

A black and white illustration of VeggieTales characters. In the center is Larry the Cucumber, wearing a suit and a top hat, smiling broadly. To his right is Mrs. Green, also smiling. In front of them are Junior the beanie baby, a teddy bear, and a football. To the left is a character with curly hair. In the background, a steam train is visible on tracks, with a star on its side. The scene is set in a station or factory.

# VeggieTales

## It's a Meaningful Life

### EVENT GUIDE

#### Hut one. Hut two, Hut...WHAT?

The Salad Bowl is only one game away when a misunderstood play forever changes the outcome of football star Stewart Green's future. Only when Stewart is able to experience the "What ifs" on an eye-opening train ride is he able to fully understand his purpose and become content with his life. Our thanks to you for partnering with Big Idea to host a Family Fun Event for VeggieTales' most recent feature "It's a Meaningful Life." This touching story of Stewart Green and his relationships with family and friends will bring home the importance of learning to be content. Be creative and imaginative in using any or all of the resources in this guide to provide a truly MEANINGFUL event.

#### PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

- **Preview** "It's a Meaningful Life" with your planning team.
  - **Synopsis:** *It was the biggest football game of his life, and Stewart (Larry the Cucumber) had a chance to win it all. Injured in one bad play, his hopes of playing in the Salad Bowl—and living a life of fame and fortune—are dashed forever. Years later, silly-but-sweet Stewart loves his family, friends, and job at the toy train factory but still wonders "what if" things had been different. When he meets a mysterious train conductor who can turn back time, Stewart gets a chance to have the life he always wanted. Will he finally find all he's been looking for? And what does this mean for those he loves most? Find out in this story of wonder and a lesson in being content.*
  - **Running Time:** *approximately 48 minutes*
  - **A Lesson in Being Content**
  - **Key Verse:** *Jeremiah 29:11 "I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. They are plans for good and not disaster; plans to give you a future filled with hope."*
  - **Silly Song:** *Bedtime Songs with Junior - "Goodnight Junior"*
- **Select a date** for your event prior to October 2, 2010.
- **Enlist volunteers** to help with various activities of your event including preparation, implementation, and cleanup.

- **Publicize** this Family Fun Event 3-4 weeks in advance.

- *Use the posters included in this kit for hanging in the church or various community locations.*
- *Invite daycares and local Christian schools to your event.*
- *Post announcements in local newspapers, church bulletins, and community/school newsletters.*
- *PERSONAL INVITATION is the best form of publicity. Encourage church family members to call or visit neighbors and friends to invite them personally or mail cards that include details of the event.*
- *Consider collecting Change for Orphans at your event. Invite families to bring their loose bills and change to help give an orphan a forever family; \$35 goes a long way to showing hope to a waiting orphan! Co-founded by Steven Curtis Chapman, **Show Hope** is a ministry that can provide resources, Change for Orphans buckets, videos, and curriculum for your church or children's ministry so that we can each show hope to orphans in distress! Visit [showhope.org/veggie](http://showhope.org/veggie) to learn more.*

#### DECORATING

This show offers multiple theme ideas for decorating. Choose one decorating theme, or offer a different motif for different areas of your event.

- **Football Theme**
  - *Decorate the welcoming area with a football game atmosphere (goal posts, Rockwell University Stadium sign, cardboard scoreboard enhanced with lights, streamers, balloons, pennants, megaphones, pompons, footballs).*
  - *Include large banners with "Go Green Machine," "Salad Bowl," and "Goin' Green."*
  - *If you have a large area, mark off the floor space with masking tape to look like a football field.*
  - *Invite your local high school marching band to play some pep rally songs.*
  - *Encourage helpers to wear "letter jackets," "letter sweaters," or football team sweatshirts and/or jerseys.*

Some may want to dress as football players or cheerleaders. If a striped shirt is available, have someone dress as a referee. He can start the event by blowing his whistle!

#### ● Train Theme

- Using a very large piece of cardboard, create a large locomotive as depicted in the show. (Borrow or rent a “fog machine” to add a realistic touch to your steam engine.)
- Use silver and brown tape on the floor to create a set of tracks. (Consider using chalk on concrete to create a train track leading up to the front door of your event.)
- Prior to your gathering, create and distribute “train tickets” for “It’s a Meaningful Life” Family Fun Event. These may be used as invitations. Include the place, time, destination (Rockwell), and other particulars about the event.
- Display various toy trains and train accessories/memorabilia throughout different areas of activity.
- Encourage helpers to wear railroad engineer hats and/or bandanas. Hats and bandanas may also be used for decorating purposes.
- Use a train whistle and a call of “All Aboard” to gather everyone together or to signal a move to different activities.
- Watch the bonus video “All Aboard: Larry Rides On A Real Train” during a break or as part of the pre-event time.

#### ● Christmas/Small-town Theme

- In the welcoming area, create a large cut-out silhouette of “small town” buildings using cardboard boxes. Include a city sign (billboard) for Rockwell and a lighted movie theater façade to display the large “It’s a Meaningful Life” poster that is included in the event kit.
- String Christmas lights throughout the area.
- Use real or artificial Christmas trees and sprinkle the area with artificial snow or polyester quilt batting.
- Display an assortment of wrapped Christmas gifts, using one of the gift boxes to hold “enter to win” papers.
- Enhance other areas of activity with simple, festive Christmas decorations.
- Play Christmas tunes as background music.
- Encourage your helpers to add simple Christmas/winter accessories (pins, scarves, ties, hats) to their clothing. Guys may want to wear suits, hats, and

ties to imitate Stuart’s attire OR suggest that your volunteers wear “unflattering hats” as advertised by Morty.

## WELCOME

- Assign persons to greet attendees, making sure that new families or guests are partnered with welcoming members.
- If you are using a football or train theme, stamp each guest’s hand as they enter. (Use any appropriate ink stamp.)
- Attach the stickers included in this kit to card stock to create name tags.
- Offer slips of paper and pencils for guests to provide name, address, email and phone number for door prizes and follow-up information. Provide a container for these “enter to win” papers to coincide with your theme (football helmet, Christmas package, or railroad engineer’s hat).
- Provide an area for guests to have group pictures taken of their family and/or friends.

## WATCH “IT’S A MEANINGFUL LIFE”

- Gather everyone together. (Use horn or referee whistle for Football Theme; train whistle and call for “All Aboard” for Train Theme and jingle bells for Christmas Theme;.)
- Extend a warm welcome to all, and open your event with a prayer.
- When the show is finished, ask for responses to the following questions:
  - Who spoils Stewart’s plan for becoming the hero of the football game? (Morty...by making the game-winning catch.)
  - Why doesn’t Stewart want to work for his father’s toy train factory? (He has bigger plans for his life...dreaming of becoming a star football player.)
  - Why did Emma have a rough day at school? (She wanted to be a camel in the Christmas play but was assigned to be a sheep.)
  - When Stewart is sitting alone and desperate in the Rockwell University Stadium, what blows into his face? (A ticket for the “What If Express.”)
  - Where does the “What If Express” take Stewart? (First stop: What life would be like if Stewart had made the touchdown? Second stop: What life would be like for everyone else if he had made the touchdown? Third stop: Presents a choice for Stewart to stay in the world of “What If” or return to Rockwell.)
  - What does Stewart discover when he returns to

*Rockwell? (All of his friends and neighbors have come together to return his kindness by helping complete the Christmas order for trains.)*

- *In the end, why was Stewart content to stay in Rockwell? (He realized that God had a plan more important than football. His life was meaningful because God was always working in his life.)*

## **GAMES AND ACTIVITIES**

Make selections from the following activities that will meet the time and space allotments of your event. Divide the participants into groups and offer several activities at the same time at various locations in a rotation-type experience.

### **“What If Express”**

This is a sit-down, quiet memory game that will also serve as a review of “It’s a Meaningful Life”. Small groups will work better than large groups for this activity, and young children should be placed with an adult who is able to help them.

Have the children seated in a circle on the floor. The first person begins by saying: “I took a trip on the “What If Express” and took along...(name an item or character from the show). Examples: football, toy train, Morty, hot wings, teddy bear, gold whistle, camel. In addition to naming the item or character, he mentions briefly how it fits into the show. The next person repeats the line “I took a trip on the “What If Express” and took along...(names the previous person’s item/character and adds another). The next person repeats both of the previous persons’ items/characters and then adds one of his own. Play continues around the circle as time allows.

### **All Aboard the Friendship Train**

You will need:

- *A VeggieTales’ CD and player*

Briefly talk about Stewart’s trip on the “What If Express” and how it made him appreciate his family, his friends, and the plan that God had for his life.

This active game is suited for a large group with a large area for movement. Divide the group into several smaller equal groups. (If there is an uneven number of participants, add the extra person to one of the groups for this first time only.) After introducing themselves to each other, direct each group to stand in a straight line with their hands placed on the waist of the person in front of them (train style). Start the music, shout “All Aboard,” and encourage the “trains” to move around (walk, skip, hop, go backwards) in rhythm with the music without breaking apart. After a

time of moving, stop the music and call out “All Aboard 4” (use any number). Each group must separate and form a new train with different friends. Allow a brief time for introductions before continuing the music. Play continues with different numbers being called out and new groups formed each time the music stops. (If there are extra players when a certain number is called, they stand on the sidelines and wait to be a part of a train on the next number called.) There are no winners or losers in this activity...just lots of fun and a chance to “hook up” with some new friends.

### **Hut one...Hut two...**

You will need:

- *Football (regular or small, soft replica) for each team*
- *Whistle*

Discuss the football game that takes place at the beginning of “It’s a Meaningful Life.” Talk about the miscalled play that changes the outcome of Stewart Green’s football career dreams. How does Stewart feel as he watches from his hospital room as his football team boards the train for the Salad Bowl with Morty on their shoulders? Read the Bible verse from Jeremiah 29:11 and discuss how that verse relates to Stewart.

Divide the group into two or more teams. Have each team form a straight line (facing the same direction), with each team member standing 2-3 feet apart. When the whistle is blown, the first person in line bends over, places the football on the floor and then “hikes” the ball to the person behind him. That person catches the ball and then “hikes” it to the next person. Play continues until the last person in line has received the ball. Then, the whole team turns to face the opposite direction, and the last person to receive the ball begins “hiking” the ball. The ball is “hiked” back up the line until it reaches the person who first “hiked” the ball. The first team that completes “hiking” the ball up and down the line is declared the winner.

### **Fame and Fortune**

You will need:

- *Play paper money*
- *Trophies*
- *Blindfolds*

You will need a very large space (gym/large grassy area) for this activity. Scatter a few pieces of paper “play” money and/or a few trophies (representing fame and fortune) around the gym floor. Select 2 to 4 persons to participate, with the rest of the group seated around the edges of the area. Blindfold the participants and place them at opposite ends of the area. Spin them around a

couple of times and then direct them to get on their hands and knees and crawl around to pick up as many trophies and paper bills as possible. (Set a point value for the trophies and paper money.) Allow the sidelined observers to shout out encouragement and directions to the blindfolded participants. After a designated time, direct the participants to stop. Count the value of trophies and money and declare a winner. Select other participants for this activity as time allows.

**Options:** Place only one trophy or one stack of money in the area and see which blindfolded participant can locate it first. If you are following a Christmas theme, you may want to place the money and/or trophies in wrapped Christmas packages.

After completing this activity, discuss the importance/unimportance of fame and fortune. Are trophies (accomplishments) and lots of money really what matters in life? If we measure our success by the world's standards, we will never have enough. Promote conversation about what it means to be content with what we have instead of always wanting something more.

### **Family & Friends Art Activity**

You will need:

- Paper
- Scissors
- Colored pencils and crayons

After a ride on the "What If Express," Stewart Green finally realizes the importance of his family and friends and discovers how his life touches the people around him. Have the adults in your group assist the children in making chains of cut-out paper dolls to remind them of their family and friends. Fold the paper accordion style and draw a simple "person" figure on the top layer, making sure that both arms extend beyond the folded sides. Cut out the figure and unfold to reveal a chain of persons. Allow the children to use pencils and/or crayons to add details of their family members and friends. Customize the number of characters on each chain for your guests. Cut off characters as needed; for longer chains, use larger paper or tape chains together. Note: If you are using a Christmas theme for your event, you may want to use red and green paper and use the paper doll chains as decorations for trees and windows.

Option: Have clipboards, crayons and/or markers and coloring pages from the event kit for the children to color.

### **Just for fun with pre-schoolers...**

Remind the children of the scene in Emma's bedroom where Stewart and his children are jumping on the bed.

Have fun repeating the finger play rhyme of "5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed," substituting the word "cucumbers" for "monkeys."

### **STEWART'S SNACKS**

Choose from these snack options that best fit your group size and budget:

- If you wish to serve a meal at your family event, consider having a simple Soup and Salad Bowl dinner, Green Machine HOT WINGS, or football game hot dogs.
- Small bags of snacks sold at football games...popcorn, peanuts, pretzels, potato chips
- Soft Drinks or fruit drink
- Hot Dogs and buns with a condiment table
- Ice cream cones
- If you are using a Christmas theme, serve an assortment of Christmas cookies
- Veggies and dip are always appropriate at a VeggieTales' event

### **CLOSING**

- Use the bells, horn, or whistle to again gather everyone together for a time of closing.
- Draw door prize winners and distribute prizes.
- Thank everyone for attending and invite them to future events and activities at your church.
- Close with a prayer.
- As guests are leaving, distribute stickers and coloring/activity sheets, reminding them of the DVD coupon on the back of the poster.
- If you are not using the photos taken earlier in the event for follow-up contacts, distribute those as the guests are departing.

### **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

- Place a "thank you" in the church bulletin/newsletter or send personal notes to all volunteers who helped with the Family Fun Event,
- Hold a post-event meeting with the key planning people to evaluate the gathering.
- Contact in person, by mail, or with telephone calls, event guests who do not attend your church. Thank them for attending and invite them to future events and church services. If you did not distribute the photos from the event, deliver them in person for follow-up contact.

