

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS STORY



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

It's Christmas. Nativity scenes are everywhere. You know, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, and the drummer boy (who wasn't actually there). Maybe you grew up seeing these scenes and wondered what they were all about. Or maybe you've heard the story a million times. Either way, there's another story we bet you haven't heard, characters you barely

know, scenes you don't see in the plastic nativity on your neighbor's lawn. As we explore two often-untold parts of the Christmas story, we discover that God had something bigger in mind from the very beginning. And, just as it was true for those at the first Christmas, He may just have a bigger story in mind for us as well.

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Reggie Joiner

The stories you tell matter.

You are inviting kids and teenagers into a bigger narrative—one where they are designed to play a significant role.

Why do you think...**Luke Skywalker** in Star Wars, **Frodo** in Lord of the Rings, **Aslan** in The Chronicles of Narnia, and a boy named **Harry** have such an appeal to the hearts of kids?

It's because they remind us of...

- the **struggle** between good and evil.
- the **existence** of a supernatural and miraculous power.
- the **potential** to be personally restored and transformed.

Why do you think the same themes are recycled so many times? **Maybe it's simply because the idea of story originated with God.**

If every story was written by an author who is created in God's image, maybe that's the reason so many reflect His ancient narrative.

- No wonder stories inspire us.*
- No wonder stories incite faith.*
- No wonder stories give us hope.*

Isn't that the kind of perspective you want kids and teenagers to have about this world? Don't you want them to know life's connected to a bigger story where God is the Author?

A bigger story perspective...

- prepares them to face whatever happens.
- compels them to take risks and do something significant.
- moves them to keep believing that good will ultimately win.

Life will be hard.

It will be harder for some than for others. The only guarantee in everyone's story is there will be conflict.

That's why everybody loves a good story. You latch onto someone who is going against the odds. You identify with their struggle to push through.

Did you know the script for *Harry Potter* was written during J.K. Rowling's darkest hour?

Here's how she describes that time in her life: "An exceptionally short-lived marriage had imploded, and I was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain, without being homeless...I was the biggest failure I knew. I was set free, because my greatest fear had been realized, and I was still alive, and I still had a daughter whom I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life."

So, Rowling captured the imagination of a generation with a story.

The story of a boy named Harry— an unusual boy, marked for a specific destiny from birth.

As he discovered his true identity and embraced his purpose, he grew in wisdom and strength. His closest friends followed him everywhere, facing grave opposition, but they could not always understand what he understood. They could not follow him into the very final battle against an evil

enemy, where he entered into death itself...and defeated it.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Regardless of what you think about Harry, you have to agree.

Stories are powerful—especially when they reflect God's story.

Stories over time matter—especially when they come from parents and leaders who care.

So, do whatever you can to amplify the best stories around you...

- Read them.
- Watch them.
- Tell them.
- Create them.
- Write them.
- Illustrate them.
- Film them.
- Live them.
- Collect them.

Stories can make history for a child. Stories can transform his or her perspective. They can make life fuller, faith deeper, and hope stronger.

Stories over time move us to imagine a world beyond ourselves.

For more from Reggie Joiner or to connect to a wider community of parents, check out www.parentcue.org.

TRY THIS

Fictional stories have incredible power to help students imagine. But real stories are just as important. The stories of family help kids and teenagers understand where they come from and where they belong.

Christmas provides more opportunities to remember your real family story than any other season. It seems nearly every tradition, every dish, and every ornament comes with the story of someone who mattered or a moment in your family history, but in the busyness of it all, those stories are often lost. **This Christmas, try creating a tradition of storytelling.** Maybe for your family that means...

- Asking your teenager to tell you his or her favorite Christmas memory while you hang lights.
- Sharing the story about special ornaments as you put them on the tree.
- Visiting the grandparents and asking them what the holidays were like for them.
- Reading the original Christmas story (Luke 2:1-20) as a family.

Every family has a story. In fact, every family has lots of them. This Christmas, share some of yours with your kid and ask him or her to do the same. You may just find you've started a tradition of connecting in a whole new way.