



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

Use an animated video to review previous stories.

② **prepare** FOR THE STORY

Focus our minds for imaginative listening.

③ **imagine** THE STORY

Listen actively to a live telling of a Bible story.

④ **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE

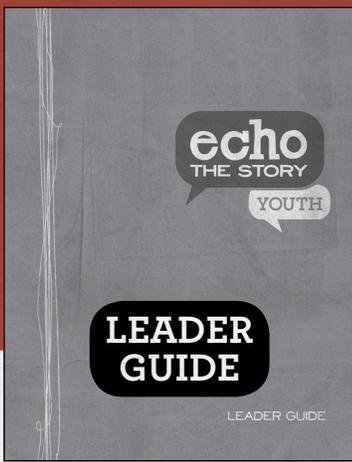
Record observations by sketching or writing.

⑤ **remix** THE STORY

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

⑥ **connect** TO YOUR STORY

Share insights through guided dialogue.



Echo the Story: Youth 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 process of each session and gives you the prompts, scripts, and encouragement you need to lead well.

Echo the Story: Youth Sketch Journals

These are creative logbooks of each participant's journey through the stories. These work in tandem with the Leader Guide and are used throughout each session. Make sure every person has a Sketch Journal!

Echo the Story: Youth DVD

At the start of each session your group will watch a video that includes a group interaction and a fast-paced review of previous sessions' stories.

ALSO ON THE DVD: LEADER VIDEOS!

▶ ECHO THE STORY LEADER PROMO:

This **sixty-second video** gives a fast overview of the Echo the Story experience and can be used with leaders and parents to help get them excited about Echo the Story.

▶ THE STORY BEHIND ECHO THE STORY:

This **three-minute video** explains how Echo the Story was created, why it was created, and how it has worked with other participants.

▶ HOW TO LEAD AN ECHO THE STORY SESSION:

This practical, **six-minute video** is the best way for you to get a sense of what each session looks like and how best to lead.

We recommend before you read any further in this guide, you watch all three leader videos on the DVD. 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:

the promise

SESSION OVERVIEW

SUPPLIES

- ▶ **Echo the Story: Youth DVD** and DVD player with a TV or projector
- ▶ **Echo the Story: Youth Sketch Journals** for every participant
- ▶ Markers, pens, and colored pencils

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

The Story So Far video begins with a sixty-second interaction for your group. Following this interaction, the video will show a fast-paced, animated review of the previous story.

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

Participants will draw their own version of this session's story symbol in their Sketch Journals. Then the leader will share a scripted segment that helps to create a reflective environment and encourage imaginative listening.

3 **imagine** THE STORY [7 MINUTES]

The leader will now verbally 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 [7 MINUTES]

After a quiet moment of reflection, participants will take ninety seconds to capture in their Sketch Journals aspects of the story that stood out to them.

5 **remix** THE STORY [12 MINUTES]

The leader will then ask someone of an opposite gender to do a second telling of the story. During this telling, participants will choose from two REMIX activities (included in the Sketch Journals) 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 asking participants to share their observations and insights from the story. A set of intentional questions is provided in this Leader Guide.

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.
- ▶ CUE: After the video, get a few brief responses to the question:

* As you watched the video, what part of the story stood out to you?

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



prepare FOR THE STORY

[10 MINUTES]

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 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:

Before we tell the next story, I want to share a helpful way we can look at the Bible. [There is a summary of this idea on **page 41** of your Sketch Journal.]

For nearly a thousand years, Jewish rabbis have passed on a special way of looking at Scripture. They call it the *Seventy Faces of Torah*—the Torah being the first five books of the Bible. This phrase comes from comparing Scripture to a beautiful diamond with seventy sides or faces.

Imagine holding up a diamond and slowly turning it, allowing light to reflect further detail, beauty, depth, and brilliance off of its many sides.

As the ancient Jewish people listened and looked deeply into the Scriptures, they anticipated that each person would see something unique reflected back, illuminated from the same source of light—*God's Spirit*.

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.

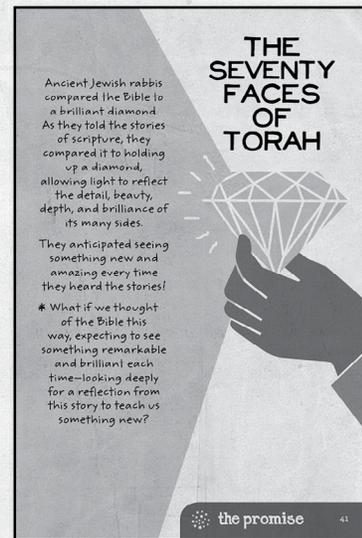
And when you see something in the story—something simple, or beautiful, or profound—I hope you will share it with the group! Each reflection can teach us something new.

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

[7 MINUTES]

Leader Narrates:

Generations after Noah and the flood, the Earth was filled with people again.

Many forgot that they'd been created in God's image, and followed their own disruptive ways. But God didn't give up on humans.

God made a deep, binding promise, called a *covenant*, with Abram, a descendant of Noah. God promised him:

"I will bless you and make known throughout history!

Your family will become a great nation . . . that I'll 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 (SAY-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 they called the *Promised Land*.

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 am 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]

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.

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

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

So Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she ran away.

Eventually Hagar returned and gave birth to Abram's son, Ishmael.

But Sarai still did not have a child. [pause]

More than ten years passed. Then, suddenly, God appeared to Abram.

Abram 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 did 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!"* [pause]

It had taken twenty-five years, but God's promise to give Abraham and Sarah their own son had come true.

This was the beginning of a new kind of people, called to live in God's ways and extend God's blessing to the entire Earth.

Abraham's family would eventually grow into a large nation. They would be called Hebrews, and later the people of Israel, named after Abraham's grandson. The name Israel means *struggler with God*.

Soon, we'll hear more about why they were given this unique name . . .



capture WHAT YOU NOTICE

[7 MINUTES]

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Leader Says:

Take a quiet moment to close your eyes and let the story replay in your mind like a movie. Don't rush this. Allow yourself to explore the story again.

Pay attention to what you see and sense, and the parts of the story that stand out to you.

▶ **CUE:** After twenty seconds of quiet, continue.

CAPTURE WHAT YOU NOTICE

Leader Says:

With the story still fresh in your mind, take the next **ninety seconds** to quickly CAPTURE what you are seeing in the story. Space is provided for this on **pages 44–45** of your Sketch Journal.

Please quietly draw or write your thoughts. Use whichever method makes it easiest for you to capture what you're thinking about this story.

In a few minutes, you'll get a chance to share your thoughts with our group.

▶ **CUE:** After two minutes, lead a short dialogue using the questions below.

CAPTURING QUESTIONS

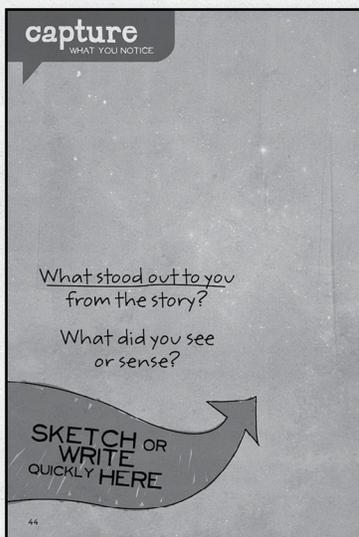
Leader Says:

I am excited to hear what you saw and sensed in this story! I'm not looking for specific answers; it's *your* observations that have meaning. Who would like to share . . .

- * What stood out to you from this story?
- * What did this story make you wonder about?

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

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



Leader Says:

We are going to listen to the story again, this time with a different voice telling it. During this telling of the story, you have some options in your Sketch Journal.

These are called REMIX activities, because they are designed to help you *retell part of the story in your own unique way.*

Choose one of the REMIX activities:

Drawing activity on pages 46–47 or

Creative writing activity on pages 48–49.

Keep in mind: these are not fill-in-the-blank, boring workbook activities; these are designed to help you *express yourself* and share what you see in the story.

Your thoughts, words, sketches and creativity are what is important here. If you invest yourself in one of these activities, you will be surprised at what you create.

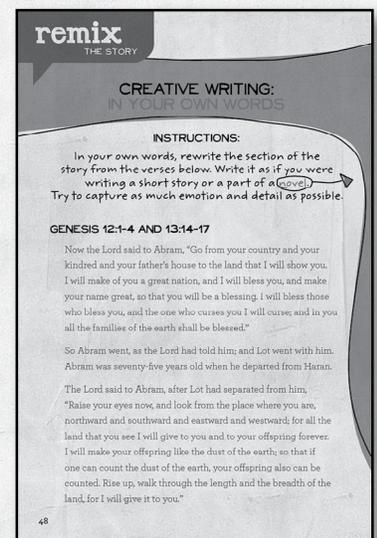
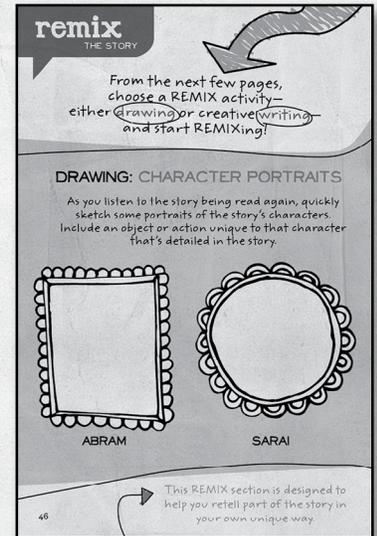
Let's begin our REMIX activities now while we listen to the story being retold.

▶ **CUE:** For this second telling, use a storyteller of an opposite gender from your first telling. *Different voices help people to listen with fresh ears.*

Leader Says: [After the second telling]

Take three or four more minutes to finish your REMIX, and then we'll share our REMIXes with each other.

▶ **CUE:** After about four minutes, go to the next section.



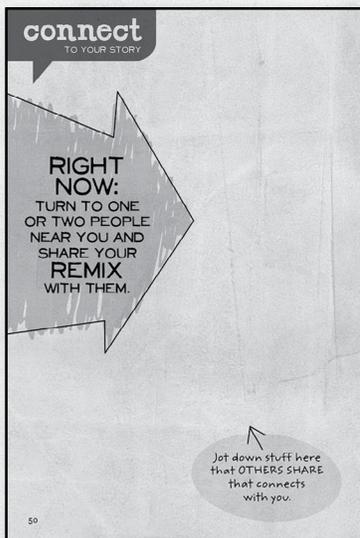
Preview the REMIX Activities

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

[20 MINUTES]



REMIX SHARING

Leader Says:

Turn to one or two people near you and share your REMIX with them. Please don't make fun of a person's art or words—just listen and encourage them, O.K.?

► **CUE:** After two minutes, begin the dialogue.

GROUP DIALOGUE

Leader Says:

I am excited to hear more of your thoughts about this story! As we begin a group dialogue now, I'd love to hear from all of you. If something that someone shares connects with you, write it down on **page 50** of your Sketch Journal.

- * Who would like to share something you've written or drawn from the REMIX section?
- * How would you describe Abraham and Sarah from this story?
 - What do you think Abraham's faith was like?
 - Why do you think God renamed them? Why is this significant?
 - How did they try to fix the situation themselves?
- * What did God promise to Abraham and Sarah?
[skip if already reiterated]
 - 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 they struggled to believe (and laughed at!) God's promise? Do you think you would've struggled, too?
- * Share the *first* thing that comes to your mind when I ask this question: What do you notice about *God* in this story?
 - Where in the story did you see this?

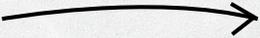
DIALOGUE PREP

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 are for follow-up. Use as time allows and as needed.

FINAL QUESTION:

Take a moment in quiet and think about this last question:

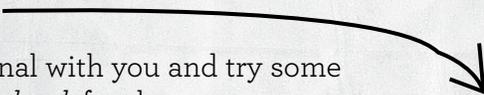
- * *What does this story say about US? ... about YOU?*

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. Encourage participants to personalize their ideas using “I” and “me” instead of “you” and “we” language. This helps keep participants from being overly general or preachy.

Leader Says:

This was a really meaningful time. *Thank you!* You did a great job, and I’m so excited for us to gather again and experience the next story!

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

I’d encourage you to take your Sketch Journal with you and try some of these activities. But remember to *bring it back* for the next story. Don’t forget! If you are worried about forgetting it, you may leave your Sketch Journal with me.

- ▶ **CUE:** To close this session, ask someone to pray.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER

- * 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?
- * Did you hear anything that reminded you of the first two stories?
 - Do you see or hear anything that seems to be the same in all the stories?

