the first thing that comes to your mind when I ask these questions:*

- + What do you notice about God in this story?
  - What was God like in this story?
- + Why do you think the ancient Israelites told this story?

### DIALOGUE PREP

1. There are probably more questions here than you'll have time to ask. Pick a few questions ahead of time that you want to make sure to ask.

2. Questions in GRAY and marked with a dash are for follow-up. Ask them as time allows and as they are needed.

## FINAL QUESTION:

Take a quiet moment to think about this final question:

- + What does this story say about us? . . . about you?

Write a quick response on **page 51** in your Sketch Journal. 

- ▶ **CUE:** After twenty to thirty seconds of quiet, ask a few participants to share.

### Leader Says:

This was a really meaningful time. *Thank you!* You did a great job. I'm looking forward to gathering together again so we can experience the next story.

If you'd like to learn more about this story, there's a section called EXPLORE MORE on **pages 52–53** of your Sketch Journal. 

You are welcome to take your Sketch Journal with you and try some of these activities, but be sure to bring it back for the next story. If you're worried about forgetting it, you can leave your Sketch Journal with me.

- ▶ **CUE:** To close this session, ask someone to lead the group in prayer.

## OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER

- + Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?
- + The covenant promise uses the word *bless* several times. What do you think it means to bless someone? How do you think God blesses people?
  - How did God bless Abraham in this story?
  - How has God blessed humans so far in all of our stories?

