

saint mary's press

ECHO

THE STORY

A BIBLE STUDY FOR
CATHOLIC TEENS

LEADER GUIDE

ECHO

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A BIBLE STUDY FOR
CATHOLIC TEENS



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WHAT IS ECHO THE STORY?

Echo the Story is an imaginative way to engage in the Bible using storytelling, creative reflection, and dialogue. This approach helps participants discover meaning and identity in the biblical narrative.

SESSION FLOW

① **rewind** THE STORY [5-14 MINUTES*]

Watch an animated video to review previous sessions' stories.

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

Focus our minds for imaginative listening.

③ **imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

Listen actively to a live telling of a Bible story.

④ **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]

Record observations by sketching or writing.

⑤ **remix** THE STORY [10 MINUTES**]

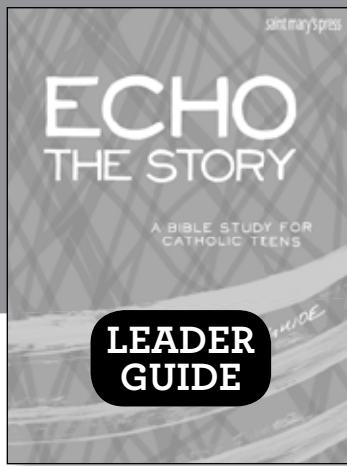
Choose from drawing or writing activities to retell part of the story in your own way.

⑥ **connect** TO YOUR STORY [20 MINUTES]

Share insights through guided dialogue.

* Videos increase in length to recap all the stories told so far.

** Do REMIX activities if time permits.



Leader Guide

The guide you are holding right now will be your map through each of the twelve sessions of *Echo the Story*. It details the activities in each session and gives you the prompts, scripts, and encouragement you need to lead well.

Sketch Journals

The Sketch Journal is a creative logbook of each participant's journey through the stories. Sketch Journals work in tandem with the Leader Guide and are used throughout each session. Make sure every person (leaders and participants) has a Sketch Journal!

DVD/Video

The DVD/video contains "The Story So Far" videos and leader preparation videos. At the start of each session, your group will watch "The Story So Far" video for that session, which includes a group interaction and a fast-paced review of previous sessions' stories.

ALSO ON THE DVD: LEADER VIDEOS!

ECHO THE STORY PROMO VIDEO

This **short video** gives a fast overview of the *Echo the Story* experience, helping **leaders** and **parents** understand and get excited about *Echo the Story*.

THE STORY BEHIND ECHO THE STORY

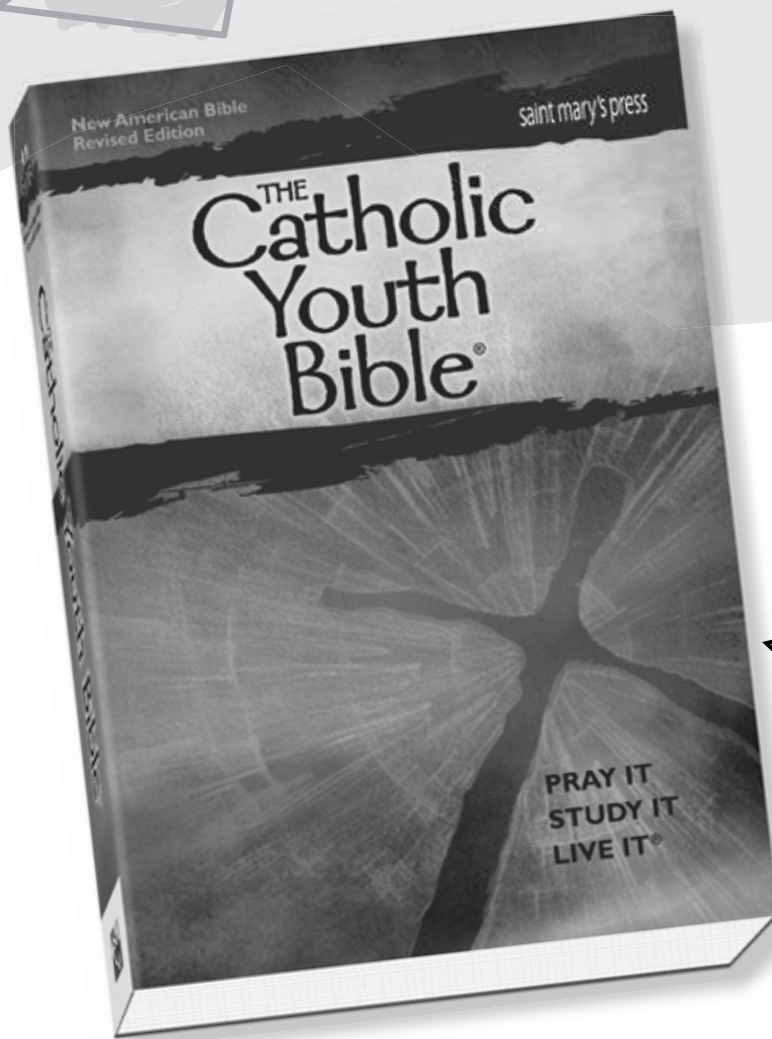
This **3-minute video** explains how *Echo the Story* was created, why it was created, and how it has worked with other participants.

ECHO THE STORY SESSION OVERVIEW VIDEO

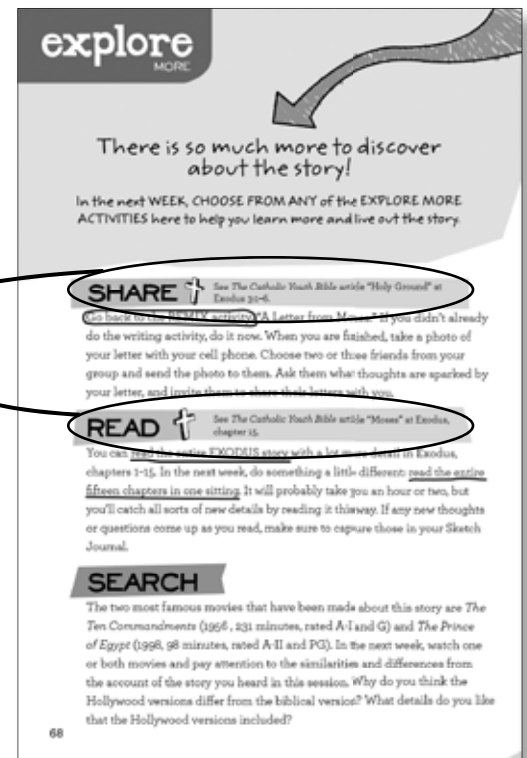
This practical, **6-minute video** is the best way for leaders to understand the elements in each session and how best to facilitate *Echo the Story*.

We recommend that you watch the leader videos before you read any farther in this guide. Much of what is outlined in the next few pages will be more useful to you if you've already viewed these video segments.

THE ANCHOR TO YOUR STUDENTS' ECHO THE STORY EXPERIENCE . . .



The Catholic Youth Bible® (available in NABRE and NRSV translations) is a perfect companion to *Echo the Story*. Over 700 lively articles will help your youth grow deeper in their understanding of God's Revelation in Scripture and Tradition.



DON'T HAVE YOUR COPY YET?

We'd be happy to help you place your order.

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Quantity discounts are always available—just ask!

THE STORY BEHIND ECHO THE STORY

Thanks so much for your interest in *Echo the Story*! Much of the reason I'm so excited about this resource is that I've seen firsthand what happens in students' lives when they encounter this unique way of approaching the Bible.

During my first ten years of youth ministry, I tried everything I knew to help my students connect with the Bible. I started with preaching, but that sometimes felt more like force-feeding—like I was a momma bird chewing up the Bible into bite-sized pieces for my students, hoping they'd take its nourishment and not spit it back out! Mostly, I saw my preaching met with indifference.

So I tried to get my students to engage the Bible for themselves using all kinds of study methods: *inductive, topical, general survey, verse-by-verse, devotional, chapter analysis*—you name it! **But most of my students still showed little interest in the Bible and struggled to stay focused.**

At first I dismissed this as a lack of initiative. Then one of my students told me: "*Michael, I love to read, but when I try to read the Bible I feel like I'm trying to decode something. I'm not sure that this is the way I learn.*" This opened my eyes.

I realized that I was giving students only *one way* to approach the Bible—a way based solely on critical analysis. This seemed to lead us to dissect the Bible, extracting only single ideas from it. **We needed an approach to the Bible that would engage us both critically and creatively.**

Then one day I discovered something called Chronological Bible Storying at a workshop led by John Witte, a missionary to Africa. John led a group of us through a powerful experience of Bible storytelling and group dialogue. He never gave answers. Instead, he asked intentional questions and *allowed the group's observations to do the teaching*. For three hours, I was riveted to stories from the Bible.

The process was revolutionary to me. Not only was it the first time I saw the Bible as one big, interconnected story, but it was **deeply experiential and theological at the same time**. I had to try this with my youth group.

Before long, my students became captivated by the Bible narratives, eager to share their observations and wonderings. They were looking for God—in the Bible and in one another. I saw the story of the Bible begin to shape my students' theology and identities. One of them even said, *"I realized that God is the author of my life . . . and is writing my story that I'm so excited to discover!"*

Over the past decade, I've had the opportunity to lead hundreds of youth and adults through this imaginative approach, helping them (and myself) to experience the Bible in a fresh way. During these past years, I've also worked to refine and improve this approach and infuse it with proven experiential learning methods.

My learning and practical experience have led to the creation of *Echo the Story* resources that guide groups to journey through the story of the Bible. My hope and prayer are that this resource will help your group imagine the Bible—and themselves—in a new way.

Learning together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Novelli". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Novelli, author of *Echo the Story*

USING THE SESSION SCRIPTS

The **session scripts** beginning on **page 25** of this Leader Guide are your road map for leading *Echo the Story*. These scripts give you the language and prompts you'll need to lead participants through each session.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The first page of each session script is an overview. For all of the sessions (except for the first) the parts—REWIND, PREPARE, IMAGINE, CAPTURE, REMIX, and CONNECT—remain the same, but the **lengths** for these parts vary a bit. This overview also gives you a list of **supplies**, which remain the same for all of the sessions.

SESSION OVERVIEW

SUPPLIES

- ▶ *Echo the Story* DVD/videos for this session
- ▶ *Echo the Story* Sketch Journals for every participant
- ▶ markers, pens, and colored pencils

- 1 rewind** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]
"The Story So Far" video begins with an interaction for your group. Following this interaction, the video will show a fast-paced animated review of the previous sessions' story.
- 2 prepare** FOR THE STORY [10 MINUTES]
Participants will draw their own version of this session's story symbol in their Sketch Journals. Then a participant will read a section from the Sketch Journal that helps ready the group for imaginative listening.
- 3 imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]
The leader will now tell this session's Bible story. A carefully crafted narrative script of the story is provided in this Leader Guide.
- 4 capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]
The leader will ask for a participant to volunteer to do a second telling of the story. During this telling, participants will use their Sketch Journals to capture aspects of the story that stand out to them.
- 5 remix** THE STORY *TIME PERMITTING [10 MINUTES]
Participants will be invited to choose from two REMIX activities (included in the Sketch Journal) that guide them to retell part of the Bible story in their own unique way.
- 6 connect** TO YOUR STORY [10 MINUTES]
Finally, the leader will guide a group dialogue where participants are asked to share their observations and insights from the story. Dialogue questions are provided in this Leader Guide.

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rewind THE STORY [5 MINUTES]


"THE STORY SO FAR" VIDEO

Leader Says:
 Right now we are going to continue our twelve-part journey through the Bible.


We are going to start with a video. The first part gives you a chance to answer a question with a partner.

After the timer finishes, the next part of the video will start right away, giving us highlights from the last session. This video moves really fast, so we'll have to pay close attention and listen carefully. Are you ready?

*** CUE: Play "The Story So Far" video for this session**



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

SESSION 2  **disruption** 39

Throughout the session scripts are **sidebars** with tips for leading well.

PART 1: REWIND

Start each session by playing **"The Story So Far"** video, located on the *Echo the Story: A Bible Study for Catholic Teens* DVD. In your session script, an image of "The Story So Far" video is in the sidebar to prompt you when to play the video.

Each of "The Story So Far" videos begins with an **interaction** that invites participants to share about elements in that session's story. This interaction is followed by a fast-paced animated **video recap** of previous stories.

CUES in BOLD are **not** to be read aloud to the group, but provide leader actions for specific moments.

USING THE SESSION SCRIPTS

PART 2: PREPARE

Throughout the Leader Guide, **snapshots of the Sketch Journal** are provided so you can see what participants are currently looking at.

For the PREPARE part of the session, you will ask participants to quickly **draw their own version** of the story symbol in their Sketch Journals. This activity helps to not only get their creativity flowing, but also to embed the symbol in participants' minds and turn their thoughts toward the Bible story in that session.

ECHO THE STORY
Leader Guide

prepare FOR THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

DRAW THE STORY SYMBOL

- ▶ **CUE:** If you collected the Sketch Journals last session, pass them out to each participant. Remember to give Sketch Journals to any new people joining your group. Provide markers, pens, and colored pencils for participants to use.

Leader Says:

As I mentioned in our last session, our Sketch Journals are an important part of our experience. They'll give each of us a chance to be creative, and to capture the thoughts and ideas that these stories spark in us.

Each of the twelve stories that we'll tell has its own symbol as a visual reminder. Right now, turn to **page 24** and draw your own version of the DISRUPTION symbol [a tree with a snake around it] in your Sketch Journal.

You may be wondering why we are redrawing this symbol. Well, this will help embed it in our minds, and will also help get our creativity flowing for the rest of the activities that we'll do later. So you don't need to just copy the symbol—*be creative and make it your own!*

- ▶ **CUE:** Don't spend a lot of time on this activity—2 minutes or less.
- ▶ **CUE:** While participants are drawing, ask: **Would someone read aloud the definition for disruption provided under the symbol box on page 24?**

A disruption is when things are thrown into chaos; interrupted and knocked off course from the way they were intended to be.

THE LENS OF THE SOUL

Leader Says:

This next story is filled with wild events: *a talking serpent, a worldwide flood, a huge boat full of animals*—elements beyond what we would consider normal. So it may be easy for us to dismiss this story as a fairy tale. But like our first story, reality and metaphors are mixed together. *Who can tell us what a metaphor is?* [get a response] Yes—a metaphor is a word or phrase used as a symbol to describe something else.

So if the Bible is full of metaphors, how do we see the truths within them?

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Well, stories connect with us by opening our eyes to their deeper meaning. There is a quote on **page 25** of your Sketch Journal that talks about how we see stories through a different lens.

- ▶ **CUE:** Have a participant read this quote aloud.

"Storytelling is powerful because it has the ability to touch human beings at the most personal level. While facts are viewed from the lens of a microscope, stories are viewed from the lens of the soul. Stories address us on every level. They speak to the mind, the body, the emotions, the spirit, and the will. In a story a person can identify with situations he or she has never been in. The individual's imagination is unlocked to dream what was previously unimaginable."

—Mark Miller, *Experiential Storytelling*

- ▶ **CUE:** After the quote is read, briefly discuss this question: Why do you think stories affect us on a deeper level?

IMAGINATIVE LISTENING

Leader Says:

When we're told a good story, we don't just hear it: we see it, we feel it, and it affects us. It's like we are putting on a special pair of glasses that cause us to step inside the story and relate the characters and events to our own experiences. As we identify with the story, it stirs important questions within us about who we are and what we believe about life. Stories—especially stories from the Bible—have the power to shape our lives.

Our next story is also taken from the Book of Genesis. Let's slow down, push out any distractions, and use our imaginations to enter the story. You might want to close your eyes or focus on the image on **pages 26–27**.

Take a moment in silence. Breathe deeply, slow down, and clear your mind. Whisper a prayer, asking God to show you something meaningful in this story.

- ▶ **CUE:** After 15–20 seconds of quiet, begin narrating the story.



Next, you'll **invite a participant** to read aloud a **scripted reflection** from the Sketch Journal to help your group slow down and focus on imagining the story. This page uses a creative metaphor to encourage participants to see the value of the Bible in a new way. The hope is that this metaphor will build anticipation and interest for the Bible story you are about to tell.

After a participant reads the scripted reflection, leaders will help participants ready themselves for **imaginative listening**. A scripted segment is provided as a guide. It is essential that you take time to help prepare your group to concentrate on the story they are about to hear.

In the Sketch Journals, an **image is provided** for each story, giving participants a focal point while they listen to the story being told.

USING THE SESSION SCRIPTS

PART 3: IMAGINE

You'll now tell the Bible story.

Narrative scripts are provided in the Leader Guide. These narratives have been carefully stitched together from segments of the Bible, paraphrased with language smoothed over for readability.

Storytellers should work to bring energy and emotion to the reading without drawing attention to themselves. Participants will be encouraged to close their eyes or focus on an **image** provided in their Sketch Journals—so they often won't even be looking at the storyteller!

ECHO THE STORY
Leader Guide

imagine THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

Leader Narrates:

SCENE 1: LIFE DISRUPTED

Adam and Eve lived under God's care and protection in a beautiful garden.

One day, a clever serpent came to Eve and asked her, "Did God really say you can't eat *ANY* of the fruit in this garden?"

Eve answered: "We can eat any fruit we'd like—except for the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. God said if we eat that fruit—or even touch it—we'll die."

The serpent replied: "You won't die! God knows that if you eat that fruit, your eyes will be opened—and you will become as wise as God."

Eve looked at the delicious fruit and thought, "This will make me wise."

So she bit into the fruit. Then she gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he ate it too.

Instantly their eyes were opened, and they felt ashamed and afraid. So they tied leaves together to cover up their nakedness. [pause]

Later on in the cool of the day, God came to spend time with Adam and Eve. When they heard God walking in the garden, they hid behind some bushes.

God called to them, "Where are you?"

Adam answered, "I heard you coming and I was ashamed—because I'm naked—so I hid."

God asked: "Why are you ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?"

Adam said, "It was the woman you created . . . she gave me the fruit."

God asked Eve, "Why did this happen?"

Eve answered, "It was the serpent . . . he tricked me into eating the fruit."

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

So God said to the serpent: *"Because you've done this, from now on serpents will slither on their bellies, eating dust. Humans will be your enemies."*

God turned to Adam and Eve and said: *"Your eyes have been opened to pain, struggles, and death. You'll face intense pain in childbirth. You'll struggle through weeds and thorns to harvest food. And you'll fight for control of your relationship. At the end of your life, you'll return to the ground from which you were created."* [pause]

After that, God used animal skins to make clothing for Adam and Eve. Then God removed them from the garden.

Mighty angels were stationed at the entrance, and a flaming sword flashed back and forth, keeping Adam and Eve from returning to the garden and eating from the Tree of Life. [pause]

SCENE 2: STARTING OVER

After leaving the garden, Adam and Eve started a family.

Tragically, their oldest son, Cain, attacked and killed his brother Abel in a jealous rage—even after God warned him about his anger. Cain was then sent away to be a wanderer of the Earth. [pause]

As humans populated the earth, civilizations formed and cities were built. Craftsmanship, music, and the arts emerged.

But humans couldn't live peacefully with one another.

Selfishness and greed turned into fighting, fighting turned into hatred, hatred turned into murder, and murder turned into war.

Violence and chaos spiraled out of control.
People's hearts and minds were filled with evil day and night.

Humans had forgotten that they were created in God's image.

And God's heart was broken.

About the Narratives

These narratives were carefully stitched together from segments of the Bible, paraphrased with language smoothed over for readability. Then, a team of biblical scholars carefully reviewed these stories.

In some places, historical context and word definitions have been inserted into the stories.

As much as we tried to let the biblical texts speak for themselves, it's impossible to not reflect the editor's perspectives in these stories.

We hope these narratives provide a helpful platform, not only for meaningful reflection and dialogue, but also to spark curiosity to explore the rest of the story and renew interest in Bible reading.