

THE STORY

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

OPEN TO GET STARTED NOW



GETTING STARTED

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



1

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



2

Read the Implementation Guide



3

Review the product samples in the kit



4

Review additional resources in the Online Resource Library.*

THE STORY TIMELINE

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

*Access Code for the Online Resource Library located on the back pocket

TO ORDER GO TO
WWW.THESTORY.COM/ORDER
OR CALL 1-800-727-3480

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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.

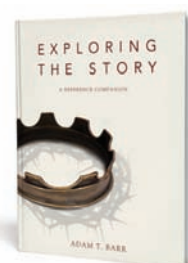
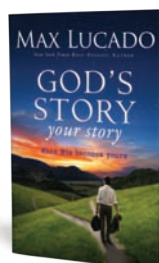
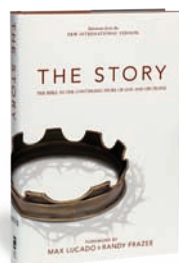


Included in the Online Resource Library: Examples of files developed by other churches are provided to give ideas for preparation, promotion and communication, such as 40 Days of Prayer, testimonial videos, welcome cards, weekly newsletters, and devotionals the minister can send out to the congregation.

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.

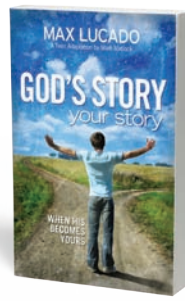
Exploring The Story, *A Reference Companion*. Commentary and accompanying charts and images explain history, characters, events, and theological concepts.



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.