

A collection of orange-outlined decorative elements including stars, sparkles, and a shooting star, arranged around the word 'WONDER'.

WONDER

Leader Guide



Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany your families as they learn to wonder and reflect on the word of God. *Wonder* is an ongoing formation experience for the entire family. Families will encounter the power of storytelling in the parables of Jesus through engaging their imaginations, hands-on activities, and meaningful conversations. Families will draw out the moral of each story and apply it to their daily lives.

“We must wonder! We must create an environment of wonder! We must create a climate of wonder! This task is closest to the family. . . . Wonder is needed so that beauty might enter into human life, into society and the nation. This beauty is the foundation and the creative moment of the culture. It is impossible to create culture by administrative means. These means can only destroy it. . . . We need to marvel at everything that is found in man.” (Pope Saint John Paul II)

A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany this program. We recommend first becoming familiar with the material before implementing it.
- Families can be placed in small groups of 3-4 families to share this journey with. Families can learn from each other as they recount their Family Meeting experiences. Companion Families can weave together these individual families into a small church community.
- *Wonder* is designed to be led at-home, and can be accompanied by the At-Church Content. The At-Church Content includes 2 Sessions for parents and children. If you are introducing families to ongoing formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Blend Session.
- Check in with families regularly using our Family Follow Through system available on Martha or as a PDF. This helps with accountability. Share photos from the Family Follow Throughs in your bulletin, newsletter, emails, or bulletin boards.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Over 10 Family Meetings, families will begin with a gathering ritual and opening prayer. They will then discuss the check-in question, participate in a short imagination exercise, pop out the story pieces, read the parable, discuss the teaching that draws out a moral, and close with a prayer. Each meeting is designed to take an average of 20-40 minutes.

For the gathering ritual families will need a Bible. They will place the Bible in the center of their gathering space, have each member of their family place a hand on it, and begin with the included prayer together. When families continually share in rituals of our faith, they can become more grounded in Christ and united as a family. This gathering ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin their Family Meetings. The check-in is meant to get the conversation started between family members. The question is loosely based on the theme, and is one that is easy to answer.

Each of the Family Meetings includes a short imagination exercise for parents to lead. To help their children get quiet and still, parents will have them close their eyes and imagine with their minds what they are speaking to them. As they finish and open their eyes, they will ask them a couple questions about how they imagined and wondered at what the parents said. These simple exercises will be tied directly to the parable text from the Scriptures. It will help them enter into a space of wondering. Along with the content, there is a story background and three pop outs for each Family Meeting to help recall and retell the story. Each teaching is focused on a theme and includes a simple moral. To end each Family Meeting, a prayer is included for families to pray together.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Family Meeting	Theme	Activity
1	Helpful steps to understanding the storytelling and teaching of parables. As a family we too have a story.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
2	God is growing each of us into something wonderful, no matter how small we start.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
3	We are called to embrace everyone as our neighbors and treat them with care and respect.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
4	We are encouraged to bring the light of Christ to the world.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
5	We are meant to build our lives on a strong foundation that can survive all types of weather.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
6	Focus on the blessings you've been given, instead of looking at other's situations.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
7	Pursue a relationship with God. Be persistent in reaching out to him.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
8	God wants us near, he will seek us out when we are lost.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
9	God is a patient gardener who wants us to grow real, true fruit.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.
10	Seeds cannot grow in soil that is not cared for.	Imagination exercise and parable sharing with backdrop and pop outs.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have families gather periodically throughout the *Wonder* process. The goal of gathering is to:

- Find out what is going well and what families are struggling with in the Family Meetings.
- To encourage, deepen, and support their experience of the Family Meetings with any tips, inspiration, or information.
- To meet and hear from other families on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of families, especially parents!
- To give children a positive and meaningful experience at-church.
- To pray together - for each other and for the entire community.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating family Sessions held at-church throughout the *Wonder* experience. The Sessions are designed to have parents and children together. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame in the Sessions. Session 1 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 4 and 5. Session 2 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 8 and 9. If you are introducing families to ongoing formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Blend Session available before Session 1.

There are supplies that need to be pulled together to help bring these Sessions to life. We have given you supply lists. We cannot overemphasize the impact of simple but beautiful decor, great hospitality, and intimate prayerful spaces. Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you! If you have a lot of families, the following content can be done in small groups. It is also important to have a good interactive MC to help the Session along.

We realize families are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written sessions we feel best take into account today's families. It is our hope that these Sessions meet them where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that families leave with a positive experience of Church and community, feeling like they have a place in it.

ACCOMPANIMENT TEAM NEEDS

We realize each of our directors have different gifts; some are wonderful teachers, some are storytellers, others are better facilitating small groups, some are gifted in finding others to present material. Use your strengths to lead your family Sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team!

Facilitator:

- Choosing a facilitator to lead your Sessions as an MC from the front is an important decision. There will be other voices like witnesses, but it is necessary to have a central person to be the stabilizing and guiding voice in the group. They will introduce and weave together the content for each Session. This person should be warm, engaging, confident, and it helps if they have a good sense of humor. This person needs to be open and non-judgmental. It will be their voice that will help the group grow together.

Companion Families:

- We recommend placing 1 companion family in each small group of 10 families, if possible. This will help provide a relatable connection to the parish community. Companion families will focus on building relationships and supporting the facilitator in guiding the at-church Sessions. Make sure companion families feel comfortable with the flow of each Session. Leave time at the end of each Session with the companion families to evaluate the experience. To make this a great experience for all, we must be checking in regularly and making any needed changes as soon as possible. Invest in time with your companion families. Having a strong team of people committed to the same mission helps everyone. Offer time to get to know one another, provide skills training, and spend time in prayer together. We want our families to feel like they are being invited into a group that has been preparing for them and enjoys each other.

Hospitality:

- Hospitality is about much more than setting out cookies and water bottles. Great hospitality is the root for the growing that will take place. Having a team that interacts well together, and welcomes you into their community, will help the families get comfortable almost immediately. This will produce greater engagement in the Sessions. This type of hospitality requires the facilitator and companions to become friendly with the families before they ever begin. It includes being “real” through sharing, vulnerability, and laughter from the minute your families arrive.

- How the room “feels” is also an important part of the hospitality recipe. Covered tables, simple centerpieces, and the glow of a few candles will encourage the families to lean into the conversation, like a great dinner party. Take the time to set the room in advance, so that families walk into a space that feels prepared for them. A prayer table up front with changing images each Session can also be a small voice speaking into the room. Find creative people in your community who have a heart for families and let them loose to work their magic.

Intercessors:

- Having intentional intercessors who are praying for your families and your ministry is an important step to staying on mission. Prayer always needs to be integral to the work we do. People in your parish community who take the time to talk with Jesus often and who understand the struggles and difficulties facing families are perfect to help in this role. These prayer warriors can be organized as a group, or can individually come before God for the needs of the parish families each day. Prayer can be specially centered around this time of growing as disciples.



FAMILY FOLLOW THROUGHS

Time with family is precious. Following through with this family experience tells your child this is important. With your child, please complete the following tasks after each meeting to turn in.

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Family Meeting 1: Email a picture of the shapes with your happy, difficult, and laughable moments.

Family Meeting 2: What do you think is the special purpose God is growing your family for? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 3: As a family, what are some ways you can treat others with mercy? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 4: As a family, what are some ways you let your light shine before others? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 5: As a family, what have you decided to build your life upon? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 6: Describe a moment when your family was generous even when it seemed unfair or undeserved. Email a short response.

Family Meeting 7: As a family, how can you better open the door to God in your lives? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 8: What other lessons did your family draw from the Parable of the Lost Coin? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 9: As a family, who are some of the people who never give up on you? What have they taught you? Email a short response.

Family Meeting 10: As a family, what are some ways you can cultivate the soil of your hearts to better receive God's word? Email a short response.