
THE
JESSE
TREE
FLOUR
OIL
JERICHO
MARTIN

All of the Scripture used in the devotional comes from the New International Readers Version.

# How to use this book:

The month of December can be a busy time! By starting the Jesse Tree tradition, you have just chosen a meaningful way to slow down each day and focus on Jesus. When writing this devotional, we wanted to create something that was easy for you to sit down as a family and do together without much preparation. We provided a Bible reading, the story in a narrative form that would engage younger children, questions for application, a prayer, and extra activities for you to do if you want to take the story a step further.

**Disclaimer:** The Jesse Tree Devotional is a guide, not an expectation. Please feel the freedom to skip a day, go slower, combine stories, switch some stories around as your family sees fit. Each day is packed with so much you can do, and chances are, you will not be able to do everything. That's okay! Each year has looked different for our family depending on amount of Christmas activities, the age of our children, and what they could handle (sometimes what we could handle ☺). A good rule of thumb is to stop when it is still fun! Please don't try and fit everything in at the cost of "forcing" your children to participate.

With that being said, depending on the age and stage of your child, you may want to taper the devotional story to a brief summary and focus on a simple truth for them to take away. We have included these simple truths underneath the title of each devotional story to help you. If you have older children, consider reading straight from the Bible and letting them tell the story in their own words.

Please don't worry if you don't get to do all of a devotional, or you have to skip a story. God's Word does not return empty, but always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:11)! God is planting seeds along the way no matter what you can see. And remember, the Jesse Tree is something you will have the opportunity to do as a Christmas tradition for years to come! What they don't understand or seem to hear this Christmas, they will hear again and again.

Please check the website at **www.jessetreeproject.com** for further ideas and help throughout the season, and always feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Thank you for joining us in this tradition, and for blessing our family by purchasing this devotional book. We are praying for you!

# DEDICATION

This devotional is dedicated to our children whom we want more than anything to know Jesus, and how much He loves them. I want to give a special thank you to the moms who were a part of the original Jesse Tree Project and first ornament exchange. You are so dear to us! And lastly, it is dedicated to all those wonderful authors, songwriters, artists, and individuals out there whose ideas have inspired us, and helped us to write this gift to our families. Thank you!

-Jacki and Richard Rucksdashel

# THE JESSE TREE

## A Celebration of the Birth of Christ



## What is a Jesse Tree?

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples…

Isaiah 11:1-3, 10

The Jesse Tree is a way of telling the story of God's plan from the beginning of time to redeem His people by sending a Savior, Jesus. It follows the lineage of Christ's family and key people in the Old Testament that God uses to tell His story from Creation through Christ's birth. It is a countdown daily to Christmas with the telling of a story, and an ornament that acts as a symbol and visual reminder of the story.

## How did this Devotional come about?

A few years ago my husband and I started thinking and praying about how we were going to celebrate Christmas as a family. We wanted Christmas to be about the wonderful anticipation of a Savior, and a time to celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise. We found the Jesse Tree to be a wonderful way to do just that. There are many wonderful devotionals out there to help you do the Jesse Tree with your family but we had trouble finding something for young children. This devotional started originally as we, and a group of 25 moms got together and wrote these stories. We also made ornaments to hang on the tree as a reminder of God's plan for His people. Over the past six years, we have so enjoyed sharing these stories together as a family. We have learned some things along the way, and now we have tweaked and shaped it to be the present devotional before you. Thank you for sharing in the joy of Christmas with us.

# THE JESSE TREE

## A Celebration of the Birth of Christ

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December 1st

# Root of Jesse

Jesus is the Root of Jesse

## Verse of the Day:

Jesse's family is like a tree that has been cut down.
A new little tree will grow from its stump.
From its roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit. At that time the man who is called the Root from Jesse's family line will be like a banner that brings nations together.

Isaiah 11: 1,10a

## Bible Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

## the Story:

Christmas is coming! Do you know what Christmas is about? Christmas is about the birth of baby Jesus. Jesus was born more than 2,000 years ago but we celebrate Him at Christmas time. Jesus came as a baby, but when he grew up-- he did the most important thing in the whole world. He died on the cross and rose again to SAVE you and me from sin. Sin are the bad things you and I do. Because of Jesus coming into the world, we are forgiven. We can now talk to God. He can be our friend. And one day we will live with Him forever. That's why celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas time is so very special. He is the reason for Christmas!

Jesus had a family on earth just like you do. Jesus had an earthly mother, father, and even brothers. He had grandparents and great grandparents. (*Take this time to talk with your children about their own family. Talk especially about grandparents and any great grandparents they may know.) You have many people who lived before you in your family. Even though you did not live a long time ago with these family members, you can understand and get to know them by listening to stories about their lives, their hopes and dreams, and their adventures!

Jesus lived in a family that had MANY stories. This Christmas, we are going to tell you the story of Jesus' family. We are going to do that with something called the **Jesse tree**. Each day we are going to tell you a story that was important in Jesus' family. After we are finished, you will get to hang an ornament on the Jesse tree to help us remember the story. (*Look together as a family at the stump of Jesse at top of page.)

Jesse was the name of one man in Jesus' family. The tree is named after him. He was the father of David…you know, the one who fought Goliath, the giant? God promised a very long time ago that a Savior, Jesus, would come from Jesse's family. (Read verse of the day.) In the stories that we are going to be reading as a family there were people who made good choices and people who made some very bad choices. Sometimes things went so badly that the people were not sure that

December 1st

# Root of Jesse

Jesus is the Root of Jesse



God would keep His promise of sending a Savior to rescue them. This is a picture of a stump of a tree. Do you see the new branch growing? Just as this new branch is going to grow one day into a beautiful, big, healthy tree…God was letting his people know that He loved them, and was going to send someone to rescue them, and save them from their sin. And do you know what? God did not break his promise! Jesse is Jesus' great grandfather (x42)!

The Bible says, "God has made a great many promises. They are all "Yes" because of what Christ has done (2 Cor. 1:20, NIrV)." Jesus is that new shoot or branch in the tree. He was the hope of a new life. Remember, Jesus grew up to be the Savior of the world!

Well, Jesse is just a piece of the story of Jesus. Jesus' family story actually starts way back before then. Back even before the world was created! Tomorrow, we will begin there. But today, let's get our tree ready and our hearts because this Christmas we will be looking forward to the birth of baby Jesus in a manger!

## Discussion:

1. What is Christmas? CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF BABY JESUS
2. Why was the birth of Jesus so special? HE WOULD ONE DAY DIE, RISE AGAIN, AND SAVE ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD FROM THEIR SINS.
3. What is the Jesse tree? CHECK TO SEE WHAT THEY UNDERSTAND IT TO BE.

## Prayer:

Lord, thank you that you have given us the Bible. Thank you for the stories we are going to hear this month as we get ready for Christmas. Thank you that you had a plan to send Jesus to save us. Open our hearts to know more of you through these stories of the Jesse Tree.

## Worship:

Song: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" by Chris Tomlin

Song: "Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!" by Isaac Watts

## Extended activity:

1. Get your tree ready! Have children involved as much as possible! Decorate it, set it up, and hang the first ornament.
2. Look through pictures of grandparents and great grandparents. Tell stories, share memories, discuss how family may pass down keepsakes, values, character, and stories with one another.



December 2nd

# Creation

God created you and all things.

## Verse of the Day:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

## Bible Reading: Genesis 1-2

## The Story:

Close your eyes. Cover your ears. What do you see and hear? Nothing! It's dark, it's quiet, and it's very still. Empty.

That is exactly how it was before God created the heavens and the earth. There was nothing to see, to touch, to smell, to taste, or to hear. But God was there and God had a plan. He wanted to fill up all of the emptiness with something good. He spoke, and things started to happen. He started creating. He said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. He said the dark will be called "Night." And it was. He told the sky to come, and the dry land. He created mountains and hills. He told the water where to go. He said, "Let there be plants, trees, and grass!" He made vegetables and fruits. Then, He told the sun, the moon, and the stars to come. He said, "Shine in the sky!" And they did. God said, "That's good." Then God said, "Come fish, come birds!" He made whales, sharks, crabs, and every creature in the sea. The big birds and little birds flew. Then, God told the animals to "come." Every animal was created. The big elephant, the strong brown bear, the fast cheetah, the fuzzy bunny, the small mouse, and the teeny tiny bug. God created all of these things! And He said, "It is good." God liked what He had created. But the very BEST part was yet to come.

God liked all of those things He had made but He was about to make His best thing yet. God said, "Let us make people." He made a man from the dust of the ground and a woman from the man. The man was called Adam and the woman was Eve. And God **LOVED** the humans. Adam and Eve were so happy. They were never sad, afraid, or hungry. They loved God and spent time with Him. He gave them a wonderful garden to live in called Eden. He gave Adam and Eve fruit, vegetables and grain to eat. He gave them a job to do. They took care of the land and took care of the animals. Everything was perfect. God loved Adam and Eve so much and He wanted to be near them. God would love them no matter what happened and no matter how much they may hurt Him along the way. Creation is the beginning of God's story of love for us. This story leads to Jesus and the very first Christmas.

December 2nd

# Creation

God created you and all things.



God also made you. He imagined you, thought about you, and created you because He loves you. God wants to be near you too. That is why Jesus came. He is God's gift to you so that you and He can be close and spend time together forever.

## Discussion:

1. Tell me some of the things God created.
2. How did God create them? HE SPOKE.
3. Adam and Eve were special. What was different about them? THEY WERE HUMANS, MADE TO LOOK LIKE HIM. GOD LOVED THEM.
4. Who made you and ALL things? GOD

## Prayer:

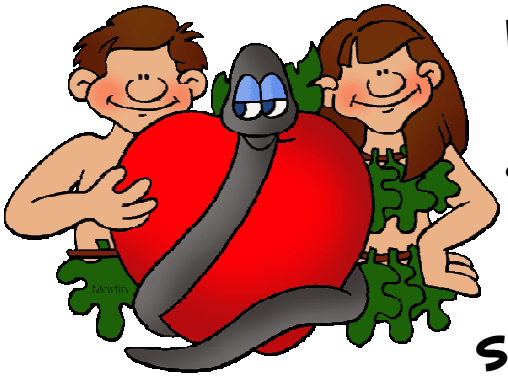
God, thank You for making all things. Thank You for making me. Thank You for loving me, and wanting to know me. Thank You that You are willing to do whatever it takes for us to be together. Thank You for sending Jesus.

## Worship:

Song: "He's got the Whole World in His Hands"
Song: "This is My Father's World" by Maltbie Babcock
Poem: "All Things Bright and Beautiful" by Cecil Frances Alexander

## Extended activity:

Go on a nature walk. Admire all of the things God has created. See if your children can find something "teeny tiny" God created, and something "BIG" God created. Can you find anything in nature that is the shape of a heart? If so, bring it home with you to remind you that God loves you so much!



December 3rd

# The First Sin

Sin separates us from God.

## Verse of the Day:

So the LORD God drove the man out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground he had been made out of.

Genesis 3:23

## Bible Reading: Genesis 3

## The Story:

God loved His children very much. Adam and Eve lived in the garden God had created and it was perfect there. They had plenty to eat. They enjoyed working the land and taking care of the animals. Each day they walked and talked with God. There was no death or sadness, only pure joy in the presence of God. There was one very important rule God gave them to follow. He said, "Do not eat the fruit from the tree in the center of the garden or you will die."

God had an enemy and his name was Satan. Satan was jealous of God and wanted to hurt God. Satan disguised himself as a snake and slipped up to Eve and whispered to her. "Go ahead, eat the fruit. Did God really say you would die? God does not want you to eat it because you will be like Him, knowing good and evil." Satan was tricky, and Eve began to doubt the loving command God had given. Eve listened to Satan's lie and she ate the fruit. Then Eve gave Adam some of the fruit to eat. Immediately Adam and Eve knew they had done something very wrong.

When God came to them, they ran away. God called to them, "Where are you?" Adam replied, "We were hiding because we were naked and ashamed." Before, they had never noticed that they wore no clothes, but now they were embarrassed by their nakedness. God asked, "Did you eat the fruit from the tree I told you not to eat?" Adam said, "Eve made me do it." Eve said, "The snake made me do it." God was very sad. Adam and Eve had disobeyed.

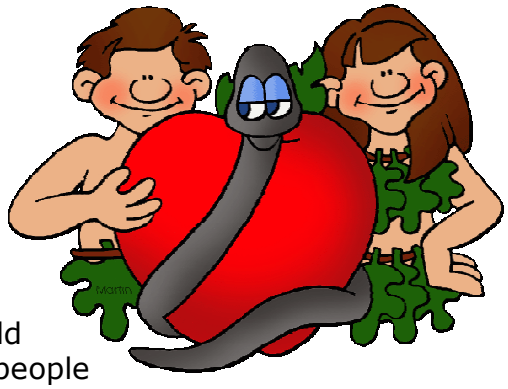
God calls anything that "misses the mark" of His goodness a *sin*. God also tells us that because He is completely holy and good—sin cannot be near Him. Because Adam and Eve sinned, they could not be close to God. When we sin, "The payment we earn is death." Now Adam and Eve could not live forever. They would have to die. Their hearts that once loved and "wanted" to spend time with God were now selfish. Adam and Eve wanted to do things their own way and not God's way. Sin had come into God's perfect world and created a gap between God and man forever. Adam and Eve, no longer perfect, could not live in the perfect garden with God. They would have to leave.

No longer could they easily find food to eat. They would have to work very hard for their food. Snakes were cursed by God to slither on the ground and in the dust for all their lives because Satan had disguised himself as one. Before Adam and Eve left the garden, God clothed them in animal skins. Then He sent them out of the garden.

December 3rd

# The First Sin

Sin separates us from God.



This is not the end of the story though. God would not always let sin destroy His world. He gave Adam and Eve a wonderful promise. God let them know that one day He would come and rescue them. He would send a Savior to save His people from their sin. He would come and destroy Satan. His son's "payment for sin" would cost Jesus his life. Just as God's clothes covered Adam and Eve's nakedness, Jesus' sacrifice would cover our sin. Through Jesus we can once again always be near to God.

## Discussion:

1. What rule did God give Adam and Eve?
   DO NOT EAT THE FRUIT FROM THE TREE IN THE CENTER OF THE GARDEN
2. What lie did Satan tell Eve?
   THAT THE FRUIT WOULD NOT MAKE HER DIE AND IF SHE ATE IT SHE WOULD BE LIKE GOD
3. What was Adam and Eve's sin?
   THEY DISOBEYED GOD AND ATE THE FRUIT
4. What was the punishment for sin?
   THEY HAD TO WORK HARD, THEY HAD TO LEAVE THE GARDEN, DEATH, BEING SEPARATED FROM GOD

## Prayer:

God, You are forgiving and kind. Thank You for loving me no matter what I do. Thank You for sending Jesus to pay for my sins. God, please help me to obey.

## Worship:

Song: "Great is Thy Faithfulness" by Thomas O. Chisholm
Song: "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" lyrics by Donnie McLurkin

## Extended activity:

1. Find a rotten piece of fruit or a withered plant. Talk about how all things die - plants, bugs, pets, even people - because of sin. Then talk about how Jesus came and because of Jesus we can now live forever, just as God originally planned.
2. (older children) Draw a target on a mirror or glass door with a dry erase marker. Gather up balls (or socks) and have your child try and hit the bull's eye every time. Talk about the meaning of sin—"missing the mark" of God's holiness. Explain that they too were born a sinner. God is perfect, and for us to be near Him we too must be perfect. It is like hitting a bull's eye every time…It's impossible. Even if you get close to the mark or you are really far away from it—we still miss the mark of God's standard of holiness. We need forgiveness for the ways we fall short.



December 4th

# Noah & the Flood

God is faithful to keep His promises.

## Verse of the Day:

Noah did everything the Lord commanded Him to do.

Genesis 7:5

## Bible Reading: Genesis 6:9-22, 7:6-12, 8:6-17, 9:1-17

## The Story:

Have you ever been somewhere where everyone was disobeying? That's how the world was after God created it. Everyone forgot all about God and this made Him very sad.

But there was one man who listened, loved and obeyed God. His name was Noah. God had a special plan for Noah.

One day, God told Noah there was going to be a big storm that was going to wash away all of the sin and meanness in the world. God wanted to make the world clean again. God told Noah to build a big boat called an ark. He assured Noah that he would keep his family safe from the storm in the ark. He promised to rescue Noah's family. God also told Noah he was going to send two of every kind of animal to the ark.

Noah obeyed God. Even though rain had never fallen to the earth before and people said Noah was crazy, he didn't care what other people thought of him. He didn't mind that his friends laughed at him for building an ark. Noah just cared what God thought and obeyed Him.

When the ark was ready, Noah's family and all of the animals climbed inside the ark and God closed the door. Then it began to rain for forty days and forty nights. God kept His promise and kept Noah and his family safe all that time.

Finally, the rain stopped and the sun came out. Noah sent a dove out to explore and it came back with an olive branch. During the storm all of the trees had been covered with water so this olive branch meant there was a tree out there! There was land for them to get out of the boat!

The boat landed and Noah's family and all of the animals came out of the ark. Noah thanked God for keeping His promise. He praised God saying, "You rescued us! You kept us safe!" Then God made another promise. He said, "Never will I destroy the world again by a flood. See I have hung up my bow in the clouds."

December 4th

# Noah & the Flood

God is faithful to keep His promises.



Noah and his family looked up in the sky and there was a rainbow…a reminder of God's promise.

As time went on, people began to fill the earth again. They began to disobey God and try to do things their own way. But God wasn't surprised by this. He had an even better plan. Instead of flooding the earth to wash it clean, God was planning to send Jesus to flood people's hearts with His forgiveness and mercy, and give them what they needed to obey Him. He was planning to give His people "new" hearts when they believed in His son.

## Discussion:

1. What is an ark? A BIG BOAT
2. What did God tell Noah to do? BUILD AN ARK
3. How did Noah obey God? BY BUILDING THE ARK EVEN THOUGH HIS FRIENDS LAUGHED AT HIM
4. What are some ways you can obey God?

## Prayer:

God, thank You for Noah. Thank You that you gave us an example of a man that obeyed You. Thank You for sending the rainbow as a sign that You will never flood the earth again. Thank You for sending Jesus so that we can be with You forever. We love You. Amen.

## Worship:

Song: "Arky Arky," a children's ministry song
Song: "Mercy is Falling" by Mercy Me

## Extended activity:

1. Make a rainbow with Skittles™. Parents, draw the rainbow first on paper using the correct color (ROYGB). Have your child put a Skittle on the correct color, tracing your line with Skittles™. You could use beads, pompoms, or any other manipulative.
2. Get a box and pretend it is an ark. Gather your child's stuffed animals and have someone pretend to be Noah, and walk all of the animals into the ark. (Take this as far as you want!)



December 5th

# Abraham & God's promise

Acting in faith pleases the Lord.

## Verse of the Day:

Sarah became pregnant. She had a son by Abraham when he was old. He was born at the exact time God had promised him.

Genesis 21:2

## Bible Reading: Genesis 12:1-9, 15: 4-6, 18:10-15, 21:1-7

## the Story:

Time passed and the people of the world were not acting any better. They were hurting one another and God never wanted it to be this way. But God was already at work. He had begun a plan to save His people and He was going to do it through a man and his family.

One day, God visited a man named Abraham. God asked Abraham, "Can you count the stars in the sky?" Abraham tried but it was impossible! There were too many starts to count. God said, "Abraham, I am going to do something wonderful. I am going to give you many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Just as you could not count the stars in the sky, you will not be able to count your children either." Abraham said, "Lord, how? I am such an old man. I'm 99 years old. My wife, Sarah, is 90 years old. We do not have any children. How can we have a family that big? How can this be true?"

God was asking Abraham to believe Him. He told him, "Is anything too hard for me? I am going to rescue the hearts of my people. I am planning to make you into a great nation so that all people on earth will be blessed." God knew that one day, His son Jesus, would be born from Abraham's family. "Abraham," God said, "I am going to give you a son. I will carry on my promise through him."

This was an incredible promise! God was going to save His people through Abraham's family. Despite how old he already was, and that he would have to wait a long time before his son Isaac was even born, Abraham believed God. He trusted that God would keep His promise. The Lord accepted Abraham because he believed. Abraham's faith made him right with the Lord.

When Sarah heard God's promise, she laughed. It was not a happy laugh, but one from a deep place of sadness. "How could I have a baby? I've always wanted a

December 5th

# Abraham & God's promise

Acting in faith pleases the Lord.



baby, but I'm too old." Sarah had forgotten that God is faithful. When He promises He will do something, He will do it!

Just as God had promised, Sarah gave birth to a baby boy. He was named Isaac, which means "son of laughter." Now, Sarah laughed with great joy and happiness. Her dream had come true! And God's plan of blessing the whole world through Abraham and Sarah's family was just beginning…

## Discussion:

1. The world was wrong. How was God going to change things? through a family (Abraham's)
2. What did God promise Abraham? that he would have more children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren than all the stars in the sky.
3. Why did Abraham and Sarah doubt God at first? because they were so old, they didn't think they could have children
4. How did God keep his promise? God gave Abraham and Sarah a son

## Prayer:

God, thank You for always keeping your promises. We can laugh at the things we think are impossible, but know that You are always faithful. By giving Your only son, You have made us the happiest people of all.

## Worship:

Song: "Father Abraham" by Yancy
Song: "O Holy Night" lyrics by John Sullivan Dwight

## Extended activity:

1. Play the laughing game! Have one member of your family lay down on his/her back. Then lay your head on top of their tummy. Have another family member lay their head on top of your tummy, and so on until everyone has their head on a tummy, and a head on their own tummy. Then tell jokes, and start giggling. You will find it is very easy for all of you to laugh!
2. Go outside and look at the stars. See if you can count them. Remember God's promise to Abraham and tell your children that God has a wonderful plan for them too. They can trust in Him because He always keeps His promises.



December 6th

# The Offering of Isaac

God is our Provider.

## Verse of the Day:

Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering…'

Genesis 22:8

## Bible Reading:

Genesis 22:1-19

Hebrews 11:17-19

## the Story:

Abraham was a man who trusted God. But did he trust God with his whole heart? Abraham was a man who loved God. But did he love God more than anything? God had blessed Abraham and taken care of Abraham and his family. But now God asked Abraham if he would worship Him even when it was hard.

"Abraham! God said. "Here I am," Abraham replied. "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and show Me how much you love me by giving him back to Me." Abraham had worshiped God on the mountain before. He knew that God was pleased with the sacrifice of lambs and goats, but now God asked for a sacrifice of the thing Abraham had dreamed of and longed for and loved: his son Isaac. Abraham remembered God's goodness, God's faithfulness, God's greatness and he obeyed. He took Isaac along with two servants early the next morning to the mountain. Abraham told his two servants, "Wait here. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham believed God's promise that Isaac would grow up and have a special family. He believed they would come back together.

Isaac loved to worship God with his father. Isaac remembered the wonderful stories of God that his father had told him. He knew they would need wood, fire, knife and an offering. As they walked up the mountain, Isaac carried the wood. Abraham carried the fire and the knife. Isaac said, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and the wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them kept climbing the mountain. They finally found the place that God had told Abraham about and started to build an altar.

Abraham remembered the wonderful times he had heard from God and seen Him work. Abraham was so, so sad. He didn't want to give up his son. He didn't understand God's plan but Abraham remembered who God was. He knew God was bigger, stronger and better than anything in the whole world. He knew that God could do anything. Even if Isaac died, God could raise him to life again. And so, Abraham raised his hand with the knife.

December 6th

# The Offering of Isaac



God is our Provider.

"Abraham! Abraham!" God called out. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know you love me more than anything because you have not kept your only son from me."

The boy and his dad were amazed at what God had done! When Abraham looked up he found a ram that was caught in the bushes. God had provided the lamb for the sacrifice just like Abraham had told Isaac! Abraham and his son worshiped God on the mountain together and God blessed Abraham for his obedience. God blessed Abraham because he did trust Him with his whole heart and because he really did love God more than anything.

Many years later, God would provide another lamb. God would show the whole world that He loves each person more than anything by giving His one and only Son, Jesus. He is the Lamb of God that takes away our sins. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

## Discussion:

1. How do you worship God?
2. What could God ask from you to show you love him?
3. What did God give us to show us how much He loves us? Jesus

## Prayer:

Thank you, God, for being my provider. Thank You that You love me so much that You gave Your one and only Son, Jesus, the Lamb of God. Help me to have faith like Abraham and trust You.

## Worship:

Song: "We will Worship the Lamb of Glory" by Dennis Jernigan
Song: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" by John Francis Wade

## Extended activity:

Talk about all the ways God has taken care of you and blessed you. Make a paper chain and write one blessing from God on each strip. Glue or staple strips together and hang on your Jesse Tree.



December 7th

# Jacob's Ladder

God is always with you.

## Verse of the Day:

I am with you. I will watch over you everywhere you go. And I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Genesis 28:15

## Bible Reading:

Genesis 28

## The Story:

Isaac grew up and he had a son. His name was Jacob. When Jacob was older he went on a journey to find a wife. It was a very long trip and Jacob was lonely. It was nighttime and Jacob was tired. He found a smooth rock to use as a pillow and lay down to go to bed.

That night Jacob had a special dream sent from God. In his dream there was a very big ladder that went all the way up to heaven. There were angels going up and down the ladder and God was at the top. God talked to Jacob in the dream. He said, "Jacob, I will give you and your children this place to live. Just like your father Isaac and your grandfather Abraham before you, I will give you many children. They will be like the dust of the earth that can't be counted. I am still unfolding My wonderful rescue plan to save My people from sin. I promised I would bring this savior from your family line. I will keep you safe wherever you go and I will always keep my promises." This was the best dream Jacob could have! He knew he would be safe on his long trip with God by his side. He would never be alone.

Jesus, God's son, is the only way we can get close to God. When we believe Jesus can save us from the bad things we do, He is like our ladder to heaven. He makes us right with God, forgiven and holy, so we can be with God forever in heaven. He also gives us the Holy Spirit so we can live like Jesus while we are on this earth.

When Jacob woke up in the morning, He praised God. He thanked God for taking care of him and he promised God he would share with others from all the blessings God had given him.

December 7th

# Jacob's Ladder

God is always with you.



Jacob could trust that God was always by his side. God is always with us too! God is with us every moment of the day whether we are inside or outside, sleeping or playing. God is ALWAYS with us.

## Discussion:

1. What is the tallest ladder you have ever seen? Can you imagine a ladder that reaches all the way to heaven, higher than any tall building or even an airplane high in the sky?
2. What is a dream?
   SERIES OF IMAGES OR THOUGHTS THAT COME WHEN YOU SLEEP.
3. What did God tell Jacob in the dream?
   GOD SAID HE WOULD KEEP JACOB SAFE ON HIS JOURNEY AND GIVE THE LAND TO HIM AND HIS DESCENDANTS.
4. Who is our ladder to God in heaven?
   JESUS

## Prayer:

God, Thank you for being with us always, wherever we go. Thank you for sending Jesus to be our ladder up to heaven so we can be with You forever.

## Worship:

Song: "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"
Song: "Angels We Have Heard on High" traditional French carol

## Extended activity:

Make a ladder out of popsicle sticks glued to paper. Have children (or help younger children) color themselves at the bottom of the ladder with God at the top. Then, draw a big cross right on top of the ladder, and show your children that Jesus is the bridge to heaven. Share the gospel!



December 8th

# Joseph & his Coat

God has a good plan for me.

## Verse of the Day:

You planned to harm me. But God planned it for good. He planned to do what is now being done. He wanted to save many lives.

Genesis 50:20

## Bible Reading: Genesis 37, 45:1-18

## the Story:

Joseph came from a big family. He had 11 brothers! Jacob was Joseph's dad, and he loved him very much. Out of all his brothers Joseph was his dad's favorite and he was not afraid to show it. One day, his dad got him a beautiful coat made out of many different colors. This made his brothers very jealous. To make things even worse, Joseph kept having dreams that he would tell his brothers about. He would dream that all his brothers would be bowing down to him. This made his brothers hate him.

One day when his brothers were out in the fields Joseph was sent to check on them. When they saw Joseph coming they came up with a plan to get rid of him forever. They took his coat and threw Joseph into a pit and later sold him to slave traders on their way to Egypt. I think Joseph probably felt scared because strangers were taking him far away from his family to a foreign land. But he trusted God anyway.

Joseph worked hard as a slave. Even though he did nothing wrong, he was thrown in jail for something he did not do. He could have chosen to be really angry with God and not trust Him anymore. But Joseph trusted God anyway, even though he could not see what God was doing.

One night the Pharaoh had a dream about skinny cows eating up fat cows. He did not understand what this meant. He heard about Joseph and pulled him out of jail to have him explain the meaning of his dream. Joseph told him that there would be seven years with plenty of food and seven years with no food. Pharaoh was so glad with Joseph that he put him in charge of collecting food for the kingdom.

Meanwhile, Joseph's family was not doing well. They were getting very hungry and running out of food to eat. They heard that in Egypt there was plenty of food so they went on a trip there to buy some. They went and knelt before Joseph just like in his dreams. His brothers did not recognize him but Joseph knew exactly who they were. Joseph told them who he was and his brothers were very afraid. They had tried to kill Joseph and knew they deserved to be punished. Instead, Joseph trusted God's plan and forgave his brothers. He told them, "What you meant for evil God has used for good. You meant to kill me but God used all of these bad things to save thousands of lives and even yours."

December 8th

# Joseph & his Coat

God has a good plan for me.



God had a plan for Joseph and his family. Despite the hard times Joseph went through, God used Joseph and his brothers to carry the promise of a Savior to come. His family came to live with him in Egypt. Many years later, a little baby would descend from the family of one of Joseph's brothers, Judah. This baby would grow up to die for the sake of forgiveness. Jesus would die on a cross so that we could be forgiven.

## Discussion:

1. How would you have felt if you were Joseph and all these bad things kept happening to you?
2. How did Joseph respond to God? HE TRUSTED AND OBEYED GOD.
3. Who was in control while all the bad things kept happening to Joseph? GOD

## Prayer:

Jesus, help us to trust You even when things seem like they are not going well for us. Help us remember that You are in control and You love us! Thank You for letting us be a part of Your plan.

## Worship:

Song: "Blessed be Your Name" by Matt Redman
Song: "It is Well with my Soul" by Horatio Spafford

## Extended activity:

Go on a "trust walk." Blindfold your child and lead them by hand or voice through an obstacle course. Use this opportunity to talk about how Joseph trusted God through hard things even though he could not see what God was doing.



December 9th

# Moses & the Passover

The Lord fights for His people.

## Verse of the Day:

The LORD will go through the land to strike the Egyptians down. He'll see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe. He will pass over that house. He won't let the destroying angel enter your homes to kill you.

Exodus 12:23

## Bible Reading:

Exodus 12:23-32, 40-42

## the Story:

The Israelites grew to be great in number in Egypt. After Joseph and his brothers died, his children's children saw a new Pharaoh come into power. This Pharaoh was worried the children of God might try and take over, so he made them slaves. He made them work very hard and he beat them. The people cried out to God, "Please save us! Rescue us from the hands of the Egyptians!" God heard their cry and wanted to help them. Just as God promised Abraham that He would make his family into a great people, He was now going to prove faithful once again. He would set His people free. He was going to use a man named Moses to do it.

Moses was in the fields watching his sheep one day, when he noticed that a nearby bush was on fire. God lit the bush on fire to get Moses' attention. God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush and told him that he must go and rescue his people from the cruel Egyptians. Moses was afraid and didn't think he could do this but God promised to help him. God said, "I will be with you."

Moses, along with his brother Aaron, went into Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh. He told Pharaoh that it was the Lord's command that he should let the Israelites go. Pharaoh did not believe in God and became very angry. He treated the poor Israelites worse than before.

God gave Pharaoh ten "plagues" as warnings. First he turned the Nile River into blood; and after that he caused large numbers of frogs to run over the land doing great harm. Next gnats and other flies came to be a pest to the people. Then the Lord caused many of the useful animals which belonged to the Egyptians to grow sick and die. But Pharaoh would still not listen to Moses. He refused to let the people go free. Then God brought other plagues upon the Egyptians. God sent boils, millions of locusts, huge hail storms and the plague of darkness; when the land of Egypt was dark for many days. During each plague, Pharaoh cried out to God, "If you will make the plague stop, I will let the people go!" But after the warning stopped, his heart grew

December 9th

# Moses & the Passover

The Lord fights for His people.



hard and he refused to free the Israelites. Moses warned Pharaoh that God would send the worst plague yet if he did not free the people. But Pharaoh laughed at him!

Finally, God sent the absolute worst plague. He said that during the night, the first-born son of every Egyptian family would die. But God had a plan to save his people. God commanded the Israelites to kill their best lamb and to paint the front door of their houses with its blood. When the angel of death came in the night and saw the blood, he knew that a lamb died there and would pass over the home and not take the first born. That night, it was just as God had said. Pharaoh's oldest son died. Finally, he did what God commanded him to do, he let the people go!

Moses led his people out of Egypt. They were free! The people of Israel remember this great rescue as the "Passover." Many years later, God would send His son, Jesus, as the human lamb to rescue His people again and would set them free from the slavery of sin. God protected His people years ago and He still protects us today!

## Discussion:

1. What did God command Pharaoh to do? LET THE ISRAELITES GO
2. What were God's warnings to Pharaoh? THE 10 PLAGUES
3. What did God command his people to do in order to be spared from the last plague? PAINT THEIR DOORS WITH THE BLOOD OF A LAMB SO THE ANGEL OF DEATH WOULD PASS OVER THEIR HOME.

## Prayer:

Lord, thank You for always being there to protect me. I praise You Lord for Your power, Your strength, and thank You for sending your son to rescue me from my sins.

## Worship:

Song: "Your Great Name" by Natalie Grant

Song: "Pharaoh Pharaoh"

## Extended activity:

1. Watch the scene of Passover from *Prince of Egypt* on Youtube. **REVIEW FIRST!**
2. Draw a large door on a piece of paper. Using red paint, let your children paint around the doorframe as a symbol that Jesus has passed over their sins.



December 10th

# Moses & the 10 Commandments

God's commandments show us what's important.

## Verse of the Day:

Israel, listen to me. Here are the rules and laws I'm announcing to you today. Learn them well. Be sure to follow them.

Deuteronomy 5:1

## Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 5:1-22

## the Story:

After Moses and the Israelites left Egypt, they lived in the desert. They were headed to a new land God had promised them but it was a long journey to get there. The Israelites were tired from walking, they were hungry, and they were hot. "We don't like it out here in the desert!" they said. They began to complain. Remember what God had just done for his people? He had set them free from Pharaoh. They were not slaves anymore! He had led them across the Red Sea on dry land. But still the Israelites were not happy. They began to say, "God doesn't care for us! Did He lead us out here to let us die in the desert?"

God was showing the people everyday how much He wanted to help them. He sent food when they were hungry. He even made water flow from a rock when they were thirsty. But God's children kept complaining. They tried to do things their own way thinking this would make them happy. But there is no such thing as happiness apart from God. God told the people, "I want you to be special. I want others to know I am your God." God asked Moses to come up on the mountain with Him. There He gave 10 Commandments to Moses. The 10 Commandments were special rules that God gave to the people of Israel. These rules were to help the people learn to obey God and to show others they were different. Other people would see the people of Israel and want to know their God too. God etched the rules to follow on two stone tablets that Moses carried down from the top of the mountain.

Moses said, "God loves you! He cares about you! Will you love Him and keep these rules (See list of 10 Rules)?" The people of Israel shouted, "Yes! We will do it!" But God knew His children would not always obey His instruction ALL of the time. We all sin and make mistakes. Following all the rules could not save the Israelites and it cannot save us either. But God knew that and had a plan. He sent us Jesus. Jesus saves us from our sins and mistakes. He is the perfect example of how we should live. He stands in our place and is perfect for us so we can be close to God. When we make the choice to obey the commandments God gave us, we show God how thankful we

December 10th

# Moses & the 10 Commandments



God's commandments show us what's important.

are for Jesus, and it makes him happy. The 10 Commandments are for us today too. They teach us what God wants us to do when we follow Him. They show others that don't know God how God's people live. You can show love to others and to God by following these rules.

### The ten commandments for younger kids:

I. There is only one God.
II. Worship no one else but God (not your blankie, toys, books).
III. Use God's name in special ways.
IV. Use the Sabbath to honor God.
V. Respect your Mom and Dad.
VI. Never kill anyone.
VII. Love the person you marry.
VIII. Never steal anything that isn't yours.
IX. Don't tell lies at any time.
X. Be content with what you have.

## Discussion:

1. Do you think it is hard to obey the 10 Commandments? YES!
2. Who helps us to obey? How? JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO IS PERFECT. WHEN WE BELIEVE IN HIM, HE STANDS IN OUR PLACE AND IS PERFECT FOR US.

## Prayer:

God, thank You for giving us the 10 Commandments. Thank You for giving us rules to follow. I pray You will show us when we are not being obedient to You. Thank You also because, although we sin and fail at following Your rules perfectly, You sent Jesus to save us from our sins.

## Worship:

Song: "The 10 Commandment Song" by Go Fish
Song: "Silent Night! Holy Night!" by Joseph Mohr

## Extended activity:

Role play with your kids. Give them a scenario and ask them what the right answer would be. Examples: If your "neighbor" has a toy truck you want, what do you do? (get to the point of being content with what you have); Think of how much you love your "doll", God wants us to love Him more; If we ask you to pick up your trains and put them away, how does God want you to respond?




December 11th

# Joshua & the Battle of Jericho

My strength comes from the Lord.

## Verse of the Day:

Be strong and brave. Do not be terrified. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.

Joshua 1:9

## Bible Reading: Joshua 6

## the Story:

A new leader was chosen for the Israelites after Moses died. God told Joshua to get His people, the Israelites, ready. They were about to leave this big hot dry desert they had been wandering around in for 40 years and were to enter into a new land. One that was cool and green and beautiful! But, they were frightened. A really big and powerful city stood in their way—Jericho.

Be strong and brave! These are the words God kept telling Joshua. "Be strong and brave and do exactly what I tell you to do. Do not get scared and frightened and start doing things your own way. Remember what your name means, 'The Lord Saves!' Follow my commands and obey Me and I will be with you wherever you go." The people believed God and trusted in what Joshua told them to do.

Jericho had heard about all of the mighty things God had done for Israel. God parted the waters of the Red Sea and led the Israelites across safely. And God helped Israel defeat mighty armies. So, what would God do to them? They were very afraid. So, they locked their doors up tight and stayed behind their big thick wall to protect themselves. But, do you think this worked?

God is very creative and works in very powerful ways. Instead of attacking the big walls of Jericho, He had the people march around the city. So the people marched around the city once a day for 6 days. March. March. March. There were seven priests with seven trumpets of ram's horn leading the people, but the people weren't allowed to say one word to each other. Not a peep could come out of their mouths until Joshua told them to shout. The people of Jericho just watched. What were the Israelites doing? Were they too scared to attack Jericho? No, they were being obedient to God. On the seventh day, God told the people to march around the city seven times, just as they had before.

Then, the time finally came. The seventh time around, the priests sounded the trumpet blast and Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!" So the people shouted as loud as they could and the trumpets blew as loud as they could. And guess what happened? They shouted so loudly that it made the walls of Jericho crumble to the ground. The big thick walls were gone. Then the army of Israel went in and took the city.

December 11th

# Joshua & the Battle of Jericho




My strength comes from the Lord.

God used Joshua to show the people his mighty power and lead His people into the Promised Land. God's plan is still at work. He brought us an even greater leader, Jesus Christ, who will one day lead us all into an eternal home where we will live with Him and worship Him forever. But until then, Jesus helps us to be strong and brave. He invites us to read God's words in the Bible, talk to Him in prayer, and trust Him. He is always with us wherever we go.

## Discussion:

1. Who was giving the people instructions? GOD
2. Are you ever afraid to do something that is hard?
3. Do you think the Israelites were scared that the people of Jericho were going to hurt them? YES, BUT THEY KNEW GOD WAS WITH THEM.
4. Why did they need to trust in God? (JOSHUA 1:9) GOD TOLD THEM HE WOULD BE WITH THEM WHEREVER THEY WENT.
5. What would have happened if they had tried to fight Jericho their own way instead of God's way?

## Prayer:

God, thank You that You give us the strength and courage to do hard things. I always know that You are with me even when I am scared. Remind me to always be strong and brave when I am frightened and to remember that Jesus is always with me and I am not alone.

## Worship:

Song: "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho" by Cedarmont Kids
Song: "Be Strong and Courageous" by Sonforce Kids

## Extended activity:

1. Have the kids build a city out of blocks. Act out the story of the battle.
2. Make Rice Krispie™ Treats. Then, make a horn out of paper by folding and taping it into a cone or you can use sugar ice cream cones as a horn. Stack up the Rice Krispie™ Treats like the wall of Jericho on the kitchen table. March around the table and reenact the story. They can then eat their treats!



December 12th

# Ruth & Boaz

God takes care of me.

## Verse of the Day:

May the LORD reward you for what you have done. May the God of Israel bless you richly. You have come to him to find safety under his care.

Ruth 2:12

## Bible Reading: Ruth 1:1-18, 2:1-13, 4:9-17

## the Story:

After Joshua and the Israelites moved to the Promised Land, things went well for a little while. Over time though, God's people began to disobey Him. They looked to other false gods to try and help them. Even though God's children were making bad choices, there were always those who loved God and wanted to obey Him. Ruth's story is of a family who trusted God and would one day play a very important role in God's plan to rescue us from our sin. She would be the great, great, great, great, great (many more greats!) grandmother of Jesus.

Have you ever taken a long trip or gone anywhere new where you did not know anyone? The story of Ruth is about a woman who moved to a new home where she didn't know anyone except her mother-in-law named Naomi. Ruth and Naomi lived in a land called Moab. Ruth was married to Naomi's son. Ruth grew up where there were false gods, not the true, living God. While Ruth lived with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her husband she saw them worship the true living God and heard of His wonderful acts. Ruth made up her mind that she, too, would worship God. A very sad thing happened some time later. Naomi's husband and son died. Ruth lost her husband. Naomi was from the city of Bethlehem and wanted to move back there. Because Ruth loved Naomi she moved with her. She told Naomi she wanted to help take care of her because she loved her very much. "Wherever you go, I will go too. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God." God had a plan for Ruth.

When Ruth and Naomi got to their new home they did not have food to eat. Neither of them had a husband to help provide food. Ruth would go into a field nearby and gather wheat to make into bread for them to eat. Have you ever seen a wheat field or a corn field? God gives us these things so that we can cook them and eat them. He always provides for us because He loves us.

Now, Ruth did not know it, but the field where she gathered wheat belonged to a wealthy and important man named Boaz. Boaz loved God. One day, Boaz saw Ruth gathering the wheat from his fields. He knew that Ruth was from another city and came to help Naomi. He also knew that Ruth was loving and kind not only to

December 12th

# Ruth & Boaz

God takes care of me.



Naomi, but others around her. Boaz grew to love Ruth and they got married. Boaz took care of Ruth and Naomi from then on and they never went without food again. Just like Boaz loved Ruth and provided for her, God loves you and takes care of everything you need.

Ruth and Boaz later had a baby boy. His name was Obed. He would be the father of Jesse. God had a special plan for Ruth. Ruth trusted in God to take care of her and later, through her family, the Savior of the world was going to come--the promise and hope for all nations! God has a special plan for you too.

## Discussion:

1. Who did Ruth love and help take care of? Who loves and takes care of you?
   NAOMI, MOM & DAD AND ULTIMATELY GOD TAKES CARE OF US
2. What happened to Ruth when she trusted God to meet her needs? SHE WAS BLESSED BY BOAZ TAKING CARE OF HER, JUST LIKE GOD TAKES CARE OF US.
3. Who later would be Boaz and Ruth's great, great, great (many more greats!) grandson? JESUS

## Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for the story of Ruth. Thank You that You are mighty to save, and have a plan for me just like You had a plan for Ruth. Please help us to be kind to others around us, just as Ruth was kind! Thank You also for bringing Jesus in to the world to save us.

## Worship:

Song: "Mighty to Save" by Hillsong

Song: "Jesus, Joy of the Highest Heaven" by Keith and Kristyn Getty

## Extended activity:

1. Make a list of kind things that you could do for others this Christmas.
2. Activity: Give your child a basket (could be an Easter basket). Scatter some wheat on the ground for your child to gather. Some ideas for "wheat" could be cotton balls, pompom balls, or actual wheat. As they are gathering, encourage them with "Ruth trusted God to provide. She was faithful to gather wheat. God took care of her and He will take care of you."



December 13th

# God Chooses a New King

God looks into our heart.

## Verse of the Day:

Do not consider how handsome or tall he is. I have not chosen him. I do not look at the things people look at. Man looks at how someone appears on the outside. But I look at what is in the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

## Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

## the Story:

Have you ever pretended to be a king before? A king is a person who is in charge. He makes the rules for a group of people and makes all the decisions. The Israelites wanted to have a king like other nations did, so they begged and pleaded with God to give them a king. God heard their prayers. He appointed a man named Saul to be king. Saul was not a very good king though. He did not obey what God asked him to do. This upset God so He decided to appoint a new king.

God spoke to a man named Samuel, who was a messenger for God. He told Samuel to go to the town of Bethlehem, throw a party, and make sure to invite Jesse and his sons. "I will choose a new king from one of Jesse's sons." Once at the party, Samuel looked at the oldest son of Jesse. He thought, "This boy is big and strong, surely he is the one that God wants to be king." But God said, "Don't look at how handsome or tall he is because I have not chosen him. God does not see the same way that people see. People look at the outside of a person. I look at the heart."

As each one of Jesse's sons was presented, God told Samuel, "No, he's not the one." Seven sons were turned away. "Is this all of your sons?" asked Samuel. Jesse answered, "No, I have one more. He is my youngest son." Jesse's youngest son had a job out in the pasture taking care of the sheep. Jesse didn't even bring him to the party. Maybe he never thought he would be chosen as king. "Bring him to me," Samuel replied.

As David walked toward Samuel, God's voice spoke to him saying, "This is the one that I want to be king. He has a heart like Mine, full of love. He will help Me with My love story for all My created people. From his family will be the King that will rule forever." David was chosen to be the new king. Samuel poured oil on David's head to show that he was special, and set apart for God. David was chosen because of his heart, not his looks. He grew up to become Israel's greatest king. Oh, David was not perfect. He even helped to kill a man. But David knew

December 13th

# God Chooses a New King



God looks into our heart.

only God could take his heart full of sin and make it new. He prayed, "I need a new heart Lord, because mine is full of sin. Make me clean inside." God heard David's prayer and forgave him. David loved God so much that he wrote many songs to express his love. He was known as the "shepherd" king because he loved the people in his kingdom just as a shepherd loves his sheep.

God sees you for who you are and not how you look. He looks at you with eyes full of love because you are a precious treasure to Him. Oh, there will be times you will mess up. You will sin. But God can take the biggest messes and make them work in His plan. Just as God forgave David, He wants to forgive you too. That's why his plan was to send another shepherd. He would be known as the "Good Shepherd" because He would lead all of God's children back to the place where they belonged--close to God's heart.

## Discussion:

1. Did David look like a king? Why? NO, BECAUSE HE WAS THE YOUNGEST. HE WASN'T BIG AND STRONG LIKE THE OTHER BROTHERS.
2. Why and how did God choose David? GOD SAW THAT DAVID LOVED OTHERS AND HAD A HEART LIKE HIS. IT'S WHAT GOD CARES ABOUT MOST.

## Prayer:

God, thank You that You see our hearts and chose Jesus to be our Forever King. Help me God to love people like You do no matter if they look or seem different than me. Thank You, God that You have a plan and You know best even when we don't understand.

## Worship:

Song: "The King of Glory Comes" by Willard F. Jabusch

Book: You are Special by Max Lucado

## Extended activity:

Get two bananas. One needs to be really green on the outside and the other needs to be speckled brown and have a few bruises. Identify which one is sweetest. Then discuss how God looks at our heart not the outside.



December 14th

# Elijah & the Big Fire

The **LORD** is the one and only true God.

## Verse of the Day:

The LORD is the one and only God! The LORD is the one and only God!

1 Kings 18:39

## Bible Reading: 1 Kings 18:16-46

## the Story:

During the days of the kings of Israel, there were many bad kings and only a few who followed God's commands. God sent messengers, or prophets, to help guide His people back to Him. One of these prophets was Elijah. Elijah lived in a time where the people of Israel disobeyed God. Most of the Israelites chose to trust in other gods that were not real. Elijah wondered if ANYONE in Israel still loved God. Was God going to keep His promise from long ago? Was he going to bless His people? Was He going to rescue them from their sin and wicked ways? We know God is in control of everything. We have read many stories from the Bible up to this point proving He IS the true living God and He always keeps His promises. Elijah knew that too, but it was a very difficult time for God's people.

King Ahab was not a good king. He became the king of Israel and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He and his people worshiped made-up and pretend gods called idols. King Ahab wanted all of the people to worship Baal and say that Baal was God. This made the Lord very angry. The people of Israel were in a time of drought. This means it had not rained in a very long time. The people were thirsty! The animals were thirsty! God sent Elijah to King Ahab and his people with a message. Elijah said, "Stop praying to Baal. Turn your hearts back to God!" But the king and his followers did not want to listen to Elijah. So, Elijah had a contest. Elijah built an altar with stones and put sticks on it. He challenged King Ahab and the prophets of Baal to build an altar with stones and put sticks on it too. They would both pray for their God to send fire to the altar.

The prophets of Baal built their altar and prayed that their god would send fire. Nothing happened. They prayed all morning long, but their made-up god, Baal, did nothing. Now, it was Elijah's turn. Elijah built his altar with 12 stones and put sticks on it. He even poured water on the sticks and all around the altar. When Elijah prayed to God, God immediately sent fire to burn at the altar. The fire burned up the altar and the sticks and all of the water around it! King Ahab and his prophets were amazed. They said, "The Lord is the one and only God!" King Ahab began worshiping God! Then, dark clouds filled the sky. God sent a heavy rain to give the earth a big drink of water!

December 14th

# Elijah & the Big Fire

The **LORD** is the one and only true God.



Nothing is too difficult for God. God can even make fire with water poured all over the sticks. God changed wicked King Ahab's heart to trust and obey Him. Even though things looked grim during this time in Israel, God was at work. There were always people who loved God and trusted Him. God's faithful followers were a small group at this point, but God had a plan to bring something mighty from this "remnant" of followers. He would one day bring Jesus from this group. Just as Elijah's fire made wicked King Ahab's heart turn back to God—this baby boy born in a manger, would turn the hearts of God's people back to Him. God is in control of everything and we can always trust in Him!

## Discussion:

1. Could the made-up god Baal start a fire? NO
2. Could the real, living God start a fire? YES – EVEN WITH WATER POURED ALL OVER THE STICKS AND THE ALTAR!
3. Did all of the people know who the one true God is? YES

## Prayer:

Thank you God, that you are the one true God. Thank you that you are in charge of the world and nothing is too difficult for you. Please help us to always remember that only you are God. Thank you for always listening to us when we pray to you. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus. Amen.

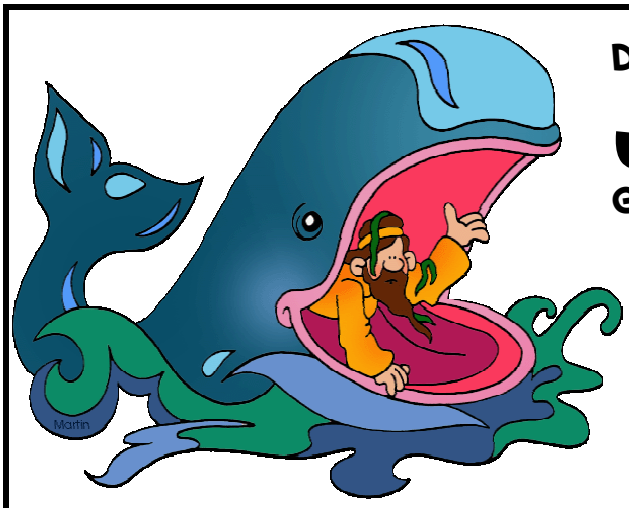
## Worship:

Song: "Our God is an Awesome God" by Michael W. Smith

Song: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" a Polish Carol

## Extended activity:

1. Make an edible altar. Have your children re-build the altar just as Elijah did. First pile up 12 rocks (mini marshmallows). Then they can put the wood on top (pretzel sticks). Remind them about how Elijah prayed and asked God to send the fire and have them add a few red-hots or red M&Ms to the top.
2. Let your children make necklaces from some sort of string, such as yarn, and "O" shaped cereals to help them remember that there are zero other gods besides the one true God.



December 15th

# Jonah Hides

God always sees me.

## Verse of the Day:

Nothing God created is hidden from him. His eyes see everything. He will hold us accountable for everything we do.

Hebrews 4:13

## Bible Reading: Jonah 1-3:3

## the Story:

Have you ever played Hide and Seek? It's fun to find a really good hiding place and see how long it takes someone to find you! Do you think it would be fun, though, if every time you hid, someone knew exactly where you were hiding? NO! Well, God **always** knows where you are.

Jonah lived in the day when God's people had turned away from God. In fact, the Jews were taken away from their homes and had to live as slaves in other lands. One day, God told Jonah that He had a special job for him to do. God told Jonah that He wanted him to go to the city of Nineveh and warn the people there that He would destroy them and their city if they didn't stop being bad. Jonah wasn't happy to hear this.

Jonah said to himself, "What? God wants me to go to Nineveh? There are bad, bad people there! No way am I going!" Instead of obeying God, Jonah decided he would go as far away from Nineveh as he could. Jonah got on a ship that was going to the farthest city he could find. Soon Jonah found out that he couldn't hide from God. God knew exactly where he was. God caused a huge storm to come up. The sailors were afraid that their ship would sink. They started throwing everything overboard to lighten the ship. They all started praying to their gods to save them but the storm kept getting worse. When the sailors realized Jonah was not helping, they went to him. "Please pray to your God! Maybe He can stop this storm. We are so scared!" But Jonah knew what the problem was. He knew there was only one thing to do. God wouldn't stop the storm until Jonah obeyed Him. So Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard. As soon as Jonah hit the water the storm calmed and all was quiet. The sailors were so surprised that the storm had stopped.

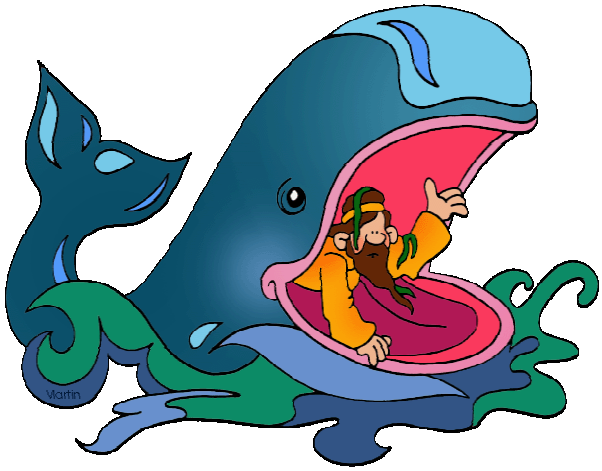
Jonah began to sink into the sea. But God didn't want Jonah to drown. He just wanted Jonah to obey Him. God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah and take him to the depths of the sea. He must have felt very alone and scared. He prayed and asked God to forgive him for disobeying Him.

Finally, after three days of being in the dark, stinky, belly of the fish, the fish came up to the top of the sea and spit Jonah out onto the shore. Then Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh. He told the people to stop sinning. He told them that even though they had run far from God, God loved them. He told them to run to God so

December 15th

# Jonah Hides

God always sees me.



they could be forgiven. They believed Jonah and God saved them. Just like Jonah, several years later God was going to send a messenger to tell everyone to run to God. Like Jonah spent three days in the dark belly of a fish, God's messenger would spend three days in a dark tomb. This messenger would be God's own Son. Jonah was given a message to share with the people of Nineveh. Jesus would have a message too. "I love you! I have come to rescue you from all the bad things you do! Stop running away from Me and run to my Son, Jesus!"

## Discussion:

1. What did God want Jonah to do? GO TO NINEVEH, TELL THE PEOPLE TO STOP SINNING.
2. What did Jonah do? HE RAN AWAY AND DISOBEYED GOD.
3. What did Jonah do after the fish spit him out? HE OBEYED GOD.
4. What does God want us to do when we do something wrong? TELL HIM ABOUT IT, AND ASK FOR HIS FORGIVENESS.

## Prayer:

Father, Thank You for sending Your son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that when we do something wrong, we can come to You, confess our sins, and be forgiven. We thank You because we don't ever have to hide from you and be alone and lost in our sins.

## Worship:

Song: "Take my Life and Let it Be" lyrics by Frances Ridley Havergal

Song: "Come to Jesus" by Chris Rice

## Extended activity:

1. Play "Hide and Seek" Jonah style. Let your child pretend to be Jonah, and you try and find them. Take a big blanket and swallow them up when you find them, and spit them onto dry land (your bed)!
2. Take an empty milk carton and cut a big wide mouth out of the opposite end of the handle. Draw two big eyes above the mouth and play Jonah and the Whale in the bathtub. Take any action figure (waterproof), and swallow him up in the milk carton. Spit him out onto dry land (side of tub) to go and obey the Lord.



December 16th

# THE COMING LIGHT

Jesus is the Light of the World!

## VERSES OF THE DAY:

The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them.

Isaiah 9:2

People of Jerusalem, get up. Shine, because your light has come. My glory will shine on you. Then your face will glow with joy. Your heart will beat fast because you are so happy.

Isaiah 60:1, 5a

## BIBLE READING:

Isaiah 9:2-7, 40:9-11, 50:10, 53:4-5, 55:3-5, 60:1-3
(Prophetic chapters in Isaiah)

## THE STORY:

Can you remember a time when you did something wrong? Maybe you disobeyed your parents, or told a lie, or were unkind to your sister or brother. If your parents found out about it, how did you feel while you waited to be disciplined by them? Maybe you felt sad or disappointed. Perhaps you even felt discouraged that you chose to do the wrong thing again even though you are trying really hard to obey.

God's special people, the Israelites, disobeyed God too. David was a good king, who loved God, but the kings after him began to lead the children of God astray. Even though God had given them laws to teach them how to live well, they chose over and over again to be wicked to one another and turned away from God. God is holy and He hates sin. God is also just, which means He can't just let His people live wickedly and not do something about it! He must punish us for our sin. So God sent a man named Isaiah to tell His special people this message: God is going to bring terrible judgment to you because you have stopped obeying Him and are living selfish and wicked lives. Wow - the Israelites must have felt really hopeless.

But God had another message for Isaiah to tell His people and it was full of hope! "Rise and shine my people! Wake up from the darkness of your sin, turn to me and let your heart be full of joy! I am coming to save you from the dark - a Light that will swallow up the darkness because it is so bright!" Even though God was going to destroy many of His special people because of their sin, He would save some of them. This "remnant" of people would be proof of His glorious love and

December 16th

# The Coming Light

Jesus is the Light of the World!



faithfulness. He would keep His promise to His people. The Savior would be coming and He would replace their hearts prone to sin with hearts full of love and a desire to follow God.

We need our mighty God to help us stop sinning too. By putting all of our faith in Jesus, the "light of the world", we can escape the terrible anger and punishment of God that we deserve. When we follow Him, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the light that leads to life. Let your heart be filled up to bursting today that God shined His light on you with the gift of Jesus, so that your dark heart could be full of light!

## Discussion:

1. How do you feel when you sin? How do you feel when you are waiting to be disciplined?
2. What does the Bible mean: God's people "walked in darkness"? DISOBEYED GOD
3. What did Isaiah tell them to expect? GOD'S PUNISHMENT
4. What was the "Light" that Isaiah told them about? JESUS AND HIS COMING KINGDOM
5. Are you afraid of God's future punishment or looking forward to Jesus' coming kingdom?

## Prayer:

Thank You, Father of Light, for sending Jesus, the Light of the world, to remove the darkness of our sin. Help us walk in the Light, obeying Your Word so that others may worship You.

## Worship:

Song: "So Long Moses" by Andrew Peterson's of God Behold the Lamb
Song: "Light of the World" by Chris Tomlin
Song: "John 8:12" by Seeds Family Worship

## Extended activity:

Take your family out to look at Christmas lights. Grab some hot cocoa and your favorite Christmas treat as you look at all the bright lights. Celebrate that Jesus is the "Light of the world!"



December 17th

# Daniel & the Lions Den

The Lord saves!

## Verse of the Day:

He sets people free and saves them. He does miraculous signs and wonders. He does them in the heavens and on the earth. He has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

Daniel 6:27

## Bible Reading:

Daniel 6

## the Story:

Things had really changed for the people of Israel. They had been taken from their home and were now living in Babylon. They were slaves to the King of Babylon. But God had not forgotten them. He was looking after them and had a glorious plan for them. This is the story of one of God's children—Daniel.

Daniel was a very hard worker. The king trusted Daniel so much that he put him in charge of the kingdom. The other men who helped the king were jealous of Daniel and they tried to look for something that Daniel did wrong to get him in trouble. Daniel continued to work hard and the king's helpers could find no fault in him. They became very angry at this and came up with a plan to get rid of Daniel.

So they went to King Darius. The helpers told him, "King Darius, we want you to make a law that says that everyone in the kingdom should pray to only you. And anyone who does not follow your command will be thrown into the lions' den to be eaten by lions." The king agreed and made it the law.

Daniel knew about the law that King Darius made. But Daniel believed in God and refused to pray to anyone other than God. Daniel got on his knees and prayed to God three times each day. In his prayers he thanked God, and asked God for help. The king's helpers saw Daniel praying to God. The men reminded King Darius of the consequence for anyone who prayed to God rather than the king.

Then King Darius said "Yes, I remember I made a law." So the King had to give the order to put Daniel in with the lions. After Daniel was put into the lions' den, the men took the biggest rock they could find and put it over the door to close off the mouth of the den. King Darius felt so bad about his decision that he could not even sleep that night. He was worried about Daniel.

The next morning, King Darius went to see if Daniel was alive. When he got close to the lions' den, he called out, "Daniel, servant of God, has the God that you pray to and honor been able to save you from the hungry lions?" Daniel called out, "My king, God sent his angel to close the mouths of the hungry lions. They did not hurt

December 17th

# Daniel & the Lions Den

The Lord saves!



me because God knows that I am innocent. I never did anything to wrong you, my king." Daniel was alive! The king was overjoyed!

King Darius decided to punish the men who tricked him and put these men and their families into the lions' den. Then King Darius wrote a letter to the world. The letter said that the God of Daniel was the living God and God's kingdom would never be destroyed. King Darius declared that God does mighty miracles in heaven and on earth! Because of God's power, and Daniel's trust in the God who saves, many people came to believe and honor God that day.

One day soon, God was going to send another man who would be brave like Daniel, and would trust God and love Him no matter what it may cost. In fact, it would cost Him his very life. Jesus would die on the cross and would save us all from the dark den of sin.

## Discussion:

1. Who did Daniel talk and pray to? He prayed to God. He refused to worship other gods or man.
2. What did Daniel pray for? God's help and he thanked God.
3. How did God answer Daniel's prayer? He closed the lion's mouths so that they could not hurt him. God saved him.

## Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for blessing and protecting us. Please help us to put our trust and faith in You each and every day. Please help us to love and worship You above anything else. Amen.

## Worship:

Song: "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" by Reginald Heber
Song: "Oh No, What We Gonna Do?" by Veggie Tales

## Extended activity:

Make a lion snack! You will need cookie or cupcake, caramel popcorn, yellow icing, and black gel icing. First, ice your cookie or cupcake. Let children put caramel popcorn all around the edge to make the mane. Help them draw a face and whiskers using the black gel icing. Eat and enjoy!




December 18th

# Queen Esther

God will make a way.

## Verse of the Day:

Then he sent back an answer. He said, "You live in the king's palace. But don't think that just because you are there you will be the only Jew who will escape. What if you don't say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like this.

Esther 4:13-14

## Bible Reading:

Esther 4

## The Story:

How hard is it to obey God? Do you think you could obey Him if you knew it might cost you your life? That was exactly the situation that Esther found herself in. There was a king who ruled over the mighty land of Persia and his name was King Xerxes. King Xerxes was looking for a wife, so he had his servants search the land for the most beautiful women. Esther was one of the women chosen. She was raised by a kind cousin named Mordecai, who was a faithful and godly man. He was like a father to her. Mordecai and Esther were Israelites, also known as Jews. In order to protect Esther, Mordecai told her to keep her Jewish background a secret.

Out of all the women throughout the kingdom, the king liked Esther the best! He put the royal crown on her head, and she became his wife and the queen. Esther went to live in the palace. There was an evil man, named Haman, who was in charge of all the royal officials in the land. Everyone was supposed to bow to him. But cousin Mordecai would not bow to him. Mordecai would only bow to God. As a result, Haman did not like Mordecai.

When Haman discovered that Mordecai was a Jew he dreamed up a plan to destroy him. He lied, and told the king that the Jews were not obeying the laws and they should be punished. The king did not know that Haman was telling a lie so he agreed to have the Jews punished. The king also did not know that Queen Esther, his beloved wife, was a Jew.

Mordecai told Queen Esther of Haman's evil plan and asked her to go to the king and plead for the lives of the Jews. Cousin Mordecai thought the king would listen to Queen Esther since he loved her. But Queen Esther was afraid. She knew that if she approached the king with a request without being summoned by him, she could be put to death. The only way her approach to the king would be accepted was if he extended his **golden scepter** to her. Queen Esther was very worried. She could die if the king did not hold out his **golden scepter**. Mordecai encouraged Queen Esther and told her, "Maybe God has made you queen at this moment so you can

December 18th

# Queen Esther

God will make a way.



save the lives of the Jewish people!" She knew the only way to save the Jewish people would be for her to intercede for them.

When it was time for Queen Esther to speak to the king, she went to the inner court of the palace and stood in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his throne and when he saw Queen Esther, he was pleased with her. He held out his **golden scepter**. Then King Xerxes asked, "What can I do for you, dear queen? I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom." Queen Esther made her request and asked him to spare the lives of her people, the Jews. The king was shocked to find out that Queen Esther was a Jew. He asked her who was responsible for putting the lives of the Jewish people in danger. Esther pointed to Haman. The king was upset with Haman for being so cruel, so he had Haman killed. Queen Esther and the Jewish people were saved!

Queen Esther knew that God had put her in that particular place at that time for the purpose of saving the Jews, God's people. God is at work in everything! Sometimes things don't seem to make any sense to us, but later we understand why God puts us in a certain place at a certain time. Do you know why He does this? So His perfect will can be done. Little did Esther know, she was paving the way for the coming of the world's Savior by protecting the Israelites from death. She did not know that one day, a Jewish man named Jesus, would make a way so that His children could approach the throne of God with confidence and grace.

## Discussion:

1. Does God have a special job for you?
2. What would be a word that describes Esther's character? BRAVE, COURAGEOUS, OBEDIENT, FAITHFUL
3. What color was the king's scepter? GOLD Why is it important? BECAUSE IT SHOWED THE KING'S AUTHORITY OVER EVERYONE.

## Prayer:

Dear God, help me to love and honor You above everyone else. Fill my heart with love for other people, and open my eyes to see the special plans You have for me.

## Worship:

Song: "My Soul Magnifies the Lord" by Chris Tomlin

Song: "The Battle is not Ours" Sweet Pea's Songs for Girls –Veggie Tales

## Extended activity:

For your little girl, let her dress up like a princess. Take a magic wand (golden scepter), and act out the story of Esther. For boys, dress up like a king, and do the same!



December 19th

# God's Messengers

We will wait and watch for Jesus.

## Verse of the Day:

But I will still be glad because of what the LORD has done. God my Savior fills me with joy.

Habakkuk 3:18

**Bible Reading:** Habakkuk 1-2:3, Zechariah 8:7-8, 9:9-11

## the Story:

Does it ever seem to you like Christmas will never come? We wait for our parents to get out the Christmas decorations; we wait for our parents to put up the tree; we wait for the presents to be placed under the tree. We wait, and we wait, and we wait! Sometimes when we wait, we can be so excited that we just don't want to do what we are told. Maybe we disobey and are put in time out! When we are in time out, we could almost lose hope and think, "Maybe Christmas isn't coming this year. Maybe I've been too naughty!"

But, we don't lose hope because we know that our parents will never stop loving us. They always do what's best for us—even if it's a time out! That should make us joyful. Our parents love Christmas too, and they delight in celebrating it with us.

That reminds me of the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel had acted very naughty. They had forgotten about God. They had forgotten about the commandments He had given them to keep them safe, and they disobeyed. God had to send them to time out. The people had to leave their homes and live in a foreign land. It was a long time out—70 years! But God promised that He would bring His people out of their time out, and God always keeps His promises.

The problem was that God knew even when He brought His children out of time out they would be naughty and disobey again. Time outs were not enough to give His children a desire to do the right thing. They always "wanted to" do the wrong thing. It was like the people had hearts made of stone. Their hearts were hard towards doing right for God. He knew that He would have to send a very special present that could soften His children's hearts and give them a desire to obey Him. He knew it all the way back in the Garden of Eden. He knew when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden they brought sin into the world, and all the children born after that would be born with hearts that did not want to follow God's ways. God promised to send a very special present to change His children's hearts to be soft and ready to follow Him. Do you know what that very special present is? It's actually a person. It's Jesus!

You see, even though the Children of Israel had the hardened hearts and disobeyed, God could never stop loving them. He didn't want to be separated from His children, but the desire to disobey God separates us from Him. That's why He promised to send Jesus. Jesus changes people's hearts to obey God and makes it so that they never have to be

December 19th

# God's Messengers

We will wait and watch for Jesus.



separated from God again. We are God's children just like the children of Israel, and God promised the present of Jesus for us too. Our parents are a picture of God for us. Even when we are naughty and get sent to time out, they never stop loving us and taking care of us. That is a wonderful thought!

God's messengers, the prophets, knew that this was true about God and never stopped telling God's people He loved them. That's why Habakkuk, one of God's messengers, stood on his watchtower and waited for God. Even though the Children of Israel were sent to time out and it seemed like it would never end, Habakkuk knew that it would end. God would keep His promise to bring them out of time out and eventually send them the best present of all—Jesus.

So, remember that when you have to wait and wait and wait for Christmas, it will come just like the first Christmas finally came so many years ago bringing with it the best present of all—Jesus!

## Discussion:

1. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden, what were all the children born with? the desire to disobey God and do things our own way (sin)
2. What does "sin" do? separates us from God
3. Who is the present that changes our hearts to obey God? Jesus
4. So even when we have to wait and wait for Christmas, it will finally come. What does that teach us about God? we may have to wait for him, but God always keeps his promises.

## Prayer:

God, thank You that You will never stop loving me. Thank You for promising Jesus who takes my heart that is hard from sin and makes it soft to obey and love God. Thank You for keeping Your promise by sending Him on the first Christmas. Thank You for the joy You have put in my heart.

## Worship:

Song: "The Best Present of All" by Donut Man

Hymn: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," Latin hymn

## Extended activity:

Wrap an empty box to look like a Christmas present. Ask your children, "What do you need to do to receive this gift?" Help them come to the conclusion "to take it." Share how God's gift is Jesus, and the way that they receive Him is just like the gift. It is by faith. They don't have to earn it, just receive it. Put gift under Jesse Tree to serve as a reminder.



December 20th

# John the Baptist

God prepares the way for His son.

## Verse of the Day:

I baptize you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:8

**Bible Reading:** Luke 1:5-23, Mark 1:1-11, Matthew 3:13-17

## The Story:

It had been almost 400 years since any of God's people had heard a message from one of God's prophets. God had been silent. The people were waiting to hear from God. "Has God forgotten about us?" they asked one another. "Will He rescue us like He promised so long ago?" They waited and waited for something to happen.

Then one day a man named Zechariah received some wonderful news! He was visited by the angel Gabriel. Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. Not just any son but a son who would be God's special helper. He would help turn many people's hearts toward God. He would help get the people ready for God's Son, Jesus. Zechariah had a hard time believing the angel. "But I am so old! My wife is too old! We can't have a son!" Gabriel then took away Zechariah's voice because he did not believe God. Zechariah was unable to speak for 9 long months.

When it was time for Elizabeth and Zechariah to have their baby, something miraculous happened. When their friends and family asked what the baby boy's name would be, Zechariah wrote the name John down on a piece of paper. Right at that moment, Zechariah's voice returned and he shouted, "John! His name is John!" Zechariah could speak again. Then, he began praising God… "Praise the Lord!" he said. "The Promised One is coming! He will save His people, just as God's holy prophets said He would!" Then Zechariah continued to praise God, "Here is my son, John! He will be God's special helper! He will go before Jesus to make ready the way for God's people to be forgiven. God is so merciful and wonderful!"

When John grew up to be a man, he did odd things. He lived in the desert, wore outfits made from camel hair, and he grew his hair really long and scraggly. The strangest thing John did was to eat locusts (like grasshoppers) dipped in honey. The honey probably made the grasshoppers taste better! From the outside, John was very unusual, but God sent John to tell his people something very important.

John told many people about Jesus's coming. He warned people to stop sinning and ignoring God. John encouraged people to ask for forgiveness instead." He had good news, "the Savior is coming! Make your hearts ready for Him!" Many people listened to John and wanted to be saved. They stopped running away and hiding their sin from God. They asked John to baptize them. Baptizing means to be

December 20th

# John the Baptist

God prepares the way for His son.



dipped under water and then come back up. Doing this meant that the people wanted to follow God. It showed they wanted to be rescued!

And one day, John would have the chance to baptize someone very special. As he was baptizing in the Jordan River, Jesus walked to the edge of the water. John looked up. Is it really Him? Is this the One? He was so excited. This was the moment he had been waiting for all his life. He couldn't contain his joy but exclaimed, "This is the lamb of God! He takes away the sins of the world!" Jesus then asked John to baptize him just like all the others. Jesus said, "It is God's plan for you to baptize me." So John baptized Jesus.

When Jesus went under the water and then came up, the sky opened up with light and shone down on Jesus. Just then, the Spirit of God like a dove flew down and rested on Jesus. God's loud voice said, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Heaven shone down on everyone there. God's plan to save His people was coming true!

## Discussion:

1. Who was John the Baptist? HE WAS GOD'S SPECIAL HELPER. HE TOLD PEOPLE THAT JESUS WAS COMING SOON.
2. Why did John baptize people? SHOWED THAT PEOPLE WANTED TO FOLLOW GOD AND BEGIN A NEW LIFE
3. What visited Jesus after he came up from the water? THE SPIRIT OF GOD LIKE A DOVE

## Prayer:

God, just as John the Baptist helped prepare people's hearts for Your coming, will you please prepare my heart for Christmas in the same way? I want to know You more, and love You more. Amen.

## Worship:

Song: "What Child Is This?" Traditional English Carol
Song: "Glory in the Highest" by Chris Tomlin

## Extended activity:

Let your children have a sip of vinegar, followed by a taste of honey. After the taste of vinegar, remind them how the people of God had to wait for 400 years of silence before they heard any message or word from God. Talk about how hard that must have been and so lonely. Then, after the honey, celebrate that today's story was great news! The wait was over! Jesus was coming! How sweet that is! (You can also remind them that John the Baptist loved locusts dipped in honey).




December 21st

# Mary & Joseph

God is with us.

## Verse of the Day:

You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must name him Jesus.

Luke 1:31

All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Matthew 1:22-23

## Bible Reading:

Luke 1:26-38

Matthew 1:18-25

## The Story:

The promise from God Almighty to HIS people was about to be fulfilled. How would the LORD God come to His people? Would He come in the mighty wind, on a bolt of lightning, or through the top of an exploding volcano? No! God chose to bring Himself down to Earth and be born as a small, helpless baby. When no one was looking, He came.

A young girl named Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. Joseph was one of King David's descendants. One day, while Mary was at home, an angel appeared. His name was Gabriel. Mary was afraid. But the angel said, "Greetings Mary! Do not be afraid! God is very pleased with you. I have some wonderful news. Mary, you are going to have a baby. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. Just as God promised long ago, He will be a king like David and His kingdom will never end. He's the One you have been waiting for! He's the one to save God's people from their sins. You must call him Jesus."

This news was hard for Mary to believe! "How can this be true? It sounds impossible!" she asked the angel. "Nothing is impossible for God," Gabriel said. Mary trusted God. "I am a servant of God. Whatever He wants me to do, I will do."

Just as the angel had said, a baby began growing in Mary's belly. Some time after, an angel appeared to Joseph while he was sleeping. The angel said, "Joseph, take good care of Mary. She will give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be from the throne of King David. He will save his people from their sins."

December 21st

# Mary & Joseph

God is with us.




Joseph woke up from his dream and he was filled with wonder. Joseph most likely learned about God's plan to save His people. He might have known about the promises of God, but probably never dreamed he would be the earthly father of God's son! "The child will be called Immanuel, which means 'God with us.' He will be the one to give us a new, clean heart. He is the one to make a way to God, so we can be close to Him." Joseph could not wait.

God chose Mary and Joseph to be Jesus' earthly parents. The first Christmas Day was coming soon. The day Jesus Christ would be born. The little baby who would grow into a man and lead us to God, the Father, who loves us SO MUCH!

## Discussion:

1. How were Jesus' earthly parents chosen? AN ANGEL APPEARED TO THEM.
2. What was the baby's name? JESUS
3. Jesus would also be called "Immanuel." What does that mean? "GOD WITH US"

## Prayer:

God, thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to the earth in the form of a baby, who grew up and showed me how to have life forever by believing in Him. Thank you for loving me that much!

## Worship:.

Song: "Emmanuel" by Chris Tomlin
Song: "Breath of Heaven" by Amy Grant

## Extended activity:

Make an angel ornament. You will need an angel cookie cutter, Crayola Model Magic clay in white, a straw, and ribbon (color of your choice). Have children flatten clay into a pancake. Then use cookie cutter to cut as many angels as you would like. Take straw and poke at top of angel to make a hole for ribbon. Let angels dry completely. It may take them overnight to dry. Hang ribbon through hole, and add them to your tree!



December 22nd

# Christ is Born in a Manger

The Savior is born!

## Verse of the Day:

So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.

Luke2:4-5

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11

## Bible Reading: Luke 1-2

## The Story:

Can you count how many people are in your family? Caesar Augustus (who was in charge a long time ago) wanted to count all of the people living in the Roman world. That's a lot of people! So, Mary and Joseph took a trip to Bethlehem to be counted. God had already said this was going to happen. When God's people of old were waiting for God's savior, He told them, "One day, the city of Bethlehem is going to be important. Though the city is small, out of the city will come one who will be ruler over my people. The One I told you about in the days of Abraham, the One who will bring you all close to Me."

Now, they didn't have any cars, or motorcycles, or trains, or planes. What they did have was a donkey. Hee-haw! Since Mary's baby was big in her belly, she got to ride on the donkey. Joseph helped her by walking beside her all the way to Bethlehem. It was about 80 miles!

Mary and Joseph were very tired from their travels, and so was the donkey. It was a starry night and they wanted to find a place to rest. They found a hotel called an Inn, but it was full of people sleeping already. There was no room for them so Mary and Joseph stayed in a stable. This is where the animals slept. It is like a barn! Mary and Joseph settled into the old stable, thankful for a place to rest.

That night, when all was still and quiet, Mary had her baby. God's wonderful gift had come to the world! The little baby that would change the world had finally arrived. Mary swaddled him in cloths so he would be warm. Joseph and Mary filled the animal's feeding trough with soft hay and laid the baby in the manger.

December 22nd

# Christ is Born in a Manger

The Savior is born!



Joseph and Mary named the boy Jesus. He is "Emmanuel." Emmanuel means "God is with us." The precious gift that God promised to rescue us from sin was with us! He did not come as a mighty King in a castle, or a strong warrior with a fierce sword, but as a humble, helpless baby. God had kept His promise. He sent Jesus.

The world would soon find out about Jesus. God had a wonderful plan for Him that involves you and me too. God knew we needed someone to rescue us. Remember, we were all born with the "strong desire" to disobey God? Jesus was going to make a way for us to be close to God again. Jesus would grow up and die for yours and my sins. He was put on a cross and buried in a dark tomb. But three days later He rose again! When He rose again, Jesus told the world that sin and death would win no more! He was going to change our hearts to "want" to follow God. We can have a new, clean heart that loves God and wants to obey Him. In Jesus, you can be close to God and live forever with Him in heaven. A long time before Jesus came, Isaiah said, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Perfect Son of God, welcome to our world.

## Discussion:

1. What was the name of the baby who was born? JESUS/EMMANUEL "GOD WITH US."
2. What was this baby going to do? SAVE THE WORLD
3. Who else is God's child? ME! (OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH YOUR KIDS!)

## Prayer:

Dear God, Thank You for your Son. Thank You that you had a plan long ago that came true in Jesus. Thank You that He saves me from my sin, and makes a way for me to be close to You again. I love You, Amen.

## Worship:

Song: "Away in a Manger"- Anonymous
Song: "Welcome to our World" by Chris Rice

## Extended activity:

1. Take time to identify the members of a nativity scene. The manger scene by Little People™ is a great one.
2. Act out the manger scene with family. Even create costumes from things around the house for Joseph, Mary, baby, and any animals from the manger.



December 23rd

# God's Big Announcement

Each one of us is very special to God.

## Verse of the Day:

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11

## Bible Reading: Luke 2:8–20

## The Story:

One night a long time ago, there was a group of shepherds sitting out in a field, taking care of their sheep. That was their job. When the shepherds left for work every day, they headed out to watch over sheep. Sheep seem like they would be fluffy and sweet, but if you've ever been close to one, you would know that sheep are actually kind of stinky – they're really not fluffy and clean. So the shepherds had a job taking care of a whole bunch of stinky sheep.

Being a shepherd was not a job that most people wanted. In fact, it was thought of as one of the yuckiest jobs a person could have. Most people stayed away from shepherds and weren't very nice to them. They thought of shepherds as "lowly" which means that they weren't as good as everyone else. Did you know that God does not think of anyone as "lowly"? Since God made each one of us, He loves us and knows that every one of us is very special.

God had a really big surprise to share with people everywhere. His Son, Jesus, had been born! That was really BIG news, and God wanted to make a big announcement and let people know! If you had a big announcement, you might call someone on the phone or have your parents send an email on the computer, but God did something really special and sent an Angel to tell the good news. Many people would expect the Angel to tell the President or the King the good news that God's Son, Jesus, had been born. But on that night long ago, God sent the Angel to the shepherds sitting out in the field. The shepherds who were thought of as "lowly" were the first people to hear God's amazing news!

It was a really dark night, and the only light the shepherds had were the stars in the sky and maybe a small lantern. All of a sudden, the sky was full of light, and an Angel appeared! Can you imagine how scared the shepherds were? They had never seen anything like it! The Angel knew that they were frightened and he told them that there was no reason to be scared. He let them know that he had great news from God! Then he told them that God's Son, Jesus, had been born in David's City – Bethlehem – and that they could go find him. They would know it was the baby Jesus, because the baby would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. After the Angel shared the news, the whole sky lit up with a choir of angels who were singing and praising God and celebrating that the baby Jesus had been born!

December 23rd

# God's Big Announcement



Each one of us is very special to God.

The shepherds were very excited that God had shared this news with them, and they wanted to go find Jesus. The Angel had said that they would find Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem. If you think about it, a manger is a strange place to be born. It was probably in a place like a barn, surrounded by all of the animals and didn't smell very good. Most people would expect God's Son to be born in a palace or a really fancy hospital, not outside in a barn. The King of the world was born in a "lowly" place. I bet because Jesus was born in a barn not a big castle, anyone could find him and worship him – even the shepherds. They immediately left the sheep and went in search of Jesus. After they found Him and worshiped Him, they went and told everyone the whole story, so that all people could go worship the baby Jesus.

## Discussion:

1. What are some jobs that people have today that might be "lowly" like the shepherds' job? THESE JOBS DO NOT MEAN THEY ARE ANY LESS THAN WE ARE.
2. The Angel shared God's great news to the Shepherds while they were at work. What are some normal things that we do every day where we might experience God?

## Prayer:

God, thank You for making all people special, even me! Thank You for sending Jesus as the Savior for everyone and for sharing Your news with the shepherds.

## Worship:

Song: "Go Tell It on the Mountain" by Cedarmont Kids
Song: "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" by Charles Wesley
Song: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" by Phillips Brooks

## Extended activity:

1. Go outside once it is dark and look up into the sky. Imagine what it was like for the shepherds to sit in a field with only the stars for light until the Angel appeared.
2. Use a brown lunch sack to make a sheep puppet. Glue on cotton balls for the fur and use a black marker to draw the face. Put on a puppet show about what the sheep might have been thinking when the Angel appeared.



December 24th

# Follow the Star

Jesus is our gift from God.

## Verse of the Day:

When they saw the star they were filled with joy.

Matthew 2:10

## Bible Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

## the Story:

A very bright star shone over the place where Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Some **very** Wise Men, like kings, saw the star and were overjoyed because they knew that the star was a sign from God that a new king had been born.

The Wise Men wanted to worship this new king, because they knew He was the King of the Jews, God's chosen people. "He must be very special," they thought. So they packed all of their things and some very special gifts for this new baby King. They set out on a trip to find Him. They rode on their camels and followed the bright star just like we would follow a map. First, the star led the Wise Men to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was an important city where a very mean king named Herod lived. The Wise Men asked King Herod if he knew where the new baby king was born. King Herod, full of jealously, was not happy to hear about the new king God had sent. Herod wanted to be the only king. Herod told the Wise Men to go to Bethlehem, where the prophets had said a ruler would be born many years before, and there they would find the new baby King. Herod secretly told the Wise Men to find the baby, and come back and report to him exactly where he was born. He was planning to hurt this new king.

The star rose in the sky above them, and led the Wise Men to Bethlehem. When the star stopped, they found the place where the new king was, with his mother Mary. The Wise Men learned that the new king was named Jesus. They were so excited to meet Jesus that they fell on the ground and worshiped him singing songs and saying thank you to God for sending this very special boy. Then, they gave Jesus the gifts that they had brought for him--Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh… three very special and important gifts for a very special and important child. The Wise Men loved Jesus and wanted to make him feel special, just like God loves us so much that he gave us the gift of Jesus.

After meeting Jesus, while they were sleeping, the Wise Men had a dream from God. In the dream, they were told on their journey home they should not go and see the mean King Herod. They obeyed God and went a different way home.

Just like the Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus, we give gifts at Christmas to the people we love. The greatest gift of all though, is the Gift that God gives to us, the very same gift that the Wise Men found all those years ago. The same gift God promised since the creation of the world, someone to save us. It is the gift of Jesus, a very special child, a king, born so that we could be together with God forever.

December 24th

# Follow the Star



Jesus is our gift from God.

## Discussion:

1. Who were the Wise Men looking for? JESUS.
2. How did the Wise Men find Jesus? THEY FOLLOWED A STAR.
3. What did the Wise Men bring Jesus? GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.
4. What is the gift that God gives to us? JESUS.
5. What are some gifts that you can give Jesus?

## Prayer:

God, thank You for sending the baby Jesus as a special gift for me. Thank You for the story of the Wise Men who loved Jesus and worshiped him as a special king. Please help me to always look for Jesus, just like the Wise Men did, so that I can know Jesus as my friend.

## Worship:

Song: "We Three Kings of Orient Are" by John H. Hopkins
Song: "The First Noel" Traditional English Carol

## Extended activity:

1. The Wise Men gave gifts and worship to baby Jesus…God, gave us the best gift of all, his Son, Jesus. As a family discuss ways that each of you can give gifts to others that do not cost any money. (example: the gift of obeying your parents, being kind to someone hurting, etc.)
2. Give a gift to Jesus. As a family, pray and ask the Lord to help you find a way to love others this holiday season. Make cookies and sing carols for the friends at a nursing home; donate a toy for a child in need, feed the homeless, donate to a favorite charity, or just help a friend or family member in need without expecting anything in return.