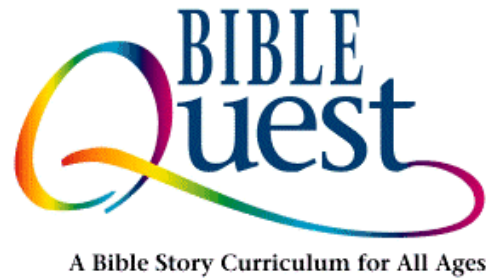


## Workshop



## Creating a Learning Environment

### Enter into Planning

As you think about leading this workshop, call to mind a place where you were welcomed, invited in, and then stimulated to grow in some way. What was the area like? What made you feel comfortable? Recall some of the settings where Jesus did his teaching. Some were wide-open, large spaces; some were intimate gatherings with his closest friends.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 and notice the care God took in creating the space into which God placed humans. How was the order important? How were needs cared for before they were thought about? How does this speak to you in creating a space for learners?

Read the article “Creating an Environment for Storytelling.” To which ideas do you relate most closely? Why? What does this tell you about yourself as a leader?

Review the plan for the workshop. The workshop is designed for one and a half to two hours. Choose the activities you will use based on the time available.

Think about the people who will be attending this workshop. Name each one aloud. Write each name on an index card. Create cards for people whom you do not yet know. After the workshop, write a comment about each person and his or her contribution to the group that will remind you of that person’s strengths and gifts.

Pray for wisdom as you lead the workshop and openness to the gifts others bring.

### You Will Need

- copies of the articles “Create an Environment for Storytelling” and “Many Ways to Learn”
- party invitations
- party supplies (food, decorations)
- storytelling cards
- video and video player
- paper, pencils
- index cards
- newsprint, markers
- notepads
- *Bible Quest* age-level Leader’s Guides, Action Packs
- colored paper

### Prepare



#### Set up the space

*Party decorations*

You will need to provide a comfortable space with lots of room, such as the fellowship hall. If you cannot make two different rooms available, separate a large room into two distinct areas. Leave one room or area plain and decorate the other in a party motif. Hang balloons and streamers; put up posters; put confetti on the tables; add table favors or flowers to the tables.

If possible before the event, mail copies of the article “Create an Environment for Storytelling” to workshop participants. If it is not possible to provide this ahead of time, allow time for people to read the article when they arrive.



### Prepare for the party

*Colored paper, index cards, pen*

Prepare colorful party invitations on brightly colored paper that say:

Dear (participant’s name):

You are invited to a progressive storytelling party at (your church’s name).

Time: (state time of workshop)

Place: (name the two rooms or the large area where you will meet)

Hand out these invitations as participants arrive. Recruit a friendly person to act as “host” for the party. Prepare four or five different story cards. On each card write a suggestion, such as these:

- Tell about a time when you were really warm.
- When you were eight years old, what or who was the center of warmth in your home?
- Tell about someone who seems to you to be a “warm personality.”
- Tell about someone or someplace where you go when you need comfort.
- When did God become a warm presence for you?

## Tell



### Come to a party

*Invitations, food, story cards, newsprint, markers*

As participants enter the room, hand each one a “Come to the Party” invitation. Direct them to the first room or section of a large room where you have set up a party motif. A friendly host welcomes them, offers to take their coat or jacket, ushers them to a table group, introduces them to others, and offers beverages and snacks.

When all the guests are settled, distribute the story cards. If the person receiving the card is uncomfortable with that card, he or she may trade with another person one time. Ask people to follow the directions on the card. If you have more participants than cards, repeat the activity until all have had an opportunity to tell a story.

After all the stories have been told, invite the participants to move into the other room or area, the one that is very plain. People will sit in a circle of chairs while you tell a story. This may be a story of a personal experience or a Bible story.

At the end of your story, ask the participants to compare the two storytelling experiences. List on newsprint the differences they identify. What elements of creating an environment did they notice? How did they feel in each setting?



### View the video

*Video, video player*

Watch the *Bible Quest* video for examples of leaders and learners paying attention to the creation of the learning environment. After the video, ask: What new insights did you gain? What affirmed what you already knew? What questions do you still have about the importance of the learning environment?

## Connect



### Take a tour

*Notepads, pencils*

Lead participants, who have notepads and pencils in hand, to the entrance of the church where learners normally enter. Pause at specific points that you know learners pass. Invite the group members to take notes at each point. Their comments will be age-specific to the learners in their groups, so not all will make the same observations.

At the entrance ask, “What about this entrance would be challenging or difficult for your learners?” Watch for height of coat racks, direction signs, lighting, stairs, drinking fountains, and so on. In the hallways ask, “How accessible are the restrooms? Is the flooring safe? Would nonreaders know where to go?”

In the sanctuary ask, “What stimulates learning here?”

In the doorway to the learning area ask, “What is the first impression learners have when coming into this space? How does the furniture accommodate their needs? What visible objects stimulate curiosity or the imagination? What does this room say to learners?”

Return to the space for the workshop and compare notes. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the total learning environment for your congregation?



### Create two areas

*Paper, markers*

Recall that the video showed two sections of a learning area: a storytelling area and a work area. Provide two pieces of paper and markers for each participant. Ask them to go to the areas where they will be leading a group and show on one piece of paper how the room is currently set up; on the second piece they are to show how the room could be restructured to create two areas or how the space could quickly be adapted for the two different activities.

Ask, “What will you need to create a positive learning environment in the area where you will meet the learners? What may need to be removed or added?”



### Review the resources

*Bible Quest age-level Action Packs, Leader’s Guides*

Although not all age levels have an Action Pack, the resources in the Action Packs may stimulate ideas for creating learning environments for everyone. Brainstorm ideas about ways these items can be used and perhaps shared across age levels.

Choose one of the bookmark stories for the quarter. These are listed in the Contents of the Leader’s Guides. Look across all age levels to see what the guides recommend for setting up the learning environment.

Suppose you were going to have an allchurch event based on this bookmark story. How would you create the environment in which to hold the event?



### Connect the environment with many ways of learning

*Article “Many Ways to Learn, “ newsprint, markers*

An important element in *Bible Quest* is paying attention to the many ways people learn. Howard Gardner has identified at least eight intelligences. See the article “Many Ways to Learn.” On newsprint list the eight intelligences:

- verbal-linguistic
- logical-mathematical
- musical
- visual-spatial
- bodily-kinesthetic
- intrapersonal
- interpersonal
- naturalistic

With these intelligences in mind, how would you create a learning environment that would provide opportunities for each to be expressed? Sometimes you may have to move from one learning environment to another to accommodate more intelligences.

## **Celebrate**



### **Enjoy the party**

Move back into the area where you started the workshop, the party area. As you gather there, invite the participants to name at least one insight they gained in this workshop. What did they learn about themselves?

Make a toast to one another for being tellers of the story. In the Genesis 1:1-2:4a account of creation, it says, “And God saw that it was good.” Celebrate your time together because “it was good.”