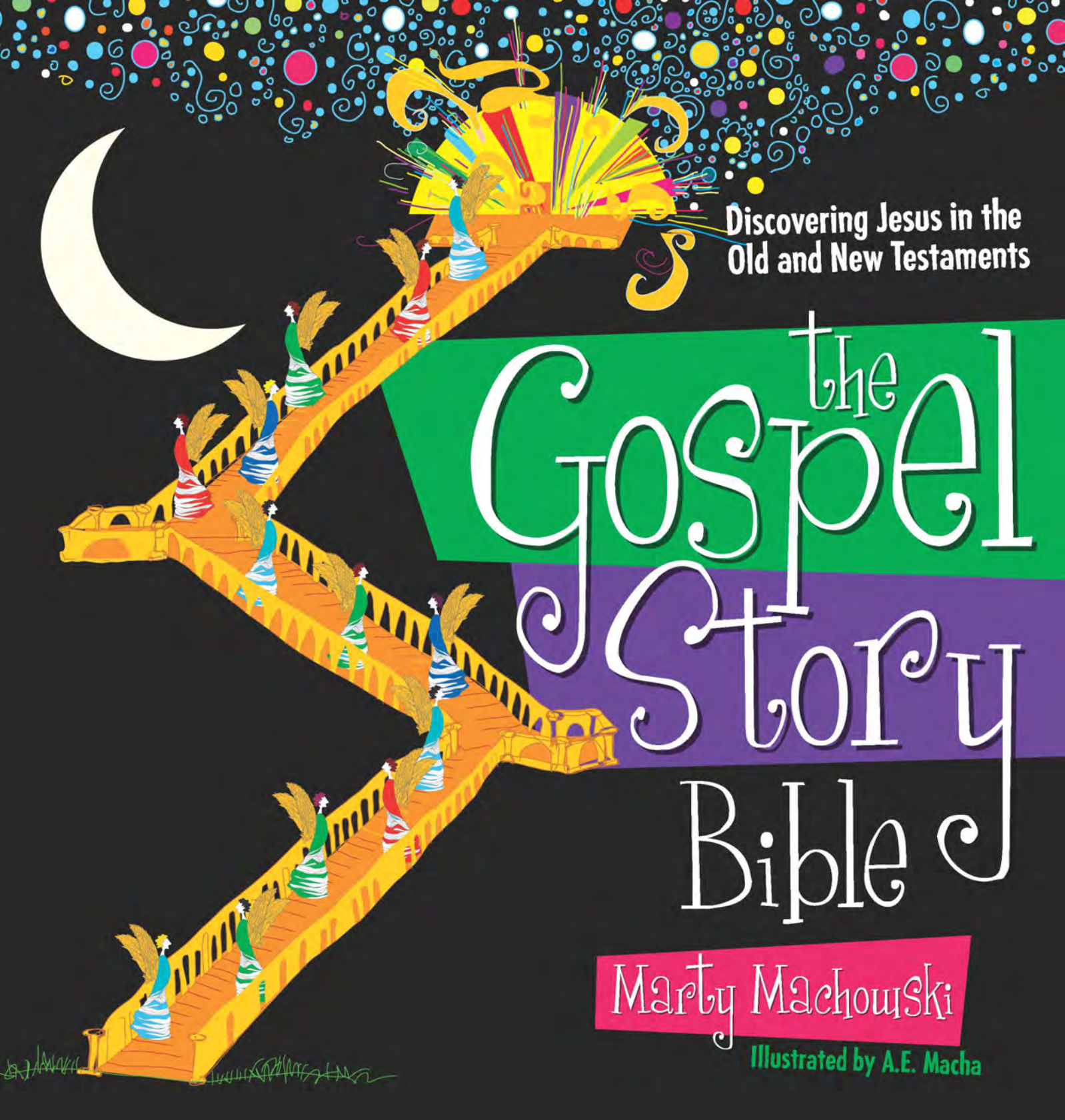




Discovering Jesus in the
Old and New Testaments

The Gospel Story Bible

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Illustrated by A.E. Macha

Abram & God's Promise

GENESIS 12–13

Now that the people of Babel could no longer talk with each other, they spread out over the whole earth. Different nations were formed, each with its own language. Terah, a man whose great-way-back-grandfather was Noah's son Shem, settled with his family in a place called Haran. Terah had a son named Abram. Abram lived in Haran with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot.

One day the Lord spoke to Abram to take his family and leave. God said, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1–2). God told Abram he would use him to bless all the families of the earth. Even though Abram didn't know where God was sending him, he trusted God's words to him. So, when he was seventy-five years old, Abram moved away from Haran with Sarai, Lot, their servants, and everything they owned. Remember, outside his own country, Abram wouldn't have understood the languages of people he would meet, but God gave Abram faith to obey. God was about to start his plan to rescue people from the curse that came when Adam and Eve first sinned. Along the way Abram sinned too, but God didn't leave Abram.

When Abram passed through a land called Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and promised to give the land

to Abram and his children. Abram built an altar to the Lord and then continued on his journey. When he arrived safely in Bethel he built another altar to the Lord. After a great famine forced Abram to move to Egypt, he returned to Bethel to live. In all their travels the Lord blessed Abram and Lot. Their flocks of animals grew and grew until they filled the land.

After awhile, there wasn't enough room for Abram and Lot to stay together. Each of their flocks needed so much land for food and water, even their shepherds began to argue. When Abram saw that they were running out of space, he asked Lot to choose where he wanted to live. If Lot wanted to go to the left, Abram would go to the right. Lot chose to live in a beautiful valley with lots of grass,



Let's Talk About It!

What is Lot looking at and what is Abram looking at?

Would you rather live in a town or in the country?

What did God give Abram that was better than living in town?

rivers, and streams. With his family and herds, Lot traveled away from Abram. He went to the cities of the valley and pitched his tent near the city called Sodom.

After Lot left, the Lord spoke to Abram and said, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever" (Genesis 13:14–15). God told Abram he would have so many children and grandchildren that they could not be counted, just like the specks of dust on the earth can't be counted. Lot chose the best piece of land, but Abram received the promise of God. Through Abram we have all been blessed, just as God promised, because it is by the death and resurrection of his great-far-off grandson Jesus that all those who believe inherit the promise of Abraham forever!

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

GENESIS 15

Abram, his wife, and all their herds and flocks settled at Hebron. That was the place where God told Abram he would have so many children that they would be like the dust of the earth. But time went by and still Abram did not have a son to fulfill the promise God gave to him. But the Lord did not forget Abram. He spoke to Abram again and said, “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great” (Genesis 15:1). Abram reminded the Lord that he still did not have any children. “Who will carry on for me after I die?” he asked.

The Lord told Abram he would certainly have a son to carry on after he died. He told Abram, “Look up in the sky and count the stars. Can you even do it? That’s how many children you will have someday.” Abram believed what God told him. The Lord saw Abram’s faith and “counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Abram was a sinner like us, but he put his faith in God’s plan.

God told Abram to bring some animals to make a sacrifice. When the sacrifice was all ready, according to the Lord’s directions, Abram fell into a deep sleep. Then the Lord told Abram what would happen in the future: Abram’s family would end up in another land as slaves and suffer for four hundred years. After that, the Lord would bring them back to Canaan with many possessions. (And that is exactly what God did through Moses hundreds of

years later when he delivered God’s people from Egypt.)

Later, when the sun was completely down and it was dark, a smoking pot and a flaming torch appeared out of nowhere. They passed down the middle of Abram’s offering as it was lying on the ground. The flaming torch was a sign of God’s promise to Abram. Again, God promised to give Abram’s children all the land around them. God called his promise a covenant, like the promise he made with Noah about the rainbow. And since God always keeps his promises, Abram could be sure he would one day have a son.

Do you know that part of this story is especially for us? The apostle Paul tells us that the words God spoke about Abram’s faith—“counted it to him as righteousness”—were written for us (Romans 4:22–24). If we believe that Jesus died for our sins and that God raised Jesus from the dead, our faith will be counted to us as righteousness just like Abram’s was. That is God’s promise to us. We are not saved by the good things we do. Like Abram, we are saved when we trust in what Jesus did for us. Since God always keeps his promises, we can be sure that if we believe God, we will be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven. Then one day we will even get to talk to Abram!



Let's Talk About It!

How many stars can you count?

What did God promise Abram?

How are you and I like the stars in the sky?

God Provides a Wife for Isaac

GENESIS 24



The Lord blessed Abraham, and Isaac grew older. When it was time for Isaac to be married, Abraham sent his most trusted servant to find a wife for him. He told the servant to travel back to the country where his relatives lived. He didn't want him to choose a wife from the local Canaanite people. The servant didn't have as much faith in God as Abraham

did. "What should I do if the woman I choose doesn't want to come back to this land?" Abraham encouraged his servant's faith. He said, "The Lord will send an angel ahead of you to give you success." The servant promised to obey Abraham's directions. He took all kinds of wonderful gifts with him and traveled to the city of Nahor, where Abraham's relatives lived.

When Abraham's servant reached Nahor, he rested his camels near a well outside the city. This was where the women would come in the evening to draw water. The servant prayed, "O Lord, give me success today." He asked God for a sign to guide him to the right wife for Isaac. The servant would ask a woman for a drink. If she offered water to the camels too, the servant would know she was the wife God had chosen for Isaac.

Even before he finished praying, a young woman named Rebekah came to the well to fill her water jar. The servant went to meet her and asked her for a drink. Rebekah quickly poured him a drink and then she said, "I'll draw water for your

camels too." The servant knew she must be the one! When she finished with the camels, he gave her two gold bracelets and a gold ring. He asked her what family she came from. When she told him the name of her grandfather, the servant knew it was Abraham's brother! Rebekah invited him to come to the family home and stay the night. The servant bowed and worshiped God for giving him success.

Rebekah ran all the way home and the servant followed. When he arrived, the servant told Rebekah's family everything that had happened. He told them about his journey, his prayer, and how God answered him. Rebekah's family could see God's blessing in it all. They asked her, "Will you go with this man and marry Isaac?" and Rebekah said yes! So the servant left with Rebekah the very next day. When they got close to home, they met Isaac. The servant told Isaac the whole story. Isaac brought Rebekah home. He loved Rebekah and he married her.

Abraham was right—God provided a wife for his son. You see, by the time Isaac needed a wife, Abraham's faith was

strong because it had been tested. He believed God's promise to make his descendants as numerous as the stars and a blessing to all nations. That meant Isaac needed a wife to carry on the promise of many children and grandchildren. One day Jesus would be born into this family, and God's promise to bless all the nations would come through him. Today we are called to believe as well. God promises to give us everlasting life in heaven if we turn from our sin and place our trust in Jesus. Reading the stories of Abraham's life and the ways God kept his promises can help our faith grow because we see that God is a promise-keeping God.

Let's Talk About It!

- What did Abraham send his servant to do?
- How did the servant know Rebekah was the right woman for Isaac to marry?
- What gifts did the servant give Rebekah?





Let's Talk About It!

What special gift does Jacob give to Joseph?

Describe Joseph's dreams.

How do Joseph's brothers feel about him?

STORY 22

Joseph's Dream

GENESIS 37:1–11

Jacob, whom God renamed Israel, returned to Canaan and lived there with his twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin. One day Joseph, the second youngest son, was tending the flocks with his brothers. He was seventeen years old. When they all returned, Joseph brought his father a bad report about his brothers. I'm sure they didn't like that very much. On top of that, Israel loved Joseph more than his brothers because he was Rachel's son. He gave Joseph a multicolored robe as a gift, but he didn't give any to his other sons. When Joseph's older brothers saw that their father loved him more, they became angry. They hated him and said bad things about him.

One day Joseph had a dream that he told to his brothers. He said that in his dream they were all in a field, tying up bundles of grain called sheaves. Then the bundle that Joseph was tying stood up tall. His brothers' sheaves gathered around and bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. When they heard the dream, Joseph's brothers said, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over

us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words" (Genesis 37:8).

Then Joseph had a second dream. This time eleven stars and the sun and the moon were bowing down to Joseph. When Joseph told this dream to his father, he corrected him saying, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" (Genesis 37:10). Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father wondered about the dreams.

God gave Joseph his dreams, which seemed wonderful at first. But if Joseph had known all the hard times that lay ahead, he might have talked about the dreams in a more humble way. God was going to take Joseph through slavery and prison before he would finally make him a great ruler in Egypt. There God would use Joseph to save his family from a terrible famine. God would use Joseph to save Israel so that one day Jesus would come from Israel's line and save us all.



God Protects Baby Moses

EXODUS 1:1–2:10



Let's Talk About It!

What is baby Moses floating in?

Can you point to the cross in the picture?

What special job does God have planned for Moses?

Because of the famine Israel and his family settled down to live in Egypt. Over time they had more and more children and grew to be a great people. Joseph died and after awhile, a new pharaoh came into power who did not remember Joseph or what he had done to save Egypt. This new king thought there were too many Israelites. He thought they would rise up and attack Egypt. So Pharaoh turned the Israelites into slaves. He put slave drivers over them who made them carry heavy loads, work in the fields, make bricks, and build cities. But God blessed his people in the midst of all this trouble, and their families continued to grow.

When Pharaoh saw this, he was unhappy. He told the midwives who helped mothers when they were having their babies to kill all the baby boys. But the midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and they did not obey. God blessed the midwives and the Israelites had even more children! Not long after that, Pharaoh commanded that every Israelite baby boy should be thrown into the Nile River. Only daughters were spared.

There was one Hebrew woman who had a fine baby boy. She was afraid he would be killed, so she hid him for three months. When she couldn't hide him any longer, she made a basket out of reeds and coated it with black tar to

keep out the water and help it to float. She put her baby son in the basket and hid it among the reeds of the riverbank. She assigned her daughter to watch him. That morning Pharaoh's daughter came to the river and found the baby in the basket. The baby's sister came out from where she was hiding and offered to find a woman to nurse the infant. Pharaoh's daughter agreed and sent the baby back to his mother to care for him until he was older. Later, when the boy came to live with her, she named him Moses and raised him in Pharaoh's courts. God saved Moses because he was a part of God's plan to help his suffering people.

Did you know that the word God used for Moses' basket is the same word that is used for Noah's great boat, the ark? Just like God used the ark to save Noah, God used the little basket to save Moses. God protected baby Moses from Pharaoh's order because God planned to use him to rescue his people from their slavery in Egypt. Many years later, God protected baby Jesus from another evil king. King Herod tried to kill him, but God warned Joseph in a dream to go to a place of safety. Jesus, like Moses, grew up to rescue God's people from slavery. But it was a different kind of slavery—a slavery to sin.

God Gives Moses the Ten Commandments

EXODUS 20:1 – 24



After three months of walking through the desert, the people of Israel came to Mount Sinai. They camped at the foot of the mountain while Moses went up to meet with God. God told Moses to set up a boundary at the base of the mountain and to warn the people not to cross it. In three days, God said he would come down where the people could see him. If the people even touched the edge of that boundary, they would die because his presence was holy and the people were sinful.

On the third day, the mountain shook with thunder and lightning filled the sky. Suddenly, the people heard a loud trumpet blast, and the mountain was covered with smoke. No one had ever seen anything like that before! Courageously, Moses went up to meet with God. God spoke to him in the thunder. He gave Moses the Ten Commandments and Moses brought them back to the people. Here is what they said:

I am the LORD your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make an idol for yourself in the shape of anything at all.

You shall not take the LORD's name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Honor your father and mother that you may live long in the land.

You shall not murder.

You shall not take your neighbor's wife for yourself.

You shall not steal.

You shall not lie and bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house or anything he owns.

When the people heard the thunder, the lightning, and the loud trumpet, they trembled! They said they were afraid to talk with God. Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. God has come to test you. He wants you to respect and honor him so that you won't sin." Then Moses walked closer to God, and God gave him these words to tell Israel: "You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. Do not make gods of silver or gold to worship along with me." After Moses gave Israel God's message, the people agreed to obey all that God said and Moses wrote down the words the Lord gave him.

Do you know why God gave Israel (and us) the commandments? The apostle Paul said that God's commandments, which we call the law, taught him what sin was. He said that if God had not given us the law, we would not know what sin is (Romans 7:7). Paul also said that the law was our schoolmaster to teach us about Christ (Galatians 3:24). You see, once we know God's law and we see how many times we break it, we realize that we are sinners who need a Savior. That is where Jesus comes in. How about you? Have you broken God's law? None of us can obey God perfectly. None of us except for Jesus! When we put our faith in him, Jesus takes away our sin and gives us his perfect record of obedience. That is how we can be saved from God's judgment for breaking his law.



Let's Talk About It!

What is Moses holding?

Where did he get them?

What is happening to the mountain?

Samson Loses His Strength

JUDGES 16



Samson made many enemies as a judge over Israel, especially among the Philistines. But he was too strong for them to fight, so they set traps for him instead. Even then, Samson escaped. Finally the Philistines came up with a plan. Samson loved a Philistine woman named Delilah. The Philistines promised her a treasure of silver coins if she could find out the secret of his great strength. Delilah agreed and the new trap was set.

The next time Samson came to visit Delilah, she asked, “Tell me the secret of your great strength. Is there any way you can be tied up so that you can’t escape?” Samson lied. He said, “If anyone ties me up with seven fresh bow strings, I will lose my power.” So, while Samson slept, Delilah tied him up just as Samson had said. Then she shouted, “Samson, the Philistines are here to capture you!” Samson woke up and snapped the bowstrings as if they were nothing. Delilah complained, “You lied to me! Now tell me the truth. What is the secret of your strength?” Samson lied again. This time he said, “If anyone ties me with new ropes that have never been used, I will become as weak as any other man.” But when she tied him up with new ropes and called in the Philistines, Samson broke the new ropes easily.

A third time Delilah asked Samson the secret of his strength. A third time Samson lied and, when the Philistines came, Samson escaped. Day after day Delilah pestered him to tell him the truth: “How can you say you love me if you won’t tell me your secret?” Finally, Samson was so tired of arguing that he told her about his vow to God to never shave his head. Samson should not have done this, but in his pride, he thought he would not lose his strength. This time, while he slept, Delilah had a man shave his head. When the Philistines came in, Samson was easily captured, because God left Samson to fight in his own strength. The Philistines gouged out Samson’s eyes and put him in prison.

After Samson had been in prison for awhile, the Philistines brought Samson to the temple of their god to mock him and to praise their god for his defeat. The Philistines were sure this would be a great day, but they forgot something. While Samson had been in prison, his hair had grown long again, as God had wanted it to be. When Samson entered the temple, he asked the attendant to put his hands on the pillars that held up the building, so they could help him stand. Then he prayed, “O God, please strengthen me just once more.” God heard his prayer, and when Samson pushed against the pillars, his great strength returned. The whole roof of the building tumbled down on Samson, the Philistine rulers, and all the people who gathered there. They all died.

Although God used Samson to save Israel from their enemies, Samson fell into the sin of pride. He thought he could be strong all by himself, without God’s help. He became distracted with the pleasures of the world. This story teaches us that no ordinary man could ever bring lasting salvation to God’s people, for we are all sinners. One day, though, God sent a deliverer named Jesus who was very different. Unlike Samson, God’s Son Jesus did not fall into sin. Though he was God, he humbled himself and came as a man to live a perfect life and die on the cross in our place, to provide a salvation that lasts forever!



Let's Talk About It!

What has God forbidden Samson to do?

What happens to Samson when he wakes up and finds his hair cut off?

Can you remember a time when you disobeyed?

David & Goliath

1 SAMUEL 17



Not long after David was anointed king, the Philistines gathered their armies to attack God's people again. Saul was still king, but the Spirit of the Lord had left him. The Philistines were on one mountain and King Saul's army was on another, with a valley in between. The Philistines had a great warrior named Goliath on their side. He was nine feet tall and wore heavy armor. Each morning for forty days Goliath came out to the soldiers of Israel and made fun of them and their God. He dared them to fight and said, "Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us" (1 Samuel 17:8–9). The men of Israel were terrified and no one volunteered to fight Goliath.

From time to time, David traveled to the battlefield to bring food for his brothers in the king's army. One day, David was there to hear Goliath mocking Israel and daring the soldiers to fight him. David asked the soldiers, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). David's oldest brother scolded David. "Who do you think you are to be talking to us like this? You don't have the right to say anything."

But when Saul heard about David he called for him. David told Saul, "I will go and fight this Philistine," but Saul saw that David was just a boy. Still David did not give up. He told Saul how the Lord had helped him kill lions and bears all by himself. He said, "The Lord who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this Philistine." So Saul at last agreed. He offered David his own armor to wear, but it was too heavy for David. Instead he took only his staff, five smooth stones, and a sling as he went out to meet Goliath.

When Goliath saw David coming toward him, he mocked him and said, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" (1 Samuel 17:43). David replied, "You come to me with a sword and a spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. He will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you down. Everyone on earth will know it is the Lord who saves." As Goliath moved toward David, David put a stone in his sling and hurled it at Goliath. The rock hit him on the forehead and the mighty Goliath fell to the ground. Then David ran to Goliath, took out his sword, and cut off his head, killing the great giant. When the Philistines saw that Goliath was dead, they ran in fear. The men of Israel chased them until they won a great victory.

When we read this story, we like to compare ourselves with David. But really, we are more like the men of Israel, afraid to fight and in desperate need of a champion to save them. David was God's man for the job. He did what the Israelites could not do. The salvation David brought Israel should remind us of Jesus. Like David, Jesus was a king who went to battle on our behalf. His victory was over sin and death. Before David delivered the men of Israel from Goliath, they stood helpless against him just as we are helpless to save ourselves and need Jesus to deliver us from our sin. David's life points to Jesus, and this story helps us see that we are not saved by our own strength, but by God's power.



Let's Talk About It!

What does Goliath say against God?

Why doesn't anyone want to fight Goliath?

How is David different from all the other soldiers?

Elisha's Ministry

2 KINGS 4:1–37

After Elijah was taken up into heaven, God's favor rested upon Elisha. Elisha received his request, a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and he became the Lord's prophet. Like Elijah, he performed many signs and wonders in the name of the Lord.

One day a widow came to Elisha asking for his help. Her husband had died and now she was in debt to some men. They were threatening to sell her two children into slavery as payment for the money she owed. Elisha listened carefully and then asked the woman, "What do you have in your house?" "All I have is one jar of oil," the widow replied.

Elisha told her, "Go and borrow as many empty jars as you can from your neighbors. Don't ask for just a few! Bring them back to your house and shut the door behind you. Then pour oil into all the empty jars, one by one." The widow obeyed Elisha and gathered the empty jars. She and her sons went inside her home, shut the door behind them, and began pouring oil from their one jar to fill all the empty containers. The oil kept flowing and flowing so that all the empty jars were filled! When the last one was full, the oil ran out. Elisha told her, "Go, sell the oil, pay your debts, and use the leftover money to live on." Her sons were saved from the bill collectors.

As Elisha traveled around, a man and his wife invited him to stay at their house. The wife prepared him meals to eat and, in time, they even built an addition to their home for Elisha to use when he was in town. This couple

had one problem. They didn't have a son and the husband was very old. When he died, there would be no one to care for the wife. Elisha wanted to bless the woman for her kindness to him. He told her that in one year she would give birth to a son. And then it happened, just as Elisha had said.

Several years later, the boy was helping his father in the field when he cried out in pain, "My head! My head!" So the boy was taken home, where his mother cared for him. But by noon her son had died. Without telling anyone the reason, the woman said she must go to the prophet of God. When she finally reached Elisha, he could see she was terribly upset. She told him what had happened and refused to leave until he came back with her. When he arrived, Elisha found her son lying dead on his bed. Elisha prayed to the Lord and then lay down on the child with his face on the little boy's face. Soon the boy's body got warmer, but still he did not wake up. Elisha walked around the house and then lay on the child a second time. When he did this, the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. He was alive again!

Elisha's life, like all the prophets of old, points forward to Jesus. Jesus was called a "great prophet" by those who saw him raise a widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:16). But while the Old Testament prophets spoke God's words, Jesus was the Word of God (John 1:1). Prophets like Elisha did miracles by God's power, but Jesus did miracles by his own power, for Jesus is God.



Let's Talk About It!

How many jars does the woman collect?

How is she going to fill all those jars with just one little jar of oil?

What do we learn about God from this story?

Good King, Bad King

2 CHRONICLES
28–29; 33

messed up God's temple and shut its doors. While he was king, God allowed the king of Syria to conquer Judah and many people were captured. When Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah took the throne. Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He commanded the Levites to clean out the temple and open its doors. When the temple was ready, Hezekiah and his officials took seven bulls, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering.

Then Hezekiah invited all the people to offer their own sacrifices. There were so many animals sacrificed that there were not enough priests to handle them all. Afterwards, Hezekiah called the people to celebrate the Passover. Because Hezekiah followed the Lord, God blessed Hezekiah and gave him victory over his enemies.

When Hezekiah died, his twelve-year-old son Manasseh became king. At first, Manasseh did not serve the Lord. He did what was evil and rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah tore down. Manasseh also rebuilt altars to the false god Baal. Because of this the Lord sent the king of Assyria to fight against Judah. Manasseh was captured and taken to

Babylon as a prisoner. But then something unexpected happened. Manasseh turned away from his sin, humbled himself before the Lord and prayed to God for help. The Lord heard Manasseh's prayer and put him back on the throne in Judah. He took down all the foreign gods he had erected, but his son Amon put them right back up after Manasseh died. After that, even the book of God's law was lost!

While Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh were ruling as kings, Isaiah served as God's prophet. Many bad things were happening, but Isaiah brought a word of hope. He said that one day God would bring a king who would reign in righteousness (Isaiah 32:1). You probably know who that was. Unlike the kings of Judah, Jesus never sinned. Even the best of the kings were sinners, but Jesus never was. He is the righteous king Isaiah said would come. The sacrifices Hezekiah offered in the temple held back God's judgment for awhile, but only the blood of King Jesus shed as a sacrifice for our sins can save his people forever.



Let's Talk About It!

What are the kings in the picture doing?

Which king is worshipping idols?

How can you tell if you love something more than God?

The Birth of Jesus

MATTHEW 1:18–2:15; LUKE 2:1–21

When Joseph found out that Mary was having a baby, he was confused and upset. He knew he wasn't the father, so he planned to end their engagement. But before that could happen, an angel came to him in a dream. The angel told him, "The baby growing inside Mary is from the Holy Spirit. Don't be afraid to marry her. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name 'Jesus,' because he will save his people from their sins." Joseph listened to the angel and obeyed the Lord.

After they were married, Caesar, the Roman ruler, commanded every man to register his name in his hometown so all the people could be counted. Since Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to travel to Bethlehem. When Mary and Joseph arrived, it was so filled with travelers that there was no place to stay, even though it was time for her baby to be born. So Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable, where animals were kept. She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, where animals ate their food. It didn't seem like a special beginning, but it was.

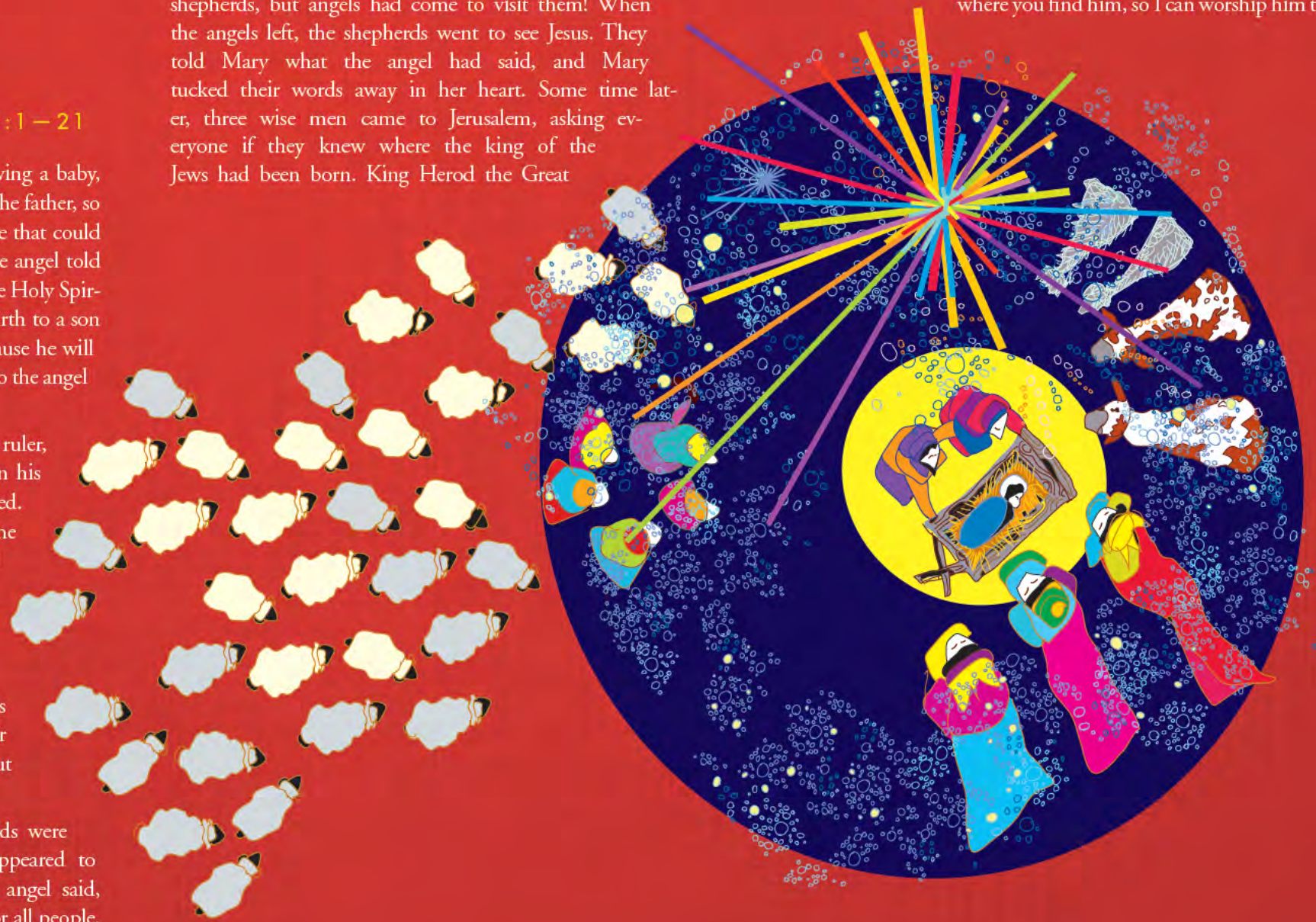
Outside the city that night, some shepherds were watching their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them. The shepherds were terrified, but the angel said, "Fear not! I bring you good news of great joy for all people.

Today the Savior has been born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord! This is how you will know him: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8–12). Then angel after angel filled the sky, praising God. The shepherds could hardly breathe after seeing all the heavenly glory. Most people ignored shepherds, but angels had come to visit them! When the angels left, the shepherds went to see Jesus. They told Mary what the angel had said, and Mary tucked their words away in her heart. Some time later, three wise men came to Jerusalem, asking everyone if they knew where the king of the Jews had been born. King Herod the Great

was the ruler over Jerusalem and he wasn't happy to hear that kind of talk. He asked the scribes and chief priests what the wise men might be talking about. They told him about an Old Testament prophecy that said a ruler would come from Bethlehem. So Herod sent the wise men off to seek the child. He said, "Please be sure to come back and tell me where you find him, so I can worship him too."

But that was a lie. Herod really planned to kill him. He didn't want to share his throne with anyone. After the wise men left, they saw the star they had been following and it led them to Jesus. When they found him, they fell down and worshiped him and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. An angel warned the wise men not to return to Herod, so they went home another way. But when Herod realized he had been tricked, he ordered all the babies in Bethlehem to be killed. It was a terrible, evil plan, but God protected Jesus. An angel earlier warned Joseph about Herod, and Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, where they were safe.

Did you know God planned the exact moment when Jesus would come into the world to save us from our sins? Paul tells us that "when the fullness of time had come," God sent his Son to redeem us so we could be brought into God's family (Galatians 4:4). God had our salvation all planned out even before he made the world (Ephesians 1:4). So it was easy for God to tell Joseph that Jesus was the one to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Did you know that Mary's son Jesus was both man and God at the same time? That is very important. As a man, Jesus carried our sins for us on the cross and took our punishment. As God, he lived a perfectly holy life without ever sinning. And because he was God, he grew up to heal the sick and raise the dead. Death could not win over him! Jesus came back to life on the third day so that some day we can rise and be with him in heaven.



Let's Talk About It!

Who came to visit the newborn baby Jesus?

How many animals are in the picture?

How do the wise men know where to find Jesus?

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

JOHN 2:12–25



After the wedding feast where he turned water into wine, it was almost time for Passover so Jesus and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem. Soon they were at the temple. It was full of people buying and selling as if they were in a market. Some were selling animals to be used in sacrifices, like pigeons, sheep, and cattle. Others set up tables to exchange Roman money for temple money, right in the temple courts. When Jesus saw this he was not happy. In fact, he made a whip out of cords and chased those people out of the temple!

Jesus dumped out the boxes of coins and turned over the tables of the money-changers. But he didn't let the animals go. Instead he told the people who sold them: "Take these things away. Do not make my Father's house a marketplace." As the disciples watched, they remembered Psalm 69 where David talked about his strong desire to care for God's house. It was the same with Jesus.

The religious leaders were upset by what Jesus did. So they asked Jesus to give them a sign to prove he had the right to chase the people away. Jesus didn't give them a sign. Instead he simply said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). When the Jews heard this, they were astonished. What was Jesus

talking about? It had taken forty-six years to build the temple! The leaders mocked Jesus for saying he could raise it up in three days. But that was because they didn't understand what he meant. Jesus wasn't talking about the temple building made of stone. He was talking about the temple of his body—the place where God was really living! Jesus didn't give them the sign they asked for but soon after, during Passover, Jesus performed other signs and many believed in him.

A few years later, when Jesus was arrested, some people tried to get Jesus into trouble by using his words against him. They told the high priest, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands'" (Mark 14:58). And when Jesus was on the cross, some people made fun of him for what he had said: "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" (Mark 15:29–30). It wasn't until Jesus rose from the dead that the disciples remembered his words and finally understood that they had pointed to his death and resurrection all along.



Let's Talk About It!

What is Jesus doing in the picture?

Why did he do this?

When Jesus said he could rebuild the temple in three days, what was he really talking about?

Good News

LUKE 4:16–44



One day when Jesus was just beginning the work God had sent him to do, he went back to Nazareth, the town he grew up in as a boy. On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue and stood up to read something from God's Word. The attendant handed Jesus the scroll that had the book of Isaiah written on it. Jesus found the place (Isaiah 61) where Isaiah wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has chosen me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to care for those who are hurt and bring freedom to those who are bound." He read the verse and then he rolled up the scroll and said to the people, "Today this scripture has come true as you have listened to me read it."

At first the people marveled at Jesus' words. They said nice things about him. They remembered he was Joseph's son. Some of them may have remembered Jesus as a boy, growing up in their town. But Jesus knew their hearts. He knew some things were not right. He challenged them and hinted that they would reject him. He reminded them of times in the past when God chose to bless Gentiles instead of Jews. When the people heard this, all their kind words suddenly turned into terrible anger. In fact, they chased Jesus to the top of a hill where they intended to throw him off the cliff to kill him. But that didn't happen. Somehow, Jesus just passed through the crowd and went away. No one could kill Jesus before his work on earth was complete.

After that Jesus traveled to Capernaum. Again one Sabbath day he began teaching the people there. One person had an unclean spirit—a demon—living in him. This demon shouted out that Jesus was the Holy One of God. This was true, but Jesus knew the demon had an evil reason for saying it. Jesus knew when the time was right for people to be told who he was, and that time hadn't come yet. So Jesus rebuked the demon and told him to come out of the man. Right away, the demon left. He had to obey Jesus whether he liked him or not. When the people saw what happened, the news that Jesus had power over demons spread like wildfire. No one had ever seen anything like this!

After Jesus left the synagogue he went to Simon's house to spend the night and found Simon's mother-in-law there, sick with a high fever. So Jesus healed her. As evening came people who had heard what Jesus had done for the demon-possessed man began to bring other sick and demon-possessed people to him, hoping he would help them too. Jesus laid his hands on them, healed them, and cast out many demons. Some of these demons also shouted out that Jesus was the Son of God, but Jesus silenced them. The next morning the people tried to keep Jesus from leaving, but Jesus reminded them of Isaiah's prophecy: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43).

The Bible gives the name "gospel" to the life and work of Jesus. Did you know the word "gospel" means "good news"? It's called the good news because it answers the question, "How can I be saved from my sins?" When Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave three days later, he made a way for everyone who believes in him to be forgiven and go to heaven. Jesus took the punishment we deserved for our sin. Now we can have peace with God instead of punishment. That is really good news!



Let's Talk About It!

How did Jesus help the woman in the picture?

Why are all the people lined up outside the house?

If Jesus was physically here today, what would you ask him to do for you?

Treasure in Heaven

MATTHEW 6:19–34



Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God and heavenly treasure when he taught the people. Heavenly treasure is the treasure God gives us in heaven for obeying him while we live on earth. “Treasure in heaven never wears out,” Jesus said. “That is why you should store up treasures there. Earthly treasure doesn’t last. The things we buy wear out. Rust and decay destroy them. Robbers can come and steal them if we don’t lock them away. But in heaven there is no rust or decay.” And any treasure God gives us there is safe because there are no robbers in heaven! It will last for ever and ever.

Jesus talked a lot about treasure and money because he knew they often make us forget about God. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24). Jesus knew that we worry about our

lives and, instead of trusting God for help, we try to solve our problems with money.

Jesus wasn’t saying that money is bad, but he wanted people to trust the Lord for what they need. God owns everything! He can provide for all our needs every day. We don’t need to worry. To teach people how God provides, Jesus said, “Look up at all the birds around you. They don’t plant crops or harvest their own food. God provides food for them. If God does all that for the birds, shouldn’t we trust God for what we need? We are much more valuable to God! Anyway,” Jesus said, “worrying about what you need won’t add a single day to your life. It doesn’t do any good.”

Jesus looked around the hillside and pointed to the flowers. “Look at these flowers,” he said. “They don’t work to buy clothing or spin thread to weave their dress, but look at how beautiful they are! They are more beautiful than even King Solomon, dressed in his finest royal robes. If God provides beauty for the flowers, don’t you think he will provide what we need to wear? And don’t worry about what you will eat either. Your Father in heaven knows everything you need. Instead of worrying about these earthly things,” Jesus said, “make following God the most important thing in your life. God promises to give us all the other things we need.”

We might think food and clothing are our most important needs, but we have a bigger need: we all need to be forgiven for our sins. Jesus died on the cross so we can be forgiven. He took care of our biggest need. If God was willing to give up his only Son to take our sins away, we can be sure he will give us the little things we need, like food and clothing.



Let's Talk About It!

Who gives the flowers their beautiful colors and cares for the birds?
What can we learn from the way God cares for the flowers and the birds?
Name one way God provides for you.

Jesus Feeds the Multitude

MATTHEW 14:13–21; LUKE 9:10–17; JOHN 6:1–15

No one had ever seen anyone do the miracles Jesus was doing, and no one had ever heard anyone talk about God and his kingdom the way Jesus did. No wonder people followed him everywhere he went! Even when Jesus sat down somewhere just to talk with his disciples, the news would spread: “Jesus is here! Jesus is here! Let’s go hear what he has to say!” Soon the crowds would surround him again, eager to hear every word and hoping to see a miracle.

This happened one day when Jesus climbed a mountain to talk with his disciples. Soon the whole mountain was covered with people, so Jesus taught them too. At the end of the day the disciples asked Jesus to send the people home. “They haven’t had anything to eat all day and there is no place for them to spend the night,” they said. To test their faith, Jesus said, “You give them something to eat” (Luke 9:13). Philip replied, “How can we do that? Even if we had 200 denarii (which was about 200 days’ wages), we wouldn’t have enough money to buy food for all these people!” There were about five thousand men in the crowd and even more women and children.

Then Andrew spoke up. “There is a little boy here with five barley loaves and two fish, but that is not nearly enough.” Normally, that would have been true, but not this time! The little boy’s lunch was part of God’s bigger plan.

Jesus asked his disciples to have everyone sit down in groups of fifty. Then Jesus took the boy’s bread and fish and

thanked God for it. He broke the fish and the loaves into small pieces and gave them to the disciples to share with the crowd. The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly how it happened, but sometime between the time Jesus broke up the food and the disciples passed it out, more and more food grew from those first, small pieces. The disciples passed out the fish and loaves to every person in the crowd, and everyone ate all they wanted.

Afterward, Jesus sent the disciples to gather the leftovers. They came back with twelve baskets full of food—more than twelve times what Jesus started with! Everyone who was there that day knew they had seen a miracle. They said, “This has to be the Prophet we have been waiting for God to send!” Jesus knew what they were thinking. He also knew they desired to make him their king, but that was not why he had come. So he sent the crowds away and slipped away by himself to another part of the mountain.

The Jews wanted a king like David, who would fight and conquer Rome, the country that ruled over them. But Jesus didn’t come to start a war against Rome. He didn’t come to free the people from their earthly enemies. Jesus came to fight against the kingdom of Satan and to free us from our enemies of sin and death. Jesus could have defeated the Romans in a second, but he had a bigger plan—to save us from our sins. That’s why he did not let the people make him their king.



Let's Talk About It!

Look at the picture. Has the crowd eaten yet?

What part in the story does the little boy play?

How can so much food be left over from five loaves and two fish?

The Transfiguration

MATTHEW 17:1–13; MARK 9:1–13; LUKE 9:28–36



When Jesus told the disciples that he must suffer and die and then would be raised from the dead, the disciples did not understand what Jesus was talking about. Jesus also told them, “Some of you who are standing here will not die before you see the kingdom of God as it comes with power.” The disciples didn’t understand that either! But about a week later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up onto a high mountain and gave them a taste of the power and the glory of the kingdom that was coming. There on the mountain Jesus was suddenly transformed from a normal looking man into the glorious Son of God. His face shone like the sun and his clothes were as dazzling white as light.

All of a sudden Elijah and Moses appeared out of nowhere and began to talk with Jesus. Peter, James, and John were terrified. No one had ever seen anything like this before! Then a cloud drifted down and surrounded them. They heard a voice from inside the cloud saying, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7). When the disciples heard God’s voice (because that is who it was), they fell down with their faces on the ground to worship God. Then Jesus came over to them, touched them, and told them to get up. When they did, no one was there but Jesus.

On their way down the mountain, Jesus told them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until I have risen

from the dead.” The three disciples kept it to themselves, but they still wondered what Jesus meant by being raised from the dead. They asked Jesus why the religious leaders taught that Elijah had to come first, before the Messiah. Jesus answered, “Elijah does come first to make things ready. And Elijah has already come, and he has suffered just as the Son of Man [one of the names Jesus called himself] is going to suffer.” That is when they realized that John the Baptist was the Elijah Jesus was talking about.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to see Jesus changed from an ordinary looking man into the glorious Son of God in dazzling white? For just a few moments the three disciples had that chance. They got a glimpse of the holiness, glory, and power of Jesus as God—something no one had seen outside heaven. No wonder they were terrified! They knew Jesus, the man who did and said extraordinary things. But nothing could really prepare them to see Jesus, the Son of God, shining with heavenly glory. And yet the transfiguration the disciples saw was only a tiny hint of the power Jesus would show in his resurrection. That is when his words about the kingdom of God coming in power would come true.

Let’s Talk About It!

Who is with Jesus on the mountain?

What do you think it was like to watch Jesus transfigured?

What does this tell us about Jesus?

The Widow's Offering

MARK 12:41–13:2;

LUKE 20:1–21:9



Jesus walked over and sat down where he could see people drop their offerings into the temple treasury box. Many rich people were giving large amounts. Then a poor widow came over to the offering box. Jesus watched her put in two small copper coins. He pointed out the woman to the disciples and said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. The people who gave large amounts of money still had plenty left over for themselves. But this poor widow gave God everything. Those two coins were all she had left to live on.”

As Jesus left the temple one of his disciples talked about how beautiful it was. “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” (Mark 13:1). And the buildings were beautiful, because King Herod had decorated them with gold and marble. But Jesus looked at the temple and said, “A day is coming when all this will be destroyed. Not even one stone will be left standing on top of another.” Jesus was right. A few years later, while many of those men were still alive, the temple was completely destroyed.

This story talks about two very different ways to live. The religious rulers wanted to look good on the outside. So did the rich people who gave large amounts of money so people would be impressed. But it was the widow who trusted the Lord. Her beauty was on the inside, where God could see it. In the same way, the temple building looked good on the outside with its beautiful decorations, but it was only a building. Jesus, our Savior, walked among the crowd in the temple but few recognized how beautiful he was. What about us? Will we live for God’s glory and trust in Jesus, or will we live to impress others? Like the Pharisees, we are all sinners on the inside. We need Jesus to open our eyes to see his beauty and take away our sin.

While Jesus was in Jerusalem he taught in the temple. Lots of people were listening to him there, but not all of them were his friends. Religious leaders—the scribes, chief priests, elders, and Sadducees—took turns questioning him. They wanted to trick him into saying something that would get him into trouble, but Jesus could not be trapped. The more they tried to catch Jesus in a mistake, the more people saw how wise he was and how different his words were from everyone else’s. Finally, in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, Jesus warned his disciples against these religious rulers. “Beware of the scribes who love to look good on the outside where everyone can see them,” he said. “Secretly they take advantage of widows and poor people by taking their money. They will be punished for their evil deeds.”



Let's Talk About It!

Who is putting more money in the offering, the man or the woman?

Who has more money left at home, the man or the woman?

Why does Jesus say the woman gave more than everyone else?

Jesus Is Arrested

MATTHEW 26:36–56;

MARK 14:32–65;

LUKE 22:39–54; JOHN 18:1–12

Jesus and his disciples walked to a large grove of olive trees on top of the mountain called the Mount of Olives to pray. Judas, the disciple who planned to betray Jesus, knew that was where they would be. So while Jesus and the disciples were talking and praying, Judas met up with some soldiers preparing to arrest Jesus. He was ready to lead the way.

Jesus warned the disciples of the hard things that were ahead. “You are all going to fall away because of me,” he said. But Peter didn’t want to hear that. He was going to be different! “That might happen with everyone else, but I will never fall away,” he boasted. Jesus knew differently. He told Peter, “Satan has already asked to test you, Peter. I have prayed that your faith would not fail.” But Peter didn’t want to listen. “I am ready to go to prison and to death for you, Lord!” he said. Jesus quietly replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter. Tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Again Peter told Jesus that he would not deny him. The other disciples said the same thing.

When they came to a place called the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked the disciples to sit down and pray. Then he took Peter, James, and John deeper into the grove with him and said, “My heart is filled with sorrow. Please keep watch and pray with me.” Then Jesus went on a bit further, knelt down and prayed to his heavenly Father. “My Father, if it is

possible, please take this cup away from me, but only if it is your will.” The “cup” Jesus was talking about was the cup of God’s wrath, filled with God’s punishment for our sins. He knew how great the punishment for those sins would be. It was hard to face, even for Jesus. He prayed this prayer three times. Then God sent an angel to strengthen him. Each time Jesus prayed he walked back to the disciples. Each time he found them asleep, unable to stay awake and pray.

The third time Jesus woke them up and said, “The time has come. My betrayer is here.” And there came Judas, with soldiers and officials. “Who are you looking for?” Jesus asked the soldiers. “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said. “I am he,” Jesus said.

When Jesus said “I am he,” the soldiers stepped back and fell to the ground. When the soldiers stood back up, Judas went to Jesus and kissed him. That was the signal Judas had arranged to betray the Lord. The soldiers and officials then stepped forward to arrest Jesus, but Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. “Put your sword away,” Jesus told Peter as he healed the man’s ear. “Don’t you realize that my Father would at once send me more than twelve legions of angels if I asked? But that would not fulfill God’s Word.” Jesus turned to the crowd. “Why do you come with clubs and swords? You have seen me in the temple many times. But this has happened so that God’s Word through the prophets would come true.” The soldiers grabbed Jesus and led him away. And, just as Jesus warned, the disciples ran away.

Terrible things were happening to Jesus and the worst was yet to come. But it is important to remember that his suffering was all part of God’s plan. Hundreds of years earlier, Isaiah wrote about Jesus’ arrest, saying that even though he would be treated cruelly, Jesus would not fight back or say anything to stop the people arresting him (Isaiah 53:7–8). Jesus could have called down angels from heaven to rescue him, but he didn’t. He let the soldiers take him without fighting so he could die on the cross for our sins.



Let's Talk About It!

What is happening to Jesus?

Why doesn't he fight back and use his angels to destroy the soldiers?

Where are his disciples?

The Resurrection

MATTHEW 27:62–28:16;
MARK 16:1–13; LUKE 24:1–12; JOHN
20:1–18

Jesus was dead and buried in a tomb, but that wasn't enough for the Pharisees and chief priests. They went back to Pilate and said, "This man was a fake. When he was still alive, he told people he would rise from the dead after three days. If his disciples get into his tomb and steal his body, they will tell everyone that Jesus has risen from the dead. You have to keep that from happening!" So Pilate sent some soldiers to make sure the tomb was closed up tightly so no one could get in. While the religious leaders watched, they put a Roman seal on the stone that closed up the tomb and posted their soldiers to guard it.

It was early in the morning the third day after Jesus died. Some women who loved Jesus were taking spices to the tomb to anoint his body. On their way they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away for us so we can get inside the tomb?" But they didn't have to worry! For moments earlier, while the guards stood watch, two angels came down from heaven. Their bodies shined like lightning and their clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they were shaking. They fell down on the ground as though they were dead. One angel rolled back the stone and sat on it, as a great earthquake shook the ground. Soon the women arrived and saw the angels with the stone rolled away! What had happened? One angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he

has risen, as he said! Come, see the place where he lay" (Matthew 28:5–6). Then the angels instructed the women to tell his disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee.

When the women went into the tomb, Jesus' body was gone! Quickly they ran to tell the disciples. But the disciples found their story hard to believe. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves. They went inside and saw Jesus' grave clothes lying there, but Jesus himself was gone! That's when they believed what the women had told them. After the disciples went home, Mary Magdalene, one of the women, stayed outside the tomb, crying. Two angels came to her and asked, "Why are you crying?" "Someone has taken my Lord away," Mary said, "and I don't know where they have laid him." She had taken the disciples the message, but she hadn't understood it herself. Then Mary turned and noticed a third man standing there. She thought he was the gardener, but then he called her name, "Mary." At once she knew it was the Lord Jesus. She fell at his feet and worshiped him. "Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold onto me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17). So Mary returned to the disciples and told them she had seen the Lord.

Did you know that Jesus' death and resurrection is the most important part of the whole Bible? Every story in the Bible that took place before Jesus looks forward to his death and resurrection. Every story after Jesus' death and resurrection looks back upon those days to celebrate the good news of the gospel! The apostle Paul said the resurrection is so important that we are lost without it (1 Corinthians 15:14–17).



Let's Talk About It!

What do you see going on in the picture?

What happened to the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb?

Why is Jesus' resurrection so important?

The Body of Christ

ACTS 18:1–11; 1 CORINTHIANS 12



The apostle Paul took many missionary journeys to bring the good news about Jesus to people who had never heard it. On one trip Paul went to a Greek city called Corinth. He started by visiting the synagogue there each Sabbath to try to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. But the Jews in Corinth refused to believe. So Paul left the synagogue, shook the dust off his clothes and said to them, “If you refuse to believe, you have no one to blame but yourselves.” He continued, “I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

Paul was welcomed into the house of Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue. As Paul taught the Gentiles there, many believed.

And since he was preaching so close to the synagogue, some Jews became Christians as well. Even the ruler of the synagogue got saved as he listened to Paul preach. One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people” (Acts 18:9–10). Paul stayed and taught the Corinthians for a year and a half.

Years later, Paul got the news that the Corinthian church was struggling. There was a lot of sinning going on! The Corinthians had become proud of the many spiritual gifts God had given them instead of being humble and grateful. Husbands and wives were not faithful to each other, and there was a lot of arguing in the church as people took sides against each other. Some even took their arguments to court instead of making peace with each other in the church. Instead of being united in Christ, they were divided. Some said they followed Paul, while others said they followed Peter or Apollos. So Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote a letter to encourage and correct them. Because the Holy Spirit helped

Paul we say that his letter was inspired by God. His letter to the Corinthians helps us when we struggle with sin today too.

In the letter, God spoke through Paul about how his people should live together in unity. Paul said that the church is like a human body, which is made up of many parts like hands, arms, legs, and eyes. Paul wrote, “If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body” (1 Corinthians 12:15). Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that even though we are different from one another with different spiritual gifts, we all belong to Christ and we’re all part of his body, the church. Paul asked, “If a person’s whole body were an eye, how could that person hear? Or if his whole body were an ear, how would he be able to smell?” Paul wanted them to see that we all need each other. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you,” nor can the head say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” The body needs all its parts! All Christians are saved by Jesus’ death on the cross. We are all

called to spread the good news about Jesus and use our gifts to help others. But God gave each of us different gifts. He wants one person’s strengths to serve another person’s weakness. So instead of boasting about our strengths or fighting with each other, we should use our gifts to serve one another. Everyone’s special gifts are meant to work together to build the church and spread the good news of the gospel. In fact, Jesus said that the way people will know we are his disciples is by our love for one another (John 13:34–35).

Let’s Talk About It!

Why do the different people in the picture need each other?

What gifts has God given the different people in your family?

What gifts has God given you?

