

Tru Curriculum

3-YEAR OLD CHILDREN





Tru is a spiritually forming, parent-empowering curriculum that equips children, leaders and families to know Jesus and live out a vibrant lifetime faith.

TRU CURRICULUM:

- Explores Scripture chronologically through God's grand redemptive narrative where God is at the center of every lesson
- Engages a family empowered ministry model that equips families to spend time together in God's Word
- Creates space for a time of worship response allowing children to respond to God through His Holy Spirit
- Offers a disciple-shaping philosophy that moves Toddlers through Middle Schoolers from childhood beliefs to lifetime faith

ABOUT TRU BLESSINGS:

Guides little children to know they are made and loved by God

- "Hamilton the Hedgehog" joins children as they discover God through His Word
- Developmentally rich activities encourage children to grow and learn
- Utilizes repetition to build confidence in children
- One-year scope and sequence
- Can be used in either a large group / small group or classroom format

SAMPLE BOOK INCLUDES:

How-It-Works document and lesson samples



For more information visit TruMinistry.com

David Cook®
transforming lives together

Spring Lesson 4

Bible Passage: John 19-20
(Easter Lesson)

Jesus Is Alive

From the very beginning, God had a plan to send a Savior. When the time was right, God the Son came to earth as a man and died on a cross for our sins. After three days, He rose from the grave. Jesus is alive!

Schedule

EXPLORE
15-20 minutes

RESPOND
5 minutes

DISCOVER
10-15 minutes

BLESS
5 minutes

Inspire contains personal stories of how God has worked in the lives of ministry leaders along with insights into that week's God Statement.

"So where do you go to school?" I asked, desperate to spark some sort of conversation with the teenager sitting next to me. "Why?" she answered, shooting me a glare that could only be interpreted as, "None of your business." It had been a long six hours with her in the front seat of my van. I was already frustrated. Summer was quickly coming to a close. My stint as a summer camp chaperone wasn't going as well as I'd hoped.

As the week progressed, things got worse. My problem child only got more and more difficult to deal with. Though the youth pastor had asked me to pay her special attention, she made it clear that she wanted nothing to do with me. She was growing increasingly rude and hostile. The week couldn't end soon enough. But then,

on our final evening at camp, God did something completely unexpected. He changed her heart.

In that instant, despair changed to hope. My own feelings of defeat turned to joy. "He saved me!" she cried through eyes that were veiled in tears. Her happiness was contagious. I hugged her and rejoiced in the reminder that we can celebrate because Jesus died and rose again. He brings life from death! His resurrection means that even in our most desperate, unlovable condition, we can be given eternal life. Jesus is alive!

Alyson Crockett

City Church, Anaheim, CA

Equip gives perspective and context as it introduces the lesson's Bible passage.

Jesus is alive! The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the central focus of *The Big God Story*. As Paul writes, without the resurrection our preaching and faith are useless (1 Corinthians 15:14).

When Eve and, ultimately, Adam, chose to listen to the serpent and eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3), sin entered the world. Scripture teaches that each of us has inherited this sin and participates in this sin on a daily basis (Romans 5:12). The wages, or payment, for sin is death (Romans 6:23). In the Old Testament, sacrifices were offered regularly to temporarily cover sin until the ultimate sin sacrifice came.

Christ came to put an end to these sacrifices. He led a perfect life

and, as God's only Son, followed His Father's will to death on a cross (Hebrews 10:1-9). He was beaten and tortured. At His death, Christ took on the past, present, and future sin of those who believe in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). He died a horrific death and paid the penalty for our sin.

Three days later, Christ conquered Satan, sin, and death with His resurrection (Matthew 28). He physically rose from the grave, walked among His disciples, and stayed on earth for 40 days before ascending to heaven where He reigns with God the Father (Acts 1:9; Colossians 3:1). Because He lives, our sins can be forgiven, and we can be reconciled with God (John 14:19). Jesus is alive!

Support provides a time of reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word as you prepare your heart to present the lesson to the children in your ministry.

"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said'" (Matthew 28:5-6).

Just a few short days after Jesus rode into Jerusalem with the crowds proclaiming Him as Messiah, everything seemed to fall apart. He was arrested and handed over to the Roman government. The crowd turned against Him and the voices screamed for His crucifixion. His closest friends and even His mother watched as He cried out in agony, waiting for God to reveal Him as Messiah.

Darkness fell as He carried the sin of the world into death. The

earth shook and the temple curtain was torn. He was placed in a tomb, which was sealed with a boulder. Roman guards were posted to keep His body from being stolen. Hope seemed lost.

But Sunday came. Arriving to pay their respects, women instead found the tomb open and an angel of the Lord sitting on the stone. Jesus wasn't in the grave. Death couldn't hold Him. The price had been paid. Jesus is alive!

Where in your life has God done the unexpected? When hope seemed lost, where has Christ redeemed the situation? Spend some time this week reflecting on the Easter story. Pray, thanking God for His saving grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

EXPLORE//5–10 minutes

Exploration stations create space for children to engage in hands-on activities as they begin their time of worship.

For additional EXPLORE ideas, see the TruBlessings *How It Works* document in *Resources*.

Option 1

It's Alive

SUPPLIES

- ☉ Tray
- ☉ Modeling dough
- ☉ Cookie cutters (of things that are alive, suggestion: animals, flowers, trees, people, etc.)

SET UP

Place the modeling dough and cookie cutters on a tray. Set the tray on the table.

PREPARE AHEAD

Note: You may want to write names on the bottom of the cups for when you distribute them at the end of class. Remind children as they leave to water their flowers every day. Encourage them to be patient as they wait for their flowers to sprout. As you hand the cups to the children as they leave say, "Jesus is alive!"

RELATE

Welcome two or three children at a time to the tray. Ask questions to encourage the children in their exploration. **Can you help me name the different cookie cutters on the tray?** Encourage the children to identify each shape. Help as needed. **What do you see?** Interact with answers. **That's right, animals and people. Animals can breathe and move. People can breathe and move around too. What else do you see?** Children will answer. **Yes, we also have cookie cutters in the shape of plants and flowers. Are plants and flowers alive? Children will answer. Yes. What about animals and people?** Interact with children's answers. **Yes, animals and people are alive too! Who made all of these things? God did!**

Option 2

Is It Empty?

SUPPLIES

- ☉ Empty containers (2, round, with lids)
- ☉ Boxes (3, various sizes with lids)
- ☉ Rock (small enough to fit inside containers and boxes)

SET UP

Place the items on the table. Set the rock inside of one of the containers and put the lid on each.

RELATE

Invite two or three children to the EXPLORE station. **What do you see on the table? There's a rock hidden inside one of these containers.** Point to each one. **Which one do you think has the rock inside?** Allow children to take a guess. **Let's see which is empty and which one has the rock. Are you ready to find it?**

Assist the children if they're having difficulty with the lids. As they open the containers, ask: **Is this box or container empty?** Allow children to answer. **Does it have anything inside?** If the container/box is empty, say: **You're right, it's empty.** If the container/box has the rock, say: **Oh my, it has a rock inside. It's not empty.** Continue looking inside each container/box so they understand the concept of empty versus occupied.

Children move into a time where they can participate in discovering God's Word through storytelling, worship, and interactive experiences.

TRANSITION SONG: "The Cleanup Song"

DISCOVER//10-15 minutes

Children participate in discovering God’s Word through storytelling, worship, and interactive experiences.

Welcome

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Bible
- ⊙ “TruBlessings Theme Song” (see *Resources*)
- ⊙ *Story Spots*
- ⊙ Hamilton puppet
- ⊙ Hamilton’s house
- ⊙ Rock

For more information on Traditions or any aspect of the lesson please see the “How It Works” document for Large Group/Small Group in the *Resources*.

Ponder Point: *Jesus Is Alive*

Hi, friends! Welcome! I’m so excited to be here with you today. Let’s all celebrate God by singing and dancing together! Play the “TruBlessings Theme Song” and lead kids in dance and celebration.

Wow! That was great! Now, everyone take a seat—it’s time to hear a part of *The Big God Story*! Friends, have you seen Hamilton the Hedgehog this morning? Children will answer; respond to their participation. **Let’s call to him and see if he’ll come and join us. On the count of three, let’s call him together. Are you ready? One, two, three. Hamilton, where are you?** Encourage kids to call for Hamilton. **Do you think he can hear us? Let’s all stand up and shout “Hamilton!” Ready, set, shout! HAMILTON!** Hamilton the Hedgehog peeks his head out of his house.

Hi, Hamilton! I’m so glad you heard our loud shouts. Hamilton pushes his rock out in front of him. **That’s a very nice rock, Hamilton. Did you roll that rock all the way over here all by yourself?** Hamilton nods. **Wow! You’re very strong. Friends, why do you think Hamilton brought a rock with him today?** Interact with the children and their responses. **I wonder if a rock is going to be a part of *The Big God Story*. Hamilton nods and jumps up and down. What do you think, friends?**

Are you ready to hear this part of *The Big God Story*? Children will respond. **Do you think Hamilton is ready?** Kids will answer. **Let’s ask him. Hamilton, are you ready to hear about Jesus and *The Big God Story*?** Hamilton nods excitedly. **Me too! It’s time for us to dig, dig, dig right into God’s Word and find out what He has to say to us. Before we do, let’s all stand up and sing our *Bible Song* together.**

BIBLE SONG (sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)

Now it’s time to hear God’s Word

Hear God’s Word

Hear God’s Word

Now it’s time to hear God’s Word

So let’s look in the Bible

As the song ends, have children return to their *Story Spots*. Hamilton can model this for the children by sitting quietly as he listens to *The Big God Story*.



LES. 4

ME AT THREE ...

Childhood development research shows that children this age are beginning to understand the concept of death. Young children realize that some things, once they leave, don’t return—a loved one, a pet, etc. They may use the phrase “all gone” to show their basic understanding of this concept. Today in *The Big God Story* we’ll be talking about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Be sure to emphasize the point that after a short time, Jesus came back to life! Also reinforce that there’s no one like our God, and only God is greater than death!

The Big God Story is written for a three-year-old audience. It can be told in its entirety or shortened if the class is on the younger side.

Prayer of Release

A *Prayer of Release* is a prayer asking God to remove any distractions that would get in the way of hearing from and responding to Him. As we pray, we dedicate this time to the Lord and ask to be filled with knowledge and understanding from Him, giving God His rightful role as Teacher.

We can begin to model this posture of prayer with the children in our care. To lead three-year-old children, pray a simple prayer thanking God for His presence and asking Him to teach you as you gather together. For example: "Thank You, God, for being with us. We ask that You would teach us today."

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Bible
- ⊙ Rock
- ⊙ Hot glue gun
- ⊙ Paper plates (3)
- ⊙ Craft sticks (3, jumbo)
- ⊙ Marker
- ⊙ Toy instruments (1 per child)
- ⊙ Hamilton puppet
- ⊙ Hamilton's rock



PREPARE AHEAD

Print *The Big God Story* images. On the front side of the paper plates, use the marker to draw a happy face on one, a sad face on another, and a mad face on the last one. Using the hot glue gun, glue a craft stick to the back of each paper plate, leaving at least half of the stick hanging at the bottom of the paper plate (creating a handle for each face).

SET UP

Place the paper plate faces within reach of the Storyteller.

RELATE

It's just about time to hear another part of *The Big God Story*. Before we go any further, let's all pray together and ask God to teach us. Lead the children in a *Prayer of Release* as you prepare to hear God's Word.

Invite Hamilton to help you tell the story. Make sure he has his rock with him. **Friends, did you know that you're alive?** Hamilton will nod. **You are! Let's all take a big breath and blow it out.** Take a big breath in and blow it out. Hamilton will do this with the children too. **Can you stand up and jump up and down? Come on, stand up and let's jump.** Jump together. **Wow, you're great jumpers. You can do all of those things because you're alive. Today in *The Big God Story* we're going to hear about Jesus dying and then becoming alive again!**

One day some people who didn't like Jesus said some mean things to Him. Hold up the mean face. **Can you make a mean face? They said He wasn't God's Son and that He wasn't our King. Friends, we know that Jesus is God's Son. We know that He's our King. But these men didn't want to listen to God. So they decided to kill Jesus. It was a terrible thing to do. Jesus died. This was so sad.** Hold up the sad face. **Can you make a sad face? Jesus had to die on the cross to take away our sins.** Show image #1.

But wait ... there's more to the story. God had a special plan for Jesus. After Jesus died, His friends took Him to a tomb. A tomb is like a cave. They wrapped Jesus up in cloth and laid Him inside. Then they rolled a huge rock in front of the tomb. Let's all stand up and pretend to roll the big rock in front of the tomb. Model this and encourage children to do the same. **The big rock closed the tomb like a giant heavy door.** Show image #2. **Wait a second—Hamilton, where's your rock?** Have Hamilton roll his rock over to you. **Hamilton has a rock too. The rock in *The Big God Story* was very, very big. Is this rock little or big?** Point to Hamilton's rock and allow children to respond. **Three days passed. Let's count to three. One, two, three. Great job!**

One day Jesus' friend Mary came to the tomb and saw that the huge rock was gone! Mary didn't see Jesus inside the tomb. Hamilton looks around as if pretending to be Mary. Encourage children to look too. **He was gone! The tomb was empty.** Show image #3. **Mary was sad and cried.** Show the sad face. **Can you make a sad face? Just then, two angels came. An angel asked Mary why she was crying. She told them that Jesus was gone and she didn't know where He was. Then Mary turned around and saw someone. Who did she see?** Children will answer. Jesus! Show image #4.

But Mary didn't know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said her name, "Mary." Mary was so excited. Jesus was alive! Show the happy face. Let's all make a happy face. Make a happy face with the children. Can you stand up and cheer with me? Let's shout, "Jesus is alive!" Stand up and shout. Jesus wasn't dead anymore. Jesus is alive! Jesus told Mary to tell everyone that He is alive.

Friends, Jesus died because He loves us so much! He was in the tomb for three days. On the third day, Jesus came back to life. This was all a part of God's plan. God knew that

Jesus would have to die for our sins, but He also knew that Jesus would come back to life! When it was time, Jesus went up to heaven to be with God the Father. Let's celebrate together that Jesus is alive! Pass out toy instruments. Encourage children to dance around the room playing or shaking their instruments, praising God that Jesus is alive! Model this by joining in on the celebration.

After spending a few minutes celebrating, have the children say good-bye to Hamilton as he goes back into his home, and thank him for coming to be a part of *The Big God Story*.

RESPOND//5 minutes

Children have the opportunity to respond to God as they celebrate Him within the faith community.

Song of Celebration

Do you think Mary and Jesus' friends were happy that Jesus was alive? Invite responses. Yes, I think so too! When I'm excited and happy about something, it makes me want to dance. Today I'm excited that Jesus is alive. We're going to dance and sing a song that says "Dance, dance, everybody dance!"

Lead kids in a celebratory worship song. Suggested Song: "Celebrate," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*.

BLESS//5 minutes

This time is set aside for leaders to spend a few moments blessing the children.

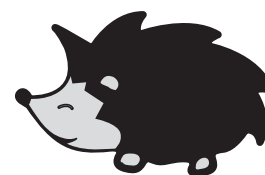
Gather the children in a circle and encourage them to hold hands. Speak this blessing over them:

Children, Jesus is alive! May you know His great love for you today and always.

Open a Bible and read Luke 24:6a: "He has risen!"

SNACK

If you'd like to tie in the snack with the lesson, give the kids something that grows, like carrots or a piece of fruit. As the kids eat, sit down with them and engage them in conversation. Be sure to consider any food allergies or check with parents ahead of time.



WANT MORE?//

Additional games, songs, manipulatives, sensory and art activities are used to help children reinforce what they experience in the lesson.

Option 1

Jesus Is Alive!

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ *Jesus Is Alive* template (see *Resources*)
- ⊕ Labels (1 per child, 2" x 3", self-adhesive)
- ⊕ Paper cups (1 per child, white)
- ⊕ Permanent marker
- ⊕ Stickers (several per child)
- ⊕ Crayons
- ⊕ Potting soil
- ⊕ Flower seeds (2–3 per child)
- ⊕ Wet wipes

SET UP

Place stickers and crayons on the table. Set the cups near the art supplies. Have the wet wipes nearby for easy cleanup.

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the *Jesus Is Alive* template onto the self-sticking labels, one per child. Stick one printed label on each white paper cup.

RELATE

Friends, Jesus is alive! Today we learned that Jesus died for us and then came alive again after three days. What are some other things that are alive?

Allow children to respond. **Yes, those things are alive. We each have a cup that says “Jesus Is Alive!” We’re going to put some dirt in each of your cups and then we’re going to plant flower seeds in the dirt.**

When you take the cup home, you can put it in the sunshine and give it lots of water every day. The flower is alive, and every time you look at it, it will remind you that Jesus is alive too!

Allow children to decorate their cups before you put the soil inside. After they’ve decorated the cups, fill each one halfway

with soil. Then give each child a couple of seeds and demonstrate how to push them into the soil. Encourage kids to make sure the seeds are completely covered by the dirt. When children are done, pass out wet wipes to clean their hands. Set the cups aside for children to take home.

Option 2

Flower Bounce

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ Parachute
- ⊕ Artificial flowers (various types and colors)
- ⊕ Scissors

SET UP

Lay the parachute on the ground and place the flowers on top of it.

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut the flowers off of the stems.

RELATE

Invite children to gather around the outside of the parachute and grab hold of an edge. **On top of the parachute are some different colors of flowers. What colors do you see?** Allow responses. **We’re going to make the flowers bounce when we make the parachute go up and down.** Demonstrate how to lift the parachute up and down slowly. Encourage kids to do the same, making sure they go up and down all together at the same time. Once children get the hang of it, invite them to go faster so the flowers begin to bounce.

Option 3

Rock and Roll

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ Playground ball
- ⊕ Masking tape

SET UP

Make a starting line and a finish line with the masking tape.

RELATE

Divide the children into pairs. Have one pair line up at the starting line, one child in front of the other. **What was rolled in front of Jesus’ tomb? Allow children to respond. That’s right—a big rock. We’re going to pretend these balls are rocks. We’ll roll the balls to the line and then back to our friend. Everyone is going to get a turn rolling the rock.**

When you say “Go,” have the first child use any method to roll the ball across to the finish line. Once the player reaches the finish line, have him turn around and roll the ball back to his teammate. Once his teammate receives the ball, she can have a turn to roll the ball to the finish line and then back. Play until every pair has had a turn to roll the ball.

Hamilton's Box of Fun

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ *Coloring Sheet* (see *Resources*)
- ⊕ Box or basket
- ⊕ Toddler Movement Scarves (available at www.discountschoolsupply.com)
- ⊕ Puppets
- ⊕ Interlocking blocks
- ⊕ Toy animals
- ⊕ Magnifying glasses (available at www.dollartree.com)
- ⊕ *"The Cleanup Song"* (see *Resources*)



SET UP

Put a variety of fun objects/toys in the box or basket. Hide it somewhere in the room. Clean the objects each week after use.

RELATE

Invite the kids to your circle time area and sing together:

Hamilton's Box (sung to the tune of "Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?")

Oh where, oh where is Hamilton's Box?

Oh where, oh where can it be?

It's full of fun toys that we sure like a lot

Oh where, oh where can it be?

Pick one or two kids to help find the box or basket. Once it's found, you can place it in the middle of your circle time area and invite the kids to come and explore what's inside. **Come on over, everyone! What fun things can we explore today? Let's take turns playing with things and even play together.**

When it's time to put the toys away, cue the kids with *"The Cleanup Song."*

HOMEFRONT WEEKLY is provided as a parent resource with each week's lesson (see *Resources*) and can be emailed or printed and distributed. This preteaching tool encourages families to spend time in God's Word together before children arrive at church. The best part is that parents are first to introduce their kids to the Bible content they'll hear at church. In this way, the church is supporting families as they spiritually nurture their children.

Spring Lesson 12

Bible Passage: Acts 12:1-19
(Peter Freed from Prison)

God Listens to Our Prayers

Jesus' disciples were busy telling everyone the good news. King Herod wasn't happy seeing so many people choosing to follow Jesus. So the wicked king ordered his soldiers to capture Peter and put him in prison. Heavy chains and 16 guards were used to ensure Peter wouldn't escape. But the people of God were praying. The Lord God heard their prayers and sent an angel to free Peter from prison.

Schedule

EXPLORE 15-20 minutes	DISCOVER 10-15 minutes
RESPOND 5 minutes	BLESS 5 minutes

Inspire contains personal stories of how God has worked in the lives of ministry leaders along with insights into that week's God Statement.

My husband and I had been trying to conceive. After countless tests and doctor's visits, we were told that there was no medical reason for the infertility we were experiencing. We were still considering the options that our doctor had presented us when I received the news. I was pregnant. Unfortunately, the pregnancy had complications from the very beginning. The trips to the doctor seemed endless, and with each visit, a new set of worries. Four months into the pregnancy, I miscarried.

My heart was broken, and I became very angry with God. I felt as if He had abandoned me. During church services I would sit in the last few rows, slipping in late and leaving early to avoid having to talk with anyone. One Sunday, I was unsuccessful in my attempts to slip in without being noticed. A friend of our family saw me slide in the back row and slipped in next to me. Afterward, she took my

husband and me into a room just off the main sanctuary where a few of our close church family members were waiting.

When they asked if they could pray for us, I grudgingly accepted. They circled around my husband and me as they laid their hands on us while they prayed. God did a work within my heart during those moments of prayer. It seemed my faith was strengthened immediately. I knew then that no matter how difficult this circumstance, He hadn't abandoned me. God was always with me. As this small group of friends prayed, their prayers strengthened me because I knew God was hearing every word. God always listens to our prayers.

Alyson Crockett
City Church, Anaheim, CA

Equip gives perspective and context as it introduces the lesson's Bible passage.

After the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, the Bible tells us that a great wave of persecution swept over the church in Jerusalem. This persecution caused the followers of Jesus to scatter all over Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). As they fled, they took with them the good news of Jesus Christ to the Jews and the Gentiles all over the region. The growth of the church angered Jewish zealots, and they tried desperately to squash the flourishing movement.

Around this time, Herod Agrippa took the throne. Many commentators believe that Herod was possibly a Jewish convert as he was zealous for the Mosaic Law. In Acts 12:2-3 he killed James (brother of John). He saw how pleased the Jewish people were by this action and responded by arresting Peter. According to the law,

it would have been illegal for Peter to be tried during the Passover celebration. Knowing this, Herod had him placed in chains to await trial and the death sentence, which would immediately follow.

Herod went to great lengths to ensure that escape would be impossible. Peter was bound by two chains, placed between two guards, locked behind prison doors, and further guarded with men outside of the prison gates. Herod failed to understand that God was with Peter.

When all hope seemed lost, the church committed to round-the-clock prayer. Prayer was their weapon in the fight against Herod's plans to execute Peter. God heard their prayers.

Support provides a time of reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word as you prepare your heart to present the lesson to the children in your ministry.

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5).

In a time of great difficulty, the church turned to God. Only God would be able to deliver Peter from the chains of Herod's prison. While the difficulties we face may vary, two things remain the same—God is with us, and He is listening. No matter what we face, prayer is always our most powerful weapon.

This week, set aside an extended block of time for prayer. Begin by praising God for who He is—our Rock, our Salvation, the one true God. Thank Him for the blessings He has bestowed upon you. Confess to Him the areas of your life where you struggle, and ask Him to show His power in your life. He is with you, and He hears your prayers.

EXPLORE//5–10 minutes

Exploration stations create space for children to engage in hands-on activities as they begin their time of worship.

For additional EXPLORE ideas, see the *How It Works* document in *Resources*.

Option 1

Play Dough Faces

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Card stock (white)
- ⊙ *Faces* template (see *Resources*)
- ⊙ Contact paper or laminator
- ⊙ Play dough (various colors)

SET UP

Place one face at each child's place setting. Put play dough in the center of the table. You may want to pre-roll eyes, a nose, and a straight line that can be turned into a smile or sad face.

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the *Face* templates onto card stock. You may choose to laminate the faces or place the images on the table and cover them in clear contact paper. Allow the contact paper to extend off the edge of the page by about two inches. Secure the contact paper to the table.

RELATE

Invite two children to the table. **In *The Big God Story*, God sent an angel to free Peter from prison. King Herod was very mad. Other people were very surprised. And some were happy. Can you show me a surprised face? How about a happy face?** Invite children to make faces. **Good job.**
On the table in front of us we have some faces. But they're missing something. What are the faces missing? Wait for children to respond. **That's right—they don't have eyes, a nose, or a mouth. Let's use our play dough to add these to the faces.** Encourage children to create different expressions out of play dough.
Assist them if they need help.

Option 2

Pool Noodle Chain

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Pool noodle (with a hole down the middle of the tube, available at www.amazon.com)
- ⊙ Serrated knife
- ⊙ Permanent marker
- ⊙ Tray
- ⊙ Rope or string (thick)

SET UP

Set pool noodles and string on the tray.

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut pool noodle into 10 one-inch sections. Write a number 1 through 10 on each section. Note: If you have limited time, you can alter this activity by having each child add only one or two rings, rather than all ten. If you choose to do it this way, you may want to have a few extra rings on hand, particularly if you have a large class.

RELATE

Invite one child at a time to the tray. **When Peter was in prison the guards placed chains on him. Today we're going to make a chain with the noodles. We'll start with the number one. Can you find the number one and string it onto the rope?** Lead the child through numbers 1 through 10. Take off all the rings after that child has finished and give another child a chance to go. Allow each child the chance to participate.
Children move into a time where they can participate in discovering God's Word through storytelling, worship, and interactive experiences.

TRANSITION SONG: "The Cleanup Song"

ME AT THREE...

Three-year-old children are constantly learning! To them, the world is one big classroom. They're ready to soak it all in—colors, shapes, numbers, letters ... you name it. Try weaving these foundational concepts into your conversations. Say the names of colors you use and ask older children what colors they're using. Point out shapes around the room, and have the children help you count numbers up to 10 whenever possible.

STORY SPOTS

"*Story Spot*" refers to an item used to mark the place where each child sits.

Consider using carpet squares, small circle-shaped rugs, or large sturdy place mats. When children hear "The Cleanup Song," cue them to choose a *Story Spot*, place it in the gathering space, and sit down. At the close of your time together in *The Big God Story*, encourage children to return their *Story Spots* to their original location.



Children participate in discovering God’s Word through storytelling, worship, and interactive experiences.

Welcome

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Bible
- ⊙ “TruBlessings Theme Song” (see *Resources*)
- ⊙ *Story Spots*
- ⊙ Hamilton puppet
- ⊙ Hamilton’s house
- ⊙ Zip ties (2)

For more information on Traditions or any aspect of the lesson please see the “How It Works” document for Large Group/Small Group in the *Resources*.

Ponder Point: *God Listens to Our Prayers*

RELATE

Welcome, friends! I’m so excited to be here with you today. Let’s all celebrate God by singing and dancing together! Play the “TruBlessings Theme Song” and lead kids in dance and celebration.

Wow! That was great! Everyone, find your *Story Spot* and sit down. Pause while children sit. **Great job. It’s time to hear a part of *The Big God Story*! Let’s call our friend Hamilton and ask him to join us. On the count of three, let’s call him together. Are you ready? One, two, three. Hamilton, where are you?** Encourage kids to call for Hamilton. Hamilton comes out of his house wearing the zip ties around his wrists like handcuffs.

Hi, Hamilton! I’m so glad you’re here with us today. I wonder why Hamilton is wearing handcuffs? Do you think it might have something to do with *The Big God Story*? Allow children to respond. **Hamilton, are you ready to hear this part of *The Big God Story*?** Hamilton nods excitedly. **Me too! But before we get started, do you know where we can find *The Big God Story*?** Hamilton nods his head and gestures to the Bible. **That’s right—The Bible! I know that you love to dig, dig, dig right into God’s Word to find out what God has to say to us. Isn’t that right, Hamilton?** Hamilton nods his head. **Let’s all stand up and sing our *Bible Song* together.**

Bible Song (sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)

Now it’s time to hear God’s Word

Hear God’s Word

Hear God’s Word

Now it’s time to hear God’s Word

So let’s look in the Bible

As the song ends, have children return to their *Story Spots*. Hamilton can model this for the children by sitting quietly as he listens to *The Big God Story*.

AS YOU BEGIN STORYTELLING

As you begin the storytelling section of DISCOVER, have a volunteer available to be Hamilton the Hedgehog using the puppet you provide. Or, you may choose to act as the Storyteller and the Puppeteer. Encourage Hamilton to come out of his home. Consider having a facade that is part of your stage/teaching area. This facade can act as a puppet stage to conceal Puppeteers. However, if this is not an option, if children see the volunteer with the puppet on his/her hand, encourage the volunteer to interact with Hamilton and the children. Their participation will help kids to see the Puppeteer and puppet as separate characters.

The Big God Story is written for a three-year-old audience. It can be told in its entirety or shortened if the class is on the younger side.

Prayer of Release

A *Prayer of Release* is a prayer asking God to remove any distractions that would get in the way of hearing from and responding to Him. As we pray, we dedicate this time to the Lord and ask to be filled with knowledge and understanding from Him, giving God His rightful role as teacher. We can begin to model this posture of prayer with the children in our care. To lead three-year-old children, pray a simple prayer thanking God for His presence and asking Him to teach you as you gather together. For example: "Thank You, God, for being with us. We ask that You would teach us today."

SUPPLIES

- ⊙ Bible (storybook-sized)
- ⊙ Storyboard (whiteboard or felt board)
- ⊙ *The Big God Story* images #1-8 (see *Resources*)
- ⊙ Felt or magnets
- ⊙ Scissors
- ⊙ Hamilton puppet
- ⊙ Hamilton's zip-tie handcuffs
- ⊙ Optional: glue



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PREPARE AHEAD

Today *The Big God Story* will be told in rhyme. Print a copy of the *Storytelling* section and place it inside a storybook Bible. The Storyteller will use this as she reads/storytells. Print *The Big God Story* images and cut them out. Place magnets or felt on the back of the images to stick on the whiteboard or felt board.

RELATE

Hello, friends! It's so good to see you today. Before we get started, let's pray and ask God to teach us today. Lead the children in a *Prayer of Release* as you prepare to hear God's Word.

Let's take a look into *The Big God Story* once again. Open the Bible and begin to read.

The good news was spreading and spreading fast. Our promised Savior had come at last. He came to wipe away our sin. He died and came to life again. Many people from far and near heard the news and did not fear. In Jesus they had put their trust: a new, loving King both kind and just.

What's this good news we're talking about? Allow children to respond. Hamilton whispers in your ear. **Hamilton says you're right! Jesus is the Good News.**

King Herod did not like it, not one little bit. Place image #1 (Herod) on the storyboard. **So he threw a royal, king-sized fit.** Hamilton jumps up and down as if throwing a fit. **"No, no, no, this cannot be. No one can be more powerful than me! We must stop the good news from getting out—arrest that Peter, or I will shout!" At Herod's command they put Peter away; he waited in jail to face Herod one day.**

Hamilton holds his hands up and walks as if going to jail. Place image #2 (Peter in jail) on the storyboard. **This must be why Hamilton was wearing those handcuffs, because Peter was thrown in jail!**

Two chains and some handcuffs held Peter in tight; no one was getting much sleep that night. Place image #3 (Peter and guards) on the storyboard. **For God's people were praying and soon all would see that God is strong and would set Peter free.**

Place image #4 (people praying) on storyboard. **What do you**

think will happen next? Allow children to respond. **Let's see if you're right.**

The guards stood in the jail and saw nothing at all, till a bright light shone and flooded the hall. Hamilton shields his eyes from the bright light. Have children do the same. **"Quick, Peter, get up and come with me," said an angel of God, sent to set Peter free.** Place image #5 (angel in the prison cell) on storyboard. **The chains fell from his wrists and clanged to the floor.** Hamilton shakes off his handcuffs or you can remove them. **"Put on your clothes. Follow me out the door!"**

Peter followed the angel out of the prison. Place image #6 (angel and Peter) on the storyboard. **He thought that he was seeing a vision. They passed by the guards and then came to a gate. It had opened itself, so they didn't have to wait. The angel walked Peter away from his chains. Then the angel was gone as quick as he came. Peter knew he was free, that God's power was strong. When he trusted in God, he never went wrong.**

Many people had gathered in a home to pray. Hamilton bows his head to pray. Encourage children to do the same. **So Peter went to them straight away. At a knock on the door, dear Rhoda came out.** Knock on a hard surface. Encourage kids to knock too. **Upon hearing his voice, she began to shout. "Peter is here. He's here at the door!"** Place image #7 (Peter at the door) on the storyboard. **"You're imagining things." "Please don't shout anymore." Rhoda kept speaking while Peter kept knocking. No one could hear him over all the loud talking. When they opened the door, God opened their eyes. Peter standing before them was such a surprise. Can you show me your surprised faces?** Allow the kids to act

surprised. Hamilton can act surprised too. Place image #8 (group of people with Peter) on the storyboard. **With a wave of his hand, Peter asked them for quiet. He told them God freed him—no one could deny it. God can be trusted more than any other. It's true, you know; go ask your mother.** Close the Bible.

Friends, did God hear the prayers of His people? Children will answer. **Yes, He did. Did He answer their prayers?** Allow

children to answer. **Yes, He did. God is so good. He always hears us when we pray because God listens to our prayers.**

Have the children say good-bye to Hamilton as he goes back into his home and thank him for coming to be a part of *The Big God Story*.

RESPOND//5 minutes

Children have the opportunity to respond to God as they celebrate Him within the faith community.

Song of Celebration

Friends, who hears us when we pray? Allow responses. **God does. He always listens when we talk to Him.**

The people who loved and followed Jesus prayed for Peter. Did God hear them? Allow answers. **Yes, He did. He sent an angel to free Peter from jail. God broke the chains that were holding Peter. Is God big and strong?**

Invite responses. **Yes, He is. Let's stand and celebrate God together.**

Lead kids in a celebratory worship song. Suggested song: "God, You're Big" from TruWorship *Your Love*.

BLESS//5 minutes

This time is set aside for leaders to spend a few moments blessing the children.

Invite children to stand in a circle. Whisper, "**God Listens to Our Prayers**" in a child's ear, and encourage her to whisper it to the next person. Continue until everyone has heard the message. After the last child has received the message, speak the following blessing over the group:

Children, God always hears you when you pray. He is with you and can save you. May you know that God can do anything.

Open a Bible and read:

Jesus looked at them and said, "... with God all things are possible."

– Matthew 19:26



SNACK

If you'd like to tie in the snack with the lesson, serve angel-shaped cookies. As the kids eat, sit down with them and engage them in conversation. Be sure to consider any food allergies or check with parents ahead of time.

WANT MORE?//

Additional games, songs, manipulatives, sensory and art activities are used to help children reinforce what they experience in the lesson.

Option 1

Happy Dance

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ Music
- ⊕ MP3 or CD player

PREPARE AHEAD

Note: For a variation on this game, you can stop the music at random points and have the kids freeze in place. Then start the music again.

RELATE

Invite children to join you. **Peter's friends spent all day and night praying for him. God listened to their prayers. Peter's friends were so happy when they saw him. Sometimes when I'm happy I do a happy dance. Do you think that if we turn on some music you can be silly and do a happy dance with me?** Turn on the upbeat music and dance with the kids.

Option 2

Prayer Chain

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ Construction paper (several sheets)
- ⊕ Scissors
- ⊕ Markers
- ⊕ Crayons
- ⊕ Stickers
- ⊕ Stapler or tape

SET UP

Place the crayons and stickers in the middle of the table. Give each child a couple of paper strips to start.

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut paper into nine- by two-inch strips. Make enough for each child to have at least five.

RELATE

Friends, God listens to our prayers. God listened to the people as they prayed for Peter. We can talk to God anytime we want. When we pray, we're talking with God. What are some things we can pray for? Interact with the children as they answer.

We're going to decorate our paper strips, and we'll write down things we want to pray for. Then we'll each make our own chain to take home.

Encourage children to decorate their strips of paper. As children decorate their strips, write their prayer requests on each strip. You may need to help some of the children as they think about their requests. When they're finished, you can make a chain by connecting the pieces with tape or a stapler. Be sure to write each child's name somewhere on the chain so he can take the chain home.

Option 3

Can You Hear Me?

RELATE

Encourage children to join you on the floor. **Friends, we know God is always with us and always listens to us. We're going to play a listening game. I'm going to whisper something in your ear, and you can tell our friends what I said.** Take turns whispering short, simple statements in each child's ear. Examples: **God is love; God is with us; I love you; you're my friend; I am silly; I like to laugh.**

After whispering a phrase to a child, have the child shout out what she just heard you say. Then whisper a different phrase to the next child and have that child shout out the phrase. Continue until every child has had a chance to go.

Hamilton's Box of Fun

SUPPLIES

- ⊕ *Coloring Sheet* (see *Resources*)
- ⊕ Box or basket
- ⊕ Toddler Movement Scarves (available at www.discountschoolsupply.com)
- ⊕ Puppets
- ⊕ Interlocking blocks
- ⊕ Toy animals
- ⊕ Magnifying glasses (available at www.dollartree.com)
- ⊕ *"The Cleanup Song"* (see *Resources*)



SET UP

Put a variety of fun objects/toys in the box or basket. Hide it somewhere in the room. Clean the objects each week after use.

RELATE

Invite the kids to your circle time area and sing together:

Hamilton's Box (sung to the tune of "Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?")

Oh where, oh where is Hamilton's Box?

Oh where, oh where can it be?

It's full of fun toys that we sure like a lot

Oh where, oh where can it be?

Pick one or two kids to help find the box or basket. Once it's found, you can place it in the middle of your circle time area and invite the kids to come and explore what's inside. **Come on over, everyone! What fun things can we explore today? Let's take turns playing with things and even play together.**

When it's time to put the toys away, cue the kids with *"The Cleanup Song,"* found in *Resources*.

HOMEFRONT WEEKLY is provided as a parent resource with each week's lesson (see *Resources*) and can be emailed or printed and distributed. This preteaching tool encourages families to spend time in God's Word together before children arrive at church. The best part is that parents are first to introduce their kids to the Bible content they'll hear at church. In this way, the church is supporting families as they spiritually nurture their children.

TruBlessings is designed for three-year-old children based on three foundational truths: **God made me, God loves me, and God is with me.**

An Overview of How It Works

TRU MISSION STATEMENT

Tru helps leaders, children, and their families connect to God, find their place in His Big Story, and respond to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Tru lesson, resource, and product is created for this purpose.

TRU PHILOSOPHY

The Holy Spirit is God's chosen teacher. He is the One who makes spiritual growth and formation happen when and as He chooses. Our role, as ministry leaders, volunteers, and parents, is to create space for the Holy Spirit to meet with our children.

FEATURES of the ONE-YEAR SCOPE & SEQUENCE

- **Repetition**— Each part of *The Big God Story* will be repeated two weeks in a row in the Scope & Sequence but will utilize different story-telling techniques and activities.
- **Interaction**— Children will use their senses to explore God's Word through a variety of visual, auditory, and other sensory activities.
- **Chronological**— Follows the sequence of *The Big God Story* meta-narrative.
- **Remember & Celebrate**— On the 13th week of every quarter (once per quarter), there will be a weekend to remember one of the three foundational truths and celebrate who God is.
- **Worship**— Kids will worship through music provided with TruBlessings and will be encouraged in the home as well.

PARENT RESOURCES

Parent Resources are designed to inspire, equip and support parents in their role to spiritually nurture their children and strengthen the home. For more information about the *Spiritual Parenting* DVD series and book, as well as *HomeFront Magazine* visit: truministry.com.

HOMEFRONT WEEKLY

Provided as a parent resource with each week's lesson, *HomeFront Weekly* is designed to help your parents intentionally spend time in God's Word with their children before they come to church. This way, parents will be the first to introduce their children to the Bible content they'll hear at church, preparing them for the upcoming individual lesson. By providing this resource, the church is supporting parents as they spiritually nurture their children. *HomeFront Weekly* can be mailed (postal or Internet) to parents and/or printed and handed out at church.

LEADER PREP

Inspire, Equip, Support

Each week you'll find Inspire, Equip, and Support articles that will help you and your leaders personally and/or corporately engage with God and His Word and take time for yourselves before beginning your prep.

- The **Inspire** article contains personal stories of how God has worked in the lives of fellow ministry leaders, along with insights into that week's God Statement.
- The **Equip** article gives perspective and context as it introduces the lesson's Bible passage.
- The **Support** article provides a time of reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word as you prepare your heart to present the lesson to your children.

Lesson Path: Seeing the Mission Statement in a Tru Lesson

Connects leaders to God...	—————→	Inspire, Equip, and Support
Connects children and their families to God...	—————→	HomeFront Weekly and EXPLORE
..And His big story...	—————→	DISCOVER
...And invites them to respond to Him...	—————→	RESPOND
...Through the power of the Holy Spirit.	—————→	BLESS

HOW IT WORKS

LESSON LANGUAGE

KEEP IT SIMPLE: Following the main activity description, we'll often offer an option called "KEEP IT SIMPLE." This is a simplified version of the activity that may allow you to still offer the experience to your children, but in an easier way for your ministry. It may utilize fewer supplies, less advance prep work, or a shorter overall experience. If you like the idea of the main activity but for whatever reason it may not work for your program that week, check out the suggestions offered in this section.

WANT MORE?: On the other hand, if you're up to the challenge of amping up the main activity to another level, check out "WANT MORE?." The tips offered here may include additional supplies or instructions to take the activity beyond what's described in the original instructions. Perhaps your kids have been in Tru longer and are ready to be challenged more, or your volunteers can handle the extra steps. See what's included here. Note: Both of these options may appear in any portion of the lesson.

ROLES

(Note: These roles may be combined or shared between two people.)

Host: The Host offers the same spirit of hospitality, generosity, and inclusiveness to the children that the host of a party would offer to the guests in her home or gathering. They may set up the time, frame the expectations, and dismiss children.

Small Group Leader: The Small Group Leader shepherds the children through every aspect of the lesson, and blesses them before they leave. Ideally Small Group Leaders work week after week with the same group of kids, giving them the opportunity to develop lasting relationships with each child.

Worship Leader: The Worship Leader facilitates individual and corporate worship by listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit and inviting others into the worship experience.

Storyteller: After active involvement with the Scriptures and the lesson, the Storyteller recounts the Bible passage for the kids in an engaging way. He leads out of an overflow of his own life, telling personal stories as prompted, and guiding the children into a time of natural worship response.

Components of a TruBlessings Lesson

EXPLORE//15-20 minutes

Exploration stations create space for children to engage in hands-on activities as they begin their time of worship.

EXPLORE Stations May Include

Option 1: Activities provided in the lesson

Option 2: Storyboards with *The Big God Story People* (found in the *Resources*)

Option 3: Sensory tables or bins

You may choose to use one or more of the options provided for your three-year-old activity areas. Consider setting up two stations each week. The first station would consist of the activities provided in the lesson. Then from week to week, rotate options 2 to 3 in your second station.

Transition Song

Use the "The Cleanup Song" as a means to transition from one activity to the next. This song is also a great cue to use as a signal for children that it's time to transition from EXPLORE into DISCOVER, and as a helpful reminder that it's time to clean up.



DISCOVER//10-15 minutes

Children participate in discovering God's Word through storytelling, worship, and interactive experiences.

WELCOME TIME

After children have placed their *Story Spots* in the gathering space, invite Hamilton the Hedgehog to join you in your time of DISCOVER and lead the children in singing the *Bible Song*. Play the "TruBlessings Theme Song" and lead kids in dance and celebration.

BIBLE SONG (sung to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

Now it's time to hear God's Word,

Hear God's Word,

Hear God's Word.

Now it's time to hear God's Word, So let's look in the Bible.

When the song ends, have the children return to their seats.

The Big God Story

As you transition children into the storytelling portion of DISCOVER, lead the children in a *Prayer of Release*.

A *Prayer of Release* is a prayer asking God to remove any distractions that would get in the way of hearing from and responding to Him. As we pray, we dedicate this time to the Lord and ask to be filled with knowledge and understanding from Him, giving God His rightful role as Teacher.

We can begin to model this posture of prayer with the children in our care. To lead three-year-old children, pray a simple prayer thanking God for His presence and asking Him to teach you as you gather together. For example: "Thank You, God, for being with us. We ask that You would teach us today."

The Big God Story is written for a three-year-old audience and can be told in its entirety, but may need to be shortened if the class is on the younger side.

After the *Prayer of Release*, you will begin storytelling from *The Big God Story*. The supplies will vary from week to week, but may include provided resources such as *The Big God Story* images. Hamilton will be cued to participate in the storytelling. At the end of the time, have the children say good-bye to Hamilton as he goes back into his house. Thank him for coming and being a part of *The Big God Story*.



Hamilton the Hedgehog is a recurring character used as a tool to help engage the children.

RESPOND//5 minutes

Children have the opportunity to respond to God as they celebrate Him within the faith community.

As children leave their time in *The Big God Story*, they will have the opportunity to RESPOND to God as they celebrate Him through music and song along with those in their faith community.

BLESS//5 minutes

This time is set aside for leaders to spend a few moments blessing the children.

Every Tru lesson concludes with a blessing. The word benediction means to speak well over someone. This is a time for parents and leaders to speak truth over and into children's lives. The children have just had the experience of encountering God and His Word; the idea of the blessing is to bless them and what God is doing in them. Allow them to receive this. As they've been blessed, they will in turn be used to bless others. Even children at this young age can begin to understand the concept that everything that comes from God is a gift to us. This is the time to remind children they can freely give away the joy, love, truth, and grace they've received from God.

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words of encouragement and guidance. Explain that a prayer is talking to God, while a blessing is speaking to a person. Concluding your time together with a blessing enables them to leave from the strength of being encouraged and built up with godly words of life and truth spoken over them.

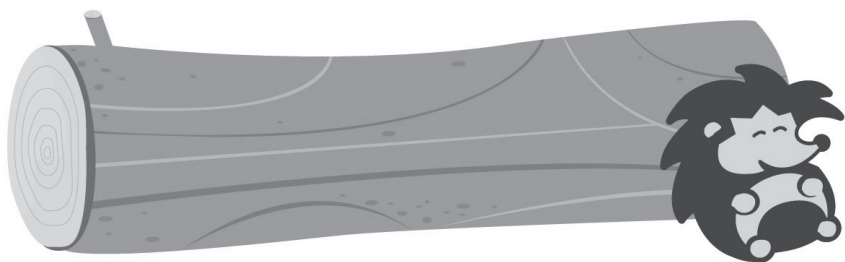
Within each lesson a simple blessing is provided along with a portion of Scripture that reinforces the spiritually forming concepts introduced within the lesson. For example:

Children, may you remember that God made our world and all the earth will worship Him.

Open the Bible and read Psalm 19:1 over the children.

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the works of His hands.
—Psalm 19:1

SNACK You may choose to enjoy a snack as children share in this time of blessing. Snack ideas may be provided to connect the snack to the lesson. Be sure to consider any food allergies or check with parents ahead of time.



WANT MORE?//

Children are encouraged to participate in a time where they will further engage through games, songs, manipulatives, sensory activities, and art. These activities are used to help reinforce what they experienced in DISCOVER.

The WANT MORE options are specifically aimed at three-year-old children and can be used when you need to extend service time or play time.

Hamilton's Box of Fun

This is a recurring activity that can be used each week. Some options have been provided to help you create your own "box of fun." Each quarter the suggested supplies will be refreshed. Be sure to check the *Resources* each week for updated coloring sheets.

Hamilton's Box of Fun will encourage kids to interact with one another as they practice sharing toys and using their imaginations with the different items inside the box. You may choose to use this at the beginning or end of the service, as time permits.

Invite your children to the circle time area and sing together:

HAMILTON'S BOX (sung to the tune of "Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?")

Where, oh where is Hamilton's Box?

Oh where, oh where can it be?

It's full of fun toys that we sure like a lot!

Oh where, oh where can it be?

When the song ends, encourage the children to work together to find *Hamilton's Box of Fun*. Consider hiding the box in a new location each week to pique the children's curiosity and excitement.



HOW IT WORKS

Remember & Celebrate

TRADITIONS OF TRUBLESSINGS Every quarter, we take time to pause and remember who God is and all He has done. As we remember, we celebrate Him together as a faith community. The TruBlessings *Remember & Celebrate* lesson is a time to stop and celebrate all the things God has been teaching us through the lessons of the previous weeks. The children review the things God has been teaching them about who He is. Each quarter focuses on one of the following foundational truths: **God made me, God loves me, or God is with me.**

The *Remember & Celebrate* lesson contains the familiar sections of EXPLORE, DISCOVER, RESPOND, and BLESS. There are also WANT MORE? activities provided, or feel free to bring back favorites from previous weeks.