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The Story Church Campaign Kit

WELCOME

Welcome to *The Story* Church Campaign Kit, and congratulations! You are about to lead your church through an experience that has a specific goal of transforming average people into devoted Bible readers. What a tremendously beneficial undertaking for your church.

In this Church Campaign Kit, you have resources and tools to take every member of the family through *The Story*, a book of carefully-selected verses from the Bible organized chronologically from Genesis to Revelation. Your church members will come to understand God's story as a seamless narrative of God and his pursuit of a relationship with mankind.

Between now and the end of your journey through *The Story*, your church will experience transformation on several levels:

- Individuals will improve their personal Bible literacy.
- Parents will be equipped to be the spiritual leaders of their children, as families learn together from aligned *Story* books designed for every age group.
- Your whole church will grow in two dimensions: depth and width. The depth is a result of the greater unity from the corporate understanding of how the Bible fits together. The width comes from spreading the reach of *The Story* to all the age-related ministries in the church, and beyond.

SURPRISE: *The Story* has proven to be an unexpected outreach tool. There's something about it that attracts visitors, that releases people to feel more comfortable to invite their friends. When they know what's going to happen from week to week, people seem to invite their friends more readily. And people in the community are attracted to a church that is going through the Bible.

GETTING STARTED

Are you ready to get going? Here is a simple pathway to learn all about *The Story*.

Step 1: Watch the webinar, **Starting The Story**, found on the Church Resource DVD, or go to www.TheStory.com/video-on-demand

Step 2: Read this **Implementation Guide**.

Step 3: Review the product samples and resource DVDs in the **Church Campaign Kit**.

Step 4: Orient yourself to the additional resources in the **Online Resource Library**. See the inside back pocket of this Implementation Guide for access instructions.

HOW TO USE THE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This Implementation Guide has been developed for use by the senior minister and those who have a role in leading your church through *The Story*. You will want to read it through from cover to cover when you are first getting oriented to the campaign, rely on it when you are in the preparation phase, and refer to it from time to time as you are in your implementation phase.

Some key things that are covered in the Implementation Guide include:

1. Explanation of how the book called *The Story* was developed
2. Overview of the *The Story* Church Campaign, and all age group resources available in the kit
3. Step-by-step plan to prepare your leaders and your church for *The Story*
4. Implementation guidelines for campaign timing and finding supplementary resources
5. What's next for your church after going through *The Story*

ABOUT THE STORY

The book called *The Story* is a best-selling abridged chronological Bible. There are no verse references in the text, and the segments of scripture are woven together with transition text written to connect the storyline so it reads like a seamless story. For people new to the Bible, this way of reading scripture reduces the intimidation one can feel when approaching the full-length unabridged Bible, and it gives them a holistic and sequential picture of the storyline of Scripture. For seasoned Bible veterans, the chronological arrangement of the essential texts reveals the way the whole Bible fits together in a single grand narrative. Reading through *The Story* triggers interest and understanding, and drives people back to the original Bible texts for further exploration.

HOW WAS THE STORY ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED?

The Story was originally published by Zondervan in 2005 to provide a product that would help achieve the Zondervan Bible Department's mission of "more people engaging the Bible more." *The Story* is an abridged chronological Bible, developed for the express purpose of helping people engage with the Bible more easily and with better overall understanding. In 2011 *The Story* became the basis of one of the two largest corporate-wide initiatives in Zondervan's history (publishing the NIV update being the other one). Significantly, Zondervan has made its largest corporate investments in two Bible products that will truly help more people engage the Bible more.

The selection committee that chose the Scriptures for *The Story* was comprised of experts in Biblical product development from two separate organizations: the Bible Department at Zondervan, and the Livingstone Corporation, best-known as the original developers of the Life Application Bible. The editorial committee selected and organized the texts to tell the overarching story of the Bible, including passages that would be important for a first-time reader of the Bible to know. They chose texts that held to the overall flow of the narrative, giving readers a sense of the story of God's relationship with people. The target audience was both first-time readers and also readers familiar with the Bible but who were looking for a fresh way to engage the text. The team wrote transitions to tie the passages together and smooth out the narrative.

HOW WAS THE STORY REVIEWED?

The final Scripture choices and the transition texts received the same rigorous editorial review that all Zondervan Bible products receive, by the same editorial team that edits and reviews Zondervan study Bibles, devotional Bibles, and reference Bibles.

ARE THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES IDENTIFIED ANYWHERE?

You can find a list of all the passages included in each chapter of *The Story* on the Chart of References pages in the back of the book. Additional versions of the list are provided in the Online Resource Library. One of the most common requests we receive is for footnoted references or an indication of the scripture references somewhere within each chapter. In order to preserve the story-like reading of the passages, the scripture references are intentionally not provided with the text. Without the standard points of reference and biblical structures, readers of *The Story* are far more likely to experience new discoveries within familiar passages, and that is one of the main purposes of this book.

ABOUT THE NIV

The Story is an abridged Bible, arranging selected texts from the New International Version in chronological sequence. The latest revision to the New International Version was completed in the fall of 2010 after years of meticulous translation work by the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). The CBT was formed in 1965 to create a modern English Bible translation from the oldest and best-attested Biblical manuscripts. Since the most recent NIV update in 1984, the CBT has continued to meet every year in accordance with the NIV charter, which requires constant monitoring of developments in Biblical scholarship and English usage and the reflection of these developments in periodic updates to the text. The members of CBT, drawn from various denominations and from some of the finest academic institutions in the world, solicited and received input from scholars, pastors, missionaries, and lay persons and reviewed every proposal, many of which led to revisions to the text. The Bible is the bestselling book in history, and the NIV Bible is the bestselling version year after year, selling more than 400 million copies since its first full publication in 1978. Zondervan is the exclusive commercial publisher of the NIV Bible.

ABOUT THE STORY CHURCH CAMPAIGN

The Story Church Campaign is a collection of resources based on *The Story* that provides a complete spiritual growth pathway for every member of the family, reinforced by the teaching and focus on *The Story* during the weekend services and special events. *The Story* products are all aligned, based on 31 chapters that study the same segments of the Bible in chronological sequence. Classroom curriculum is included in the kit for every age-related ministry, so all the ministry leaders for the preschool, elementary, youth, and adult ministries departments can be teaching through the big story of the Bible over 31 weeks. Companion resources are available to enhance the personal experience of *The Story*, including trade books by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee, a reference guide, video-based going-deeper studies for adults, and trading cards for children.

The resources for all aspects of the Church Campaign are located in two places:

- Church Campaign Kit
- Online Resource Library



How to Access the Online Resource Library

- Go to www.TheStory.com/resourcelibrary.
- Sign in, using your unique username and password found on the back inside pocket of this Implementation Guide.

The Online Resource Library is where you'll go to find these great resources:

1. **Downloadable versions:** The files on the resource DVDs and children's CD-Roms in the Church Campaign Kit are duplicated online as downloadable files.
2. **Church-developed resources** to use as inspiration for developing your own tools, or to supplement what you get in the kit.
3. **Coaching sessions:** Campaign training for ministry leaders is offered on video, in conference calls, and in articles.

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

This Resource Overview walks section-by-section through all the key resources of *The Story*, explaining each resource and pointing to where it can be found.

PREPARATION & COMMUNICATION

Resources are provided for the pastor and church leaders to use to prepare the church for *The Story* by casting the vision and creating momentum.



The Story Church Resource DVD (included in the kit): This DVD contains a complete set of resources for those who communicate about the campaign to the church, including promo videos, training videos, graphics, artwork, video elements, and communications templates.

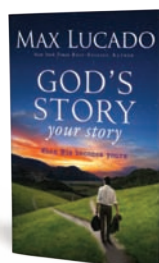
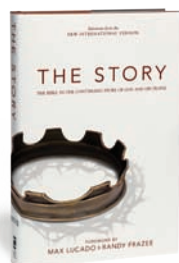


Included in the Online Resource Library: Examples of files developed by other churches are provided to give ideas for preparation, promotion and communication, such as 40 Days of Prayer, testimonial videos, welcome cards, weekly newsletters, and devotionals the minister can send out to the congregation.

WEEKEND SERVICES



Included in the Online Resource Library: Examples from other churches are provided to help the senior minister and the worship team prepare the weekly services around *The Story* themes, including a Sermon Video Library, sermon outlines, special features, handouts, weekly song selections, even an Easter musical.



Companion Resources
(Not included in the Kit)

ADULT MINISTRIES

Book and curriculum samples are included in the kit for evaluation purposes. Additional teaching options for adult ministries can be found in the Online Resource Library.

The Story A rewarding, whole-church journey that captivates and empowers participants as they engage in the Bible as a seamless, compelling story.

Church Campaign Suggestion: Buy one copy for every adult in your church.

Companion Resources:

The Heart of The Story (included in the kit) book and 31-week video-based curriculum by Randy Frazee. Discover the heart of God's Upper Story and the joy that comes as you align your story with God's.

God's Story, Your Story, 11-chapter book on the New Testament with 6-week video-based curriculum, by Max Lucado. God's grand epic of redemption and our discovery of meaning, purpose, and joy in it.

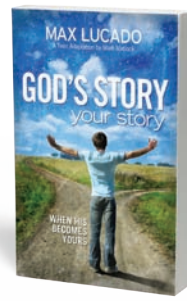
Exploring The Story, *A Reference Companion*. Commentary and accompanying charts and images explain history, characters, events, and theological concepts.



Included in the Online Resource Library: Examples of adult curriculum developed by other churches are provided. These offer different formats of adult materials, such as adult Sunday school or men's Bible studies. Other options offer studies of a different length, such as a 16-week video-based study for groups, with accompanying individual and family guides.



Adult curriculum helps small groups learn, discuss, and apply what they have experienced during *The Story* 31-week experience.



Companion Resource
(Not included in the kit)

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Book samples are included in the kit for evaluation purposes. The complete teen curriculum is included in the kit, and additional teaching options for youth ministries can be found in the Online Resource Library.

The Story: Teen Edition reveals the unfolding, grand narrative of the Scriptures. Using the clear, accessible text of the New International Version, this rendering of the Bible allows its stories, poems, and teachings to come together in a single, compelling read.

Church Campaign Suggestion: Buy one copy for every teen in your middle school and high school youth program.

Companion Resources:

God's Story, Your Story Youth Edition book by Max Lucado. Through New Testament examples, see the roadmap God has laid out to help teens reach the destination God planned for them.

Complete Curriculum (included in the kit): 31 experiential learning lessons for youth groups, featuring weekly stop-motion artist videos, Teacher's Guide, and Student Materials. This Michael Novelli curriculum is based on helping teens experience a story, rather than being told or shown, so they absorb it and remember it more thoroughly.



Included in the Online Resource Library: Alternative messages and activities developed by church youth leaders are posted in the Teen Toolchest.



Experiential learning and fun, creative illustrations help teens clearly understand *The Story*.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Product samples are included in the kit for evaluation purposes. The complete elementary, early elementary, and preschool curriculums are also included in the kit.



ELEMENTARY (ages 9-12)

The Story for Kids is a unique edition of the New International Reader's Version (NIRV) of the Bible done in story format that parallels the adult edition of *The Story*. Using actual Bible text, *The Story for Kids* gives kids a big-picture view of the Bible. Includes black-and-white illustrations and discussion questions.

Church Campaign Suggestion: Buy one copy for every child in your later elementary Sunday school program.

Companion Resources:

Elementary Trading Cards, Pack of 31, created to correspond to the elementary and early elementary curriculum as a motivational weekly take-home item.

Complete Curriculum (included in the kit): 31 lesson plans, kid skits, and activity sheets based on *The Story for Kids* help elementary children experience God's great love by bringing his story to life.

EARLY ELEMENTARY (ages 4-8)

The Story for Children is a unique storybook Bible written by beloved pastor and writer, Max Lucado, which tells the big picture of God's enormous love for his children!

Church Campaign Suggestion: Buy one copy for every child in your early elementary Sunday school program.

Companion Resources:

Elementary Trading Cards, Pack of 31, created to correspond to the elementary and early elementary curriculum as a motivational weekly take-home item.

Complete Curriculum (included in the kit): 31 lesson plans, kid skits, and activity sheets based on *The Story for Children* help early elementary children experience God's great love by bringing his story to life.

PRESCHOOL (ages 2-5)

The Story for Little Ones is filled with vibrant illustrations and simple text that bring 31 pivotal Bible stories to life and introduce children to God's great love story.

Church Campaign Suggestion: Buy one copy for every child in your preschool Sunday school program.

Companion Resources:

Preschool Trading Cards, Pack of 31, created to correspond to the preschool curriculum as a motivational weekly take-home item.

Complete Curriculum (included in the kit): 31 lesson plans, puppet scripts, and activity sheets based on *The Story for Little Ones* help preschool children experience God's great love by bringing his story to life.

PREPARATION

PREPARATION TIMELINE

The preparation timeline is divided into two segments, **Preparing Your Leaders** and **Preparing Your Church**:

1. **Preparing Your Leaders** is a three-phase segment and can be done as far in advance of your start date as you want. This is where you will cast the vision for *The Story* with your leaders and influencers, and gain buy-in for doing *The Story* at a future date.
2. **Preparing Your Church** begins eight weeks out from your campaign start date. During this time you will go through six steps to promote the campaign to your congregation, purchase and distribute the books, orient your teachers, and get people plugged into groups to deepen their experience with *The Story*.

PREPARING YOUR LEADERS

(To be completed any time two to six months out)

Stage 1: Establish your vision

Stage 2: Hold Vision Meetings

Stage 3: Recruit a team

PREPARING YOUR CHURCH

8 Weeks Out: Plan and budget (promotion, website, books)

6 Weeks Out: Place orders (books, promotional items)

4 Weeks Out: Promote to the church, recruit group hosts

3 Weeks Out: Prepare the teachers

2 Weeks Out: Populate groups

1 Week Out: Pass out books

Campaign Launch Weekend

Weeks 1-31

Ministry leaders teach *The Story*

Team meets monthly

PREPARING YOUR LEADERS

It is safe to say that the most critical part of your preparation phase is this one, **Preparing Your Leaders**. During this time, you will establish your vision and purpose for your church's journey through *The Story* and pass that vision along to your church's key leaders and influencers, and, in the process, gain their buy-in and go-ahead to do *The Story* at some time in the future.

The key things to accomplish during the **Preparing Your Leaders** segment of the planning phase are to establish your vision, gain leader buy-in, and recruit your team. Different churches will do these three things in different sequences, depending upon the leadership style of the pastor and the governance model of the church. Sequence them in the best order for your scenario.

Different churches will also do the **Preparing Your Leaders** segment at different numbers of weeks ahead of their campaign. In some churches, the pastor and leaders need to decide together a year ahead of time what the church will be doing for the next ministry year. In other churches, a one- or two-month lead time is all that is needed to set the direction for a 31-week series. But, if you are close to the time you want to start this program in your church, it is very important that you do not skip this first phase. The success or failure of this program will be determined by how effectively this first phase is carried out.

A successful **Preparing Your Leaders** phase is one that results in all the key leaders and influencers in the church having a unified sense of ownership of *The Story*, and a unified vision for its potential to help and change your church.

STAGE 1: ESTABLISH YOUR VISION AND PURPOSE FOR YOUR CHURCH'S JOURNEY THROUGH *THE STORY*.

This critical step of establishing your vision and purpose for your church's experience of *The Story* is something that should be done by the senior pastor and one or two trusted advisors who can delve in, pray hard, and dream big. By defining your vision for this program, you are putting words to the needs you sense in your congregation, and how you see this program helping to meet those needs. Do some spiritual imagining about what you want your congregation to be like, feel like, act like, one or two years beyond *The Story*. Then, determine some of the ways *The Story* can help you get there. Do you need to equip your people to be a more outreaching church? Do you want them to be more unified and loving with each other? Do you foresee a major project or new ministry that will need the whole church to band together to accomplish it? Your vision needs to be bigger than *The Story*. So, what's your goal? What do you want your people to become as a result of going through *The Story*?

The real vision for this journey is not confined to *The Story*, but is probably something bigger than *The Story*. For instance, at Oak Hills Church, their vision was to become more of an outreaching church, with a greater impact for Christ in their city. In order to get to that place, they felt their people needed to get a better understanding of the God they believe in. They saw *The Story* as a way to provide an appreciation of their spiritual roots and a solid foundation in Bible literacy, which could then become their platform from which to reach out and invite others to join in their faith journey.

In the next phase, when you are rallying all of your key leaders to decide together whether or not to do *The Story*, they will need to first see that there is a genuine need in your congregation before they can go to the next step with you to agree that *The Story* can be the solution that they need.

UPPER STORY AND LOWER STORY

As part of your meditation on the needs of your congregation and the potential of The Story to play a role in meeting those needs, consider the overarching theme of The Story, the Upper Story and Lower Story. The terms Upper Story and Lower Story give new language to the traditional concepts of God's sovereignty and the mystery of man's existence on earth. This fresh way of looking at broad theological themes gives clarity to the spiritual explorer, and rejuvenates the seasoned Christian. Refer to the following essay explaining the concepts of Upper Story and Lower Story to help you determine the place of The Story in the spiritual journey of your congregation.

The Bible contains an Upper Story and a Lower Story. The Upper Story tells the big picture, the grand narrative of God unfolding throughout history. The Lower Story contains the sometimes delightful, other times appalling particulars of human experience. Without the lens of the Upper Story, the Lower Story seems out of focus and perplexing. As we make our way through the Bible—*The Story*—we will be mindful of both the temporal, easily-seen events, and the not so obvious yet truly eternal realities. In the opening chapters of Genesis, the two stories are virtually one. God, who is love, creates the universe, and places humanity at the crown of all he brings into existence. Man and woman, as individuals and also in their collective, reflect God's image. People are both the objects of God's love and lovers in return.

But when the first man and woman choose to reject rather than respond, the Upper Story transitions to God's relentless pursuit and restoration of what was lost. That Upper Story never changes even to the last chapter of the Bible. The details in the Lower Story describe the many ways people mostly—with a few notable exceptions—resist God, and wreak havoc with themselves and each other. In trying to be God, people ruin what God has made, and pass that curse to their offspring. In one dramatic episode, God decides to start over by destroying all life through a flood except for eight people: Noah and his family. In the Lower Story, those few given that second chance fail miserably to build the new world God envisioned, and evil continues to hold sway. But in the Upper Story, God makes the promise that he won't ever flood the earth, thus teaching every generation that he is intent on redeeming what's broken, not destroying it.

One feature of biblically-literate people is they tend to focus more and more on the Upper Story and live in that realm; that knowledge rightly colors how they approach and apply any part of the Bible. It is knowledge of that Upper Story that gets us through the hard times in life, more so than through the Lower Story information. Immature believers tend to focus more on the particulars of a story and its immediate application, while more mature believers are able to put all they read into the larger picture of the Bible's overall story, and make application from that level of reading. It is important to instruct people to have this more full-orbed approach so they get away from the habit of isolated-verse-only application. This also will protect people from the common misapplications that can be made with some texts, including the "what it says to me" error that rips a verse out of its historical context. The Upper Story guides people into seeing every text as fitting into a bigger whole. Getting people to become not only more familiar with the Upper Story of the Bible but also to be wisely handling the various particulars of Scripture within that larger context is an enormous gain for any congregation.

Adapted, by Judson Poling, Willow Creek Church
Written to help align all the teaching pastors who would assist Randy Frazee
as he taught through *The Story* in Willow Creek's midweek services in 2005

STAGE 2: HOLD VISION MEETINGS WITH KEY LEADERS AND INFLUENCERS

Once you have put your vision into words, then you need to communicate it to your leaders during something called Vision Meetings. This is a process we highly recommend that ministers go through in order to onboard their leaders. You want to have the senior minister being the vision caster and the spiritual leader of this campaign. Vision Meetings are an important strategy to help you gain buy-in up front from those who will be most affected by this journey.

Why a Vision Meeting?

Besides prayer, there is probably nothing more important to the success of your journey through *The Story* than creating a sense of ownership amongst your church leaders and influencers. Too many churches have undertaken a major spiritual initiative without the complete buy-in of the leadership, and the problems that result can cause lasting damage.

What's a Vision Meeting?

Holding a Vision Meeting, or a series of Vision Meetings, is a crucial step in the preparation process for *The Story*. The purpose of a Vision Meeting is to gain the buy-in of your key leaders for the idea of taking your entire church through a year-long emphasis on *The Story*. Vision Meetings should have significance. Send out invitations, serve food, create a nice atmosphere, and don't rush – allow enough time for the vision to be communicated, for interaction to occur, and for people to feel heard.

Who comes to the Vision Meetings?

Your first Vision Meeting could be for your church staff and appointed leaders – those with named leadership roles in your church, such as your elders, deacons, trustees, council members, Sunday school teachers, etc. A second Vision Meeting could cast the net wider, and include the influencers in your church – those who may not necessarily have a formal position, but who are the thought leaders and respected influencers in your congregation – where they go, people follow; what they say carries weight.

What do we cover?

Here is a sample agenda for your Vision Meeting, and some principles to remember when communicating to your key leaders during this important time.

Cast the vision

It is essential that the senior minister be the vision-caster, and an enthusiastic one at that! The minister's personal enthusiasm is what will create an excitement about what your church can become. The minister, as the senior leader, is the one who can set the bar high enough to be a little scary for everyone, but a good, faith-invoking scary. And the minister's recommendation of *The Story* as the pathway towards realizing the vision that is bigger than *The Story* and goes beyond *The Story* will be the catalyst for embarking on this journey together.

Principle: The senior minister is the vision-caster, and the vision is bigger than *The Story*.

Explain *The Story*

Explain *The Story* and how you see it working in your church. Ideas to help you communicate the main purpose of the journey could include:

- Give copies of *The Story* to all the participants.
- Show samples of the children's and teen books.
- Watch Randy Frazee's introductory message for *The Story*, Deal or No Deal (found on the Church Resource DVD). This is a great explanation of the ways that a person in the church can engage with *The Story* over the course of the year.
- Suggest a clear purpose statement for *The Story* that these leaders can use when explaining what it is to others, such as:

The Story is a condensed chronological Bible, and in our church-wide journey through it we're going to discover how our story fits into God's story.

Principle: Be clear and complete in explaining *The Story*. The purpose statement should be transferable.

Describe what participation looks like

All the programs, annual events, ministries, outreaches, and organizations within your church structure and on your church calendar will be affected for the entire year, so your leaders potentially have a lot to give up, and a lot to give. It is very important to communicate clearly that participation in *The Story* **is an option, not a mandate**. Each ministry leader should feel that they have the choice to engage their ministry in *The Story* and that the choice to not participate is completely fine. The goal is not to have 100% participation, but to have enthusiastic participation.

Make use of the materials on the Church Resource DVD and curriculum CD-ROMs in the Church Campaign Kit to help you communicate the breadth of the journey and how each ministry can engage with *The Story*.

- Show the promo videos and coaching webinars that you feel will be most compelling for your group to see.
- Show samples of the curriculum for children, teens, and adults.
- Show samples of the visuals and promotional graphics.

Principle: It's voluntary, not mandatory. Inspire; don't coerce.

Answer questions

Be sure to allow ample time for dialogue and questions. Be prepared to address logistical questions such as, "Can we still have our ladies' retreat?" (**Answer:** Yes, but you might want to choose a theme that goes along with where we would be that weekend in *The Story*.) Or, "Can our drug addiction support group still talk about drug addiction, or do we have to talk about *The Story*?" (**Answer:** You can still talk about drug addiction, but your group members might want to read *The Story* along with the rest of the church if they don't have another group to do so with. If they're interested, there are discussion questions you could adapt to your group – pick one or two, or come up with your own.) Be prepared to answer questions on budget, Bible version, how the books will be paid for, website, etc.

HINT: It may even be effective to show the video answers to some of the Frequently-Asked Questions that are posted on the FAQs link at www.thestory.com.

Principle: Allow enough dialogue time so that people can catch up with where the pastor has already been for awhile.

Ask for commitment

Conclude the discussion by having a “covenant” moment with your leaders. Ask straight out for their commitment. Have a stacking-hands time, whether that’s literal and you really stack hands and do a cheer, or whether it’s having those who want to buy-in sign a covenant document. The commitment can be as small as personally committing to reading *The Story*, or as large as deciding to lead their ministry through *The Story*. It must be clear at this point that commitment is optional. There won’t be a true feeling of ownership if people feel coerced. Allow space for alternate decisions by ministry leaders who honestly do not feel that taking their group through *The Story* is the best thing for their group at this time. There will be enough opportunities for their group members to experience *The Story* with their families, through personal reading, in the weekend sermons, etc., so to have certain groups opt out should not detract from the overall unity the church will experience.

Principle: Provide an opportunity to commit. This is where ownership begins.

Pray

The Story will be an empty journey if it’s not powered by prayer. Have an extended prayer time together. In any spiritual endeavor you can expect spiritual warfare, and one of this magnitude is especially vulnerable. When your entire church is engaged, the potential for attack can come on that many more fronts. Pray together for unity, growth, protection against miscommunication and division, and for a realization of God’s vision for your church. Pray for yourselves and your own part in this journey; for your own hearts to be open and receptive to God’s teaching through this year.

Principle: It won’t succeed without prayer.

STAGE 3: GET ORIENTED, RECRUIT A TEAM

Orient yourself to the resources available in the Church Campaign Kit and the Online Resource Library. As you gain an understanding of the scope of the resources, it will become clear who you need to surround yourself with in order to ramp up for and implement *The Story*. Have *The Story* resources on-hand to show to people as you talk to them about joining you on a special *Story* team.

Depending upon the size of your congregation and the scope of your vision for *The Story*, you could include people on your team to handle the following areas of responsibility:

- Senior Minister
- Worship Services Planning
- Adult Ministries and Small Groups
- Youth Ministries
- Children’s Ministries
- Campaign Director
- Prayer Coordinator
- Promotion and Communication
- Book Distribution

Assemble your team at least eight weeks out from your start date to meet each other and pray, then start holding weekly meetings for the next seven weeks leading up to the campaign.

Once you start *The Story*, it would be a good idea to hold a monthly check-in meeting with those who lead your age-related ministries and your weekend services, in order to hear praise reports, share ideas, and coordinate upcoming events such as holidays or transitions to new sections of *The Story*.

With a program that extends this long, it will be important to keep your leaders motivated and fresh by connecting with them regularly so they feel supported and united.

PREPARING YOUR CHURCH

8 WEEKS OUT: PLAN AND BUDGET

Begin planning the physical elements of your ramp-up to the campaign. This is when you'll be making most of your financial decisions. Budgeting considerations are offered in this section to help you plan your promotional efforts, your website, and your book order.

Promotion

Develop your promotional plan eight weeks out from the start of your campaign. You have tools to build your own promotional items in the Church Campaign Kit, and there is a line of *Story*-branded promotional items available for purchase from our preferred vendor.

PREFERRED VENDOR: Outreach, Inc., www.TheStoryOutreach.com

Zondervan has partnered with Outreach, Inc. to develop an exclusive line of promotional tools for *The Story* including stage backdrops, banners, posters, invitation postcards, door hangers, and bulletin shells. Any of these resources can be customized for free and most shipping is a low flat rate of \$5.99. We are excited about this partnership because Outreach has a long history of providing quality promotional tools to churches at reasonable prices. Outreach also provides expert consultation services to help you get the best products for your church!

When planning your promotional efforts, consider how you will create momentum with your own people, what you will do to announce *The Story* in your community, and how you will establish the presence of *The Story* throughout your church building.

Create Momentum with Your People

Promoting *The Story* to your own congregation is perhaps the most important aspect of promotion that you can invest in (see Budget Consideration below). Here are some ways you can build momentum from the time you announce the campaign to your church to the week you launch, and beyond.

- Senior minister announcements are the most valuable way of casting the vision and motivating involvement. Have your minister spend time on explaining the vision for *The Story*, allowing time for this during the weekend services for a few weeks in a row.
- Show a series of promotional videos (provided on the Church Resource DVD).
- Make your own promotional video featuring testimonies of people who are excited about *The Story* (opening and closing moving graphics are provided on the Church Resource DVD).
- Create a commitment card, or other response device to provide a way for people to indicate how they will engage with *The Story* (template provided on the Church Resource DVD).

Announce *The Story* to Your Community

The opportunity to participate in a systematic progression through the big stories of the Bible is (surprisingly!) attractive to people in your community. Make use of the following resources to publicize the fact that you are doing *The Story*:

- Send in a press release to your local paper (provided on the Church Resource DVD).
- Insert an ad in your local paper (provided on the Church Resource DVD).
- Do a postcard invitation mailing to all homes within a radius of your church (service offered by Outreach, Inc.).
- Provide invitation cards for your people to distribute to their friends (available from Outreach, Inc.).
- Put a banner on the outside of your church building (options available from Outreach, Inc.).
- Go in together with other *Story* churches in your community for more broad-reaching publicity, such as a billboard or a local cable television ad.

Establish *The Story* Presence in Your Building

The visuals for this campaign are rich and varied, and will help keep your congregation engaged and intrigued as *The Story* unfolds. Make use of the many options to help you dress your stage and public areas with *Story* branding, and refresh the look at different points throughout the campaign, such as when you move from the Old Testament to the New Testament:

- Stage backdrops (options available from Outreach, Inc.)
- Indoor banners and posters (options available from Outreach, Inc.)
- Media screen graphics (all of the 31 chapter icons as well as slide backgrounds are provided on the Church Resource DVD for use on your media screens during your weekend services)
- Bulletin shells (series available from Outreach, Inc.)
- 31 chapter icons for use on any of your self-produced print pieces (provided on the Church Resource DVD)

BUDGET CONSIDERATION: Your people are your best promotional strategy

The best way to invest the money in your promotional budget is to invest it in your own people. They are your best promotional plan. An invitation from a friend is far more effective than a billboard or a newspaper ad. Billboards and ads **lend credence to the invitation from your people, so they definitely have value**. But choose to invest the bulk of your marketing dollars in items or print pieces or videos that will build excitement, create momentum, educate, give tools, provide reminders, create anticipation, give people concrete proof that this is definitely something they'd want their friends to be in on – all of that kind of ethos is what you want to build with your promotion dollars.

Your internal marketing plan could include providing people with different types of invitation tools - a short DVD to watch, a bookmark, a prayer card on which to list their friends they're praying about inviting, an invitation postcard, door hangers, yard signs – these kinds of things get people personally invested in spreading the word and thinking proactively about bringing in others.

Then, the external marketing such as ads and signs and banners that are seen by the public are now the reinforcement of your main marketing strategy of the personal invitation – “Did you see that postcard we sent out? That's what I'm inviting you to.” Just evaluate your budget and make sure the largest percentage of it is being invested in promoting *The Story* to your own people.

WEBSITE

One great unifying element in your church's experience could be a website dedicated to *The Story*. Because this program extends over several months, people will inevitably have to miss a week here or there. In a series that builds, week upon week for 31 weeks, missing one or more weeks is problematic. By building a website where the pastor's weekly messages are posted, and where downloadable resources are added every week, you create a central gathering place where your community comes to stay connected with the journey.

PREFERRED VENDOR: UpperRoom Technology, uroomtech.com

UpperRoom Technology offers ready-made *The Story* websites and web plug-ins, with 10-month programs specifically designed to cover the span of time of *The Story* experience. Go to www.uroomtech.com and click on "Zondervan's 'The Story' Websites."

IDEA: You can add *The Story* web banners to the home page of your current church website. Options are provided on the Church Resource DVD.

BOOKS

BUDGET CONSIDERATION: Invite your key leaders to help you work through the issue of how to fund the books. This is really a philosophical decision that your leaders should make together. You have three basic options for funding the books, and three different philosophies that drive each option:

1. **Pay to Play:** require people to purchase their books. Books could be sold at cost, or at a slight markup, and the surplus funds could help pay for children's books or books for families who can't afford them.
Philosophy: There is value in asking people to pay to participate in a program, because they are more likely to follow through and do it when they have spent their own money.
2. **Optional Offering:** ask for a donation to cover the cost of the books. If they can't afford it, they don't have to donate, but others might donate extra.
Philosophy: If people are required to pay for a church program, they will object if they're unable to afford it or they feel coerced. But if payment is a voluntary offering, not only will people feel honored, but many will cheerfully give more than was asked and thereby share in covering the costs for everyone.
3. **Free Gift:** the books are funded by the church budget or a designated donation, and given away.
Philosophy: This is a gift from the church to the congregation, and is an indication of the value the church is placing on this program. The church wants everyone to participate, and no one to be left out because of money issues or other forms of resistance.

Here are a couple of other hybrid ideas to discuss:

1. Give away something other than the books. In this model, people purchase their own books so they feel committed, but the church funds some incentive gifts that they give away through the year to keep people engaged. The church could give away self-produced journals for note-taking and recording their answers to the personal devotion questions, they could give bookmarks, or book bags, or they could decide to fund the children's books only.
2. Use the books as a leveraging tool to build your small groups or Sunday school classes by giving the books to the Sunday school teachers and small group facilitators, and have them be the ones who distribute the free books. If you're not in a class or group, you have to pay for your book. This might be a strategy to try if you're looking for a way to validate and reinforce your small group or Sunday school participation.

6 WEEKS OUT: PLACE ORDERS

Order enough books!

Place your order for books at least six weeks out from your distribution date. Be sure to order enough books – at least one per adult and teen, and at least one of the kids' books for each child in your church. The experience of the churches who have done this program already has been universal—they didn't have enough books for Book Distribution Day! A common trend has been for a church member to pick up a book for themselves, then purchase additional copies for relatives or friends. Keep in mind that not only do you have to supply the people who are there on Book Distribution Day, but you need to continue for a few weeks afterwards as visitors come, as people who were away return, and as church members want to get additional copies.

HOW TO PLACE YOUR BOOK AND CURRICULUM ORDER:

As a purchaser of this Church Campaign Kit, you qualify for deep discounts on all case purchases of books and small group study guides. To make sure you obtain all the discounts you qualify for, contact your area representative to help you place your order. Refer to www.TheStory.com/order to contact your area representative or find your local Christian Retailer who will carry the full line of *Story* products.

Promotional Items

Place orders for promotional items such as banners, postcard mailers, bulletin shells, and customized invitations with Outreach, Inc. Work on development of self-produced items such as brochures, videos, and print announcements. Place ads and press releases with your local media outlets.

GREAT IDEA: 40 Days of Prayer

Adjust priorities, prepare hearts to make them receptive, establish protection against spiritual warfare, and foster unity in your church through a prolonged emphasis on prayer, starting six weeks out from your campaign start date. 40 Days of Prayer is a church tradition for Oak Hills Church. They pray for forty days before any major initiative or church transition – awesome idea! So, in preparation for their year-long journey through The Story, they developed a prayer plan for the forty days preceding the launch. Their complete set of prayer emails and resources are posted in the Online Resource Library, and may be adapted for your church.

4 WEEKS OUT: PROMOTE TO THE CHURCH

You will do two important things four weeks out from your launch date: announce the campaign to your entire church for the first time, and begin recruiting people to facilitate new *Story* groups.

Start promoting the campaign

About a month ahead of your campaign, start deploying your promotional plan. The simplest and most important thing you can do is to have your senior minister announce it to your church family during your weekend services. From here on in, be sure to give plenty of air time to announcing, explaining, exploring, envisioning, and communicating about *The Story*. When a program is going to go as deep and wide as *The Story*, people need a lot of time and repeated messaging in order to grow from knowing nothing about it, to understanding it, to feeling a comfort level with it, to embracing it, to enthusiasm for it.

Start forming new small groups for *The Story*

If you don't already have a small groups champion, now would be a great time to recruit one! Give your champion the task of overseeing the startup of new small groups, populating them with participants, and coaching the new facilitators throughout the year.

At four weeks out, you should piggyback on the announcement of *The Story* to the whole church by following up with an appeal for facilitators for new groups. Explain what a facilitator would do, and distribute a sign-up card for facilitators to collect their address, contact information, and preferred days of the week for group meetings. Compare the response cards against your church membership roll to determine whether the candidates are church members and can be confirmed as facilitators. Invite new facilitators to an orientation meeting the next week.

3 WEEKS OUT: PREPARE THE TEACHERS

Schedule orientation sessions for teachers and leaders of groups to orient them to the materials they will be working with as they lead their group through *The Story*. Schedule a few repeated sessions over the next few weeks to give all your teachers and small group facilitators a chance to attend. Invite people to your orientation sessions with written invitations that set the right tone by casting the vision, making participation optional, and emphasizing prayer.

Note: *It is assumed that the participants in these orientation meetings have been to a Vision Meeting and have decided to do The Story in their group or class this year. If the participants in the orientation meeting have not had an opportunity to attend a Vision Meeting, and therefore have not learned about The Story from your senior pastor and made their own decision about whether or not they want to do The Story in their group, it is important to share as much of the Vision Meeting agenda as possible and give the leaders/teachers the option of choosing their curriculum direction for the year.*

Depending upon the number of leaders you are training, you may want to schedule different orientation meetings for different ministries, such as small group facilitators, adult Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and children's Sunday school teachers. Adapt the following guidelines for each group's orientation meeting:

Orientation Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome and prayer
2. Share the church-wide vision for *The Story*. If possible, the senior minister should personally share this at every orientation meeting.
3. Review the written guidelines for the leaders of this ministry. Locate written guidelines for each level of curriculum and distribute copies.
 - a. Children's curriculum Leader Guides are included on each of the three age-related children's curriculum CD-ROMs.
 - b. *The Story for Teens* Introduction is included on the teen curriculum DVD.
 - c. Facilitator guidelines for the small group curriculums can be found in the study guides.
 - d. Guidelines for other adult ministries groups, such as men's Bible studies or adult Sunday school can be found in the Online Resource Library in the zip files for those resources.
4. Show the video for Chapter 1 at orientation meetings for adult or youth ministries.

5. Distribute a copy of the lesson plan for Chapter 1, and review the features and format of the lesson. If appropriate, actually teach through a portion of the lesson, or have participants form groups and go through some of the lesson together to experience it first-hand.
6. Explain how the teachers will obtain their lesson plans. (This is up to you – you may email them to everyone, every week, or post them to your website for teachers to download, or print and distribute copies to everyone.)
7. If possible, refer them to a resource person to whom they can go if questions come up that they can't answer. You may also recommend the reference book designed as a companion to *The Story*:



Exploring The Story, A Reference Companion. Commentary and accompanying charts and images explain history, characters, events, and theological concepts.

8. Allow time for questions and discussion. Close with a time of corporate prayer.

2 WEEKS OUT: POPULATE SMALL GROUPS

Shift focus from starting groups to filling groups

For a couple of weeks now, you have been promoting the idea of starting a new small group and signing up to facilitate a group. Now your focus should shift to recruiting participants for those groups. Offer a way for potential participants to link up with facilitators in their geographic area. Geography is more important than demographics for a successful group; in other words, it's more important that group members live in the same area than that they are at the same life stage. Geographical distance kills way more groups than "age distance." So, over the next two weeks, collect addresses and preferred meeting times from interested participants and use a mapping program to link people to facilitators. Have your facilitators call potential group members and personally invite them to their first meeting.

1 WEEK OUT: PASS OUT BOOKS

Depending upon whether you are selling or giving away books, decide how to handle various logistics.

1. Will there be a need to collect money and give change?
2. Will you take orders and payments ahead of time and distribute materials only to those who are on your list of paid orders?
3. How much information will you collect about people who get books, and how will you collect it? (See Information Cards below.)
4. Where will you distribute books and how will you plan for smooth traffic flow?
5. Will all book distribution take place in a central location, or will people get some of their resources elsewhere, such as small group study guides from their Sunday school class or small group leader, or children's books from the children's department?

Information cards

An important exchange should take place during book distribution ... you hand a book to a person, and the person hands you an information card in exchange. The book distribution point is the perfect time to collect data about who is doing *The Story* with you. Don't miss this opportunity to gather information such as name, address, email, cell phone, affiliation with which small group or Sunday school class, or whatever information will be useful to you in tracking people. Now is your chance to build up your database of email addresses and learn additional information about your congregants.

LAUNCH WEEKEND

You have been building up the momentum and the excitement for several weeks now, so capitalize on the excitement. Give *The Story* a significant startup throughout your church.

In your weekend services, the senior minister can do an overview of how God's upper story and our lower story will be seen through the 31 chapters of *The Story*.

In your children's departments, or for the whole church, you can hold a Meet the Authors event (guidelines available in the Online Resource Library).

Continue your book distribution and small group sign-ups, and be sure to plan a special welcome for visitors and provide them an easy way to plug into a *Story* group.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once *The Story* is launched, the teaching pastor and ministry leaders will be taking their groups through *The Story* using their separate sets of teaching tools and curriculum. Guidelines for using each type of resource are included with their documents.

After you start *The Story*, it would be a good idea to hold a monthly check-in meeting with those who lead your age-related ministries and your weekend services, in order to hear praise reports, share ideas, and coordinate upcoming events such as holidays or transitions to new sections of *The Story*.

With a program that extends this long, it will be important to keep your leaders motivated and fresh by connecting with them regularly so they feel supported and united.

LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN

The Story Church Campaign Kit provides a complete spiritual growth experience that includes 31 weeks of curriculum options for every age-related ministry in the church, along with 31 weeks of sermons and sermon prep resources – one week of programming for every chapter in *The Story*.

The benefits of spending 31 weeks on *The Story* include:

- Every chapter in *The Story* covers a broad range of scripture. Allowing a week for every chapter gives participants enough time to explore the complete storyline of the Bible without skipping over any of the major stories.
- The preaching minister reaps the benefit of having seven months of sermons laid out and planned in advance.
- There is a security for ministry leaders and participants in knowing what is coming up in their departments for an extended period of time.

The challenges of spending 31 weeks on *The Story* include shifting the programming for all ministries to a single church-wide focus for an extended period of time, and keeping people engaged over the course of a seven-month experience.

SCHEDULING

Two of the most common starting points for *The Story* are in the fall and in January. Here are some scheduling recommendations for each starting time:

Fall Start Date

The advantages of a Fall start date are that it corresponds with the timing of the school year (starting in September and ending in May or June), and you can align the resurrection chapter with Easter. To schedule a Fall start, begin with Easter Sunday of the next year, and slot Chapter 27 into that week. Going backwards from there, slot chapters into the weeks, leaving a four- or five-week break at Christmas, and continue slotting in the chapters until you arrive at the beginning of the book; that is your start date.

January Start Date

The advantage of a January start date is that you can go straight through *The Story* with no breaks, ending in July. It is strongly recommended that you do not take an extended break over the summer – the loss of momentum is too dramatic, and it is hard to regain enthusiasm and re-engage people after being off of the subject for several weeks.

MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT FOR 31 WEEKS

There are some simple ways to maintain the interest and engagement of people over a 31-week series.

Visuals

One way to maintain interest is to learn a lesson from the children. The children's resource selections include sets of 31 trading cards that the children collect from week to week. These cards keep kids coming back so they can get their next card. In similar fashion, you can make good use of the weekly chapter icons provided with the graphics resources. You may not necessarily make grown-up trading cards out of them, but just changing your graphical look from week to week on as many visuals as possible – like the stage backdrops, the indoor banners, the bulletin covers, and the PowerPoint backgrounds – will help to keep people engaged and interested. In some small way, you'll find that people will actually look forward to coming in order to see what that week's image looks like.

Mini-Series

Another way to keep the campaign fresh is to create mini-series within the 31-week schedule. Insert starts and stops so people have more than one ending and starting place. Endings give you a chance to recap and look back at how far you have come, and starting places offer the refreshment of new beginnings and natural on-ramps for those who joined late. An example of a church that created nine mini-series is posted to the Online Resource Library. Here is a suggested outline for three 11-week mini-series:

God Forms a People

Chapters 1-11

Close by using the Jeopardy-style review from the adult Sunday school curriculum in the Online Resource Library.

God Pursues His People

Chapters 12-21

Add a week after these ten chapters to review the Old Testament. Check out a review resource called Old Testament Rewind from Willow Creek Association that could be a feature in the weekend service. (www.willowcreek.com, search for “Old Testament Rewind” or “Long Story Short”)

God Saves His People

Chapters 22-31

Add a week after these ten chapters to review the New Testament. There is a New Testament Rewind product from Willow Creek Association, as well as a New Testament Jeopardy-style review in the adult Sunday school curriculum in the Online Resource Library. (www.willowcreek.com, search for “New Testament Rewind” or “Long Story Short”)

OTHER TIMING OPTIONS

6 Weeks: There are alternative studies through *The Story* that take less time. A great introductory study of the 11 chapters of the New Testament portion of *The Story* is the six-week book-based video study by Max Lucado called *God's Story, Your Story*. This study is based on the Max Lucado book that explores the grand epic of redemption and how our story indwells God's story, giving it purpose, meaning, and joy.

16 Weeks: Another study was developed by a church based on a two-chapter-a-week schedule through the 31 chapters of *The Story*. This video-based 16-week study for groups is offered in the Online Resource Library. Recommendations are provided for aligning the sermons and children's curriculums with a 16-week schedule.

It is not recommended that you extend *The Story* to a full year by spending more time on some of the chapters. It is preferable to get through the overview of the major stories of the Bible at the fairly fast clip of 31 weeks, then go back afterwards and spend more time on the portions of the Bible that you wanted to go deeper on.

ALTERNATE RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Weekend Services

The majority of the resources for planning sermons and weekend services are provided in the Online Resource Library where all church-developed resources are offered. Several pastors have contributed their sermons, special feature ideas, handouts, visuals, and music choices for the 31 weeks.

Adult Ministries

In addition to the two book-based curriculums that you see in the Church Campaign Kit, there are several church-developed curriculums for different types of adult groups available in the Online Resource Library. If you do not need to use these lessons for groups, they provide a wealth of extra material from which the minister can build sermons.

WHAT'S NEXT

When deciding what to do after *The Story*, your original vision for *The Story* comes into play. Where do you want your congregation to grow? What goal are you helping them reach? A need may arise while you're studying *The Story* that needs to be pursued, or a section of Scripture that triggered a lot of interest may drive you back there for further study.

One church used *The Story* as the first of a three-part series, where *The Story* is about God's Story, then they studied the book of Acts to learn Our Story (the Church), followed by a study in the book of Romans, which is My Story (apologetics). Other options would be to go back and study books of the Bible or people or stories that are not included in *The Story*.

A list of follow-up ideas and resources is posted to the Online Resource Library. Have your plans in place well before the end of *The Story* in order to keep the momentum and unity going that your church will be experiencing because of *The Story*.