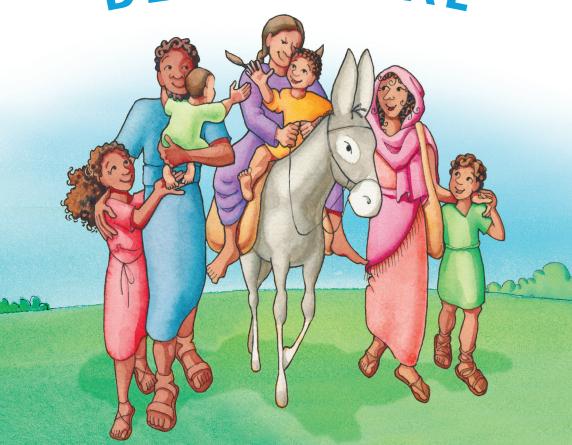
THE BIG PICTURE

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL





The Big Picture

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

edited by David R. Helm



The Big Picture Family Devotional

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Acknowledgments

One of the immense privileges of pastoring a church plant is the opportunity to colabor in the gospel with eager and energetic Christians—people who put their desire to make an impact for Christ to work by experimenting with new ideas to strengthen the church. In that context, *The Big Picture Family Devotional* was born.

In the fall of 1996, in the very early days of our church plant in Chicago, a commitment arose to provide fresh gospel resources for the many young families who were instructing their children in the faith. Because we believe the home is the central place for Christian education, the idea of writing a family devotional made sense. Soon afterward, the church was buzzing with excitement as members began writing devotional material that attempted to trace the storyline of the Bible. We even found ourselves writing Sunday school curriculum and adult small group study guides to supplement what was taking place around our dinner tables. Kids and adults alike began memorizing forty-five big picture verses that function as windows through which we gaze at God's unfolding promise. It was during these years that God also allowed me the privilege of writing *The Big Picture Story Bible*, beautifully illustrated by Gail Schoonmaker.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Graeme Goldsworthy, whose ideas on biblical theology provided a springboard for us, as well as my admiration for the many members of Holy Trinity Church, Chicago, who joyfully labored in writing bits and pieces of what you now hold in your hands. The Big Picture Family Devotional is not the work of one person, but many—too many to mention them all by name! Special thanks go to Helen-Joy Lynerd for helping me prepare this book for publication. Also, I am indebited to Tara Davis of Crossway for her careful editing of the manuscript.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the children of Holy Trinity Church, Chicago—for you we gladly labor, counting it sweet joy.

How to Use This Devotional

The difficulty of devotions. Most people find doing family devotions difficult. For starters, many of us never had devotions modeled at home. Even if we were fortunate enough to grow up in a home with parents who tried to teach us the basics of religious belief, we must admit that today is a different world—one that presents us with practical challenges most of our parents never faced. Let's face it: today a family often eats meals at different times. Getting everyone together in the same place at the same time is nearly impossible.

How to use this devotional. Take heart! We live in the same world you do, and have written The Big Picture Family Devotional especially for today's family. Getting through this devotional in one year requires only three times a week when your family is in the same place at the same time. We even limited the material to fifty rather than fifty-two weeks so you can put this down and do something else for devotions during the weeks of Christmas and Easter. The devotional contains forty-five weeks of content and five weeks of review spread throughout the year. Everything is already prepared for you, saving you the time of trying to figure out something productive to share with your kids. Just open up the book and read the short Bible selection for the day and the brief devotional paragraph that unfolds the message of the Bible. Follow that up with the reflection and interaction prompts that are meant to spur family discussion. The entire process can take as little as five to ten minutes—or longer, at those unexpected but enjoyable leisurely times when your kids are particularly interested.

The devotional is geared for children ages six to ten, with the intention that it will be read through over several years so that the concepts are reinforced and children grow into an understanding of the more advanced ideas.

For those who want more. For families who like to sing, we have included songs that reinforce what you are learning together. For the highly motivated, we encourage you to make use of the forty-five memory verses that trace the big picture of the Bible. We call them the big picture verses, and a little booklet

How to Use This Devotional

containing just the verses is available (titled *The Big Picture Verses: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*). The verses can easily work as a catechism that takes you from Genesis to Revelation.

The word *catechism* comes from the Greek *katēchein*, which means "to teach." *The Big Picure Bible Verses* is a tool that will help parents teach their children the storyline of the Bible through questions and answers.

We hope *The Big Picture Devotional* will help clarify the main message of the Bible and instill in your family a growing confidence that the words of the Bible are the very words of God!

PART 1

God Creates His Kingdom

Questions 1–9

God Creates a Place

- Q. Who created the heavens and the earth?
- A. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:1

Devotional Reading: The Bible Assumes God's Existence

The Bible opens with these amazing words: "In the beginning, God." Have you ever stood outside at night and looked up into the stars and wondered, "How did all this get here? How did I get here?" In its very first verse, the Bible reveals the answer to those questions. The Bible says that God exists and that he created the heavens and the earth! Many people question whether God exists. Some are certain there is a God, others are unsure, while still others think that God is only an idea in your mind and not real after all. But guess what? The Bible doesn't waste any time arguing about the existence of God. It simply begins by saying, "In the beginning, God." How refreshing! The first words of the Bible are already hinting at its big picture—the unfolding activity of God in history.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Memorize the question and answer of our first big picture verse: Genesis 1:1. What does today's Bible reading teach you about God?

Q. Who created the heavens and the earth?

A. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:1-2

Devotional Reading: The Bible Begins with God Creating the Heavens and the Earth

Have you ever wanted to create something? Perhaps you had an idea in your head and you wondered if you could make it. Let's suppose you were going to try. What is one of the first things you would need to do before starting? You would have to gather all the materials your idea needed. Did you know that God did something like that when he created the world? When God set out to create the heavens and the earth he first had to create the materials themselves! The Bible tells us that when God first made the earth, it was only a dark and watery mass. The basic materials were all there, but it didn't look the way it does now. It looked strange. Nothing could live on it—certainly not people like you and me! How amazing it would have been to see God creating and assembling all the materials he needed to make his wonderful creation.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Would you say the Bible reading today is more concerned to teach you about the *heavens* or the *earth*?

What does the Bible's concern with the earth here tell you about the focus of Genesis 1?

Q. Who created the heavens and the earth?

A. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:3-25

Devotional Reading: God Formed Places and Then Filled Them

Often when you want to color a picture of something, you first draw, or form, the outline of the object or person to be colored and then fill in the color. Well, something like that is going on in Genesis 1. It's as if the writer gives us an outline of what happened in the first few verses and then fills in the details later in the chapter. The creation outline of day 1 gets filled in on day 4. On day 1 we learn about light and darkness, day and night. Then on day 4, we are introduced to the sun and the moon and the stars, which fill up the sky. Isn't that amazing! The outline of day 2 (the heavens and the seas) is filled in on day 5 (the birds and sea creatures). And day 3 (the earth and plants) corresponds to day 6 (the land animals). The writer wants you to see the overall picture of God's creative activity. He wants you to know that God formed all the places in the universe (days 1, 2, and 3), and then filled those places with creations to rule over them (days 4, 5, and 6). Finally, notice that the writer says God did all this simply by speaking words (see vv. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14–15, 20, and 24)! Imagine creating something that was an idea in your head by talking it into existence!

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Can you create things simply by speaking words? What does God's ability to do so teach you about God?

Learn "The Creation Song" found on pages 174-75.

God Creates a People

Q. Who created people?

A. God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:26-31

Devotional Reading: People Are Created in God's Image

The Bible makes it clear that people are very special to God. In fact, we are the crowning jewel of God's creation. God did not make people to be like the rest of creation, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." An image is a reflection of someone or something. When you look in the mirror, you see your own reflection, or image. God made us to reflect his image. That doesn't mean we look like God. Instead, it means that we are like him; we rule over things, just as God does. In ancient times, kings used to set up monuments in faraway parts of their empire to show that they ruled there (often these monuments were statues made to look just like them). In a similar way, God has set us up to rule over his creation. As his image-bearers, we act as his representatives in the world. Later on in the Bible story, the psalmist will pick up on this same idea (Psalm 8), and then, the writer of the book of Hebrews will show us that Jesus is God's supreme image-bearer (Heb. 2:5–8). This is important for us because it teaches us how we extend God's rule today—namely, by living under the rule of Christ.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

What does being made in the image of God teach you about God's plans for you?

Memorize the big picture verse for this week: Genesis 1:27. If you memorize one each week, you will learn all forty-five verses that trace the storyline of the Bible!

Q. Who created people?

A. God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Bible Reading: Genesis 2:18-25

Devotional Reading: People Are the Pinnacle of God's Creation

Have you ever seen a road map? It's helpful because it shows you many roads. Some maps even come with an inset map. This highlights in greater detail one part of the road map. Genesis 1 and 2 function much like a road map. After giving us the large map of creation in chapter 1, God highlights the most important part of creation in chapter 2—people! He wants you to see the creation of people in greater detail. The point is clear: God created this place for people. We learn that Adam loved everything about his life in the garden, except for one thing: he was alone. The animals all had partners, but not Adam. In fact, one of the reasons God had Adam name the animals was to prepare him for Eve. God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper." So God had Adam fall into a deep sleep. While Adam was sleeping, God took one of Adam's ribs, and from this rib he "built" a woman. As only God could do, he created the perfect companion for Adam. This teaches us another thing about being made in God's image. We are meant for relationship. Not only does man have a special relationship with woman, but both men and women have a unique relationship with God.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Why did God ask Adam to name all the animals?

What was special about Adam's relationship with Eve that was different from his relationship with God's other creatures?

Q. Who created people?

A. God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Bible Reading: Genesis 1:26-31

Devotional Reading: People Are to Rule over the Rest of God's Creation

When children are born, who is responsible for them? Parents are. Parents prepare meals, teach their children to get dressed, and help them learn what is right from wrong. Parents are responsible for their children. Do you know who is responsible for caring for God's creation? All of us are. When God created the world and everything in it, he made us responsible for his creation. God gave us the wonderful responsibility of ruling over and caring for all that he created. That means the entire earth and everything in it. It is God's world, but he appointed us to rule it for him.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Discuss some ways that we care for God's world.

Can you think of some ways that we rule God's world?

Jesus Died for Our Sins

- Q. Did Jesus say God's promise was fulfilled when he was crucified?
- A. [Jesus] said, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Bible Reading: John 19:16–18, 28–30

Devotional Reading: Jesus Was Victorious on the Cross

Do you know what a mystery is? A mystery is something that can't be understood, unless someone explains it to you. Remember when we wondered how God could allow Jesus to die on the cross if he had never committed any sins? This week we will unravel that mystery. Jesus wasn't dying for sins that he had committed; rather, he was dying for our sins. His death was fulfilling God's rescue plan. And so, when Jesus had done everything God had asked him to do on the earth, he called out in a loud voice, "It is finished!" Jesus said these words like someone who just finished doing something great. He accomplished his goal. He finished his task. He was the perfect sacrifice for sins. If you want to know if your sins are forgiven, look back to the death of Jesus. He is the only perfect sacrifice for our sin. And his death is the answer to the mystery of how God would rescue us from sin. God sent his only Son to pay the penalty for our disobedience.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

How do you think Jesus felt about finishing the work of paying for our sin? What does Jesus's death on the cross teach you about God's love for you? Memorize this week's big picture verse: John 19:30.

- Q. Did Jesus say God's promise was fulfilled when he was crucified?
- A. [Jesus] said, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Bible Reading: Genesis 3:23; 6:17; Exodus 12:21; Isaiah 5:13; John 2:19

Devotional Reading: God Banished Jesus from His Presence for Us We read five different verses from the Bible today—and they were all memory verses from earlier times in our devotional. Each one points us to being able to understand what was happening when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus was banished for our sins. Jesus perished. Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb. Jesus represents God's people who go into exile. Jesus's death is the destruction of the Temple. The Bible has been showing us all along the penalty for sin. It requires separation from God. He banished Adam and Eve from the garden; he caused everything to perish in the flood; he killed all the firstborn Egyptians at the time of the Exodus; he sent Israel into exile; and he had Solomon's temple destroyed to show that he was separated from his people because of their sin. Now, Jesus's death shows us what all those events meant. Jesus takes on the punishment for the sin of his people. He was abandoned by God when he died on the cross (Mark 15:33–34). In his death you see the extent of God's love for you!

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Do you see how the New Testament helps us understand the Old Testament? Thank God for giving us all the clues we need to understand the mystery of his great love.

- Q. Did Jesus say God's promise was fulfilled when he was crucified?
- A. [Jesus] said, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Bible Reading: John 19:30

Devotional Reading: Jesus's Death Is the Good News of God's Rescue

Let's do a quick review of the Gospel of John. First, we heard things said about Jesus. Do you remember the words of the angels and John the Baptist? Then we listened to the many things Jesus said and did. Remember his words about the temple, the kingdom, the resurrection, and the Way? We even learned that Jesus raised someone from the dead. Next we saw what others did to Jesus. They crucified him on the cross. And this week we are learning about what Jesus said about what they did: "It is finished!" The Gospel of John gives us the words and actions of others and the words and actions of Jesus to help us see that Jesus's death is God's plan to rescue us from sin.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to rescue you from your sin? If actions speak louder than words, what does Jesus's death on the cross mean to you?

Jesus Rose from the Dead

- Q. How did Thomas respond to Jesus after the resurrection?
- A. Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Bible Reading: John 20:1-8, 19-20, 24-29

Devotional Reading: The Surprise of Easter

Have you ever been so surprised by seeing someone that the shock made you gasp for air? Just such a surprise happened to the followers of Jesus, especially Thomas. The two days after Jesus's crucifixion had been the most difficult days his friends could remember. Jesus, the one they had hoped was the Messiah, had been crucified, was dead, and buried. His followers were all very sad. They never imagined that this was how it would all end. But the third day had now come, and they were beginning to deal with the reality that Jesus was no longer with them. On that morning some of Jesus's friends went to the tomb. When they got there, the tomb was open and Jesus's body was not there. They wondered what was going on. Had someone taken the body away? Their sadness turned to confusion, but later, they saw him alive and were shocked! He had risen from the dead! Finally Thomas saw him too. What an exciting day that first Easter must have been.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

How surprised do you think the disciples were to learn that Jesus was alive? Sing the song "My Lord, My God" found on pages 186–87.

Begin to memorize this week's verse: John 20:28.

- Q. How did Thomas respond to Jesus after the resurrection?
- A. Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Bible Reading: John 20:24-30

Devotional Reading: The Necessity of Easter

Today there are two questions to answer. First, do you have any idea how Jesus could rise from the dead? The answer is something we learned earlier. Jesus is the resurrection and the life—the way, the truth, and the life. Since Jesus is life itself, Jesus could not stay dead. And since Jesus had never sinned, he did not deserve the punishment for sin—and death could not rightly hold him. His resurrection was bound to happen. Second, what do Thomas's words, "My Lord and my God," teach you about Jesus? Part of the answer is simple; they teach us that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. He is God in the flesh. But the words of Thomas also teach us that Jesus is Lord. And the word Lord means master, one who has human authority. The resurrection of Jesus doesn't prove to us only that he is God, but it teaches us that he is the perfect man too! It tells us that Jesus never did anything wrong. Since death is the penalty for every man or woman who sins, then Jesus's resurrection from the dead must be the reward for living perfectly. No wonder Thomas put it like he did: "My Lord and my God!" In all his humanity, Jesus is the one and only person who can rightfully stand, on his own merit, in the presence of God. That gives us great hope of standing there too!

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Can you say in your own words why the resurrection of Jesus is so important? What does the resurrection of Jesus prove to you about Jesus?

- Q. How did Thomas respond to Jesus after the resurrection?
- A. Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Bible Reading: Genesis 12:1–3; 2 Samuel 7:12; 2 Chronicles 6:2; Jeremiah 29:14; John 2:19

Devotional Reading: The Triumph of Easter

What are some things that might help you on a treasure hunt? You certainly would need a map or clues along the way, wouldn't you? Our devotionals have been leading us on a treasure hunt. Our Bible readings for today were past clues that help us know that we have found our greatest treasure in Jesus. In fact, his resurrection from the dead explains all the clues we have been picking up. His resurrection is the temple rebuilt—the Old Testament time of rebuilding the temple was the clue. He is the returning person from exile—the Old Testament returning people were the clues. His resurrection is proof that he is the King of kings who will reign forever—King David is the clue. And his resurrection is the fulfillment of God's promise to bless all the families of the earth—the promise to Abraham was the clue. In Jesus's resurrection we find God's greatest treasure!

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

How does the resurrection help you to praise God?

Praise God for his surprising, necessary, and triumphant plan for salvation in song and in prayer.

PART 5

God Completes His Promise

Questions 37-45

Spreading the Gospel of Jesus

- Q. How did Jesus say word of his victory would spread?
- A. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Bible Reading: Acts 1:1–11

Devotional Reading: Jesus's Charge to the Apostles

Imagine that there is a large box just in front of where you are sitting. Can you see it? Now, pretend that when we open it, we find a slightly smaller box. When we open that one, we find yet another smaller box. Imagine that this goes on and on until we are left with the tiniest of boxes with a present inside. Wouldn't we be amazed to be given a surprise box like that? Well, the Bible is like that box. We find surprise after surprise inside: the surprise that God created us and loves us; the surprise of Jesus's death and resurrection; and today, the surprise of Jesus's ascension back into heaven. King Jesus didn't stay on earth to begin his kingdom; he went back into heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit and decided to use people to spread the news of his victory! Jesus's return to heaven proves that there is one man who can rightly live with God. Back he went into the garden of God's presence! Back to the Promised Land, the place where God lives. Jesus's ascension into heaven is another one of God's surprises. What it must have been like to see that! What a surprise to learn that you were chosen to spread the message of his victory to the ends of the earth!

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Why is the ascension of Jesus a comforting thing for us?

What was the charge Jesus gave the apostles, and what tool did he give to help them with their task?

Memorize the big picture verse for this week: Acts 1:8.

Q. How did Jesus say word of his victory would spread?

A. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Bible Reading: Acts 2:38-41; 6:7; 8:25; 11:19-21; 28:30-31

Devotional Reading: The Apostles Spread the Message of Jesus's Victory

Planting a tree on Arbor Day can be fun. After choosing a good spot and digging a hole, you place the young sapling into the ground and tuck the moist soil back in around the roots. With the right amount of sun and water, your tree will grow. It will grow and grow and grow even as you grow! Imagine coming back to visit your tree twenty or thirty years after planting it. Do you have any idea how big it would be? Some trees grow to be dozens and dozens of feet high. When the disciples of Jesus shared the gospel message with the people of their day, it grew and grew and grew! First, it grew in Jerusalem. Acts 6:7 tells us that here even some of the priests became followers of Jesus. Then, the gospel message spread to Judea and Samaria, as Stephen and Philip shared the story with those who were half-Jewish, the Samaritans. Then Cornelius believed (Acts 10:1-33). He was the first non-Jewish believer. Finally, as the book of Acts closes, we find Paul sharing the gospel in the city of Rome which at that time was the ends of the earth! The spread of the good news all happened just as Jesus had said it would. People who follow Jesus have the joy of bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

How is the spread of the gospel in the book of Acts like a tree that just keeps on growing?

How could you help spread the gospel message? Is there anyone that you want to tell about Jesus? Pray for a chance today!

Q. How did Jesus say word of his victory would spread?

A. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 1 John 1:1-4

Devotional Reading: Witnesses Are Important

Suppose someone told you that he had a spaceship, one that could really go to the moon and back. Would you believe him? Would you be more or less likely to believe him if he wouldn't let you see it? Why? It is very hard to believe in something that you can't see, isn't it? In the same way, it would be very hard to believe that Jesus rose from the dead if there had been no witnesses. God knows that it is hard to believe without witnesses; that is why the apostles are so important. The Bible tells us that more than five hundred people saw Jesus after the resurrection. And John, the disciple, tells us that he touched him and saw him too! If you lived two thousands years ago in Palestine, you might have seen Jesus after the resurrection. But, you and I live at a different time. For us, believing in the witness of the people back then is what is important. Jesus is risen. You can trust the witnesses.

REFLECTION AND INTERACTION

Why is it important that people saw Jesus after the resurrection? Take some time to catch up on your big picture verses.



The Creation Song

Genesis 1













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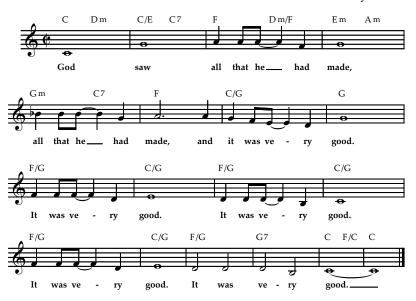
Big Picture Songs



It Was Very Good

Genesis 1:31

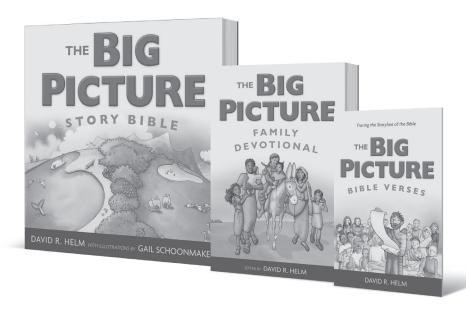
Music: Gary Rownd



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THE BIG PICTURE

STORY BIBLE SERIES



Explore God's Word together as a family with *The Big Picture Story Bible* and see the big picture of God's love for you unfold from Genesis to Revelation. Teach your kids to apply God's Word with *The Big Picture Family Devotional* and help them memorize key Scripture passages with *The Big Picture Bible Verses*.

Download a free audio recording of The Big Picture Story Bible, read by the author, at BigPictureStoryBible.com

A Year's Worth of Devotions for the Whole Family

Make regular devotions part of your family life with this easy-touse resource aimed at helping children understand the big picture of the Bible.

Designed as a complementary resource to the best-selling *The Big Picture Story Bible*, this family devotional offers parents a year's worth of material for teaching children ages 6–10 about God's plan of salvation for the world through Christ.

Intended for families to use three times per week, each 5- to 10-minute lesson includes:

- a basic Bible question with an accompanying answer in the form of a memory verse
- a carefully chosen Scripture passage to read aloud
- a short devotion designed to help kids connect the Scripture passage to the Bible's overarching message
- reflection questions for the whole family to discuss together

DAVID R. HELM serves as a lead pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Chicago. He is also chairman of the Charles Simeon Trust, which promotes practical instruction in preaching. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Big Picture Story Bible* and *The Big Picture Bible Verses*.

