The
Jesse Tree

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How to use your Jesse Tree

On the following pages are sample schedules for completing the Jesse Tree devotions during the Advent Season. May your family be blessed as you use the Jesse Tree to prepare your hearts for the celebration of the birthday of our King!

Option One: If you would like to read one devotion a day during Advent with the final one being on Christmas Day, then each year you should start on November 26th.

Option Two: If you would like to start on December 1st each year, you will complete one devotion on most days with two devotions on the five specified days.

Option Three: Fill in dates as desired. You can modify this to begin devotions on the first Sunday of Advent, the Saturday following Thanksgiving or create your own unique schedule for your family.
Jesse Tree Devotion Schedule

November 26th – December 25th

Nov 26 - The Jesse Tree
Nov 27 - Creation
Nov 28 - Adam & Eve
Nov 29 - Noah
Nov 30 - Abraham & Sarah
Dec 1 - Isaac
Dec 2 - Jacob
Dec 3 - Joseph
Dec 4 - Moses
Dec 5 - Rahab
Dec 6 - Ruth
Dec 7 - Samuel
Dec 8 - David
Dec 9 - Solomon
Dec 10 - Prophecy
Dec 11 - Elijah
Dec 12 - Jonah
Dec 13 - Isaiah
Dec 14 - Jeremiah
Dec 15 - Daniel
Dec 16 - Nehemiah
Dec 17 - Zechariah & Elizabeth
Dec 18 - Angels
Dec 19 - Mary
Dec 20 - Joseph
Dec 21 - John the Baptist
Dec 22 - Shepherds
Dec 23 - The Star
Dec 24 - Jesus' Birth
Dec 25 - Chi Rho
Jesse Tree Devotion Schedule

December 1st - December 25th

Dec 1 - The Jesse Tree
Dec 2 - Creation
  - Adam & Eve
Dec 3 - Noah
Dec 4 - Abraham & Sarah
  - Isaac
Dec 5 - Jacob
Dec 6 - Joseph
Dec 7 - Moses
Dec 8 - Rahab
Dec 9 - Ruth
Dec 10 - Samuel
Dec 11 - David
Dec 12 - Solomon
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- John the Baptist
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- Jesus' Birth
  - Chi Rho
The Jesse Tree
Symbol: Stump (Banner)

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a
Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him...”

Isaiah 11:1-2a

Scripture: Isaiah 11: 1-2

We are about to hear a story, a story as old as time—a story about how much God loves his children and how he has always had a plan for everything. It’s a story about how he would rescue his children and some of the people who were part of his plan. It is also a story about God’s promises. One such promise was made to King David, the youngest of Jesse’s sons—that David’s kingdom would last forever and that through him and his family, God would save his people. About 200 years after David died and the people had forgotten this promise, one of God’s servants, Isaiah reminded the people of God’s promise to David. He told them that from the stump of Jesse, there would be a shoot, a new Branch, and that he would have the Spirit of the Lord. Have you ever seen a stump that was left after a tree or a bush was cut down? What happens if the stump is not removed? Even though it looks like the tree or bush is dead, a new sprout, a “shoot” begins to grow from the stump! A thousand years after David, when many people had forgotten the promise, God kept his promise to send a Savior, and a “Shoot” was born, a brand new Branch.

God’s people waited a long time for the birth of the Savior, Jesus. That was the very first Advent. Advent is a season of waiting for us, too, as we look forward to celebrating Christ’s birth at Christmas just as God’s people waited with excitement for God to send the promised Messiah. As you wait, how can you prepare your heart for Christmas?

For Older Children: If the first Advent was the birth of Jesus, do you know what the second Advent is? Read John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Prayer: Thank you, God, for our family. Help our family to prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birthday this Christmas. As we learn about the family tree of Jesus, help us to grow in our love for him and our own family.
Creation
Symbol: Earth

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
God saw all that he had made and it was very good."
Genesis 1:1&31

Scripture: Genesis 1

Have you ever created something? Certainly you have created something using clay, or cardboard, or crayons; but have you ever created something from nothing? Well, in the very beginning, God created the world—from nothing! He made the sun, the moon, and the stars, just by speaking. He made dry ground, plants, and trees. God created so many different animals...from huge elephants to tiny ants, from fierce tigers to fluffy bunnies. And finally, God made two people, Adam and Eve. From the beginning when God made people, he made them special. They were special because God made them in his very own image and he loved them more than anything else in his creation. God had given Adam and Eve a perfect place to live and he also trusted them with the job of taking care of the land and the animals that he created. What are some ways that we can take care of the world God created?

It took God only six days to make the world and everything in it; and when he had finished creating the world, God knew that it was very good. Our beautiful world is God's gift to us and he wants us to enjoy his creation and to take care of it. As wonderful as the gift of creation is, there was still a much greater Gift that God would give his people someday, because he loved them more than anything else.

For Older Children: Do you think God is still creating things? Read Psalm 139:13-14. You are God's amazing creation! Just like Adam and Eve, you are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Discuss with your family how being made in God's image makes a difference in how you think and live.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for creating such a wonderful world! Help us to take good care of your world and all your creatures.
Adam and Eve

Symbol: Apple

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

Genesis 3:6

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-24

Remember that beautiful, perfect home that God gave to Adam and Eve? He had given them only one rule to follow—not to eat the fruit from one special tree. But they ate it anyway! Instead of listening to and trusting God, they listened to a terrible lie from God's enemy, Satan. After they ate from the special tree, Adam and Eve hid from God because they knew they had disobeyed and they were afraid—but God already knew the truth. Even though Adam and Eve disobeyed and disappointed God and he had to punish them—he still loved them very much.

Adam and Eve's disobedience brought sin into the world. Do you know what sin is? Sin is either not doing what God commands or doing what God forbids.

What kinds of things do we do or not do that makes God unhappy?

Because sin had entered God's perfect world, it changed everything. Nothing was perfect, and nothing would live forever as God had created it. But of course God had a plan to save the people he loved so much from their sin—so that they could live with him forever. Before God made Adam and Eve leave the garden, he clothed them, and he promised them that someday he would send Someone to do battle against the snake, against Satan.

For Older Children: Eve was tempted by Satan. What is the difference between temptation and sin? Read James 1:14-15. We know that temptation in itself is not sin, but yielding to temptation is sin. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

How can we resist the temptation to sin?

Prayer: God, we are sorry we don't always listen or do the things we should. Please forgive us for doing things that make you unhappy. Thank you for sending Jesus so we can be forgiven.
Noah
Symbol: Ark with Rainbow

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

Genesis 9:13

Scripture: Genesis 6:9-22, 9:8-13

Many years passed after Adam and Eve died and the earth was filled with a lot of people—it was also filled with a lot of sin! The people had forgotten all about God and he was very sad to see what had happened to the world he loved. God decided to send a huge flood to destroy all the people on the earth, because he was sorry that he created them—except for Noah, whom God had chosen to save. “Noah was a righteousness man, blameless among the people of his time and he walked with God.” (6:9) God told Noah of his plan to destroy the earth and instructed him to build a big boat, called an ark. It was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and had three decks. Noah, his family, and two of every kind of animal that lived would be on the ark during the flood.

After the flood God made a promise to Noah that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. He put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of that promise. What are you reminded of when you see a rainbow in the sky today? (Of God’s promise to never destroy the earth again; that God loved his creation so much that he wanted to give it a new start; and that God will give us a new start, too, every time we turn to him).

It was a new beginning! It wasn’t very long before God’s people began to fill the earth with people and sin—again. But was God surprised? No!! He knew that he would not destroy his world again, but that he would have to save it, and that he would have to send his very own Son to make things right again.

For Older Children: Noah was faithful to God at a time when no one else was because he walked with God. Paul said something similar in Galatians 1:10. How are these men alike? What can we learn from them when we are in a situation where no one else is choosing to do what would please God?

Prayer: Thank you, God, for keeping your promises. Help us to walk with you. Thank you for loving us enough to give us a new start every day.
Abraham and Sarah

Symbol: Camel

"Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be."

Genesis 15:5

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7; 15:5-6; 17:3-9; Hebrews 11:8

Many years after the flood and the time of Noah there lived a man named Abram. One day, God spoke to Abram and told him to leave his own country and go to a new land that God would show him. He promised to make Abram a great nation and that all the people of the earth would be blessed through him. Even though he did not know where he was going, Abram obeyed and went because of his faith in God. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, all of his servants, all his possessions and followed God to the land he had promised.

Sometimes we have to go to new places or try things we have never done. We can trust God to be faithful. Do we sometimes have to obey even when we do not understand?

After God guided Abram and Sarai through a famine and rescued his nephew Lot, God made another promise to Abram: He told him to look up into the heavens and count the stars—that is how many descendants God was going to give Abram. Several years passed and Abram was ninety-nine years old—he and Sarai still did not have any children. But God reminded Abram of his promise and as a reminder of his promise he changed Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah.

Even though Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old and they had to wait a really long time, just as he promised, God gave them a little baby boy name Isaac. And even though the world would wait a really long time, God would someday send another Baby Boy that would save his people, just as he had promised.

For Older Children: What does it mean that Abraham believed God or that he had faith? Read Hebrews 11:1-3; 8-12. Have you ever followed God by faith like Abraham?

Prayer: God, help us to put our trust in you and obey even when we do not understand. Thank you for always being faithful.
Isaac
Symbol: Ram

"Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together."

Genesis 22:8

Scripture: Genesis 22

When Abraham and Sarah’s only son Isaac had grown older, God tested Abraham to make sure that he loved and trusted God completely. He called out to Abraham and told him to take his only son Isaac to a mountain and offer him as a burnt offering, a sacrifice. Early the next morning, Abraham set out with Isaac to do exactly as the Lord had asked. It took them three days to get to the mountain God told Abraham about. Isaac carried the wood and Abraham carried the fire and the knife. When Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the sacrifice, he replied “God himself will provide the lamb.” Abraham built the altar and placed Isaac on the wood. Just as he took the knife to kill Isaac, the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham to stop. God told Abraham that he knew that he loved and trusted him completely because he was willing to give him his only son. When Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the thicket and he sacrificed the ram instead of his son. And once again God called to Abraham reminding him of his promise and telling him that because he had not withheld his only son from him, that he would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore; and that the whole world would be blessed through his children.

Many years later, God would provide another Lamb to die in our place; but this time it would be his only Son; and he, too, would carry the wood, a wooden cross, for his own sacrifice.

For Older Children:

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Can we sometimes do good things, be obedient, and even make sacrifices without pleasing God? What did God want from Abraham that he also wants from us? (to love him and trust him completely)

Prayer: God, thank you for loving us so much that you gave up your precious Son to die for our sins. Help us to have the same faith as Abraham, trusting and loving you completely.
Jacob

Symbol: Ladder

“He had a dream in which he saw a ladder resting on the earth with its top reaching to heaven…”

Genesis 28:12a

Scripture: Genesis 27 & 28

Isaac married a young woman named Rebekah and they had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. When Jacob and Esau were men, Jacob tricked his father Isaac into giving him his brother’s blessing which meant that Esau would have to serve his brother Jacob. Esau was very angry and wanted to kill Jacob. Rebekah and Isaac, his mother and father, sent Jacob on a journey to see his uncle Laban—to find a wife and hopefully let his brother’s anger go away. He stopped for the night at a place called Haran. He took a stone from the ground to use as a pillow and went to sleep. He had a dream—he saw a ladder going from earth up to heaven. He saw angels going up and down the ladder and the Lord standing up above it. The Lord spoke to Jacob, and promised him that all the people of the earth would be blessed through him and that he would be with Jacob and watch over him wherever he went. When Jacob woke up, he was afraid because he knew God had spoken to him in the dream and he knew he was in an awesome place. He set the stone on its end and poured oil over it as an act of worship.

Jacob did find not one, but two wives at his uncle’s house; but he had to work seven years to marry Leah and then another seven to marry Rachel. And even though Jacob loved Rachel best, it was through one of Leah and Jacob’s sons that God would keep his promise to Jacob and bless the whole world.

For Older Children:

Which son of Leah and Jacob would be in the family tree of Jesus?

See Matthew 1.

Prayer: Thank you, God that you are with us wherever we go. Help us learn to listen for your guidance and to obey what we read in your Word.
Joseph
Symbol: Coat of Colors

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50:20

Scripture: Genesis 37:1-36; 41:41,53-57; 50:15-21

Even though God had given Jacob 12 sons, Joseph was his favorite; and Jacob gave Joseph a special coat of many colors. When his brothers saw how much more their father loved him, they hated Joseph and decided to get rid of him. They were going to kill Joseph but decided to sell him to some merchants. (They took Joseph's beautiful coat back to their father with goat's blood on it to prove that he had been killed.) He was then sold as a slave in Egypt to one of Pharaoh's officers. The Lord was with Joseph in Egypt and gave him success in everything he did. Joseph was put in prison for something he didn't do, but God made him very wise, and he continued to listen to God and to do things that pleased God. Pharaoh eventually put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt!

Remember how we learned that God has a plan for everything? Do you think that God planned all along for Joseph to be in Egypt? Why? (41:53-37)

When Joseph's brothers met him in Egypt they didn't even recognize him (it had been so many years since they sold him), but he recognized them right away. What do you think you would have done if you were Joseph and had been treated so badly? His brothers were afraid when they realized Joseph was in charge because they expected him to be angry with them. But Joseph chose to forgive them and help them even though they had been unkind and had sold him into slavery. Joseph knew that God was in control and had used everything that had happened to him to accomplish something good. Can you think of something that has happened in your life that was bad but God used it for something good? And remember God's promise of a Savior? Like Joseph, he too, would be hated and wrongly accused, but God would use it for good, to save his people.

For Older Children: Why do you think God allowed Joseph to go through so many trials? See Romans 8:28 and James 1:2-4 for two possible reasons.

Prayer: God, thank you for being with us during good times and hard times. Help us to be kind to all people, even those who are unkind to us.
Moses
Symbol—Ten Commandments

"And God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

Exodus 20:1-2

Scripture—Exodus 1:1-11; 3:1-10; 20:1-17

Many years after Joseph died, a new king or pharaoh came to power who did not remember Joseph and what he had done for Egypt. This pharaoh was afraid of God’s people, the Israelites, because there were so many of them and they had become so strong. He decided to make them slaves.

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. When it was time, God chose Moses, calling him through a burning bush, to help free the people from slavery and to lead them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. This is called the Exodus. It was a glorious time for the Israelites. They never forgot it and celebrated it every year to remember God’s faithfulness and to teach their children about God and what he had done for them. Can you think of some of the miracles that God performed during the time that Moses was leader of the Israelites? (the ten plagues, Exodus 7-12; parting the Red Sea, Exodus 14; manna and quail in the desert, Exodus 16)

It wasn’t long after Moses led the people out of Egypt that they forgot the amazing things God had done for them. God continued to love and take care of his people and gave the Israelites some rules or laws to follow—the Ten Commandments. These laws told them and tell us how we should love God and love each other. The people promised to obey the rules but no matter how hard they tried they couldn’t. Did this surprise God? No! He knew they would not be able to obey perfectly and wanted them to see and understand their need for a savior, the Savior that he would send one day and the only One that could keep the law perfectly.

For Older Children: How many of the Ten Commandments can you name? (Exodus 20: 1-17) Which law is most important? (Read Matthew 22:36-40)

Prayer: Lord, thank you for freeing us from our sins. Thank you for your commandments that show us how to live and show us our need for a savior. Help us to look to him daily. Amen
Rahab

Symbol: Scarlet Cord

"By faith, Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."

Hebrews 11:31

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-21; 6:22-23

After Moses died, Joshua was appointed to be the new leader of God's people, the Israelites. They were ready to enter the Promised Land, but there was one thing stopping them—the city of Jericho. It was a large, strong city with high walls. Joshua sent two men called spies into the city to see what the land was like. A woman there, named Rahab, let them stay in her house. The leaders did not want the spies in their city, so this was a very dangerous and brave thing to do. Rahab was so brave that she hid the men even when the leaders came looking for them and then she helped them to escape out of her window which was in the wall of the city. She did this because she had heard of the amazing things God had done for his people—how he had freed the Israelites from Egypt and led them on dry ground through the Red Sea. She also knew that God had promised her city to the Israelites. She believed in God and said, “The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.”

Because she believed in God and helped God's people, they agreed to help her and her family. She tied a scarlet cord in her window so they would know where to find her. When the walls of Jericho fell, the two men went in and saved Rahab and her family. Then, she lived with the Israelites as one of God's people. Who gave Rahab her courage? Has God given you courage to do something for Him? Rahab is the great-great grandmother of King David, one of only four women who are named as one of Jesus' ancestors in his family tree.

For Older Children: Rahab is mentioned two other times in the New Testament besides in the family line of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). Do you know what they are? Read Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 and discuss faith and works.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving us courage. Help us to use it to honor you.
Ruth

Symbol: Wheat

“‘Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor’...So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening.”

Ruth 2:2-2:17

Scripture: Ruth 1:15-2:3; 4:13-22

After the death of Joshua and the leaders that remembered all that the Lord had done for Israel, most of the people stopped serving and listening to the Lord. During this time there was a famine in Israel. A man decided to travel with his family from his hometown Bethlehem to another land called Moab to find food. Once they were there, the man died. His two sons married women from Moab. One of these women was Ruth. After ten years in this new land, the two sons also died. This left their mother, Naomi, with no husband or sons, only her two daughters-in-law. Naomi heard that there was food in Israel again and she decided that she was going to travel back to her home. She told her daughters-in-law to go back to their families. However, Ruth did not want to leave Naomi. Ruth had learned that Naomi served and worshiped the one true God and Ruth wanted to do that as well. She said, “Your people will be my people and your God my God.” She was faithful to Naomi and to God. What can you do to help another person? Does this show faithfulness to them and to God?

Once they arrived back in Bethlehem, Ruth began to gather wheat from a field every day to provide food for herself and Naomi. The owner of the field was Rahab’s son Boaz. Boaz saw that Ruth showed her love to God by remaining faithful to Him and by loving Naomi. Boaz treated Ruth kindly and eventually, he married Ruth and they had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, and Jesse had a son named David. God blessed Ruth by making her a part of the family line leading to Jesus.


Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your faithfulness to us. Help us to be faithful to you and to others.
Samuel

Symbol: Horn of Oil

"Then the Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; he is the one.' So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power."

1 Samuel 16:12b-13

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:19-21; 16:1-13

About 50 years after the story of Ruth and Boaz, there was a woman named Hannah who wanted a baby very badly. She prayed to God and asked him for a baby, promising God that she would give her son to him to serve the Lord his whole life. God answered her prayer and when Samuel was still young, Hannah took him to live with Eli, the priest. He learned many things from Eli.

When Samuel was older, he became the first prophet in Israel. This meant that God spoke through him to the Israelites. The people refused to listen to Samuel and wanted a king like the other nations. God told Samuel to give the people what they had asked for, a king. Saul was the first king that Samuel anointed. Anointing is pouring oil over someone's head to show that they are special to God. Saul was a good king for a while, but then he forgot to listen to God and he became a bad king. God was sorry that he made Saul the king and told Samuel to anoint a second king for Israel—a king who loved the Lord. God told Samuel to go to Jesse’s house in Bethlehem to find this king. When Samuel saw Jesse’s sons, he thought surely the oldest and strongest would be God’s choice to be king—but God had a different plan. God told Samuel to choose David, Jesse’s youngest son who was a shepherd. David was only a boy when this happened and it would be many years before he would become king. Samuel listened carefully to God and obeyed his instructions carefully even when it didn’t seem to make sense to him. How can we listen to God? Should we always do what God says?

Samuel served God his whole life and was a great prophet; but God was going to send a much greater Prophet to his people, and just as with Samuel, some people would listen to him, and some would reject him.

For Older Children: Even though the people rejected Samuel as a leader and begged for a king, Samuel continued to do what for them? Read 1 Samuel 12:23.

What does God ask us to do for those who oppose us or are our enemies? Read Luke 6:27 and 23:34.

Prayer: God, help us to listen carefully to you and to obey everything you tell us.
David
Symbol: Harp

"Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts."

1 Chronicles 16:9

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16 & 17; 2 Samuel 5:1-5

David was a young shepherd boy when Samuel anointed him as king of Israel. When he was still a boy, David did a very brave thing—he took out his slingshot that he used to protect the sheep and he killed Goliath, a giant. Many years later David became the king of Israel and just as he had trusted God to help him kill Goliath, he trusted God to help him be king. David was king for 40 years and during that time he tried very hard to be obedient and listen to and follow God—but David also made some really bad mistakes. He even killed a man, an innocent man. But when David realized his sin, he always turned to God and asked for forgiveness. God made him a strong king and Israel became a strong nation under his leadership. God said about David, "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart." (Acts 13:22)

When David was a shepherd and when he was a king, he spent time talking to and praising God. He also spent time writing Psalms—poems and songs that are like prayers. You may have heard some of them—"The Lord is my Shepherd" (Psalm 23), "Create in me a clean heart" (Psalm 51) and "God is our refuge and strength" (Psalm 46). David was blessed with the ability to sing and write and play his harp. Perhaps you could try writing a poem or song to God.

Do you remember the promise we talked about when you placed the very first ornament, "the stump" on your Jesse Tree?—that David’s kingdom would last forever and that through him and his family, God would save his people. And God of course keeps his promise and eventually sends another Shepherd, who would also be a King, to save his people.

For Older Children: Both Saul and David disobeyed God while they were king—why did God forgive David but not Saul? Read 1 Samuel 15:24-25 and Psalm 32: 1-5. What was different? (David loved and trusted God so he blamed himself for his sin and confessed to the Lord; Saul loved himself so he blamed other people for his sin and only confessed to Samuel.)

Prayer: Dear God, give us hearts like yours.
Solomon
Symbol: Crown

"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong."

1 Kings 3:9

Scripture: 1 Kings 3:9-5

When David died, his son Solomon became king of Israel. Solomon also loved the Lord and tried very hard to be obedient and listen to and follow God. When he became king, God told him to ask for whatever he would like. Solomon knew that being king was a very important but very difficult job. He asked for a wise and understanding heart to know right from wrong so that he would be able to lead the people well and make wise decisions. God was very pleased with his request and gave him that wisdom. God said "there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be." But God also gave him something he didn't ask for—great wealth and honor so that he was great among the other kings. How do we get wisdom? (James 1:5) Is being wise different than being smart?

While Solomon was king, he built a great temple for God. It was a place for the people to worship God and to offer sacrifices to him. For the last 500 years, since Moses led them out of Egypt, the people had worshiped in a tabernacle that was like a tent that they moved from place to place. And finally, they had this magnificent temple, the "house of God", in Jerusalem. Solomon also brought to the temple the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets with the Ten Commandments. God made Solomon the same promise he had given to his father David—that if he walked with the Lord, observing his commands and laws, that his kingdom would last forever. Solomon's heart was not fully devoted to God as David's was, and when he was older he worshiped other gods. But God did not forget his promise to save his people, and would one day send not just a wise king like Solomon, but the King of all kings "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)


Prayer: Dear God, please give us wisdom to know right from wrong and help us to follow that wisdom to do what is right.
Prophecy

Symbol: Rose

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom...”

Isaiah 35:1

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7

Long ago, God began to tell his people that someday there would be a Messiah who would come to save them. Do you know who the Messiah is? (Jesus) God told his people this good news through people called prophets. There were many different prophets in the Bible and except for God’s call they had no special training. They were from all different walks of life—shepherds, farmers, princes, and priests. Sometimes they told God’s people what would happen in the future; sometimes they told people what God wanted them to do during difficult times and plentiful times; and sometimes they warned the people that God was not happy with them because of disobedience. Whatever the message, it was always a message from God. Over the next several days, we will read about some of the prophets that God sent to his people.

Why did God speak through prophets? (Because God wanted his people to know how much he loved them and that he had a plan for them) Do you think the people were glad to hear what the prophets had to say?

There are hundreds of prophecies (truth from God about something that would happen in the future) in the Old Testament about Jesus, the Messiah—and every one of them came true! The prophet Isaiah spoke to the people about the Messiah and he tried very hard to help them see the beauty and splendor and joy that this Messiah would bring—he told them that even the wilderness, the desert, would rejoice and blossom at the glory of the Lord.

For Older Children: When we hear someone speak God’s word, how can we be sure that he is not a false teacher or prophet. Read Acts 17:11 and 2 Timothy 3:16.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for speaking to us through teachers and preachers.
Elijah

Symbol: Raven

"You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the Ravens to feed you there."

1 Kings 17:4

Scripture: 1 Kings 17

Have you ever been really hungry? Perhaps you have been driving on a long trip, and you thought you were going to starve if Mom and Dad didn’t stop somewhere to eat; or maybe mom didn’t go to the grocery store and it seemed like there was nothing to eat in your house. Not many of us have ever truly been without food, but God’s prophet Elijah was. Listen to his story.

After King Solomon’s death, the land of Israel was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, which were ruled by very wicked kings—except for one. There was in Judah, a king named Asa who did what was right in the sight of the Lord; but in Israel, King Ahab and his wife Jezebel were more evil than any of the kings before him and served the false god Baal.

During this time, Elijah, a prophet sent by God, boldly went to the evil King Ahab and told him that there would be no rain or dew unless he said so. God then sent Elijah into hiding beside a brook where He caused the ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evenings. When the brook dried up because there was no rain, God sent Elijah to the home of a widow where God performed even more miracles! The widow was willing to give Elijah her last morsel of food, and the Lord promised that her bin of flour and jar of oil would never be empty as long as he did not send rain. While Elijah was there, the widow’s son died. Elijah prayed to God to please let the boy’s life return—and he did! God provides for his people daily—can you think of a time that God provided for you or your family in an unusual way?

God miraculously provided bread for Elijah but some day he would send his very own son, the Bread of Life, to save his people.

For Older Children: Read Chapter 18 for the rest of the story of how God sent fire and rain. Also, do you know how Elijah died? (2 Kings 2:11)

Prayer: Dear Father, Forgive us when we forget that everything we have is from you. Thank you for loving and caring for us.


Jonah

Symbol: Whale

"But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah,
and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights."

Jonah 1:17

Scripture: Jonah 1-4

Can you think of a time that your entire class or group of friends, or perhaps your sports team got punished because one person disobeyed but didn’t admit it? Well, that is what happened to Jonah! Since this is a familiar Bible story, let’s see how much you can remember. What did God ask Jonah to do? (Go to the city of Nineveh and preach because the people were wicked. 1:2) And the people of Nineveh were not only wicked but they had treated the Israelites, God’s people, very badly. What did Jonah do? (He ran from the Lord and got on a ship. 1:3) What happened? (The Lord caused a great storm, and Jonah told the rest of the sailors that it was his fault there was such a storm, and to throw him overboard. They did and he was rescued by a great fish and stayed in his belly for three days and three nights. 1:4-17) What did Jonah do while he was inside the fish? (He prayed to God to forgive him for disobeying him and he repented of his sin. 2:1-10)

After three days and three nights in the dark smelly belly of the whale Jonah asked for forgiveness and God had the whale spit Jonah onto the shore. God helped Jonah be obedient and this time he went to Nineveh and preached to the people—and they believed and repented of their sin. Can you think of a time that you were disobedient and God forgave you and helped you be obedient in that same thing?

God sent a whale to rescue Jonah from the punishment he deserved, and God sent Jonah to rescue the people of Nineveh from their sin by telling them of God’s love. Hundreds of years later God would send Jesus to rescue his people from their sin—he too would spend three days and nights in darkness before he rose again—and many would believe and repent of their sin.

For Older Children: Read Chapter 4 and discuss being obedient on the outside but having a disobedient heart on the inside. Also read Matthew 12:40.

Prayer: Thank you Lord, that you love us even when we sin. Help me to do the right thing the first time you ask.
Isaiah
Symbol: Scroll

"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go."

Isaiah 48:17

Scripture: Isaiah

Of all of God’s prophets, Isaiah was one of the greatest. Because the people of Israel and Judah were still being disobedient to God and worshiping idols, Isaiah was given the job of preaching very strong words about the judgment and punishment that God was going to send if they did not repent of their sins. But Isaiah also got to tell the people how much God loved them and how He would save them. God told them over and over through Isaiah “I am the Lord and there is no other.” The people continued to be stubborn and disobedient and eventually both Israel and Judah were destroyed and many of the people were taken into captivity by their enemies.

Read the words below, written by Isaiah, and see if you recognize who he is describing.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“For unto us a child is born, a son is given...and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

“He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom...forever.” Isaiah 9:7

“He was despised and rejected by men...he was pierced for our transgressions... and by his wounds we are healed...he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.” Isaiah 53:3,5,7

Did you guess that these words were describing Jesus? Of course there are lots of words in the Bible that describe Jesus—but Isaiah wrote these words about 700 years before Jesus was born! We can always depend on God to keep his promises, not just for 700 years, but forever and ever.

For Older Children: Why do you think God had Isaiah write down the prophecy about His son Jesus when it wasn’t going to happen for 700 years?

Read Isaiah 48:3-5

Prayer: Thank you Father for always keeping your promises.
Jeremiah

Symbol: Bible

"'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant...

_I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.'"

Jeremiah 31:31,33

Scripture: Jeremiah

Have you ever watched a friend or a brother or sister decide to be disobedient? You knew that when they got caught by the teacher or by mom or dad that they would be in trouble. Maybe you even tried to talk them out of the choice they were making. Perhaps it made you sad to watch them choose disobedience. So it was with another of God's prophets—Jeremiah. He sometimes is even called “the weeping prophet” because he spent his whole ministry trying to get his fellow countrymen to repent and follow the Lord.

Before he was even born, God chose Jeremiah to be his prophet. And God called him to start preaching when he was probably a teenager. God told Jeremiah that being young was not a reason to be afraid. God also knew that the people would hate Jeremiah because of the message God had given him to speak to them. He reminded Jeremiah "I am with you, to deliver you." For forty years, Jeremiah tried to get the people to repent but they refused to listen and continued to be disobedient to God.

Just as Jeremiah had said, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, the temple that King Solomon built was destroyed, and the people were taken captive to Babylon. Even though there were consequences for the disobedience of the people, Jeremiah also gave a message of hope. He too, told of the One who would come from the house of David, a righteous Branch, a King who would rule wisely, and who would be called “The Lord is our Righteousness.” (23:6)

This was about 600 years before Jesus was born!

For Older Children: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. What is the new covenant that Jeremiah was talking about? Read Luke 22:20

Prayer: Thank you Lord, for not giving up on us when we are stubborn. Help me to always keep your word in my heart.
Daniel

Symbol: Lion

"...For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end...He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." Daniel 6:26,27

Scripture: Daniel 1-6

Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Daniel was a great prophet. Unlike Isaiah and Jeremiah, he was not a prophet to the people of Israel and Judah, but to the people in the palace of Babylon. As a young man, Daniel, along with others from the tribe of Judah, was taken into captivity into Babylon. Because he and a few friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were handsome and quick learners, they were chosen to be educated in the palace so they could serve the king. They were pressured to eat the same food and drink the wine that those in the palace did; but Daniel and his friends refused to eat and drink the things that were forbidden by God, or to worship any other gods. Because they remained obedient, God gave them much wisdom and knowledge and gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. He was quickly promoted and served several different kings throughout his life. Can you think of a time when it seemed that you were the only one trying to do the right thing to be obedient to God?

When Daniel was older, King Darius planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom. Some of the other men were jealous and tried to think of a way to get rid of Daniel. These men knew that Daniel loved God and prayed often, so they tricked King Darius into passing a law that would forbid praying to anyone other than the king. Daniel knelt to pray three times a day as he always did, and the men turned him in to the king. King Darius realized he had been tricked but also knew that he could not undo the law, so he had Daniel thrown into the den of lions. Imagine the king’s surprise and happiness the next morning when he found Daniel safely sleeping with the lions! Someday soon, God would send another Servant who would also be falsely accused and sentenced to die—this would be part of God’s plan—his promise to save his people.

For Older Children: Daniel believed that God was sovereign in all things. What does sovereign mean? Read Daniel 2:20-22

How can we live so that others see that we love the true living God? Read Philippians 4:5-9

Prayer: Thank you that you are in control of everything and that you can close the mouths of lions. Help me to be strong and courageous like Daniel.
Nehemiah

Symbol: Trowel and Bricks

"Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Nehemiah 8:10b

Scripture: Nehemiah 1-13

Nehemiah was not a prophet or a king; however he did live in the palace—as cupbearer to the king of Persia. What do you think his job was? *(To taste the wine that was served to make sure it did not contain poison!)* Nehemiah was a trusted advisor to the king and had a good life in the palace. However, he was also an Israelite and had heard that the Jewish people who were released from captivity were back in Jerusalem, but they were in trouble. The walls of Jerusalem were still broken down. Nehemiah sat down and wept and then he fasted and prayed to God to give him success as he went in to talk with the king. God answered his prayer—not only did the king grant Nehemiah’s request to go to Jerusalem and help his people, but he also allowed him to cut wood from the king’s forest to make the city gates, and sent army officers with him to protect him as he traveled.

Nehemiah gathered the people and began to rebuild the walls. Those around them made fun and threatened them and once again Nehemiah prayed to God to encourage the people as they worked. Many of them worked with a sword in one hand and others took turns standing guard. Even with those enemies around them, they finished the wall in only 52 days!! When their enemies heard that the wall was finished, they knew it could only have been completed with the help of God. After the wall was built, Nehemiah stayed for twelve years to help the people get organized. Nehemiah didn’t appear to have skills as a builder or even as a leader and yet God chose him for this huge job. Is there something that you need to let God help you do even though you don’t feel qualified?

Nehemiah loved the Israelites enough to leave the palace to help them—but God would send another Servant who would love his people so much that he would leave heaven to save them!

For Older Children: Nehemiah could have stayed at the palace in his place of high position and he still could have prayed for the people of Israel and for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Why was his response better? Read James 2:14-17

Prayer: Thank you Father that you use cupbearers as well as kings and prophets to accomplish your purposes. Help me to be available and to trust in you for the strength to complete a difficult task.
Zechariah and Elizabeth

Symbol: Praying Hands

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.

Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son..."

Luke 1:13

Scripture: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

"Wait a minute"; "Wait 'til after dinner"; "Wait until I'm finished". Have you ever heard any of these answers? Waiting might be one of the hardest things we do! What is the hardest thing for you to wait on?

Today's story is about a couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who had waited and waited to have a baby—and now they were too old to have a baby. Or at least that is what they thought. Zechariah was a priest and it was his turn to go in to the temple of the Lord and burn the incense. While he was in the temple, an angel of the Lord, Gabriel, appeared and told him that Elizabeth was going to have a son—not just a son, but a son who would prepare the people for the Lord.

This news was hard for Zechariah to believe! He and Elizabeth were too old! Because he questioned the angel, Gabriel told him he would not be able to speak. When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

Everyone thought they would name him Zechariah but Elizabeth said no. Do you know what they named him? Just as the angel had instructed him to, Zechariah wrote "His name is John" on a writing tablet and at that moment he was able to speak again. Elizabeth and Zechariah prayed and waited for a long time for their prayer to be answered.

Can you think of some things that you have prayed for that God answered quickly? Is there a prayer that you are still waiting to be answered?

Zechariah and Elizabeth had waited for a long time to have a baby, but God had been waiting since Creation for just the right time to send the Savior he had promised. The time was almost here!!

For Older Children: Read Luke 1:13-20. Why was Zechariah punished for questioning the angel?

Prayer: Thank you for the gift of prayer. Help me believe with all of my heart that you will answer my prayers.
Angels

Symbol: Angel

“For He will command His angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.”

Psalm 91:11

Scripture: See below

Have you noticed how popular angels are? There are paintings of angels, statues of angels, stuffed angels, lace angels—you’ve probably even made a snow angel! But what is an angel, a real angel? (a heavenly messenger) God created the angels just as He created everything. (Colossians 1:16) God has used angels in many different ways: to guide as they did Philip (Acts 8:26) and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8); to provide food as they did for Hagar (Genesis 21:17-20) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:6); to protect as they did for Daniel and his three friends (Daniel 3, 6); to deliver as they did for the apostles (Acts 5) and for Peter (Acts 12); and to strengthen and encourage as they did for Jesus (Matt 4:11) and for Paul (Acts 27:23-25). These are just a few examples.

Even though they most often appear in the form of a man when they appear to people, angels do sometimes appear to be dazzling white and bright as lightning (Matt 28:2-4)—perhaps that is why they often start their message with “Do not be afraid”. We are given this encouragement concerning angels: “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”(Hebrews 13:2)

Angels are in the Bible from the beginning to the end. They shouted for joy when God created the world (Job 38:7) and they will be with Jesus when He returns (1 Thess 4:16). Can you think of some other times in the Bible that an angel or angels appeared? Especially think of the times the angels appeared at Jesus’ birth.

For Older Children: Can you think of a reason that we don’t see angels being used as often in our lives as they were in the lives of the people in the Bible? Read John 14: 16-17 and Acts 2:1-4.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for creating the angels and using them to guide, and protect, and strengthen and encourage. Help me to be as obedient as the angels in heaven are.
Mary

Symbol: Mary Kneeling

"But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.'"

Luke 1:30-31


Like Zechariah, Mary was surprised and startled when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. After telling her not to be afraid, he told her that she was to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of the Most High, and that he would be a King who would reign forever. Mary was a young, poor girl from Nazareth who was just now engaged to be married! How could she have a son? Mary asked the angel this and he explained to her that her Son would be from the Holy Spirit, and that he would be called the Son of God. He even told her about Elizabeth having a son in her old age, adding "Because nothing is impossible with God." And Mary, never doubting again, answered "I am the Lord's servant." She believed that nothing was impossible with God and she remembered God’s promise to Abraham that the nations would be blessed through his descendants. (Genesis 22:16-18).

Mary was so excited that she traveled to see her cousin Elizabeth who was also going to have a baby just as the angel Gabriel had said. Before Mary said anything about her baby, Elizabeth knew the good news about Mary because her unborn baby (John the Baptist) leapt for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. While she was with Elizabeth, Mary praised God with a song. Her song is called the Magnificat (a Latin word that means magnifies) and is sometimes sung in church. Mary's song was about God’s greatness and his love. How does Mary describe God in her song of praise?

For Older Children: Not only was Mary present for Jesus' birth, but she was also present at his death on the cross. What were Jesus’ words to Mary from the cross? Read John 19:25-27. To what commandment was Jesus being obedient? Read Deuteronomy 5:16

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for choosing Mary and for the example of her faith. Help me believe that nothing is impossible with you and to remember to sing praises to you like Mary did.
Joseph

Symbol: Tools

“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.’”

Matthew 1:20

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Remember God’s promise that Jesus, the Savior, would come from the root of Jesse? Well, just as God chose Mary to be Jesus’ mother, he also chose Joseph be Jesus’ earthly father and Joseph was the great, great, great, great........ grandson of King David, Jesse’s son. Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married so of course he was surprised when he found out that Mary was going to have a baby. Being a kind man, Joseph did not want Mary to suffer any embarrassment so he thought the right thing would be to break the engagement quietly. But, of course, God had a different plan! God knew how difficult this would be for Joseph to understand, and so he sent an angel of the Lord to Joseph in a dream. And after he heard from the angel he knew for certain that he was to be Mary’s husband and the earthly father of Jesus no matter how hard it may have seemed. Joseph learned to trust God as he and Mary traveled to Bethlehem with no place to stay and God provided a stable; and once again when an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream telling him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt so Jesus would not be killed.

God chose a simple carpenter to be the father of Jesus and when the shepherds and the wise men came to worship this little baby, Joseph must have realized this huge job he had been given—to raise the Son of God, the King of Kings.

For Older Children: Even though Jesus was the Son of God, did he also honor and obey Joseph, his earthly father? How? Read Luke 2:49-50.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you that you chose a simple carpenter to be Jesus’ father and that you gave him everything he needed to believe and obey you. Help me to be obedient in whatever you have for me to do.
John the Baptist

Symbol: Dove

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."

Matthew 3:16

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-6, 13-17

Do you remember the little baby named John? Do you remember who his parents were? (Zechariah and Elizabeth) He was also Jesus' cousin. Before he was even born, God chose John to preach and get the people ready for Jesus. John was the first prophet from God in about 400 years, so the people were ready to listen. When John grew up he was very different than other people. Do you remember what his clothes were made of and what type of food he ate? Even though he dressed funny, ate weird food, and lived in the desert he had an important message from God. He told the people how God wanted them to live, that they needed to repent of their sins and be baptized; many people came to him to confess and be baptized. There were some people who thought that John might be Christ, the Messiah, but John continued to preach about One that was coming who was mightier than he. John's focus was always on Jesus and preparing the way for him. Even though you may not be called to wear camel's hair or eat bugs, you are called to be different in a way that points others to Jesus. How can you be different?

As John was baptizing people in the Jordan River, he looked up and saw the One that he had been preparing for his whole life. He thought he was not worthy to baptize Jesus, but he did because Jesus asked him to. And as he did, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rested on Jesus and a voice from heaven said "This is my Son whom I love". Remember God's promise to send a Savior? This was all part of God's plan to save his people.

For Older Children: What happened to John the Baptist not long after he baptized Jesus? Read Matthew 4:12 and 14:3-12 for the rest of the story. John the Baptist was content with his simple lifestyle and the task he was given. Can you think of another place we are encouraged to be content?

Read Philippians 4:12-13

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me live my life in such a way that others will want to know about Jesus.
Shepherds
Symbol: Shepherd’s Staff

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Luke 2:20

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Let’s imagine for a moment what it would have been like to be a shepherd. Their job was taking care of sheep, of course. But what does that mean? What did they actually do? (They had to protect the sheep from wild animals; they had to find fresh water for the sheep to drink, and grass for the sheep to eat; they had to know when the sheep were restless and needed to move, and when they needed to rest; they knew exactly how many they had so that if one was lost, they searched for it.) It was a really hard job! Now imagine that the shepherds are settling down for the evening. They have taken care of the sheep all day and are perhaps about to fall asleep when suddenly an angel appears. They weren’t just afraid, they were terrified! The angel tells them not to be afraid (easy for him to say!!) and tells them that he has good news for all people—that a Baby named Jesus, who would be their Savior, has been born in the city of David. He tells them that they will find the Baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. And then—even more angels appear, filling the sky and praising God!! This must be pretty important to send all of those angels. The shepherds wasted no time and as soon as the angels were gone, they went to Bethlehem to find this Baby. What did the shepherds do after the angels told them about Jesus? (They spread the word to all who would listen.)

Is it surprising that God chose the shepherds to hear the good news first? Who might you have picked to be the first to hear? Someone who had wealth or power? It shouldn’t surprise us that God chose the shepherds—he has often chosen shepherds for big jobs—remember David, the shepherd turned King. But of course he too is a Shepherd, taking care of his sheep (that’s you and me) when they are hungry, and thirsty, and sometimes stubborn, and sometimes lost.

For Older Children: Who called Jesus “the Good Shepherd”? Read John 10:11-18. Who had the authority to take Jesus’ life?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for being my shepherd and for taking such good care of me. Help me to tell others about how much you love me—even when I act like a crazy sheep!
The Star

Symbol: Star

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:2

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

He created them and named them and placed them exactly where he wanted them in the sky. Do you remember how he told Abraham to look into the sky at the stars, and that he would bless him with that many descendants? Now God had placed a brand new star, bigger and brighter than all of the others, in the sky to point to his Son, Jesus. It was like a spotlight shining down from the night sky to the place where Jesus lived. The Bible tells us that God used the star to guide the wise men, the magi, to the house where Jesus and his family lived. They traveled thousands of miles to see the King of the Jews. And when they got there, they worshiped him first, and then presented very expensive gifts to Jesus—gifts appropriate for a king. Does this remind you of a Christmas tradition that you have? Think about who you give gifts to at Christmas and why you do it. Ask God to help you have a heart like the Magi—to receive gifts with joy, and to give without expecting anything in return, bringing honor to the Lord.

Perhaps when you see the stars shining in the night sky, they can remind you that God always keeps his promises. Long ago, he promised a Savior to his people and he sent his Son into the world to be the Light of the World (John 9:5), the True Light that gives light to every man (John 1:9).

For Older Children: The Magi said they saw Jesus' star. Why did they think it was Jesus' star? Read Numbers 24:17

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for the greatest gift of all, your son Jesus. Help us to share the gift of his love with others today and all through the year.
Jesus' Birth

Symbol: Baby in the Manger

“...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke 2:7

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23

God had prepared for this since the beginning—he prepared the people through his prophets; he chose Mary and Joseph to be the parents; he told the shepherds where to find the baby and to spread the Good News; he placed the biggest, brightest star in the sky to point to his Son; and he had chosen the place, Bethlehem, as foretold by the prophet Micah 700 years earlier—but Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was almost time for Jesus to be born!! And so the story continues...

Because Caesar wanted to count all of the people in the land so he could collect taxes, everyone had to go back to their home town, the place where they were born, to register and be counted. That meant that Joseph and Mary had to travel seventy miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The roads were rough and this was a long and very dangerous journey—and it was almost time for Mary to have her baby, baby Jesus. When they arrived, there was nowhere for them to stay, except for a stable. God could have provided anywhere he wanted for his Son to be born but he chose a lowly manger, in a stable, to be King Jesus’ first bed—but this was all part of God’s plan!

Immanuel (“God with us”) had come just as the prophet Isaiah had said and he was born in exactly the place God had chosen. God had given his people the greatest gift of all—not beautifully wrapped like the gifts we give, but wrapped in swaddling clothes; not under a beautifully decorated tree, but lying in a manger.

For Older Children: Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger borrowed from the animals. What similar circumstance occurred at his death? Read Matthew 27: 57-60.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for sending your son Jesus, Immanuel, to be our Savior and for doing it in your perfect way.
King of Kings

Symbol: Chi Rho
(earliest “monogram” for Jesus)

“...the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings, and Lord of lords...”

1 Timothy 6:15

Scripture: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

As we have seen during this advent season, from the beginning, God has loved his people with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3); and from the beginning he had a plan to save his people. Think about the men and women we have talked about over the past several weeks—all used by God to announce and accomplish his plan. Some were young, some were old; some were women, some were men; some were kings, some were common and poor; some trusted God and were obedient, some forgot to trust God and were disobedient; some knew him from a young age, some did not know him until they were adults. And God used each one of them. But only one man could be a Savior for God’s people. Do you know who? Jesus (John 3:16).

How did God use Jesus to accomplish saving his people from their sins? He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Why was Jesus the only man that could die in our place for our sins? Because he was perfect, without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). What can we do to be saved? Nothing, it is a gift (Ephesians 2:8).

You may have heard Bible stories about Jesus your whole life. Take a moment and share things you remember about Jesus—perhaps a miracle, a teaching, a parable, or something about his death and resurrection. Can you think of some other names for Jesus?

Today we celebrate the birthday of the King of kings!

For Older Children: This advent season has been a celebration of the birth of Jesus. Did Jesus exist before he was born? Where was he? Read John 1:1-5.

Where is Jesus now? Read John 14:1-2. When Jesus comes again, how will he come? Read Matthew 24:30-31

Prayer: Thank you for sending your one and only Son, Jesus. Help me to celebrate his birthday today in a way that honors you and reminds me how much you love me.