



Advent

— THE AUSTIN STONE —

Family Devotional

Family Devotional

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4 ESV)

The Advent Family Devotional is a 25-day curriculum of Scriptures, devotionals, and questions that starts December 1 and ends December 25.

We built this devotional because we want to help your whole family center around specific truths found in the Old Testament and have your hearts stirred together toward the coming of Jesus.

To use this devotional, gather your family at some point each day, morning or night, read the day's Scripture and devotional, answer the questions as a family, and record your answers in the space provided.

Afterwards, if you so choose, check the ornament icon at the top of the page and color the day's corresponding ornament in the Kids Ornament Book, available at austinstone.org/ornaments. Cut it out and hang it on your Christmas tree to help your kids remember that day's message.

How to use

Family Devotional

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Read all or part of the Scriptures aloud to your children. If your children are old enough, invite them to read part of the Scriptures.

If they are really young, refer to the bottom of the page for “The Jesus Storybook Bible” narratives that can be read instead of the Scripture passages.

DEVOTIONALS

These beautiful retellings of Scripture show how God had a plan all along to display His love to the world through His Son, Jesus. Each and every story shows us how, throughout history, God has been actively at work saving His people, loving His people, and preparing His people for the greatest gift of love the world will ever see, His very own Son.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you have older children, take a few moments when the story is finished to use these questions as a springboard for discussion. These questions are intended to help your children apply the story to their own lives. Pray at the beginning or at the conclusion of the discussion (or both).

MAKING MEMORIES

These questions can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the age of your kids. If your children are old enough to answer the questions, ask away, and record what they say. Maybe they are not old enough to answer for themselves, but you know the answers (i.e. in the case of a favorite book or outfit). Or maybe the question is more for you as the parent to answer. No matter who answers the questions, use them as an opportunity to record memories of the past year, events of this Christmas season, and hopes for the year to come.

COLORING ORNAMENTS

At the top of each page, an ornament picture is suggested. Your child can either draw their own picture or color one provided in the Kids Ornament Book.

You can download this book for free at austinstone.org/ornaments.

The Fall

Genesis 3:1-6, 8-15*

God loved giving gifts to His kids, Adam and Eve.

But these weren't the kind of presents that could fit in a box and be wrapped up with shiny paper and bows. No, they were better than that! God scattered stars across the sky and lit them up, like white twinkly lights. He gave them slow-moving, silly-looking, sleepy sloths and speedy, spotted cheetahs. Mighty trees with strong branches bursting with juicy fruits. See-through waters where scaly fish swam past spiny seahorses and crawling crabs. God gave Adam and Eve some good gifts to show them some important things about Himself: He was good, He loved them, He could always be trusted.

Then one day, along came Satan, who spoke lying words with his snaky tongue. He made Adam and Eve think, *Hmmm, maybe God isn't good. Maybe God doesn't love us. Maybe God can't be trusted.* Satan whispered that to really be happy, they needed the one gift that God hadn't given them—fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But instead of feeling happy after eating the fruit, Adam and Eve became very sad. Instead of being wise, they were ashamed.

Maybe you're thinking after all this, *God won't want to give Adam and Eve any more gifts.* But God had actually been waiting this whole time, until Adam and Eve had disobeyed and broken His one rule, to give them His best gift. What?! After they had disobeyed, He was going to give them His

best gift? What could it be? What could God give His children that would be better than all the world? It was the gift that Adam and Eve most needed, the gift that would take away the sin that they had brought in, the gift that would smash their enemy's head under Jesus's foot. This gift would be a person who would make Adam and Eve remember that God was good, that God loved them, and that they could always trust Him.

God promised them His best, most perfect gift—the gift He had always wanted to give them: His Son, Jesus.



1. *Can you think of a time that your mom or dad told you “no” to something that you really, really wanted? Why would your mom or dad, who love you, say “no” to something you really, really want?*

Sometimes you may want things that are not good for you. Like God telling Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, your mom or dad may need to tell you “no” to things they know are not good for you.

2. *Was there a time today that you disobeyed God? When you disobeyed, can you think of a lie that might have been whispered to your heart that made you think you’d be happier doing things your own way?*

The lie is usually, *If I could just have this/ do this/etc., then I will be happier than if I obey God.* It’s like when Satan whispered to Eve, “If you really want to be happy, you need to be wise like God and eat from the tree.” Sin is always promising us happiness if we disobey God. But like Eve found out, that happiness will never last.

3. *Do you think God was surprised when Adam and Eve ate the fruit off the tree?*

God always knew that Adam and Eve would disobey Him. His original plan, His Plan A, was always to give us Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-6).

What is one thing you want to thank God for today?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "The Terrible Lie"

The Flood

Genesis 6:9-8:22*

The world was hurting.

The sin that rushed into the hearts of Adam and Eve back in the garden—it was now everywhere. It had spread like nasty germs into each and every person. It poisoned every heart so that no one trusted God or thought He was important. God was so, so sad as He looked at people throwing punches, screaming ugly words, wearing mean faces, and telling lies. God decided to scrub this world clean with rain, more rain than anyone had ever seen fall from the sky. More than any bathtub, swimming pool, or ocean could ever hold.

But God saw Noah on the earth. He loved Noah and wanted to make him, his family, and all the animals safe so that the flood wouldn't destroy them along with everything else. So God whispered in Noah's ear a warning of the rain. He told Noah the one thing that would rescue them from the flood, an ark. Now, Noah was different from all the other people on the earth. While they ignored God and plugged their ears when He spoke, Noah listened carefully because he believed that everything God said was really true. If God said a flood was coming, then it would come. If God said it would be so big that it would wipe out everything and everyone, then it would. And if God said an ark was the only way he and his family would be safe, then it was. So Noah trusted in God and built the ark. Then just as God said, for forty days and forty nights, the rains came. They hammered against the roof

and the wood creaked and groaned as the waves crashed against the sides. Only Noah, his family, and the pairs of animals inside the great ark were safe from the water that swallowed up the world.

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, everyone was gone and everything looked clean. But it would soon be discovered that all the water in all the world couldn't rinse away the sin hiding in the heart of every person. The flood didn't stop the world from all its hurting. God again needed to deal with sin, and He needed to pour out a more powerful kind of storm to once-and-for-all deal with the sins of His people. So, just as before, He looked at the earth and found children that He loved—that's us!—and He gave us an ark to protect us. But the ark that God gave us this time wasn't exactly like Noah's ark—it wasn't made out of wood and tar. In fact it wasn't an "it" at all. The ark that God gave us was a person—God's own Son, Jesus. In order to protect us, Jesus received all of God's raging storm that was heading our way. In the ark that is Jesus, we will be safe from everything God will send to get rid of sin for good.



1. *God gave Noah very specific instructions on how he would be safe in the ark —what type of wood, how big, the number of decks, etc. What kind of instructions has God given us on how we can be safe in Jesus?*

God has given us the gospel. He says if we confess that we disobey Him and trust that Jesus died on the cross for all our sins and then rose from the dead, we will be saved from all the punishment God is sending for sin (Romans 10:9).

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2. *We can see that Noah trusted God by looking at all the ways Noah obeyed Him. Noah went and got the wood, he followed all God's instructions, and he did what God said. If we trust that Jesus saves us, how will we see that show up in our lives?*

We will start to obey the things that God tells us in the Bible (e.g., being kind to others, praying to God, giving things we have to others, and being honest).

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3. *Noah believed God when no one else did. In fact, most of the people around him were probably laughing at him for building the ark. If you follow Jesus, sometimes people might laugh or make fun of you for doing it. How do you think Noah was able to keep trusting God even if people thought he was silly?*

Noah believed that what God thought about him was more important than what anyone else thought. Noah trusted that what God said was true. If God said a flood was coming and the ark would save him, it was worth doing, even if people laughed while he did it.

What is something you really want for Christmas this year?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "A New Beginning"

The Promise

Genesis 9*

The flood ended.

A wind whistled across the earth and began drying everything off. The ark landed. God opened the door that He shut so many days ago and Noah peeked out into this familiar but new world. As he looked at the emptiness that used to be crowded with people, maybe Noah wondered, *Will God flood this earth again if we keep disobeying?* Maybe Noah should have run out of the ark and thrown himself on the ground yelling promises like, “God, we will never make the world so bad again! Please, no more floods!”

But Noah didn’t make any promises to God. Funnily enough, when he got off the ark, God began making promises to him. “Noah, I want to make a covenant with you.” Now, covenant is a fancy word that means a promise, but it’s bigger than just an ordinary promise, like when you say, “I promise I’ll clean my room,” or, “I promise I’ll finish my homework.” A covenant is tougher than nails, stronger than steel, big, and unbreakable. The God who created the sun, scattered the stars, and made man out of dust said that He would make this kind of promise to Noah, his family, and to all the people that would come after them. Wow! Noah opened his ears wide and listened as God promised that He would never, ever, in all the years of forever, destroy the earth with another flood. Then suddenly, across the sky, God painted a brilliant rainbow of many colors. It was a seal of this covenant—which means it was a sign that Noah

and every person ever after could look up at the sky, elbow each other in the ribs, and say, “Hey! A rainbow! Remember, that time God sent that huge gigantic flood? That was so big! That rainbow reminds us He won’t ever do that again! Beautiful!”

This covenant and many others that God made in the Bible were to help get us ready for the biggest and best covenant that ever was: the New Covenant! In this strong, unbreakable, forever promise, God says to all the people who trust in Jesus that all of His anger against all of our sin has all been poured out onto Jesus when He died on the cross. Not a drop of it is leftover for us. And because God likes to seal His covenants to make sure we know He is super serious about them, He puts the Holy Spirit inside our hearts as a seal of the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit reminds us every day for all of our lives that God loves us. We don’t have to be afraid of Him punishing us because Jesus was punished for us. The Holy Spirit is like a rainbow shining upon our hearts, pointing us to the God of the universe who has given us the strongest and the most beautiful promise in all the world.



1. *Has someone ever made a promise to you and then they weren't able to keep it? Maybe they ran out of time or money, or they got lost, or forgot, or changed their mind about it. Why is it different for God to promise you something than for a person to promise you something?*

God's promises are certain. He rules over time, He owns everything, He is all places at all times, He always remembers, and His words are trustworthy. God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19). Because He controls everything, knows everything, has all power, and can be in all places, He is able to make and keep promises in a way that people can't.

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2. *God decided to protect Noah and his family from the flood. What could be some reasons that He decided to protect Noah and his family instead of wiping them out too and simply starting over with new people?*

God had promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Rescuer through one of Adam and Eve's descendants. This Rescuer would crush Satan's head under His heel. For God to keep His promise, God had to protect a few people from the flood that were part of Adam and Eve's family line. They would continue to grow their family on and on and on until finally, one day, the family line reached to Jesus, who would crush Satan's head.

What is your favorite food to eat at Christmastime?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "A New Beginning"

The Offering

Genesis 22:1-19*

Abraham looked up the tall mountain ahead.

He glanced back and watched Isaac petting their donkey that was piled high with bags for the trip. *How am I going to do this?* Abraham thought. *God wants me to give Him Isaac.* Abraham's heart hurt as he thought about it. Isaac was his son, his only son, and he loved him so much. He had waited such a long time to be his daddy and God had promised Abraham that His Rescuer was going to come through Isaac's family! Abraham scratched his head, confused. How is God going to bring the Rescuer through Isaac if he dies now as a sacrifice? Abraham didn't know the answer, but he knew God must have a plan. God always did. So with a heart that was both sad and trusting, Abraham kept going.

After much walking and climbing, they reached the spot God had told to Abraham. Abraham prepared for the sacrifice —built an altar, laid out his firewood, and brought forth his precious offering, Isaac. It was time. Abraham got out his knife, his heart beating fast and stomach fluttering with butterflies. He sucked in a breath and thought one last time, *God has a plan. I trust Him.* A tear trickled down his face. His hand clutched the knife, and he shakily raised it above his son.

A voice pierced the still air. "Stop!" Abraham's heart leapt into his throat. "Abraham!" the angel shouted, "You trust God! He sees that you trust Him! You were willing to

do whatever He said, even though it was so hard." Just then, a ram skittered in the bushes. Abraham grabbed the ram by a horn and dragged it to the wood pile. He undid the rope that bound Isaac and swooped him up into a great happy hug. God had given Abraham something else to sacrifice instead of Isaac.

Abraham was ready to give up Isaac, his most precious thing in all the world. This shows us that Abraham's heart believed God loved him and wanted good things for him. God's heart toward His children is full of love and desires good things for us. To show us His heart, God gave up what was most special to Him. He gave up His Son, Jesus, for us.

Remember when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden? Their hearts asked, *Does God really love us?* That question is a big question. It's one all of our hearts ask. God wanted to answer this question once and for all so He gave up His Son, His only Son, whom He loved. You and I can look at Jesus and hear God's response, the loudest, "Yes!" in all the world.



1. *Think about something that is special to you. Maybe it's a toy you love, a best friend or sibling, or a stuffed animal or blanket you sleep with every night. What would it feel like for you to have to give that up? What do you think it felt like for God to give up His Son, His only Son, whom He loved so, so much?*
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Because God the Father and His Son Jesus have always loved each other forever and ever with a perfect love, it must have been very hard for God to send Jesus to the cross to die for our sins.

2. *In the Bible, God sometimes tells His people to do hard things. He told Abraham to give up Isaac, He told David to fight Goliath, and He told Paul to go to some hard places and talk about Jesus. Is there anything hard that God has told you to do?*

Maybe God has asked you to be kind to someone who has been really mean to you. Maybe He has asked you to give away something you love to help someone else. Maybe it's hard for you to obey your mom, dad, or teacher. Because God did the very hardest thing in giving up Jesus for us, we can trust that He will help us do the hard things He tells us to do. Will you ask God to help you do the hard things He has told us to do in His Word?

What is one prayer request you remember
God answering this year?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "Son of Laughter"

The Choice

Genesis 29*

Here's something you should know about God: He likes upside-down things.

Sometimes He does what doesn't make sense to us or it's the exact opposite of what we expect or want. This was the case with two sisters, Leah and Rachel, who were both married to Jacob. Now, Jacob was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God had picked Jacob to continue the family that would lead to His promised One, but Jacob had two wives, so which one of them would God use to continue His chosen family?

Leah was not a pretty girl. Jacob didn't even want her for a wife. He was tricked into marrying her. Rachel, on the other hand, was so beautiful, like a princess, and Jacob loved her with all his heart. If you and I were to guess which one God would choose to continue the family of His Rescuer, wouldn't we pick Rachel? Wouldn't we look at the two sisters and decide with our eyes that she was the best?

Ah, but like we said earlier, God sometimes does upside-down things. God didn't make His decision based on shiny hair, fashionable clothes, and long, lovely eyelashes. God chose Leah, the girl who looked ugly and lonely and unloved to everyone else. God was showing us through Leah a little what our Rescuer was going to be like.

The people of God had been on the lookout for their Rescuer for a really long time, but they had always expected someone like Rachel. They thought the Rescuer would be

the best and look the best. Maybe He would be born in a giant stone palace with lots of servants, fancy robes, and sparkling jeweled crowns. Maybe He would have a strong, tall body and a handsome face. Surely His enemies would take one look at him and scream like little girls and hide in the haystacks. The people of God thought they would be able to look with their eyes and know, *This must be Him! He is the One who will save us!*

But God's Rescuer wasn't like Rachel. He was like Leah. Jesus was a son in a poor carpenter's family. He was born in a stable, surrounded by stinky animals. His clothes were stained with dirt and filled with little holes. Outsiders would kick dust at His town as they passed by it. Nothing about how He looked or where He came from was important in any way, but God likes upside-down things. And His Son, Jesus, though not special to human eyes, was perfect in God's eyes. Jesus would come in a way that no one expected, in a way that no one would have planned so that He could flip the world upside down.



1. *Can you think of anyone else in the Bible that God chose to use, even though they weren't the best, the most important, or the strongest?*

Moses killed a man, lived out in the desert, and was not a great speaker. God chose him to rise up against Pharaoh and then lead the Israelites for 40 years. David, the youngest of eight sons, was a shepherd boy. God chose him to defeat Goliath and be king of Israel. Peter was a simple fisherman. God chose him to be an apostle, share the gospel, and write several letters that became part of our Bible. Paul killed people before Jesus saved Him. God chose him to be the main person to take the gospel out beyond the nation of Israel.

2. *Why would God use people who are weak, small, poor, or ugly to do a lot of the work for Him?*

When people who seem unimportant in the eyes of the world do mighty things, God is seen as strong. When David, a young shepherd, defeated the giant Goliath, the people didn't look at David and think, *Wow. He was so strong!* Instead they looked at God and thought, *Wow! You are so strong! You used this little guy to defeat a great enemy! You must be powerful!*

What is your favorite Christmas song? Sing a few Christmas songs together as a family.

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: *"The Girl No One Wanted"*

The Dreamer

Genesis 37; 41; 50:15-21*

Young Joseph had some amazing dreams that showed he would one day lead his family.

Joseph was proud of this beautiful future, so he was probably surprised when his life started falling apart. His brothers hated him because their father loved him most. Instead of just calling Joseph mean names, they sold him as a slave. Slavery?! Joseph hadn't dreamed about that. He was treated well by his Egyptian master until people told lies that sent Joseph to jail. Jail?! Again, his visions of becoming important were smashed into little pieces. Then, one day, God put dreams into Pharaoh's head that were sort of scary. He searched the land for someone to explain all the fat and skinny cows he had seen in his dream. Only Joseph could explain they were a warning from God. The dream indicated a famine was coming and there wouldn't be enough food, so Pharaoh lifted Joseph up out of jail and placed him next to the throne. Joseph now had the super-important job of making sure the Egyptians didn't run out of food.

Then when the famine came, the Egyptians had food but other people, including Joseph's family, were starving. His brothers traveled the long dirt roads to Egypt for grain to fill their bellies. Upon arriving, they were shocked and terrified to find Joseph was alive and very powerful. With wide eyes, they bent their wobbly knees before him, just like Joseph's dreams showed they would. Joseph could have spewed hateful

words at them or said, "Ha, ha! I told you I would rule over you!" Instead, Joseph gently said, "You meant to destroy my life by breaking it into pieces. But you didn't know that God was at work through you, chiseling away the rough edges of pride and hardness in my heart. God was leading me on a crooked and painful path to this seat beside Pharaoh. What you meant for evil, He always meant for good." God had always planned to use mean brothers, slavery, and jail to change Joseph and put him in the perfect place to save God's people.

The story of God's Son, Jesus, was a lot like Joseph's. Jesus had a beautiful dream of saving God's people, but to make this come true, Jesus had to watch His life fill with brokenness. He was hated by people and even sold away by one of His best friends for money. He was thrown into jail and beaten and crowned with thorns. But the most hurtful thing of all was being nailed to the cross. Jesus stayed there and took all of God's anger at sin so He could pay the full and final price for our sin. God always knew the cost for us to be His. Jesus would have His life smashed to pieces and walk the painful path to His death on the cross, all in perfect fulfillment of what God had always planned.



1. *Has God ever used something hard, sad, or hurtful to bring about something good in your life?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

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2. *Many of Jesus's disciples were put in jail, beaten, or forced to leave their homes because they were telling people about all that Jesus had done to pay for our sin. What do you think they thought about on their hard days to help them get through the sad and hurtful things that were happening?*

They might have thought about Jesus dying on the cross and all the suffering that He had gone through. They might have thought about the family of God that they were helping to build. Maybe they thought about Heaven and seeing Jesus again. Maybe they thought about how God uses all hard things to do good for His people.

How has God asked you to obey in a hard way this year?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "The Forgiving Prince"

The Plagues

Exodus 3:1-5:9; 7:14-10:29*

Egypt was no longer a good place for God's special people, the Israelites.

Joseph and his brothers had all died long ago, and no one in Egypt remembered them, especially the new Pharaoh. He decided these Israelites would make good slaves for his kingdom. Being a slave meant working hard for long hours, being punched and kicked by Egyptians, and barely having enough to eat or more than rags to wear. God saw His people hurting under Pharaoh's rule. Because He loved them so much, He asked Moses to tell Pharaoh that God wanted His people to go free.

This was an impossible job! Moses was an old man who spent his days hanging out with sheep. He wasn't very good at talking to anyone, much less a king, but he obeyed God and told Pharaoh, "God says His people must go free so that they may worship Him." Pharaoh sneered at Moses and began to laugh, "Ha! Never!" He wouldn't listen to Moses, but God was not done. He began to throw down heavy plagues on the Egyptians to punish them. First, God told Moses to make the Nile River run red with blood. Yuck! No one could get a drink or take a bath. Surely that would make Pharaoh listen to God, but he didn't. God sent a great crowd of frogs that came and ribbited all day and night, but Pharaoh didn't care. Then gnats and other insects swarmed the land, buzzing in ears day and night, yet Pharaoh still wouldn't

let the Israelites go. So God killed all the horses, donkeys, sheep, and camels of the Egyptians. Pharaoh looked out at the dead animals, held his nose to keep the smell away, and then plugged up his ears to not listen to God. Next Moses watched as God filled the Egyptians' skin with itchy, oozy sores that made them wail like babies. It wasn't enough for Pharaoh. Neither was the hammering hail that came next or the leaping locusts that gobbled up the last of the food. Pharaoh wouldn't even listen when a horrible darkness crept over the land, as if God had turned off all the lights in the sky. "No!" Pharaoh shouted. "My slaves cannot leave to worship God!"

What would it take? These plagues weren't enough. What would God have to do for Pharaoh to finally let His people go free? Pharaoh was a hard and mean master of his slaves and wanted them to worship and obey him, not God. God made Pharaoh ruler over the Israelites to show us what sin is like. Sin is the hardest and meanest master of all. Sin wants us to obey what it wants all the time, and it tells our hearts where to go and what to do. Sin doesn't want us to be set free to worship God. What would it take for God to fight sin and beat it once and for all? What would it take for God to set His people free?



1. *God created Pharaoh and raised him up to be one of the most powerful men in the world. What did it show about God when He destroyed the land that Pharaoh ruled and Pharaoh was unable to stop Him?*

It showed how powerful God was. Pharaoh ruled over many people and had many subjects and slaves. No one rose up against Pharaoh, but God demonstrated His power as Pharaoh was unable to stop the frogs, the insects, the darkness, or any of the other plagues. God is the most powerful ruler of all.

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2. *Think about what it would have been like to be a slave to Pharaoh. Every day you could only get up and do exactly what Pharaoh commanded. Think about the sin that is in our hearts. If the sin in our hearts is like Pharaoh, then what do we do every day, unless God gives us a new heart?*

All we can do or want to do every day is sin, unless God gives us a new heart to worship Him. Sin rules over our hearts and, like Pharaoh, it is our master unless God sets us free.

What is your favorite thing to do outdoors during the Christmas season?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "God to The Rescue!"

The Passover

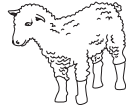
Exodus 12:2-7, 12-13*

One last plague was coming, the final straw that would finally make Pharaoh give up his slaves.

Moses leaned in to hear what God was planning. The words took Moses's breath away. "Every firstborn son in the land of Egypt will die." Death. God had to kill the firstborn sons for Pharaoh to free God's people. Moses's heart began to beat quickly. God had said death was going to come to all the firstborn sons living in the land of Egypt, but that's where all of God's people lived, too. Still, Moses remembered all the other plagues and thought, *God protected us from the gnats that swarmed and the boils that festered and the darkness that overwhelmed. Surely He will keep us safe from the death that is coming. We are His people.*

Moses was right. God had a plan to protect His people if the Israelites obeyed exactly as He told them. Every family had to paint the blood from a perfect lamb across the top and sides of the door of their house. When God sent His angel to kill the firstborn sons in Egypt, the angel would see the blood and pass over these houses. The lambs' deaths would take the place of the firstborn sons of Israel, but the Egyptians did not cover their doors with the blood of lambs. In the houses of the Egyptians, great cries arose in the night as they found their firstborn sons dead, even Pharaoh's firstborn. He called for Moses and yelled in his face, "Go! Take all your people and all your animals and all your things and leave!" God's people were free to go and worship Him.

The cost to be paid for the freedom of God's people was the death of the firstborn sons. God wanted us to see what all it would take for a harsh master to release his slaves. God tells us that we are born as slaves to the harshest of all masters, sin. Sin had us. We belonged to it, as much as the Israelites belonged to Pharaoh. We couldn't escape its hold on our hearts. God always knew what it would cost for Him to set us free. He knew He was going to send His anger down against us for our sin and that there was only one way He could protect us from Himself. For us to be safe, God put His Son, Jesus, to death and painted His blood over us. He gave us His best and perfect Lamb to make us safe and happily free from sin, our horrible and evil master. He set us free from sin so that we might come and worship Him forever.



1. *For God's people to be safe from the death of their firstborn sons, they had to obey exactly what God said. What does God say we have to do in order to be safe inside Jesus?*

God has given us the gospel. He says if we confess that we disobey Him and trust that Jesus died on the cross for all our sins and then rose from the dead, we will be saved from all the punishment of God that is coming for sin (Romans 10:9).

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2. *Think about how silly it would have been for the Israelites to have been set free and then to just have stayed in their houses, gotten up the next morning, and gone back to their work like they had every day before! If God has set us free from sin, then what should our lives start to look like?*

We can hope that God will keep helping us to say no to sin and not let it rule over us anymore. Whenever we listen to the lies of sin in our hearts that tell us not to trust God or worship Him, we are like the Israelites, just going back to work for Pharaoh like nothing had changed.

What is your favorite thing to do inside during the Christmas season?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "God to The Rescue!"

The Journey

Exodus 14-15*

Moses shaded his eyes as he peered over his shoulder at the swarm growing larger on the horizon.

The ground shook and the waters rippled as angry Pharaoh and his army moved closer and closer. Moses gazed at the huge sea in front of him. The Israelites were packed like sardines around him, their terrified eyes full of questions. *Where do we go now? Why would God bring us out here to die? Does He love us?* Though Moses, too, felt the fear crawling in his belly, he knew the answer to all their questions. “Everyone! Listen to me! Your God does love you. He isn’t surprised that we are stuck here. God is planning to rescue us. Do you know what He wants us to do? Nothing! Just zip your lips and open your eyes. Watch and see your God save you.”

Hoofbeats pounded behind them as the Egyptians closed in. The Israelites were trapped. Moses took a step forward, lifted up his old wooden staff, and stretched out a shaky wrinkled hand over the sea. Gasps rose from the mouths of the Israelites as the waters of the Red Sea split in two and dry earth appeared before them. “Go!” yelled Moses. And the Israelites went. Some stared at the walls of water and tiptoed through, worried that at any moment they might come crashing down and drown them all. Others ran through, skipping and hopping with happiness, confident that God would hold the water back until they were across. Whether they cautiously crept or rapidly ran, every single Israelite made it to

safety. The Egyptians saw the Israelites exit the floor of the sea, so they tried to follow them. Instead of holding back the curtains of water, God let go and Pharaoh and his army disappeared beneath the waves. Their enemies were gone. God’s people were saved.

“Watch and see,” God had said to the Israelites when they were trapped in an impossible spot, unable to save themselves. We also were trapped in our impossible sin that ruled our hearts. We couldn’t save ourselves, but Jesus came into our world and said, “Watch and see.” At the cross, Jesus took all the punishment that we should have had for our sins. He held back the curtain of God’s anger so that we could safely cross into God’s arms. Some of us look at Jesus with small faith, wondering, *Is He too good to be true?* Others of us look at Jesus with big faith, trusting that He is even better than what our brains can understand. Whether we hope in Jesus with small faith or with big faith, every single one of us who trusts in Him will be saved.



1. *Why do you think God trapped the Israelites between the Red Sea and the Egyptians? Why didn't He take them a different way or somehow stop the Egyptians from coming after them?*

God set up this situation so that only He would get the glory. Only God could get all the credit for saving the Israelites. They would know that they had been powerless but their God had been mighty to save them.

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2. *When we look at all that God had to do to save us—that His own Son had to die on the cross—what does that say about our sin?*

The sacrifice of Jesus shows us how serious our sin is and how impossible it would be for us to try to save ourselves. Our sin against God is so big that *only* Jesus could pay for it with His death and resurrection.

What is one thing God has taught you this year?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "God Makes A Way"

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-21*

Back in Egypt, the Israelites always had to listen to the words that Pharaoh said.

“Make those bricks!” “Build that wall!” “Feed those animals!” Day in, day out. Whatever Pharaoh said, they did. His words made their lives hard and unhappy. Then Moses came and said that God wanted them to be free so they could worship Him. Worship? Hm-mmm. They only knew slavery. What would worship look like? It had been months since the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Life was rough. Arguments arose over which sheep was whose. Bellies grumbled for meat. Moses couldn’t grant all their wishes. God had said He wanted His people to go free so they could worship Him—but was this what He meant? Surely not! They reached the rocky base of Mount Sinai and watched Moses climb to the cloud-covered top and wondered what secrets God would share way up there.

The Israelites stared at the two weighty stone tablets that Moses had lugged down the mountain. Carved into each of them were ten important rules, or “commandments.” As Moses read them aloud, the people thought, *These seem like good rules to live by! Not killing or stealing from each other. Being respectful to mommies and daddies and taking a nice rest once a week.* Moses banged his staff on the ground to get their attention. “God loves us, so He gave us these rules! He rescued us out of our terrible slavery in Egypt. This is how we can worship Him! We can love Him by obeying what He says

is best!” God had been waiting until now to explain worship. He hadn’t come to Egypt and whispered in their ears, “Obey, obey and I’ll come whisk you away. Pharaoh will be no more.” Instead, God had made the river bleed and the locusts swarm and He had torn open the sea. In mighty and miraculous ways, God had wrapped His strong hand around His people and plucked them out of Egypt. His great love for His people could not be questioned, and now that His great rescue was complete, He shared all the ways to obey. Freedom first. Obedience after.

This is what our story looks like. God didn’t come to us while we were still slaves to sin and say, “Do this! Do that! If you obey, then I’ll set you free!” Instead, while we were slaves to sin, He sent Jesus to save us. God made His Son bleed, let His enemies swarm, and then tore Him apart on the cross and raised Him back to life. With this mighty work, He set our hearts free and *then* He came to us and said, “Now, let me show you what it looks like to worship me.” Obeying God isn’t something we have to do so that God will save us. Obeying God is something we get to do because He saved us.



1. *Think about what it was like to serve Pharaoh in Egypt. Are there any ways that it was the same as serving God? Are there any ways that it was different from serving God?*

Slavery to Pharaoh was miserable. The work was hard and there was no joy in it. Pharaoh didn't care about the people and didn't want good things for them. Disobedience was severely punished. Obeying God is the same in the sense that we should follow all that He commanded and often the work will be hard. What should be different is that instead of making us miserable, serving God should produce joy in our hearts. God is a different Master because He loves us and wants what is best for us. When we disobey, instead of facing punishment, we look to Jesus, knowing that all of our punishment was poured on Him and we receive forgiveness from God.

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2. *Jesus tells His followers, "If you love me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15 ESV). Why do you think He said this?*

To obey God means to trust Him. In the garden, Adam and Eve didn't obey. They questioned God's love for them and whether they would be happiest if they obeyed all He said. When we sin, it's because we think there is something else that we need to make us happy outside of God. When we obey, we are saying to God, "I trust you. You love me and will make my heart happiest."

If you got the chance to go anywhere next year, where would you go?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "Ten Ways to Be Perfect"

The Wall

Joshua 3; 6*

Jericho towered over the land with its tall walls, but sat quiet as a mouse.

News had come that God had walled up the waters of the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross, just like the Red Sea! Inside Jericho, fear melted the hearts of those living there like hot wax on a candle. Outside the walls, Israel waited for words from their wise leader, Joshua. Joshua was strong and very courageous. It wasn't because he had bulging muscles or never quivered with fear. It was because his heart overflowed with trust in God. If God said He loved Israel, Joshua knew they were loved. If God promised them a land, then Joshua knew it would be theirs.

But now, as Joshua craned his neck to look at Jericho's walls, his eyebrows knitted together and he wondered, *What are we gonna do?* God's voice spoke into his thoughts, "I have given you Jericho." Joshua's eyebrows shot up and his eyes widened. *He's already given it to us! But wait, why are we still out here?* God continued, "Give seven of the priests loud horns. March behind them around Jericho, once a day for six days. And no talking!" Joshua scrunched his eyebrows and squinted his eyes at these odd instructions. *No spears? No war cries?* And God wasn't finished yet. "On day seven, march around the city seven times. After the last lap, tell the priests to sound those horns to the skies! Tell everyone to shout until their breath runs out! Those walls will crumble in a pile at your feet! Jericho is yours." Though

this battle plan was pretty strange, Joshua had already seen God do crazy things. He had watched God rip open the Red Sea. Joshua had munched on mysterious manna that floated down from Heaven. He drank crisp, cool water that gushed from a rock. Joshua reassured himself in his heart, *God loves us. Everything He does is best.* Joshua's big faith went to work doing all God had said. Sure enough, seven days later, Jericho was theirs.

A lot of God's plans seem odd: Passover, the Red Sea, Jericho. His plans ask people to trust that He is good and does what is best. His biggest and most important plan was the strangest of all. To rescue His people, Jesus would leave Heaven, putting His crown away for a short time, and become like us. He was God, but would cover Himself with skin and put on our weaknesses, because only then could He die in our place. God become man? God die on a cross? How crazy is that? This plan couldn't be carried out by Moses or Joshua. The One who would do this would need the biggest, strongest, most perfect faith of all. He would have to trust in God's love more than any person ever had. He would have to believe God's way was best more than any of us ever could. Only Jesus could carry out the greatest plan in all the world.



1. *How can we tell that Joshua trusted God's plan to conquer Jericho?*

We see that he did everything God told him to do. The actions that he did showed us the faith in his heart.

2. *How do we know that Jesus always trusted God perfectly?*

Jesus never sinned. In every action that Jesus did, He always obeyed God perfectly. The things He did showed us the perfect faith in His heart.

3. *What are some things that we could look for in our lives to show us that we are trusting God in our hearts?*

We can look at the things we are doing. The actions we are carrying out show us what our hearts are believing about God and all that He tells us to do.

What was the most difficult thing your family faced this year? How was God faithful during that time?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "The Warrior Leader"

The Shepherd King

1 Samuel 16*

Samuel's heart was sad as he walked toward Bethlehem.

He had hoped that Saul would be a good king, but Saul's actions quickly showed that his heart didn't trust God. Without faith he could never lead Israel well, so Samuel was going to find the new king God had chosen. A man named Jesse lived in Bethlehem. One of his sons would soon wear the crown. Samuel went to meet them, but when they arrived he nearly passed out! Jesse had so many sons! How would he know the right one?

Samuel examined them with his eyes. King Saul had been really tall and super strong. Samuel searched for a son that was built like an ox. Ah, Eliab. The oldest. *Easy peasy*, thought Samuel. *That's what kings look like!* God interrupted Samuel's thoughts. "I'm not like you, Samuel. I don't look at the outside of a person. I look where no one else can, the heart. Eliab doesn't have the right heart. I want My king to have a heart that trusts me." So Jesse's other sons came forward, one by one, to be inspected by Samuel. He tried to look past their handsome hair and strong shoulders and peer into their hearts, but Samuel didn't have those kind of eyes. Seven times, he heard God whisper, "That's not him." Finally, Jesse sent to the fields for his youngest son, David, who was tending the smelly sheep. David was a small boy with pink cheeks and bright eyes, and when he arrived, the excited voice of God told Samuel, "This is him! What a beautiful heart he has!" Samuel tilted his head and

eyed the boy, trying to imagine a crown on his head and a sword in his hand. All he saw was a shepherd boy in need of a bath. Still, he trusted that when God looked at David, He saw a king. Samuel lifted his horn, spilled oil on David's head, and said, "You will be king of Israel."

When Jesus came to this world, no earthly eyes could look at him and see a king. People's eyes could only see what he looked like on the outside, which wasn't anything special. In His human body, He was the poor son of a carpenter. His clothes weren't clean, He wasn't tall, He wasn't especially handsome, but when God looked at Jesus, He saw His heart, the heart of His precious Son that trusted completely in His Father. When God looked at Jesus, He saw His perfect King, a King that would rule for the good of all His people. And when God gives us faith to believe all He has promised, the way we see Jesus changes. We no longer see a sad, helpless man nailed to a cross. We see Jesus as He truly is, our beautiful and mighty King of all kings.



1. *If we make decisions about a person based on what our eyes can see, will that always tell us the truth about them?*

No, because the outside of a person and even the actions they are doing never tell us the whole story. Only God knows what is true about every single person because only He can see what is inside their hearts. He knows who believes in Him and who doesn't. He always knows if we are acting from faith or from sin.

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2. *Why didn't God make Jesus look like a king so that everyone would know who He was?*

Right now, we live by faith. We have to believe all the things that God says are true, and most of them we don't get to see right now with our eyes. God has told us Jesus is His Son, the King of all kings, and we believe it is true, but one day Jesus will return in glory and He will look like the conquering King that He is!

What is something your family plans to do this Christmas season that you have never done before?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: *The Teeny, Weenie...True King*

The Giant

1 Samuel 17:1-50*

A battle was brewing in the valley of Elah.

God's people were on one side, nervously eyeing the Philistines opposite them. David came running up to the valley, looking for his brothers. He was wiggling his way through soldiers when a voice thundered in his ears. A giant Philistine, as big as a bear, had stepped forward. "I am Goliath!" he roared. "I am the fighter for the Philistines. Send out a fighter, Israel! One man! If I beat him, you become our slaves!" A cheer rose from the Philistines while groans rumbled through the Israelites. David stared at Goliath, thinking, *How dare he! This is God's army! He will not get away with this.*

David found King Saul and said, "I will be the one man to fight for Israel!" Saul examined young David and snickered. "Goliath is an enormous warrior! You're a kid!" David knew this, but this wasn't the first time David had faced a scary enemy. "Once, I was with the sheep, and a bellowing bear came to steal one for dinner. God helped me kill the bear. Another time, a lurking lion crept up on my herd. Again, God helped me. I killed the lion. Today, I will face Goliath. God will help me, like He always does. I will kill the giant." So David went to face Goliath, one person fighting for all the people of Israel. Goliath wore a mean smile on his face. "Ha! You? Will you hit me with sticks? Come here! I will crush you!" David didn't shake at these rude words but shouted, "This battle is God's, and you are finished!" David slung his smooth stone, and

it whizzed like a rocket through the air. It sunk deep into the forehead of the laughing Goliath, and he slumped to the ground like a sack of potatoes. David had killed Goliath.

There's another enemy of God's people so giant he makes Goliath seem like a little-bitty ant. You remember our old enemy from the garden, don't you? Satan stands screaming to God about how bad we are. He reminds God of all the ways we have sinned. "Your people are so bad! They don't ever obey You! They deserve to die and be *my* slaves!" With shaking hearts, we stand there, knowing all that Satan says is true. Every single sin that he reminds us of, we did. Every single punishment he says we deserve, we do. Our only hope is for God to give us a champion like David. One man who could smash our enemy. And God has given us a champion! To beat Satan, Jesus had to take away his power over us. He went to the cross and took our bad things as His own. When He died, all of those horrible things died, too. Satan was crushed. He had nothing left to say to God about our sin because Jesus washed it all away.



1. *Why do you think God would use small, young David and his little slingshot to kill such a giant warrior?*

When God uses things that look weak to the world, it shows how powerful He really is. He likes to use what seems small or maybe even silly to our eyes because the result is that His power is seen clearly, and He is glorified.

2. *You are a kid, right? You are probably small in the eyes of the world. Are there things you can think of that you would want to ask God to do through you so that His power could be seen?*

If this is difficult for your child to answer, ask some leading questions, like, “What are some broken or bad things that you see happening in our neighborhood/city/world?” Pray with your child to ask that God would use them to do mighty things and that His power would be seen through them.

What is one of your favorite games to play right now?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: *The Young Hero And The Horrible Giant*

The Healing

2 Kings 5*

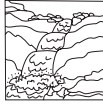
Naaman, the mighty soldier of Aram, looked sadly out his window.

You would think Naaman would be the happiest guy around. He was the king's man, a hero to the people, and they all thought, *Naaman is awesome!* There was this one thing—Naaman had leprosy. He looked down at his arm and noticed an oozing cut but didn't feel any pain. That's how leprosy works. Inside Naaman, things were broken. Instead of telling his brain, "Hey, you're hurt! Put some medicine and a band-aid on that!" there was only silence. Naaman's skin was full of bruises, cuts, and other ouchies, but he couldn't feel them. Those hurts would slowly grow until his flesh would rot and his fingers or toes would fall off.

More than anything Naaman wanted to be free of his leprosy, but he was out of ideas. There just wasn't any hope until, one day, a slave girl living in his house had an idea. She said, "Go to Israel and see the prophet of God. He will heal you." Naaman was ready to try anything, so he went. Elisha the prophet saw him and said, "Go wash in the Jordan River if you want to be clean." What?! Just wash in the river? That made Naaman angry. After travelling so far, he wanted the prophet to shout to God or wave his hands in an abracadabra way, but Elisha just said wash. Maybe it seemed like a simple order, but it was hard to obey. Naaman would have to make his proud heart low. He would have to stop commanding and instead obey a command. For Naaman to do these

things, it would take a miracle in his heart. "Fine!" Naaman finally shouted. "I'll wash in this stinky river!" He lowered his heart, obeyed Elisha's command, and washed. As he rose from the water, his skin gleamed beautifully in the sun. Inside Naaman, God fixed the broken parts. Outside of Naaman, everyone could see the changes.

Our sin is a lot like leprosy. It's hidden inside where our eyes can't see but it shows up on our outsides—when we don't listen to God, when we are mean to our siblings, or when we steal or lie. Like leprosy, sin wants to kill us. It doesn't want us to feel anything as it slowly rots our hearts. We may try to fix it on our own, to heal ourselves, but we can't. Only Jesus could. "Come, I will wash you and make you clean," He says. It seems simple, like it would be an easy thing to obey, but to come to Jesus takes a miracle. It means our high and mighty hearts have to come down low. It means we have to stop being in charge of ourselves and instead obey all that God says. When we do, God cleans the brokenness inside of us and on the outside, we shine and begin to look like Jesus.



1. *Pride in our hearts often says to us, “I can do this all by myself—I don’t need God.” Has there ever been a time that your heart has said something like that to you?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

2. *Why do you think pride is the opposite of trusting in Jesus?*

Pride says, *I can do it myself!* Trusting in Jesus means we realize that we could not pay for our sin, that we couldn’t do it ourselves, and that we can only be right with God because Jesus did everything for us.

Who is someone you want to pray for next year? What do you want to pray for them?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "The Little Servant Girl And The Proud General"

The Prophecies

Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-12*

Before you were born, before the world was made, God had a plan.

He would send His Son, Jesus, to save His people and become the treasure of their hearts, but it was going to be a really long time before He came. God looked at His Israelites that He specially loved. When Jesus arrived, He didn't want them to be surprised or confused. God wanted them to be ready, but how?

Some people had a special job God had given them. They were called prophets. Now prophets had to have open and ready ears tuned into God's words. Then they used their mouths and spoke whatever God had told them, like they were God's mouth speaking to the world. Often, God would tell His prophets what would happen in the future, and they would tell everyone, "Hey! God said get ready for this!" Of all the secrets God would whisper to His prophets, He most loved giving them hints about what His Son would be like.

Isaiah was one of God's prophets, and he got to hear God talk about Jesus a lot! Isaiah would shout, "Get ready! A Son is going to come. He won't be a very handsome guy. His life won't look very pretty, either. There will be a lot of pain for Him, and in the end, a very sad, but special, death." God was giving the Israelites all these clues to lead them to His treasure. If they had these prophecies with them, then they could be on the lookout. When Jesus arrived, they

could look at their checklist: is He going to His death quietly? Yes. Check. Is He being pierced on the cross? Yes. Check. When all the clues matched up with the person, they would know—it's Him! The Rescuer is here! But sadly no one paid attention to the hints God gave. When Jesus came, they didn't know. When He did everything God said He would, they didn't realize.

When Jesus came to earth, He reminded people of the prophecies. He said, "I am the One that Isaiah was telling everyone about. Do you remember? He said to get ready for me." But even when He pointed to each clue, people ignored Him. Their eyes were blind to the treasure that God had given them. God was showing us that even if we have every single clue, even if we know all the prophecies backward and forward, without His help we could never see that they all point to Jesus. We would be blind, we would be deaf, and our hearts would not treasure Jesus, but God knew that. Because He knew that, He whispered other promises to other prophets. He said He would give His children new hearts to believe, new eyes to see, and new ears to hear. God told us what the future would hold—all of His children treasuring Jesus as the One who was promised to come.



1. *Why is it important to us that the prophecies God gave through His prophets came true?*

It grows our trust in God and His promises. There are many more promises that haven't been fulfilled, like that Jesus will return and there will be a new Heaven and a new earth. When we read these promises, we can look back on God's faithfulness to do all that He said He would do, and our hope in the promises of what is coming can grow.

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2. *Any time you share the good news about Jesus—that He was the Son of God, that He came to earth and died on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose three days later—why is it important to pray?*

We can share all the facts about Jesus, point to all the prophecies, and explain what they mean, but people can hear all of that and still not believe in Jesus. We ask God to give the person a heart to believe all these things about Jesus are true and that they need Jesus to rescue them.

What is your favorite
book right now?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "Operation 'No More Tears!'"

The Protector

Daniel 6*

Daniel was one of God's people, but he was living in a strange place where hardly anyone knew God.

Daniel served King Darius and was one of his best workers. Though he was usually happy to serve the king, today was a sad day. A new law declared people could only pray to King Darius for the next month, and that wasn't the worst part. If anyone prayed to another god, they'd become food for lions! *We shouldn't pray to anyone but God*, thought Daniel. *Will I obey God, even if it means I might die?* Daniel slowly walked to his usual spot, bent his tired knees, bowed his head, and began to pray. Some of the king's servants were waiting outside. They didn't like Daniel very much and were looking for a reason to tattle on him. Skipping up the palace steps, they sang out, "King Darius! Daniel broke your law! Throw him to the lions!"

The king walked Daniel down to the lions' den with slumped shoulders and said, "Daniel, I never wanted this for you. I hope your God will protect you." The ferocious beasts growled as Daniel stepped inside. *God, even if I die, I trust You*. Daniel's heart leapt wildly as the lions licked their lips, getting ready for their dinner. One lion stepped forward to attack. Daniel sucked in his breath and closed his eyes, waiting to feel the crunch of teeth. But it never came. Daniel opened his eyes and his jaw dropped. An angel of the Lord was stopping the lions! *God! You're protecting me!* he thought. Daniel slowly sat down with his back against the

cold, hard wall. All night long, he said thank you to God while watching the angel hold the lions' mouths closed. Hours later, there was pounding on the stone door and King Darius cried out, "Daniel?! Did your God save you?" Daniel shouted back, "He did! The lions wanted to eat me, but an angel muzzled their man-eating mouths!" Daniel came out of the lions' home not torn to shreds but in one perfect piece. The king and Daniel hugged and laughed. King Darius quickly passed a new law that said, "Worship the God of Daniel! He's the true God!"

Imagine asking yourself, *Do I disobey God and stay safe, or do I obey and get thrown to the lions?* What do you think you would do? There was a night that Jesus had to make a decision like this. He was in a garden, praying to God. He bowed low to the ground with tears streaming down His face, thinking, *Do I obey God?* Except for Him, it wasn't, *Maybe I'll die*. It was certain. Not a quick death like being thrown to lions, but a slow, painful, and humiliating death on a cross. Jesus chose to obey, knowing that if He did, He would have to die. For us to be protected, He had to be torn to shreds. It was the only way that He could rescue all of God's people and we could forever cry out, "Worship God! He is the true God!"



1. *If God knew He was going to send an angel to stop the lions' mouths, why did He let Daniel be put in the lions' den in the first place?*

Daniel's faith was grown because he had to trust God in a very hard situation. God's name was made great because everyone saw that He saved Daniel from a sure death.

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2. *Daniel decided to obey God even though people around him didn't worship God and obeying was the harder choice. Have you ever had to make a decision to obey God when it was hard? What was that like? If not, what do you think you would do?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

How have you seen God provide for your family this year?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "Daniel And The Scary Sleepover"

The Messenger

Jonah 1-4*

God looked at Nineveh and sighed.

It was a bad place filled with bad people doing bad things. Though people there didn't love God, He still loved them. God decided to send a messenger to Nineveh. God's eyes peered into Israel and found His messenger, Jonah. God had given Jonah messages before, but this one surprised him. "Jonah, My heart is sad over Nineveh. Go there, tell them I love them and I want them to turn away from all the bad things." *Nineveh?* Jonah thought. He couldn't believe his ears! *Israel's biggest enemy?* It made Jonah's heart angry that God wouldn't just smash and destroy them, so instead of carrying God's warning to them, Jonah got on a boat that was sailing far away. *Maybe if I don't deliver the message, the people won't apologize, and then God will crush them!* But poor Jonah was a fool. Whether he ran away to the ocean or the North Pole or the moon, God's plan wouldn't fail.

Waves pounded against the boat as the storm swirled around it. Screaming sailors scrambled around, dumping boxes overboard, trying to save themselves. Jonah knew the storm was for him. God wouldn't let him run away. He told the sailors to throw him into the sea. They picked him up, prayed to God, and dumped Jonah overboard. Immediately, the wind stopped raging and the waves sat still. In the thick churning waters, Jonah gasped and cried out for God to rescue him. God heard him and pointed to a giant fish. "You, go get Jonah." The fish obeyed its

Master and swallowed Jonah whole. Gulp! For three days, Jonah waited in the belly of the fish until finally being coughed up onto a beach. Again, God whispered to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh."

Jonah walked slowly down the streets of the city, shouting the words God had said. "God loves you! He wants you to turn away from all the bad things, or He will destroy this place! Tell Him you're sorry!" All the people of Nineveh bowed their heads, fell to their knees, and cried out to God for forgiveness. God heard their apologies and smiled. He didn't destroy them.

Jonah got the attention of an entire city. They turned to God, said they were sorry, and turned away from their bad things. What messenger would ever be able to get people from every city to turn to God? God had a very special messenger for this task—His very own Son, Jesus. Jesus wasn't angry at God for trying to rescue His enemies. Jesus didn't try to run away. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and came out to tell the people of Nineveh God's message, Jesus went into a deeper and darker place called death for three days. When He came out, He gave God's greatest message to the whole world. "I died so you can live. Turn to God. Say you're sorry. Be rescued!"



1. *It was hard for Jonah to give God's message to his enemies. Think about someone who you don't get along with very well. Would it be hard for you to tell them that God loved them and wanted them to be rescued?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

2. *Why does the Bible say that we are God's enemies? What did Jesus do for His enemies?*

Because of the sin that is in the heart of every person, we are born without love for God. We don't want to listen to His words or obey anything He has to say. We constantly fight against His plans and His ways for our lives. The Bible tells us that while we were God's enemies, Jesus came and died for us.

What is one of your favorite Christmas traditions?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "God's Messenger"

The History

Nehemiah 8–10*

For many years, God's people had been living in a strange land.

Because they disobeyed God's rules, God let the Babylonians capture them. Even in Babylon, God's eyes watched His special people, and after a while, He let His people come back home. Everyone was happy to return, but something sad had happened while they were away—they forgot how to worship God. God didn't want them stuck in forgetfulness, so He sent Ezra to help them remember.

Ezra blew the dust off the heavy book of God's laws and shouted to the crowd of people, "Let's remember how God has told us to live!" Ears leaned in as Ezra started reading. As the people listened, hearts sank at hearing how much they had disobeyed God. Smiles turned to frowns and tears began to drop. Ezra gently spoke, "God knows you haven't been obeying. Giving you these rules again shows how much He loves you! Be happy!" The people dried their eyes and wiped their noses. God still loved them?! A happy laugh sounded, followed quickly by more, and then clapping and hurras! Yummy food was shared as they celebrated God's great love. Their parties lasted many days until Ezra gathered them to say a few more things.

He said, "Out of all the earth, God picked Abraham and promised him a special forever home. Many years later, God invaded Egypt and rescued us from Pharaoh. Even after

all this, we chose to disobey Him. Still, He loved us! For forty years, He cared for us in the wilderness and brought us to this amazing home, but again we ignored Him and were taken as prisoners to Babylon. Even there, God didn't give up on us! He won't stop loving us!" Hearts nearly burst with happiness as Ezra told story after story of how God chased after His rule-breaking people with His powerful love. Remembering all these things, the people wanted to promise God that they would follow His rules. In their hearts, they knew they would probably fail again. Yet they weren't placing their big hopes in themselves but in their God and His forever love.

Do you ever fail to obey God? Do you look at His rules and think, *Geez, I broke another one!* What if we fail a hundred times? Or ten-thousand times? Will He still love us? Yes! During the time of Ezra, God's people looked at His rules and remembered that He loved them, but now something better than God's law has come. We look at Jesus, God's Word to us, for with His life He told us how to worship God. Jesus is the perfect worshiper who died for our failures and rose so that He could make our worship perfect, too. When we break God's rules and our hearts become sad, we can look at Jesus, trust in Him, and remember that God hasn't given up on us. He loves us with an unstoppable love. That's a reason to celebrate!



1. *Our hearts often quickly forget all the ways that God wants us to worship Him. What are some ways that God helps us remember?*

God has given us the Bible, His Word. God puts His Holy Spirit in the heart of every person who trusts in Jesus, and the Holy Spirit reminds us what Jesus said to us. God also puts other people around us who remind us.

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2. *Is it good for us to feel sad or guilty about our sin?*

When we feel sad or guilty about our sin, it is God's way of showing us how we are disobeying the good rules that He has given us. However, because we believe in Jesus, it isn't good if we stay feeling sad or guilty about our sin. Jesus paid for all of it on the cross so that we could tell God we are sorry, turn away from our sin, and praise Him!

How do you want to serve God
in a new way next year?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "Get Ready!"

The Genealogy

Matthew 1:1-17

It had been 400 years since God had talked to His people.

He had spoken through Malachi, and then nothing but silence. God's people kept their ears open, hoping to hear His voice, but God had zipped His lips and no more words came. *Maybe He got tired of us breaking His rules,* they thought. *Maybe He doesn't want to rescue us anymore.* Doubts crept in, but the people would fight these thoughts by telling each other, "God made us big, tough, unbreakable promises! He won't forget them!" During all God's silence, the people clung to those promises from long ago because without them, what hope did they have? God couldn't break His promises, could He? Does that sound like something God would do?

While God wasn't speaking any words to His people, He hadn't forgotten them or His promises. God *always* remembers. In the quiet, God was actually preparing for the first Christmas. Remember, God had picked Abraham a long, long time ago and told him, "Abraham, many years from now, I'm going to use your special family to bring My Rescuer into the world." The chosen family continued through Abraham's son, Isaac, and Isaac's son, Jacob. The family tree grew to include names like David, Solomon, and Josiah. So during these years when God's mouth was silent, His hands were at work carving this family tree. No prophets received messages from God, but mommies and daddies still had babies, and those babies grew up and got married and became mommies and daddies to more ba-

bies, and each branch of the family tree was getting closer to a man named Joseph and a woman named Mary. Each time a person in this special family tree was born, it was like God was shouting from the rooftops, "I haven't forgotten My promises! I love you! Get ready! The Rescuer is coming!" The first Christmas was almost here.

Even now, we have some promises from God that He made long ago. When Jesus went up into Heaven after He rose from the dead, God said that one day He would send His Son back a second time. We've been waiting so many years for this to happen! Our hearts may want to think, *Hmmm, did God forget? He promised Jesus would come again, but I sure don't see Him!* When worries creep in, we can peek over our shoulder back into the garden of Eden and remember God promised He would send someone to crush the serpent's head. We can point to Abraham and remind ourselves that God promised His Son would come through his family tree. Lastly, we can celebrate Christmas, remembering that Jesus came. With His birth, Jesus answered, "Yes!" to the promise that God made to Abraham. With Jesus's death, God said, "Yes!" and smashed Satan's skull. Jesus is God's "Yes!" to all His promises. So get ready, look carefully with your eyes, and listen closely with your ears, because Jesus is coming back!



1. *Sometimes we can get confused about what things God has actually promised us. How can we know exactly the things that God has said He will do?*

We look in the Bible. His promises are written down for us and the words He has given us in His Bible are the ones we can trust.

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2. *During the years that God's people had to wait for Jesus to be born, God was doing important work to get ready for Him. If we are waiting a long time for Jesus to come again, what can we trust God is doing?*

God is doing important work to get everything ready for His Son to come back. He is building the family tree of all His sons and daughters, and Jesus will come back when the family tree is complete.

What is one holiday tradition you started this year that you hope to continue in the future?

John the Baptist

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

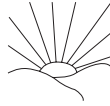
The world didn't know it, but our King was about to come. Shouldn't a kingdom get ready? Shouldn't someone tell everyone important news like this? Don't worry. God thought so, too. Announcing the King was a special job, and God needed a special messenger. His eyes roamed across the earth and settled on a man and woman, the parents He had chosen long ago to have a son named John. John would be His special messenger to share the news: the King is coming!

God had always known that Zacharias and Elizabeth would be John's mommy and daddy. These two people loved God a lot, but they were old and childless, even though they had prayed for kids year after year. Their hearts were sad and they wished their house wasn't so empty. But God had waited all this time because He wanted to give them their special child at the perfect time, right before He would give the world His Son.

Zacharias walked up to the temple to give an offering to the Lord. Once inside, he quietly stepped up to the altar and nearly jumped out of his robe! An angel was standing there! "Zacharias!" Gabriel said gleefully. "God has heard your prayers. Your wife will have a baby and he will be special. Your son, John, will tell people to get ready because the King is coming!" Zacharias shook his head. "Surely not. My wife—she's old! I'm old! How can we have a baby now?" Gabriel smiled a sad smile. "You can because God said so, and His words are always true. Be-

cause you did not trust me, your lips will be shut tight. You won't speak until your son is born." For nine long months, Zacharias waited in silence. As he watched his wife's belly grow, the hope in his heart grew as well. Finally, the day came that a screaming baby boy entered the world. Zacharias held his precious son and his mouth burst open with praise. "This is my son John! He will get everyone ready! The King is coming!"

Imagine being Zacharias, holding this great secret inside of you. Imagine looking at your family members, at your friends, at the strangers you passed on the street, and not being able to speak the most exciting thing you had ever known. What if you knew that the King of the world was coming, but you couldn't say it? What if you had a son that would be born and would get everyone ready, but you couldn't shout it to the skies? That must have been the hardest secret that anyone ever had to keep, but you and I don't have to be silent about God's Son. God says to us, "Go! Tell the world! Tell everyone in every place about My Son Jesus!" Every day, our mouths can burst open with praise to our mommies and daddies, sisters and brothers, neighbors, friends, and strangers. "Jesus has come! He is King!"



1. *Today we aren't telling people that Jesus is coming the first time but that He is coming back. How can we tell people to "get ready" for this?*

Jesus said, to tell God that we have sinned against Him and are sorry for our sins. We trust that Jesus died to pay the full price for our sins and rose from the dead. We wait with great hope for Him to come back.

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2. *God has said that He wants His people to go to the ends of the earth to tell people about Jesus. Who do you think you might be able to tell about Jesus, our King?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

If Jesus was sitting right here and you could ask Him anything, what would you ask Him?

The Savior

Luke 1:26-38

In the small town of Nazareth, Mary gazed at the night sky ablaze with a thousand stars.

Does God see me from way up there? she wondered. Her life seemed like a small one, not big or special. Mary imagined what her life would be like. She would soon be married to a carpenter named Joseph, who had almost finished building their new home. Their lives would probably fill up with normal things: Joseph crafting things from wood, Mary caring for their home and raising children. Mary didn't know that God's eyes were fixed on her, His daughter, whom He had chosen long ago for a spectacular spot in the great story He was writing.

Mary was out walking a few days later when the angel Gabriel appeared in her path. "Mary!" Gabriel shouted aloud. "God loves you! He has picked you for a super important job. His Son is coming soon. He will be your baby. You will be His mommy." "What?!" questioned Mary. "I'm going to have a baby? I'm not married yet!" A river of fears ran through Mary's heart. This news, if it was true, would turn her life upside down. In her town it was a bad thing for a girl without a husband to have a baby. It was possible that she would be kicked out of her family or put to death, but God said His Son was coming, and He had chosen her to be the mommy. *This isn't the story I would have dreamed for myself*, Mary thought, *but do I trust that God is a better dreamer than I am?* It seemed impossible that Mary would be the mom to the King of the world. It seemed

impossible that anyone would ever believe what Gabriel was telling her. The angel smiled gently and spoke into the doubts clouding her head. "Nothing is impossible with God." With those words, Mary's heart felt lighter and her hope grew stronger. *I belong to the Lord. Whatever He wants me to do, I will do*, she thought. Then she smiled, too.

When Jesus came into Mary's world, He made her ordinary life into something extraordinary. Everything she had planned was suddenly changed. Everything normal was gone, but what may have looked like a disaster to other people was actually God writing an amazing story into Mary's life. Her world was going to be filled with knowing and loving Jesus. The same is true for us. When Jesus comes into our hearts, He makes our ordinary lives extraordinary. The things He wants us to do may look strange or silly to other people. But we trust that God is actually doing something bigger and better than we could have dreamed for ourselves. When we believe that knowing and loving Jesus is better than anything else, we can say along with Mary, "I belong to the Lord. Whatever He wants me to do, I will do."



1. *What are some things that Jesus says for us to do that might seem strange or silly to others?*

He tells us to think of others as more important than ourselves. He tells us to forgive, even if our feelings have been hurt very badly. He tells us to give our time and money to the church. He tells us to obey our moms and dads. All our friends may not understand these things, but God says they are best.

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2. *What things do you hope will happen in your life? How would you feel if God told you that your life would be different from what you want it to be?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

What is something new you learned to do this year?

Mary's Song

Luke 1:46-56

Mary walked up to the house of her cousin Elizabeth.

The angel Gabriel had told her that Elizabeth was going to have a baby after many years of waiting! Mary was so excited to see her, but also couldn't help but think, *Will she believe me when I tell her the news about my baby?*

Mary wondered as she opened the door to her cousin's house and stepped inside. "Elizabeth? Hello!" said Mary. The little ears on little baby John, growing inside Elizabeth's belly, heard Mary's words and John jumped with joy! Elizabeth's bright eyes shone as the excited baby bounced around in her belly. She laughed with glee and told Mary, "You are the mommy of my Lord!"

Mary's face glowed and she gently laid her hand across her own belly. The King of the world was growing inside of a poor, unimportant girl like her. God could have chosen anyone to be the mommy of Jesus. He could have picked a rich princess with ringlets of gold, clothed in a plush, poofy dress, with a palace of servants to help care for the baby King. He could have chosen the wife of a priest to take Jesus to serve in the temple each day. God could have chosen anyone, but He chose Mary. At this thought, a song stirred inside her heart.

It would be the kind of song God's people had always sung. It was like the song of the Israelites when God delivered them from Pharaoh's mighty army at the Red Sea. Though they were small and weak, their

mighty God had flung Egypt's horses and riders into the sea. It was the kind of song that young David sang of His powerful God, who used a smelly shepherd boy like him to slay a giant and rule a kingdom. The song growing in Mary was a song like this. She wasn't sad or mad that she needed God so much. Mary was happy as her voice sang about her God, how He was big and strong and mighty to save and how she was small and weak and needed Him.

The song that this world tells you to sing is one that says, "I am great! I am important! I am popular!" It is a song that shows that you can do everything and don't need any help from anyone, but God has always wanted His people to sing a different song. When you belong to God, you see that you were lost and lonely, unable to lift a finger to save yourself, and God, looking down at you, completely helpless, sent His Son. Jesus has done everything to save us. When our hearts see the gift God has given us in Jesus, a song rises up inside of us, just like in Mary. We open our mouths and out tumble unending words of praise to our God who is mighty to save!



1. *Why is it important that we understand that Jesus did everything needed to save us?*

Since He did everything, He gets *all* the praise. If we did any of the work to pay for our sin, then we would need to sing a little song of praise to ourselves. But if we did nothing, then He gets all the glory for rescuing us!

2. *When you look at your life, maybe it seems like you are just a kid who can't do very much. What is God showing us by doing something big through someone like Mary?*

He is showing us that He can use *anyone* to do His great work. We don't have to be big or important to be used by God.

What is one thing you want God to do in your life next year?

The Stable

Luke 2:1-7*

Joseph kicked a rock with his dust-covered sandal.

He and Mary were slowly plodding down the long road from Nazareth to Bethlehem. He glanced at his pregnant wife and saw her eyes squeeze tight in pain as she grasped her belly. It was swollen big like a balloon, ready to pop. Joseph sighed. *Why did Caesar pick now to count everyone? Why do we need to be in Bethlehem now? The baby could come any day.* Joseph closed his eyes, trying to imagine the perfect spot for this baby to be born. *Maybe a family member in Bethlehem has an extra room? Maybe there's a nice inn that will have a comfortable bed and hot water? This is God's own Son! Surely God wants Him to be born somewhere special.* Joseph was right. God did have a special place in mind, but it was very different than what Joseph imagined.

A few days later, a wrinkly, wriggly Jesus was born into the world. Of all the kings who had lived, He was the greatest. Of all the people who had walked the earth, He alone was perfect, but He would start His life in the strangest way you or I could imagine. His birth didn't take place in a palace, or even a house, but in an old, stinky stable filled with baas and moos and cockadoodle-dooos. Jesus's little body wasn't wrapped up with soft satin blankets but with simple strips of cloth swaddled tightly around him. He wasn't laid in a crib of gold that sparkled with bright gems but in a well-worn manger filled with bits of straw and hay that the animals hadn't eaten during dinner. Jesus had

left the highest throne in the universe to be born into the lowliest of all places.

We often think that to get to God, we have to go up to Him. We think that we have to work hard, obey our mommies and daddies perfectly, and follow every rule without messing up. Then maybe, if we get everything right, we can climb and claw our way up to Him. But God wanted to show us that for us to come to Him, it was never about us going up to Him. It was about Him coming down to us. The only way we could be with Jesus forever was if He came and got us. We couldn't keep all the rules. Jesus had to come down and keep them for us.

Just think how tough this had to be for Jesus! Everything had been so perfect in Heaven. Jesus sat right next to His Daddy on a throne that ruled over every other throne. He had all the riches and crowns and majesty that He deserved as King of all kings. Coming down meant that He would have to leave all of it, give it all up for us, all so that He could come get us. And He did! In the smallest and weakest of ways, He came down to us because He knew we could never make it up to Him.



1. *Think about your home, your family, and the things that are special to you. How hard would it be for you to give those up? How do you think it felt for Jesus to give up things that were special to Him to become a human and live in our world?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

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2. *Why is it important that Jesus, who is God, became a human?*

Only as a human, like us, with all of our weaknesses but still without sin, could Jesus die in our place (Philippians 2:5-8). Also, this helps us know that whatever hard, sad, or scary things we face in this world, Jesus knows how we feel. We can pray to Him, knowing that He understands (Hebrews 4:15-16).

What has been your favorite thing to wear during this Christmas season?

* Corresponding *Jesus Storybook Bible* story: "He's Here!"

The Good News

Luke 2:8-20*

One night long ago, an angel, overcome with great excitement, whooshed down into a huddle of shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem.

He looked into the eyes of these tired, raggedy men, and his face glowed with warmth. The shepherds stared at the glowing angel with knees knocking and teeth chattering. Looking at them with burning but gentle eyes, the angel grinned and said, “Ah, you don’t need to be afraid! I have really good news. In Bethlehem, there is a baby that was born tonight. But it isn’t just any baby. It’s Him! The One that God promised to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to David. The Rescuer that God promised is here! He is God’s gift to you, to everyone! Hurry, go see Him! Look for a baby in a manger, wrapped up in swaddling cloths!” The shepherds looked at each other in surprise and then shock as they found themselves surrounded by a choir of angels shouting in song, “Glory to God in the highest!” Then, just as suddenly, the voices were silent. The angels were gone. All was quiet. The shepherds glanced at each other, smiles spreading across their faces. They threw down their staffs, left their sheep, and went sprinting through the streets of the town, searching for God’s gift. They came to an old stable. Inside, wrapped up like a gift, was their King. Christmas had come! God was with them!

While most people were inside their homes snuggled up with their families in soft blankets, those shepherds had been outside, shivering in the cold. Their sheep couldn’t

be left alone or they would wander off, fall in a ditch, or be snatched away as a wolf’s supper, so the shepherds stayed with their sheep, softly stroking their heads and speaking in gentle tones. These smelly, simple shepherds were not special. They weren’t invited to celebrations. They never received special gifts from anyone. They sat out among their herds, forgotten and ignored, until this night. God had not forgotten the shepherds on the hill. The gift that He had always wanted to give to the world was finally here, and God invited these shepherds to celebrate His newborn Son, His most special gift.

Did you know that in the Bible, God calls us “sheep” and He calls Jesus the “Great Shepherd”? We were the lost sheep that wandered off from God’s care. We wandered off thinking we knew better, that we knew where the best water and the best grass to lay in was. Instead of finding what was good, we fell into the ditch and were attacked by enemies. Then Jesus, the Great Shepherd, came looking for us, the lost sheep that He loved so much. Jesus is God’s special gift to those who are in need of a Shepherd. He invites everyone who feels alone and forgotten, broken, and smelly to come to Him. Jesus is the gift that God always wanted to give to His people. He is the reason to celebrate Christmas every single day. Jesus is with us always!



1. *Sometimes we see people who don't look special in our eyes. But how do you think they look in God's eyes? How should we treat people God thinks are special?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

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2. *How does it feel to know that Jesus is with you wherever you go?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

Do you have any special plans for Christmas Eve or Christmas this year?

* Corresponding Jesus Storybook Bible story: "The Light of The Whole World"

Merry Christmas!

John 3:16

Do you remember the story we started with? In the beginning, God spoke into an empty blank space and created shining, silvery stars and a scorching sun. He built bulky-brown buffalo, lounging-lime lizards, and fast-flying falcons. He crafted a land covered with tall, trembling trees and fields of lilacs, daisies, and bluebonnets. Water ran cool and crisp to drink. This whole perfect world God made to give as a gift to His favorite creation, people. Adam and Eve walked through the garden of Eden with eyes full of wonder at the world their Father had made for them to share with Him. In every petal, every blade of grass, every squawk, every drip-drop, God was saying to His children, “I love you! This world tells you about Me. I will meet with you here. It is My gift to you.” But there was one tree that God said not to eat from, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And in telling them not to eat that tree’s fruit, God was still saying, “I love you,” but with this rule, God was also asking Adam and Eve a question: “Do you trust me? Do you trust that I love you and haven’t kept one good thing from you?”

Adam and Eve looked around at the beautiful world their Father had given them. They thought about how He walked with them there during the cool weather. They listened to His whisper through the leaves of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “I love you. You can trust Me.” But then Satan slithered up to this tree and whispered his questioning lies to Eve. “Does God really

love you? Wouldn’t He have given you *everything* if He really loved you? Can you trust Him?” The questions that Satan asked sank deep in their hearts. Adam and Eve answered those questions by biting into the fruit that God had told them not to eat. From that moment on, sin sliced down deep into their hearts, and ours as well, where it whispers those same old questions once again: “Does God really love you? Can you trust Him?”

There was yet one more gift that God had always planned to give. God waited until that very first Christmas to give His greatest gift. This gift would be the final answer to that lying question our hearts have been asking since we were born. *Does God love me? Can I really trust Him?* Jesus, God’s only Son, is His answer. He came to cry out on the cross with painful shrieks, “I do love you!” And with His Son—His biggest show of His love for us—God is shouting, “Yes! Trust Me!” If He didn’t hold back His own Son from us, then surely He will not hold back anything that would be good for us. Yes, He loves us! Yes, we can trust Him!



1. *John 3:16 tells us God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son. He says if we believe in Him, if we trust in Him, that we have everlasting life. What does it mean to “believe” in His only Son?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

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2. *Is there anyone who comes to your mind that needs to hear the great message of Christmas, that God has given us the greatest gift we could ever hope to receive?*

Discuss and help your child apply this truth to his or her own life.

What was your favorite thing about today?

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