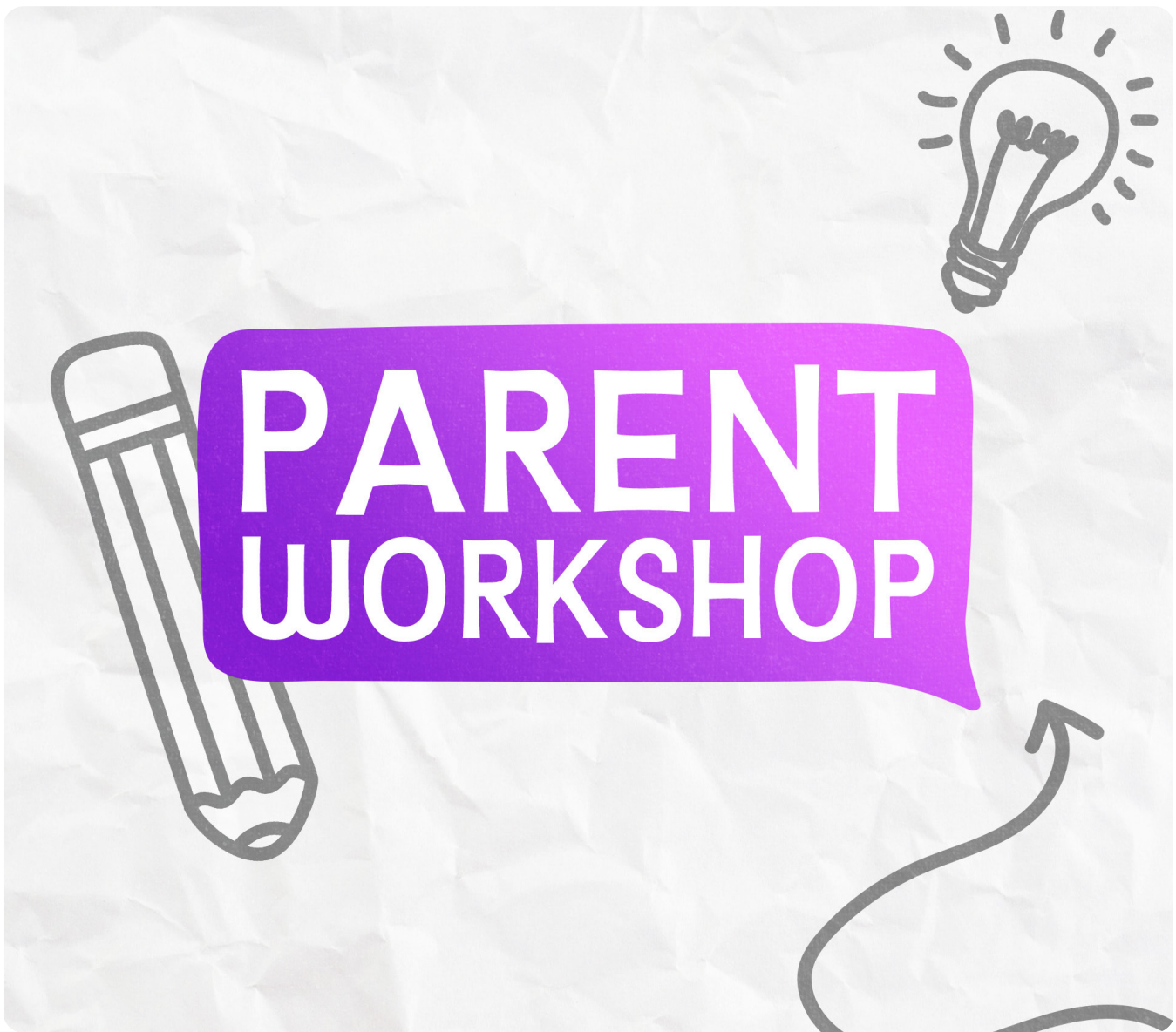




A 1-YEAR
PLAN FOR

FAMILY EVENTS

FROM GROW'S ANNUAL **FAMILY STRATEGY**



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WHAT DOES A PARENT WORKSHOP LOOK LIKE?

A Parent Workshop is a training event for the parents of kids in your ministry. Your main audience will be families who have kids who are already involved in your ministry, though you can market this event to new or prospective parents as well.



EVENT

An event like this is an environment that provides value to parents and connects them with their child, your church, or both. If you're following along with our 1-Year Parent Strategy, you'll see this icon on your **Annual Calendar** four times during the year.

A great Parent Workshop should be interactive, inspiring, encouraging, and educational. You want this event to show parents that you believe they are the primary influences in their kid's life and that you are here to help them succeed!

This event will consist of a shared meal, the main session where you can lay out an overall vision for your time together, and a breakout session where parents can discuss a problem that affects their kid more specifically. We recommend having all parents together in one room for the main session and dividing parents into breakout rooms based on the age of their kids.

WHAT WE'VE PROVIDED

We've given you all the resources you need to make this event happen! Here's what that includes...

PLANNING

- **Event guide** (plus a **how-to guide** for planning any event)
- **Schedule**
- **Shopping list**
- **Volunteer roles**
- **Planning timeline**

GRAPHICS

- **Editable graphics**
- **Title and background images** in horizontal, square, and vertical formats
- **Event flyers**

TEACHING

- **Training outline for the main session** in PDF and DOC formats
- **Training outlines for the breakout sessions** in PDF and DOC formats

TOOLS

- **Parent handbook**
- **Annual parent survey**
- **Volunteer business cards**

AND MORE!

- Themed ideas for:
 - **Decorating**
 - **Food**
 - **Prizes & giveaways**

WHAT TO DO



DATES & TIMES

Your Parent Workshop can take place on any day or any time that works best for you in your context. The resources and schedule that we've provided reflect one hour and thirty-minute event that includes time to eat lunch together. You could host this event immediately after your weekly program ends to make it easy on a parent's calendar or make this an evening event where you provide dinner instead of lunch.



ENVIRONMENT

You will need to prepare a few different spaces in order to make this Parent Workshop happen. You will need your main session space which we recommend to be the same place where lunch is served. If you can, set up round tables where parents can eat together and interact throughout the meal and the first training session.

You will also need a variety of breakout spaces which you can choose to set up with tables or rows of chairs. You can set up as many breakout rooms as you think will be beneficial, but we recommend at least one room for parents of teenagers, one for parents of kids in elementary school, and one for parents of preschoolers. Consider having a refreshment table in each breakout room to allow for a quick snack and coffee break!

Knowing that you will want to remove any barrier that will keep parents from attending and enjoying this workshop, you may want to consider providing childcare for this event. Bring in extra volunteers or pay some responsible teenagers to take care of all of the kids throughout this Parent Workshop.



TRAINING

The main objective for this Parent Workshop is to host two excellent training sessions full of practical and relevant information for parents. We have provided the outlines that you can use to deliver this content.

Consider sharing the stage or prerecording some of this training content so that you can get more of your team members in front of parents throughout this event. Not only does this take some of the pressure off of you to be the expert, but it also can help to create a more interactive environment with a variety of voices being given a chance to share.

For the breakout sessions, you can recruit volunteers who work with kids of each age group, parents of kids in that age group, or other members of your kids and student staff to lead these sessions. Make sure that whoever you recruit is prepared to not only share information but lead an active conversation!

CREDITS

Created by the

STUFF **YOU CAN USE**
team!

This resource was created by our team at **Stuff You Can Use!** We're a team of pastors, volunteers, church planters, writers, editors, designers, programmers, video creators, and more. We live in three countries, twelve states and five time zones, but somehow we all manage to hang out on Zoom at the same time. We're here to make ministry a tiny bit easier for you — and we really like making things for you!

CURRICULUM TEAM



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SHOPPING LIST



ENVIRONMENT

- Posterboard and jumbo permanent markers to create extra signage for guiding parents to their breakout rooms
- Table games
- Paper (or notebooks) and pens for taking notes
- A fun playlist
- Any games or supplies that your babysitters will need to entertain and care for all of the kids

TRAINING

- Any supplies you might need for playing a game
- Ministry swag and/or prizes

FOOD

- Lunch (pizza, chicken, barbeque... there are no wrong answers, but be sure to consider potential food allergies when providing a meal)
- Beverages
- Cups, plates, utensils, and napkins
- Coffee, creamer, and sugar (you want people to like you and pay attention, right?)
- Coffee cups, stirrers, and napkins

ACTIVITIES

- For a list of supplies for each activity, check out the individual activity pages for the activities you'll be using.

PLANNING TIMELINE



3 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Determine your date, time, and location.
- Create your flyers and any other marketing materials you plan to use.
- Begin promoting to parents both in your ministry and in small groups or ministries catered to adults.

2 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Determine and communicate your set-up and tear-down needs for the event.
- Determine and communicate your technical and production needs for the event.
- Continue promoting the event.
- **OPTIONAL:** Recruit a volunteer or team of volunteers to help you plan or execute the event.

6 WEEKS IN ADVANCE

- Draft your schedule and the training content you want to share at the event.
- Recruit your co-hosts and breakout session leaders and start working on the training content with them.
- Make a to-do list (and assign responsibilities as needed) for whatever still needs to be completed.
- Recruit any volunteers (especially small group leaders) you'd like to attend.
- Continue promoting the event.

4 WEEKS IN ADVANCE

- Revisit your draft of the schedule and information you plan to share.
- Follow-up with the leaders of your breakout sessions to ensure they are getting ready to deliver their content.
- Continue promoting the event.

2 WEEKS IN ADVANCE

- Finalize your schedule and all content you plan to share at the event with your other session leaders.
- Pre-order lunch, coffee, candy, or other supplies you still need.

1 WEEK IN ADVANCE

- Order or shop for any supplies you still need.
- Finalize any slides, videos, and decor you'll be using.
- Review all event logistics.

AFTER THE EVENT

- Post photos and a recap on social media
- Follow-up with all parents who attend to thank them for coming and invite them to your next Parent Discussion Group.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE



TIME ACTIVITY

12:00 - 12:30	<p>LUNCH Provide food for parents to enjoy as they arrive along with some table games, conversation starter cards or on-screen prompts, and all of the materials or swag that they will get as a part of this workshop.</p>
12:30 - 12:35	<p>OPENING GAME Play a game together as everyone arrives, you can find a variety of excellent options in the Grow Games & Icebreakers app.</p>
12:35-12:50	<p>MAIN SESSION Briefly introduce your team before diving into the main session.</p>
12:50 - 1:00	<p>BREAK Give directions to parents as to where they will be moving next for their breakout groups based on the ages of the kids they are raising. Prompt them to discuss what they have just heard in this main session as they transition.</p>
1:00 - 1:20	<p>BREAKOUT SESSION Give parents a few minutes to share at their tables or with the people sitting next to them before teaching your breakout sessions.</p>
1:20 - 1:30	<p>CLOSING SESSION Give away some prizes, invite parents to share stories or takeaways, and send everyone home!</p>

TRAINING OUTLINE



WHAT?

ACTIVITY | Icebreaker Activity

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Log into the [Grow Games](#) app and find one of your favorite games—preferably one that is short and can make parents feel more comfortable in this environment together. Or, play one of your favorite ministry games!

YOUR MINISTRY VISION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** During this section, take a few moments to...
 - Introduce yourself.
 - Introduce any volunteers who are present.
 - Share about any upcoming events.
 - Talk about your ministry's mission.
 - Share your vision for the rest of the school year.

THE FOUR SPIRITUAL HABITS

- One of the best parts of working with kids and teenagers is being able to help disciple them. Our ministry gets to partner with you and your families to help your kids and teenagers grow closer to God. Ministry might seem like it's just a fun, free-for-all, but we really have a goal in mind—to help your kids and teenagers grow in their faith.
- And, really, that's probably the most important part of ministry to kids and teenagers. That's because spiritual growth is the lens through which we see everything else we do in ministry. Everything we do—from games, teaching, small groups, and events—is to help kids and teenagers grow spiritually.
- One of the ways we invest in spiritual growth and discipleship is by teaching kids and teenagers to develop and cultivate four spiritual habits. There's no concrete, exhaustive list of spiritual habits, but we think we all grow best when we make it a habit to...
 - Spend time with God in personal spiritual disciplines.
 - Spend time with others in Christlike community.
 - Use our gifts to serve God and others.
 - Share our stories of faith.

SPEND TIME WITH GOD

- This is an obvious one, right? It's so obvious, in fact, that sometimes it's the *only* spiritual habit we can name. But "growing spiritually" isn't the same thing as "spending time with God." That's a big part of it, but it's not the whole picture. It's just one of the four ways we can grow in our faith.
- Spending time with God may not be the only spiritual habit that exists, but it's still a pretty important one. After all, if kids and teenagers are ever going to learn to live out their faith, they've got to start spending time with God on their own. That means opening the Bible, having conversations with God, and discovering how they best connect with God through worship on their own.

SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS

- One of the great things about ministry with kids and teenagers is helping them develop and participate in a healthy community. But "healthy community" doesn't just mean hanging out with other Christians. It's about growing in Christlike relationships with everyone. Christians and non-Christians, too. Because it isn't always a Bible study or potluck that helps us grow the most. It might be a friendship or a challenging conversation with someone who doesn't believe the same things we do.
- We can understand how healthy community helps us grow by looking at how Jesus interacted with his followers. He didn't disciple them in one-on-one conversations or at the nearest Starbucks. Jesus disciplined them in real life, in the context of relationships that were real, challenging, and imperfect. It was when the disciples interacted with each other and people who didn't follow Jesus that prompted some of his most significant teaching opportunities.

USE YOUR GIFTS

- Kids and teenagers need to know that God made them unique and special, with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. They also need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and make a difference in the world around them.
- When we use our gifts, we acknowledge that the things we've been given weren't by chance. Everything is a part of God's design. Using those gifts can become a spiritual habit. When kids and teenagers begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to make a difference in the world, to serve others, and to give back to the God who made them, they grow.

SHARE YOUR STORY

- Here's the fourth and final spiritual habit: kids and teenagers need to learn how to talk about God and who God is to them. But this spiritual habit is way bigger than just knowing how to talk about your relationship with God or why they made a decision to follow Jesus—although that's part of it. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives.
- And these habits aren't just for your kids and teenagers to develop. These habits are important for all of us. Whether we're seven, thirteen, or 63 years old, each of these habits can help us grow spiritually, too.
- So, let's go deeper into one of these habits and see how we—kids, teenagers, all of us—can develop the habit of sharing our stories.

SO WHAT?

WHY STORIES?

- Stories are such an important part of our culture. Our lives are filled with stories between movies, TV shows, and podcasts. You've probably shared a story with at least one person today alone!
- We love telling stories because they help us understand our world and experiences. Stories also help us build community and connection with the people around us. We can bond over common experiences and interests.
- Really, stories remind us that we're a part of a bigger history of what's happening. It's not just about us, but we're a part of a community of people trying to navigate life and faith together.
- That's one of the reasons why reading the Bible is so powerful. It reminds us that we're not the first people to try and figure this all out. Then, through stories, we can pass on wisdom, knowledge, and advice for how to navigate specific scenarios or life in general.

MAKE IT A HABIT

- When we talk about helping kids and teenagers build a habit of sharing their stories, we're not strictly talking about evangelism. That's an important step in the process, but it's not the only focus. Instead, we want to help our kids and teenagers grow comfortable making faith a part of their day-to-day conversations. We want to help them...
 - Talk about how they're growing.
 - Share what they're connecting with.
 - Ask faith-based questions.
 - Share how they're struggling.
- If we narrow sharing our stories down to only evangelism, then we might reduce it to becoming a sort of stressful, one-time conversation with a friend or stranger. But, we know that a single conversation won't sustain our growth for the course of our lives. So, we want to help kids and teenagers develop sharing their stories as an ongoing practice in their lives. That's why it's a habit!

STORY | Share about someone in your ministry.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share about a kid, teenager, or volunteer in your ministry who models this habit. Share about how they've made this a regular part of their life and how they have grown.*
- The thing about sharing our story—and, really, all of the spiritual habits—is how they are not only signs of growth, but they can sort of kickstart the spiritual growth of kids and teenagers, too.
- In her book, *Saying is Believing*, Amanda Drury shares how talking about faith and our experiences with God can actually change the way we understand God to be working in our lives. Saying what they believe and have experienced can help them believe and make their experiences feel even more real. So, by teaching kids and teenagers to share their stories, we can help them understand God in new ways while helping them grow in their relationships. Then, their growth will inspire them to share more, which will help them grow, which will inspire them, which will...well, you get it.
- When we teach kids and teenagers to share their stories or invest in any of these other habits, we're giving them sustainable pathways toward their spiritual growth. And, these are habits that aren't contextual or fixed to a specific moment in time. They are habits that can be practiced over and over throughout the rest of their lives.

NOW WHAT?

BREAKOUT GROUP SEND-OFF

- As parents, you have daily opportunities to help the kids and teenagers in your household develop important habits for their lives and their faith. We want to help you take these habits from an idea to something your kids and teenagers can start to do right now. And, we want to give you a few ideas for how you can incorporate these habits into your own spiritual growth too!
- So, how can we actually help kids and teenagers make a habit out of sharing their stories? Let's head to our breakout groups and explore some ideas!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Dismiss parents to their breakout rooms.*

ELEMENTARY BREAKOUT



WHAT?

MORE THAN EVANGELISM

- Today, we're exploring some ways we can help our kids redefine what it means to share their faith stories. As we talked about in the main session, these stories have to do with more than evangelism. Sure, that's a really important part of it, but it's not the full picture of what it means to share a faith story.
- As we help our kids step further into their faith, our goal is to create sustainable, repeatable ways for them to invest in their faith. We want to focus on building habits that can last a lifetime. But it's not as easy as just saying, "Go do that thing." Really, sharing faith stories is a struggle even for us adults.

ACTIVITY | One-Minute Story Swap

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have parents gather in groups of four to six. Set a one-minute timer and have each group choose one adult to start. Once the timer begins, parents will have one minute to share their faith story. Once the timer ends, the parent to their left begins. Repeat until every parent has had a chance to share their story.*
- Sharing your story is a lot harder than it might seem—especially when you don't feel prepared! There are so many parts of your life to think through and evaluate in the moment. But if that activity was difficult for you, don't worry. I can struggle to share my story, too.

STORY | A Time You Struggled to Share Your Story

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a story about a moment when you could have shared your story with someone but didn't. Focus on the things you might have been feeling, the context of the conversation, and whether or not you were in a time crunch. Help parents empathize with their kids and remember it can be difficult to talk about faith.*
- There are so many factors that go into play when it comes to sharing our stories of faith. We may not expect our kids to sit with a friend over a juice box and have deep conversations, but we might not realize we hold expectations for their behavior or how they invite friends to join them at church.
- Really, those same struggles stick with us as adults, but we may be more ready to justify them because we have other responsibilities to take care of. No one is expecting you to drop everything all the time to talk about your faith. If that were the case, nothing would ever get done!
- Instead, what are some of the ways we can make sharing our faith a regular part of our lives—not just with our words, but with our actions, too? What are some simple ways we can teach our kids—and ourselves—to think about sharing our stories differently?

DISCUSSION

- What feelings come to the surface when you think about sharing your story?
- Do you remember the first time you talked to someone outside of your family about your faith? What was that experience like?
- Why might a kid struggle to talk about their faith with others?

SO WHAT?

TEN WAYS TO HELP KIDS SHARE THEIR STORIES

- Before we get into how we can help kids create their habits, there are a couple of things we should make clear...
 - **This is not an exhaustive list.** Some of these ideas might connect with you or inspire you. Some of these might fall flat for your family. That's okay! At the end of this, we'll have a chance to talk through a few things together, and you can share your own ideas and dream up entirely new ways to inspire your kids together. This is a starting place to get things moving as you partner with us and help your kids invest in their faith at home.
 - **Stay flexible.** We all grow out of certain habits and practices as we age. You probably have a different morning routine now than ten or twenty years ago. That's okay! You can adjust your plan and adapt to how your kid is growing. You have all the permission you need to stay flexible and meet your kids and families in whatever season of life you find yourselves. If you discover one idea isn't working, add a new one or shift your ideas around completely. It's all for you to customize with the people in your household.
- So, let's jump in! Here are ten different ways you can lead your family as they grow spiritually and make a habit of sharing their stories...

1. PROCESS YOUR STORY

- This first one seems obvious, but it's so important! The more you know about your story, the more you can help articulate the process with your kids.
- We tend to think of our faith stories as having a point of "arrival," where we've made it, and we're finally doing the thing we've been aiming for. But that's not really how things work. You're part of an ongoing process of growth that started way back when you first heard about Jesus.
- No matter how old you are or how long you've been following Jesus, your story is ready to share. You already have your own unique experiences with God that someone could hear about. You have your own habits and perspectives that could help someone else grow closer to God.
- So, if you've never taken the time to think about your faith journey—like when you first heard about Jesus, or how you've grown over the last several years—this is probably the best place to start.
- The more you know about your story and experiences, the more prepared you will be to help your kids make a habit of sharing their own!

2. SHARE ABOUT WHO FIRST SHARED JESUS WITH YOU

- Every great story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The problem, though, is we tend to think of the stories of our faith as being one story containing those parts. The truth is, our faith story is actually a whole bunch of different, smaller stories.
- So, rather than focusing on this big story, what if we picked one of the smaller ones and talked our kids through that story first? Help your kids understand that sharing their faith stories can be as easy as telling about someone who made a difference in your life.
- Spend time talking with your kids about the people who introduced you to Jesus first. Talk about who they were, how you met, and how they impacted your life. These conversations can help inspire your kids to care for the people around them. They never quite know how one conversation can make a difference in the life of someone close to them.

3. SHARE ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED (AND ARE STILL LEARNING)

- Sharing faith stories isn't talking about the past only. It also means talking through the things we're learning right now. Your relationship with God is constantly growing and taking shape. Again, there's never a point when you "arrive" and stop growing. So, why not share with your kids about the things they are learning?
 - Ask them what they learned in their Sunday school class, and then share one or two things you learned during the service.
 - Tell them about a podcast you're listening to or a book you've read that helped you understand God in a new way.
 - Share your favorite passage of Scripture and why it's made a difference in your life.
 - Talk about a worship song you've heard recently that has inspired you.
- Really, your kids just want to hear stories about you, your life as a kid, and your life as an adult. Be sure to share these stories often!

4. CONNECT TO YOUR KID'S EXPERIENCE

- Kids experience all types of emotions throughout the day. Whether they're upset, sleepy, or hungry, you can use those feelings as a launching point to share part of your story by asking them to talk about a time when...
 - God helped them through a situation that upset them.
 - God helped them with something they needed.
 - They felt safe because of who God is.
- Or, use TV shows, movies, books, and games as a way to weave faith into your conversation naturally. Ask questions like...
 - Which character do you think is acting most like Jesus?
 - If you experienced that, how would it make you feel?
 - How would you talk to God about that experience?

5. MAKE CONVERSATION CARDS

- If you're worried about running out of things to talk about with your kids and family, you can create some conversation starter cards and put them in a box. Write down some questions, like...
 - What do you think God is like?
 - When do you feel most connected to God?
 - What's your favorite story from the Bible?
 - Who's someone you want to be like?
 - What's a question you might want to ask God?
 - What's one problem in the world you wish you could solve?
- Then, you can pick a card and discuss it in the car, at a meal, or while waiting in line at the store.

6. DO AN "ASK ME ANYTHING"

- Sometimes, kids just need a safe place to ask their questions. Instead of expecting them to ask the random questions floating through their heads, set a regular time in your schedule to answer any question your kid may have.
- Once a month, you and your kids can list all the questions they'd like answered. If they can write, set aside a box and note cards in your house for them to write down their questions. Otherwise, list the random thoughts and ideas you might not have time to answer right away.
- Then, during your Ask Me Anything time, go through their list of questions and answer them honestly. If you don't know the answer, you can take time to look up the answer together!

7. ASK SMALLER QUESTIONS

- You might need to simplify the question to help your kid make a habit of sharing their story. We might be able to ask adults, "What's your testimony?" but kids will need a smaller, simpler question to answer. Here are a few questions you can ask instead...
 - What are you learning about God right now?
 - What do you love about Jesus?
 - Why do you follow God?
 - What is something God has done for you?
 - What are some things you like to say to God?
- When we ask kids smaller questions, we can help them focus on what's most important. They might not be able to articulate their whole testimony in one sitting, but they can answer simple questions and piece their story together.

8 . SHARE YOUR "HIGHS, LOWS, & HOPE TO GROW"

- Sharing about "highs and lows" is a ministry staple. It's asking kids to talk about the best part of their week and some of the less-than-great parts. You can add a new element by sharing how you hope to grow in your faith.
- Whether in the car, cooking a meal together, or getting ready for bed, this is a simple way to talk about faith and how you hope to grow with your kids. Simply ask questions like...
 - Tell me about something this week that made you laugh.
 - Talk about a moment this week that made you happy.
 - Tell me about something that happened this week that made you upset.
 - Share about a moment this week you're not that proud of.
 - What is something you want to try doing differently next week?
 - What is something new you learned this week that you want to keep working on?

9. SHARE YOUR STORY THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS

- You don't have to speak to share your story. Help your kids learn to share their stories by sharing through actions. Make a habit out of serving together or serving each other.
 - Find a ministry at your church you can all serve in.
 - Take time to clean up your neighborhood each week.
 - Help your kids use their gifts to make a difference in their community.
 - Hold the door open for someone and smile at them as they walk through.
 - Put the trash bins away for your neighbor.
 - Thank the crossing guard in front of the school.
 - Let cars in front of you as you drive and speak kindly about other cars on the road.
- Talking about our stories is an important part of sharing our faith, but it's not the only way. Sometimes, our actions can communicate more than our words ever could. Help kids learn to serve the people around them as an important way to share their stories and relationship with God.

10. FOLLOW THROUGH

- We've all lived through enough New Year's resolutions to know our ideas can be bigger than what's practical. Helping your kid create a sustainable habit isn't about throwing the whole book of ideas at them. Rather, it's about making small, intentional changes that lay a foundation for healthy habits.
- One of the most important things you can do to help kids share their stories is to follow through. When planning a way to help your kids, consider your family's schedule and time commitments. Consider the times when you can get the most engagement with the least amount of effort on your part. Then, follow through.

Stick to your plan and re-assess after a few weeks. Talk with other families about what works for them and adapt everything to meet your family's needs and context. And if you have questions or need more ideas, we're here to help!

NOW WHAT?

MAKE IT A HABIT

- Helping kids learn to share their stories doesn't have to be complicated. With just a few simple ideas, we can start to sow the seeds that grow into healthy habits and inspire ourselves to lead the change by reshaping some of our own habits.
- So, what could it look like for your family to try some of these? Or what are some ideas we didn't list that have worked for you?
- There's no one right way to help your kids. And you have a whole room full of parents in the same phase of life as you with their own ideas, stories, challenges, and encouragement. Let's take a few minutes and talk through how we can help our kids share their stories.

DISCUSSION

- Which of these ideas most inspires you?
- Which one seems most difficult to you?
- How might you adapt these ideas to meet your family's needs and context?

PRESCHOOL BREAKOUT



WHAT?

MORE THAN EVANGELISM

- Today, we're exploring some ways we can help our kids redefine what it means to share their faith stories. As we talked about in the main session, these stories have to do with more than evangelism. Sure, that's a really important part of it, but it's not the full picture of what it means to share a faith story—especially since preschoolers only recently learned to talk.
- So, then, what does it look like for us to help our kids learn to share about their faith? We're asking our kids to go out and preach the good news at their age, but it's still important for us to help them scoop up as much information about who God is. Over time, our kids will take those little nuggets of information and experience and fold them into their lives as they grow and mature.
- That's our starting point. It's helping kids make sense of their daily experiences and those little pieces of data about who God is and what life is all about. We want to take those things and help our preschoolers begin to understand them.

ACTIVITY | Vetoed Vocabulary

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Select one parent as a volunteer and bring them to the front of the room. Within a two-minute timer, the volunteer must get someone in the room to guess the word "salvation" without using any of the following words:*
 - Faith
 - Savior
 - Saved
 - Religion
 - Redeemed
 - Jesus
 - God
 - Holy Spirit
- It can be so hard to explain something when you don't have the right language for it. It's even harder when you don't know that the right words or concepts even exist! But that's what it's like when we help our preschoolers learn to share their stories. We are slowly helping them understand their experiences and make sense of them in relation to who they are and who God is.

STORY | A Time You Struggled to Share Your Story

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Share a story about a moment when you could have shared your story with someone but didn't. Focus on the things you might have been feeling, the context of the conversation, and whether or not you were in a time crunch. Help parents empathize with their kids and remember it can be difficult to talk about faith.
- Even when we do have the right words and language, we adults can still struggle to talk about our faith. So, while we may not expect our kids to sit with a friend over a juice box and have deep conversations, we might not realize just how new this whole experience can be for our kids.

DISCUSSION

- What feelings come to the surface when you think about sharing your story?
- Do you remember the first time you talked to someone outside of your family about your faith? What was that experience like?
- Why might a kid struggle to talk about their faith with others?

SO WHAT?

TEN WAYS TO HELP KIDS SHARE THEIR STORIES

- Before we get into how we can help kids create their habits, there are a couple of things we should make clear...
 - **This is not an exhaustive list.** Some of these ideas might connect with you or inspire you. Some of these might fall flat for your family. That's okay! At the end of this, we'll have a chance to talk through a few things together, and you can share your own ideas and dream up entirely new ways to inspire your kids together. This is a starting place to get things moving as you partner with us and help your kids invest in their faith at home.
 - **Stay flexible.** We all grow out of certain habits and practices as we age. You probably have a different morning routine now than ten or twenty years ago. That's okay! You can adjust your plan and adapt to how your kid is growing. You have all the permission you need to stay flexible and meet your kids and families in whatever season of life you find yourselves. If you discover one idea isn't working, add a new one or shift your ideas around completely. It's all for you to customize with the people in your household!
- So, let's jump in! Here are ten different ways you can lead your family as they grow spiritually and make a habit of sharing their stories...

1. PROCESS YOUR STORY

- This first one seems obvious, but it's so important! The more you know about your story, the more you can help articulate the process with your kids.
- We tend to think of our faith stories as having a point of "arrival," where we've made it, and we're finally doing the thing we've been aiming for. But that's not really how things work. You're part of an ongoing process of growth that started way back when you first heard about Jesus.
- No matter how old you are or how long you've been following Jesus, your story is ready to share. You already have your own unique experiences with God that someone could hear about. You have your own habits and perspectives that could help someone else grow closer to God.
- So, if you've never taken the time to think about your faith journey—like when you first heard about Jesus, or how you've grown over the last several years—this is probably the best place to start.
- The more you know about your story and experiences, the more prepared you will be to help your kids make a habit of sharing their own!

2. SHARE ABOUT WHO FIRST SHARED JESUS WITH YOU

- Every great story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The problem, though, is we tend to think of the stories of our faith as being one story containing those parts. The truth is, our faith story is actually a whole bunch of different, smaller stories.
- So, rather than focusing on this big story, what if we picked one of the smaller ones and talked our kids through that story first? Help your kids understand that sharing their faith stories can be as easy as telling about someone who made a difference in your life.
- Spend time talking with your kids about the people who introduced you to Jesus first. Talk about who they were, how you met, and how they impacted your life. These conversations can help inspire your kids to care for the people around them. They never quite know how one conversation can make a difference in the life of someone close to them.

3. SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND STORIES OFTEN

- To help kids make a habit out of sharing their stories, you'll want to make it a habit, too. Model what it looks like for faith to become a regular, go-to topic of conversation in your life by sharing your stories about God and your thoughts.
- When we share this way, we take some of the pressure off our kids and give them a great model to follow. Kids can see that talking about our faith doesn't need to be reserved for the pulpit or the church building. We can do it every single day.
- You're teaching kids how to communicate their relationships and experiences with God in plain language by talking about your stories and sharing your thoughts. Plus, you're setting up a platform for them to practice sharing their own experiences as they participate in the conversation.

4. SHARE ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING

- Sharing faith stories isn't talking about the past only. It also means talking through the things we're learning right now. Your relationship with God is constantly growing and taking shape. Again, there's never a point when you "arrive" and stop growing. So, why not share with your kids about the things you are learning? You can use prompts to get the conversation going, like...
 - Today at church, I learned ___ about God. What about you?
 - I just read in the Bible that Jesus said ____.
 - One of my favorite things about God is ____.
 - Let's listen to this song together.

5. INVOLVE THEIR SENSES

- Help kids explore their relationship with God by connecting their stories to their senses.
 - Gather some fragrant items around the house—fruits, spices, coffee, perfumes, flowers, and the like. Ask about which smells they enjoy the most or what they think God might smell like.
 - Have them feel different textures of fabric or toys and ask which reminds them of God.
 - Collect some things from around the house that make noise like timers, toys, instruments, and pots or pans. Then, ask "What does God sound like?"
 - Invite preschoolers to draw what they think God looks like. Or, if your preschooler can't draw, fill a page with all the colors and talk about how God made all these wonderful colors.
 - Offer different foods and remind them God made all of these flavors! Then say thank you to God for your favorite foods!

6. SHARE SMALL TRUTHS

- We want to help kids begin to relate who they are with who God is. One way to do that is to share small truths your preschoolers can hold onto, like...
 - God loves me.
 - God cares about me.
 - God is everywhere.
 - God knows when I am sad.
 - God knows when I am happy.
- Say these things together regularly. To make them easier to remember, you can set the words to music or a melody

7. READ TOGETHER

- Reading other stories can be an important part of helping your preschooler share their story. Borrow or purchase Bible storybooks and spend time learning Bible stories through vivid picture books.
- Not only does this give you a great opportunity to connect with your kid, but it also creates a space for them to ask questions about the story, their lives, and what God is like.

8. USE THEIR EMOTIONS AS A PROMPT

- Kids experience all types of emotions throughout the day. Whether they're upset, sleepy, or hungry, use those feelings as a launching point to share part of your story.
- Tell them about a time when...
 - God helped you through a situation that upset you.
 - God helped you with something you needed.
 - You felt safe because of who God is.
- These moments not only help you connect your kid's experiences with God's presence in their life, but they also give you a chance to connect your story with the emotions and feelings your kid feels in the moment. You're building up your kid's faith, giving them language to understand God, and connecting with them as a parent.

9. SHARE YOUR STORY THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS

- You don't have to speak to share your story. Help your kids learn to share their stories by sharing through actions. Make a habit out of serving together or serving each other.
 - Find a ministry at your church you can all serve in.
 - Take time to clean up your neighborhood each week.
 - Help your kids use their gifts to make a difference in their community.
- Talking about our stories is an important part of sharing our faith, but it's not the only way. Sometimes, our actions can communicate more than our words ever could. Help kids learn to serve the people around them as an important way to share their stories and relationship with God.

10. FOLLOW THROUGH

- We've all lived through enough New Year's resolutions to know our ideas can be bigger than what's practical. Helping your kid create a sustainable habit isn't about throwing the whole book of ideas at them. Rather, it's about making small, intentional changes that lay a foundation for healthy habits.
- One of the most important things you can do to help kids share their stories is to follow through. When planning a way to help your kids, consider your family's schedule and time commitments. Consider the times when you can get the most engagement with the least amount of effort on your part. Then, follow through.

Stick to your plan and re-assess after a few weeks. Talk with other families about what works for them and adapt everything to meet your family's needs and context. And if you have questions or need more ideas, we're here to help!

NOW WHAT?

MAKE IT A HABIT

- Helping kids learn to share their stories doesn't have to be complicated. With just a few simple ideas, we can start to sow the seeds that grow into healthy habits *and* inspire ourselves to lead the change by reshaping some of our own habits.
- So, what could it look like for your family to try some of these? Or what are some ideas we didn't list that have worked for you?
- There's no one right way to help your kids. And you have a whole room full of parents in the same phase of life as you with their own ideas, stories, challenges, and encouragement. Let's take a few minutes and talk through how we can help our kids share their stories.

DISCUSSION

- Which of these ideas most inspires you?
- Which one seems most difficult to you?
- How might you adapt these ideas to meet your family's needs and context?

