

COUNTING
the
DAYS
till
CHRISTMAS

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*○ come, all ye faithful! Joyful and triumphant!
○ come ye, ○ come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him born the King of Angels!
○ come, let us adore Him!
Christ the Lord!*

Advent is a time of counting the days till Christmas although it is about more than just counting. It is a time of coming to adore Jesus Christ the Lord!

Advent is a time for preparing our hearts to adore Him. This advent book is a companion to the *Jesus Storybook Bible*.

It has been written to help you as you help your children open their hearts to Jesus.

Here is how the advent book can be used –
Each of the twenty-four pages has four parts.

On the top page is:

- The chapter title, the date, the scripture passages and the pages found in *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (JSBB)
- Underneath is a Bible story that corresponds to the chapter in the JSBB
- Beside it is a picture from the JSBB (used with permission) and questions to go with the Bible story

On the bottom page is a coloring sheet with:

- Think about this – discussion questions
- The Good News of the Gospel – that ties the Bible story to Jesus and the story of how and why He came to live for us, die for us, and save us from the penalty of our sin. And it is the invitation to live with Him forever.
- Prayer – for you as you close your family devotions. One is given as a suggestion. Your children might want to add their own prayers

May the Lord God bless you and your family as you *Count the days till Christmas*
as you *Come and behold Him, Christ the Lord!*

The Story and the Song

From Psalm 19 and Hebrews 1* Pages 12 – 17

December 1

Do you like stories? Do you have a favorite story book? Maybe you like to make up your own stories. Maybe you like to hear stories that other people tell you.

Did you know that God wrote a story book? It's called the Holy Bible. God's Bible is different from any other story book ever written. The Bible is true. Completely and entirely true.

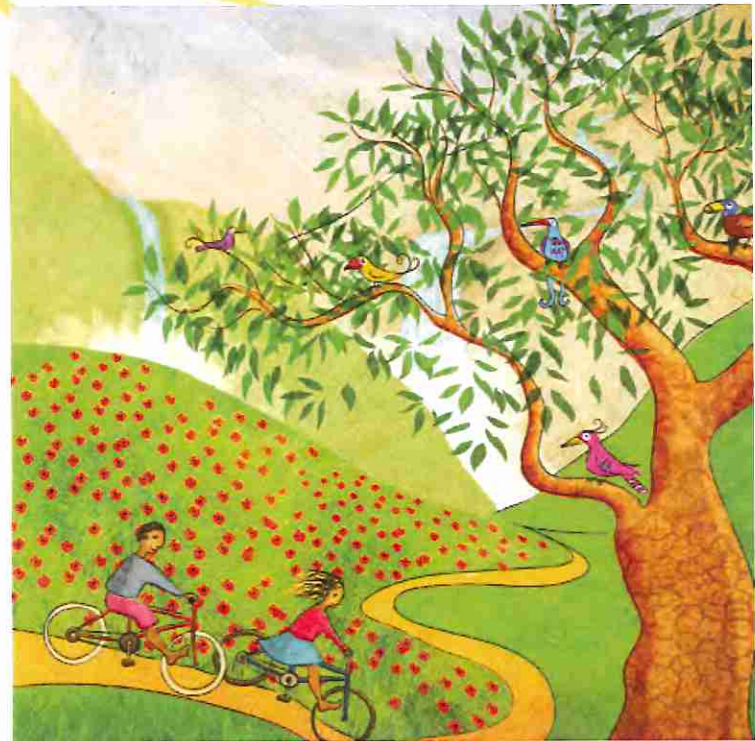
2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "All Scripture is breathed out by God." That means that God said the Bible. You might hear someone call the Bible: God's Word. Because it is. You might hear someone call the Bible the Holy Scriptures.

Why did God give us the Bible? God gave us the Bible to teach us everything He wants us to know, to correct us in how to live and how to love, to train us in how to enjoy life.

God chose men to write His Word. They weren't perfect. But what God wrote through them is perfect. God wrote us a letter. The Bible is God's love letter to us and for us.

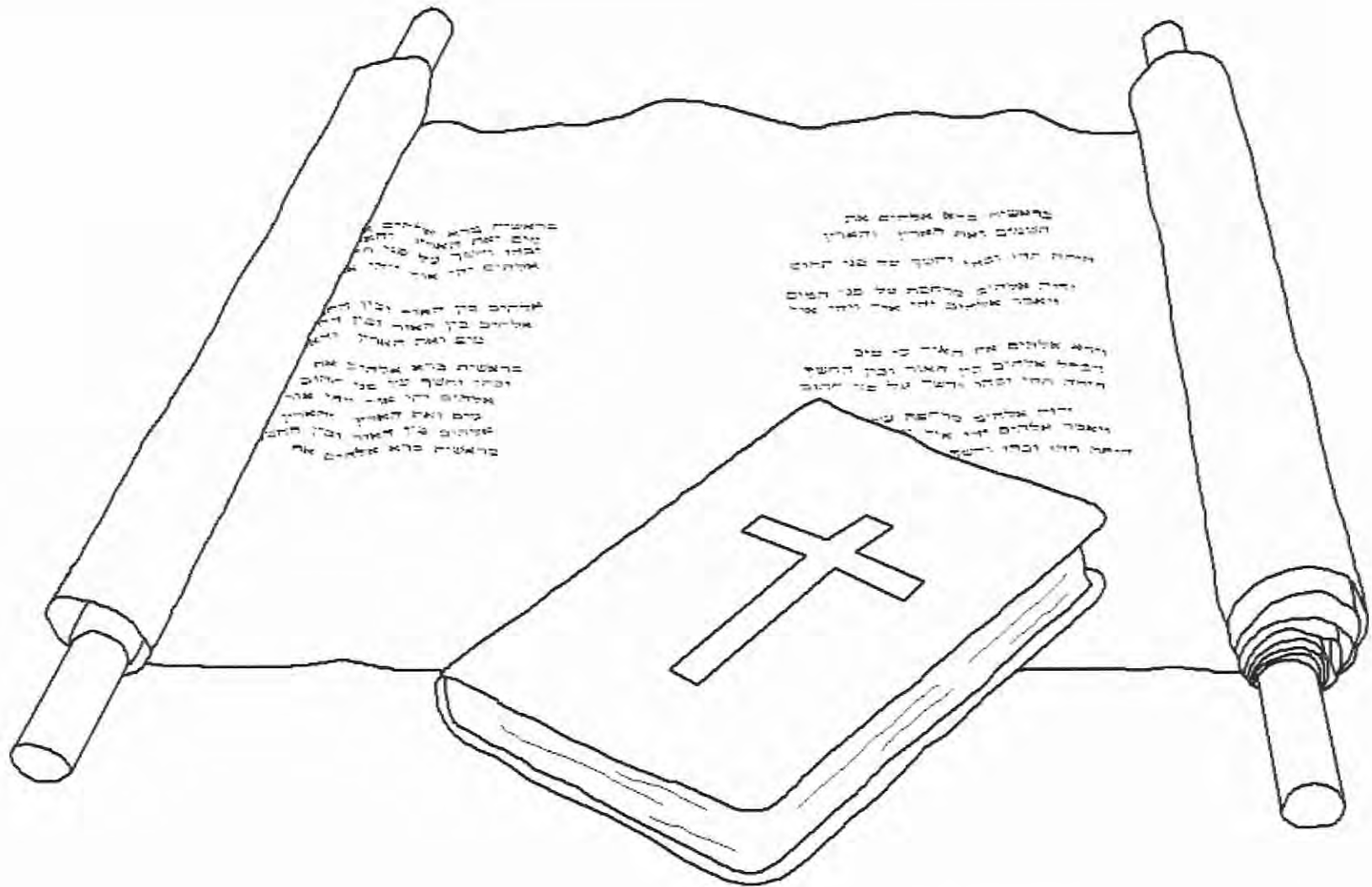
The Bible tells us about God's love for us poured out through His Son, His one and only Son, Jesus. God gave us Jesus. Jesus is God's gift to us. And as we read the Bible we learn an amazing thing: we are Jesus' gift to God!

We can say: The Bible is God's Word, it is absolutely true and it is given to us in love for our own good.



Yes or No Questions

1. God wrote a story book that is only true.
2. God chose men to write His Bible.
3. The Bible is a set of rules that we must obey.
4. The Bible is like a love letter that God wrote.
5. We need to try and find mistakes in the Bible.
6. The best way to learn about God is to read His Word.



THINK ABOUT THIS: Are you a good listener?
Do you think that if God spoke to you that You would listen to Him?
Would you do what He tells you to do? God has spoken.
He speaks to us today in His Word, the Bible.

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL: God spoke to us through
His Son, Jesus. The Bible is the story of Jesus.
PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You for giving me Your Bible. Thank You for
telling me all that You want me to know about You. Thank You for telling
me that You gave me Jesus so that I can know You and Your love. Amen.

The Beginning: A Perfect Home

From Genesis 1 – 2 * Pages 18 – 27

December 2

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” This is the first verse in the Bible. God was first. How did everything else come into being? God made it all. What were God’s tools? What did He use to make the heavens and the earth and everything in them? God used His words.

God spoke. God had a purpose and a plan. There was order to God’s plan. “Light,” was God’s first word of creation. Everything had been dark. Now there was light. Day and night began.

God filled the heavens with the sun and the moon and stars. Thousands of stars that made hundreds of galaxies. God covered the earth with land and seas. Mountains and plains, deserts and tropical forests. Creeks and streams, oceans and waterfalls.

God spoke and the waters were filled with fish and all sorts of swimming animals. God spoke more words and the skies were filled with birds. Fins and feathers!

God spoke and the land was covered with animals, great and small. Amazing creation, amazing creatures!

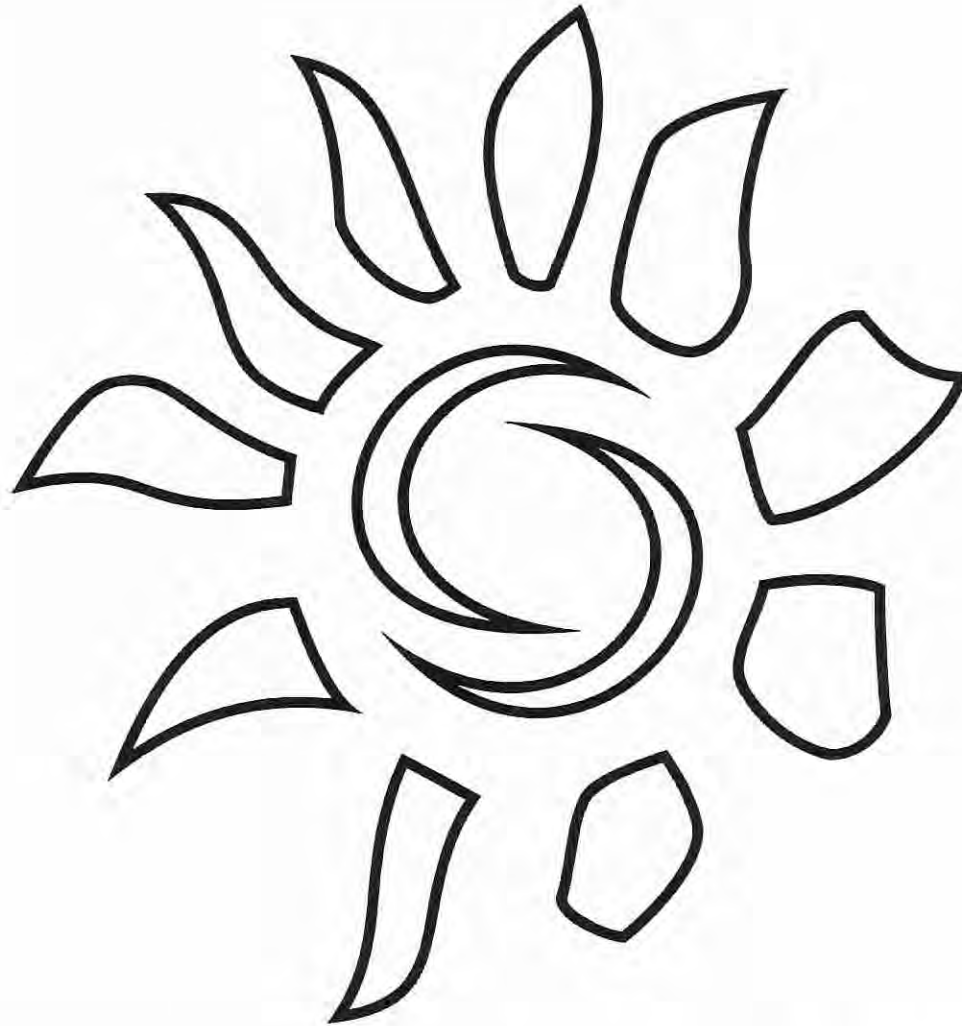
God saved the best for last, His most beloved of all creation. God made the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the earth. And God made the first woman, Eve, out of Adam’s ribs. God had said over and over and over again as He spoke creation and creatures into being, “It is good!” Now God blessed those whom He made in His own image and said, “It is very good!”

Then God rested.



Fill in the missing word

1. Before God made the world there was only _____.
2. To make His beautiful world God just _____.
3. When God made different things He called them all _____.
4. When God made Adam and Eve He said they were _____.
5. Everything that was made was good because it was made by _____.



Think about this: Words have power. You can make someone very happy when you tell them how much you love them. You can use words in lots of different ways, but your words are not like God's words. God created when He spoke. Nothing! He spoke, then something! Stars, light, elephants, thunder, hamsters. God spoke a beautiful and glorious world into being. But the crown of His creation is His children. There is nothing He loves better.

The good news of the Gospel: God loves His children, He loves you so much, that He gave up His only Son Jesus to win you back to Himself.

Prayer: Dear God, thank You for Your love that is deeper than any ocean, Your love is higher than any mountain, Your love is wider than any galaxy. Your love changes me. Thank You for telling me over and over again how much You love me. Amen.

The Terrible Lie

From Genesis 3 * Read pages 28-37

December 3

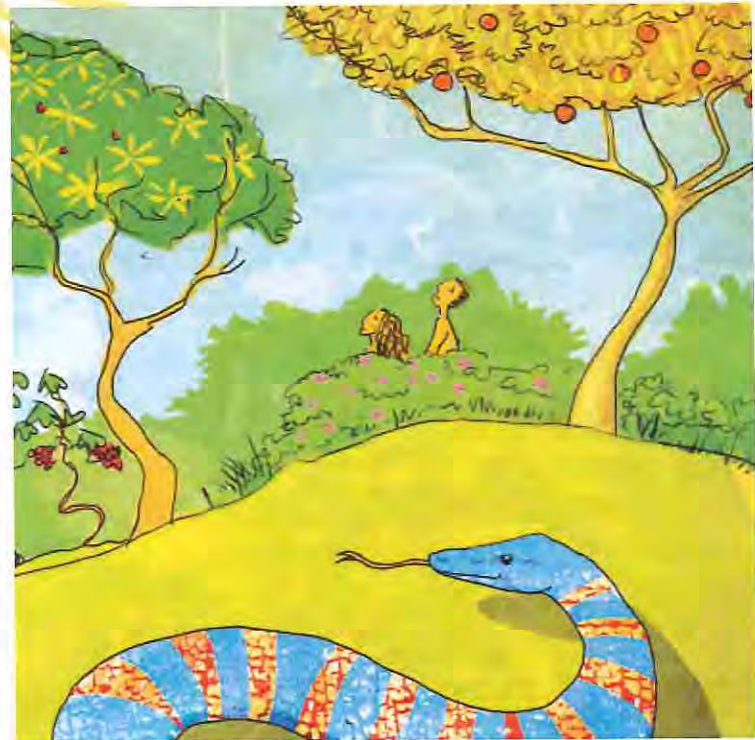
Years ago, Adam and Eve lived in a beautiful Garden. It was God's home so of course it was perfect. God gave them everything they needed and wonderful fruit for food. He gave them one rule: You may eat from all the trees, except *this one*. God was protecting them just like parents today protect their children from danger.

One day a sneaky snake slithered up to Eve. This was no ordinary snake. He could talk, and he hated God. He was really the devil in disguise. This snake had a plan: to turn God's people away from loving God. He tried to get Eve to doubt what God had said and to doubt that God loved her. He didn't want her to think about all of the wonderful things that God had given them. No! He asked Eve whether God had really said that they couldn't eat from the one tree. Eve told the snake that God had said not to eat and not to touch the fruit or they would die! The snake tricked Eve with a lie and now she was doubting God's words to her. The snake told her that she wouldn't die; God was not truthful with her. She wouldn't die in fact she would be like God. That sounded good to Eve, she wanted to be in charge.

The saddest thing happened. Eve ignored God and listened to the snake. She took the fruit, ate it and shared it with Adam. The devil slithered away, and Adam and Eve hid themselves. Oh, they knew they had disobeyed God. Oh, how their hearts hurt. Sin had come. And sin hurt. They thought that obeying the devil would make them like God. How wrong they were. How miserable they were.

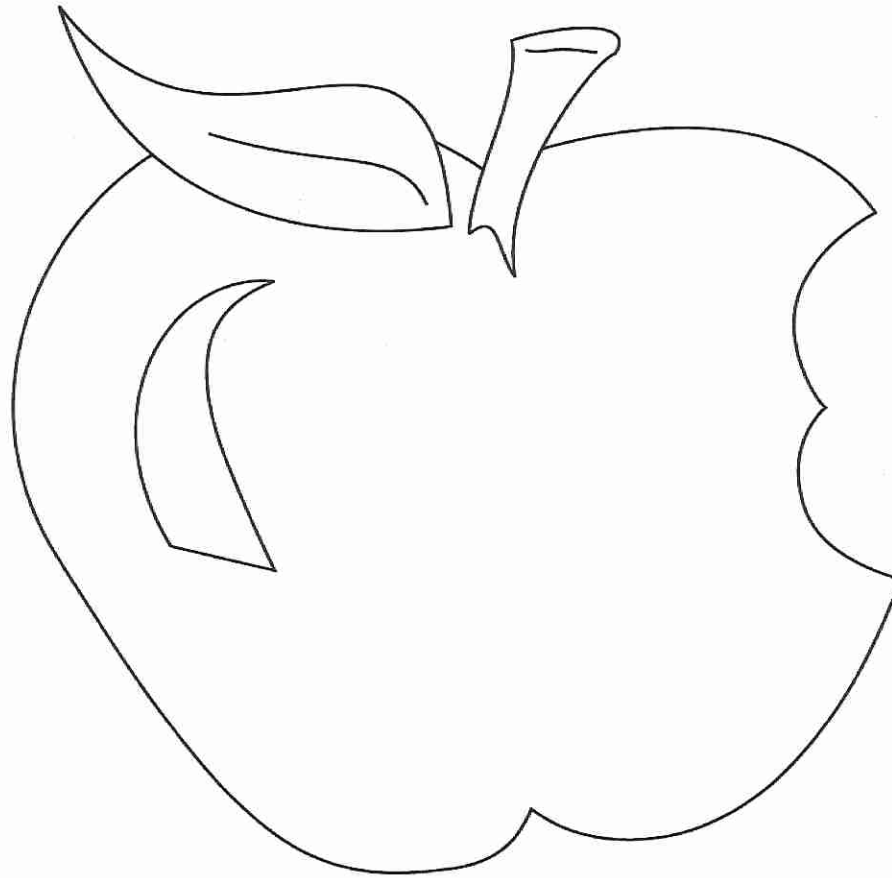
Sin never takes you where you want to go. They wanted to go into God's throne room and sit on His throne. Without using any words at all they told God that He was not God. In their heart of hearts, they knew they were wrong. And now God had to send them out of the Garden. Sin cannot be in God's home. Sin must be paid for. The price for sin is costly.

God, the loving Father, would bring His children back. His Son, His one and only Son, Jesus would wash His children clean. One day He would pay the price for our sin with His own life, with His own shed blood.



Yes or No Questions

1. The snake's big plan was to take God's place.
2. The snake wanted Adam and Eve to love him instead of loving God.
3. Adam and Eve would love God more if only they believed what the snake told them.
4. God couldn't find Adam and Eve because they liked to play hide and seek with Him.
5. God was happy when Adam and Eve left the Garden to explore the rest of the world.
6. God is perfect and pure and holy and sin can never be with Him.
7. God promised Adam and Eve that one day He would rescue them and bring them home to be friends with Him again.



Think about this:

What makes you happy? What makes your heart sing? Christmas is coming and we think that there will be something under the tree that will make us happier than we have ever been before. You already have learned that toys don't make you as happy as you want to be.

The good news of the Gospel: The story of Christmas, the story of the Bible is that Jesus has come to rescue us, to save us, to heal our hearts, to fill our hearts with true joy.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, Forgive me for believing the lie that if I have everything I want that I will be happy. Help me to believe that You will make me happier than anything else in the world. Help to put my trust in You. Thank You for loving me so much! Amen.

A New Beginning

From Genesis 6–9 * Read pages 38–47

December 4

God told His children to fill the earth and they did. Sadly, they turned away from God and were choosing bad instead of good, wrong instead of right, saying, “No!” to God instead of saying, “Yes!” And God’s heart was filled with pain.

There was one man who pleased God and that was Noah. God changes hearts. God had changed Noah’s heart. Noah was the man God was going to use to rescue His world. God told Noah He was sending a flood to destroy the world. Noah and his family would be safe.

Noah said, “Yes!” to God. But it wasn’t going to be easy. God told Noah to build an ark, a big ship for him, his family, and 100s of animals to live on when God sent the huge flood. God told Noah exactly how to build the ark. Noah said, “Yes!” to God. He worked for 120 years. Men and women and boys and girls watched Noah work but they did not turn to God. When Noah was finished God sent the animals to the ark.

God sent Noah pairs of each kind of animal. How many animals got on the ark? Maybe as many as 7000 kinds of animals! When all the animals and Noah’s family were safely in the ark God closed the door. After 7 days of waiting the rains came down and the waters came up until the earth was flooded.

After 40 days God said, “Stop!” and the waters went down, and the earth dried up. It took 1 year and 17 days. Then Noah and his family and all of the animals came out of the ark. The first thing Noah did was to build an altar to the Lord and worship.

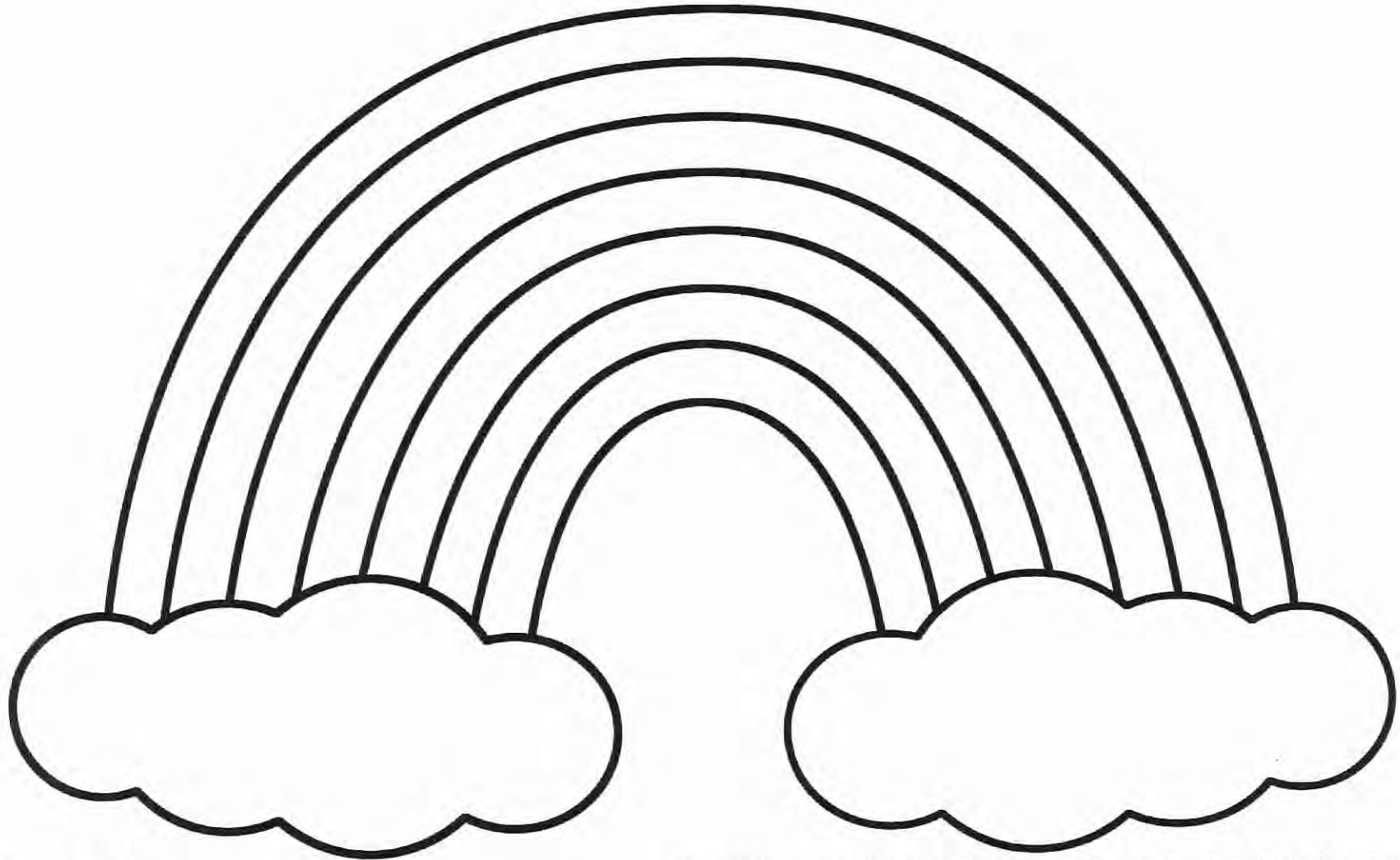
God was pleased and He blessed Noah. God splashed a colorful rainbow across the sky and promised that He would never destroy the earth with a flood again.

God had promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior one day. He promised Noah that He would save him and He did. God always keeps His promises!



Yes or No Questions

1. More and more people lived on the earth and they all hated sin.
2. Noah was God’s only friend.
3. God told Noah to build a rescue boat.
4. God told Noah to come alone on the boat.
5. After Noah and his family were on the ark God sent pairs of animals.
6. The rain started and didn’t stop for a whole year.
7. When the flood had ended Noah didn’t want to leave the ark.
8. When Noah and his family and all the animals were safely off the ark Noah thanked God.
9. God put a rainbow in the sky and promised never to flood the whole world.



Think about this:

Is the story of Noah and the ark one of your favorite stories? Do you love all the pictures of the animals, big and small, the bunnies playing with the alligators and bears? But we must remember that the story of Noah and the ark is also the story of how God hates sin. God had mercy and did not destroy the world. The flood did not wash all the sin away. Water cannot do that.

The good news of the Gospel: The Bible tells us that Jesus' blood washed away your sin.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, Forgive me for not hating sin. Help me to know it is sin when I say things and do things and keep things in my heart that do not honor You. Thank You that You sent Jesus to wash away my sin with His blood. Amen.

A Giant Staircase to Heaven

From Genesis 11 * Pages 48 – 55

December 5

After Noah and the great flood God's children began to fill the world. They decided to build a tower. Their tower was going to be great and glorious and high. They made all their bricks and mortar and started building their tower up higher and higher.

Higher and higher is heaven. They thought if they could get to heaven then they would be famous. Everyone would talk about them. Maybe they would even be called "The Greatest!"

Were their hearts full of love for God? No, not a bit. Their hearts were full of pride in themselves. They thought they were simply splendid. God knew what they were doing. God knew what was in their hearts. You could say that God knew what wasn't in their hearts – there wasn't love for Him in their hearts. God made them and knew them. He was protecting them, He loved them.

God knew that they were not building a tower to come and visit Him on His throne in heaven. They didn't trust God to take care of them. They trusted in themselves. He knew just what He had to do to stop them.

What did God do? Did He knock the tower down? No. Did He wash away the tower? No. That's what they deserved, right? God was very kind to them even though they didn't love Him or trust Him. He changed their languages. One day everyone could understand everyone else. But then no one could understand anyone else.

And then the fighting and arguing began – all in different languages. Who wants to live beside someone you can't understand and who you can't work with? They had planned to be famous, to be great, to be in charge of everything and everyone. Now their lives were total confusion.

One day God's children will all live together again. One day God's children will love Him and trust Him. One day God's children will be called by one name, the greatest name: Christian. God sent Jesus down to save us from our sins and take us up to heaven to be with Him.



Yes or No Questions

1. Only good people lived after Noah had died.
2. People wanted to build a tower to get up to heaven.
3. God thought their plans were so funny. He couldn't stop laughing.
4. God wanted the people to spread out and stop their building plans.
5. God gave everyone a new language so that they could not work together anymore.
6. We only get to heaven by trusting Jesus.



Think about this:

Some people want to go to heaven to be with God whom they love and worship. Some people want to go to heaven so they can push God off the throne and take over, so they can be God. Thankfully God is God and no matter how hard we try we cannot take His place.

The good news of the Gospel: God gives us His name, the name His Son Jesus Christ won for us on the cross, the name Christian.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for understanding my heart and how I want the wrong things. Thank You for sending Jesus down to live the perfect life, to die for my sins, to take me up to be with You forever. Amen.

Son of Laughter

From Genesis 12 – 21 * Pages 56 – 61

December 6

The Lord said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household. Go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great. I will bless those who bless you. And whoever curses you I will curse. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abraham left his family home just as the Lord had told him. He took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all their possessions. They set out for the land of Canaan and made their new home there.

Years later, the Lord called Abraham outside and said to him, "A son is coming soon. Look up at the heavens and count the stars, if you can count them. So shall your offspring be."

Years later when Abraham was 99 years old the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty, walk before Me. You will be the father of many nations. I will bless Sarah and give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations, kings will come from her."

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed. A son born to a man who is 100!? A baby born to a woman who is 90?!

God said, "Yes, your wife will bear you a son. You will call his name Isaac." And God left.

The Lord was gracious to Sarah and He did exactly what He had promised. Sarah too had laughed, laughed in disbelief.

Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. With a grateful heart Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter and everyone who hears about this son will laugh *with me!*"

God had told them to trust Him. He asked, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

No, nothing is too hard for God. God's Son paid for our peace with His life. Now we can call God our Father and He calls us: My child.



Fill in the missing word

1. The name of the man God called was _____.
2. God told Abraham to count the _____.
3. God promised Abraham that there would be more people in his family that there were _____.
4. God promised Abraham that his family would bless all the _____.
5. Abraham was very very *very* old and he didn't have any children, but even though it seemed impossible he told God that he _____.
6. Sarah, Abraham's wife, was 90 years old and when she heard God was giving her a baby boy she just _____.
7. God always keeps His promises and nine months later Sarah and Abraham had baby whose name means _____.



Think about this:

Do you like to laugh? Laughter can change a heart. Some people like to laugh at silly things. Some people like to laugh at jokes. Some people laugh at the wrong thing. Sarah laughed at God. She didn't believe He could give her a baby boy.

The good news of the Gospel: God can do all His holy will and keep every promise. When Sarah's baby boy was born she laughed for joy!

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You that all of Your promises come true. At Christmas we sing "Joy to the World the Lord is Come!" Our hearts are filled with joy because You have sent Your Son to save us from the penalty of our sins. You forgive us and we know joy and peace. Amen.

The Present

From Genesis 22 * Pages 62 – 69

December 7

Are you thinking about presents? Christmas is a present giving and a present receiving time. This story can be called, "The Story of Three Presents."

Here is the first present: God gave Abraham a son named Isaac, "Laughter." Oh, how Abraham and Sarah laughed with joy at the long-fulfilled promise. They knew that nothing was impossible for God. When Isaac was a young man God told Abraham to give his son back to Him. So Abraham obeyed God, just like he had obeyed when God said "Go."

Abraham's trust was being tested with the hardest test ever. Abraham said "Yes. Come Isaac. Get some wood, get the fire, we are going to Mount Moriah to sacrifice to the Lord."

And so they walked for 3 days. Three long days for Abraham. Three days with a heavy heart. Abraham with his son, his present from God.

Abraham knew that God wanted him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. And he obeyed. Was it easy? Oh no. Did it make his heart heavy? Oh yes. When they got to Mount Moriah Abraham told the servants to wait. They would soon return.

He took Isaac up the mountain. God had told Abraham to give Isaac as a sacrifice. And at the exact perfect time God provided Abraham with a second present.

The Angel of the Lord said: "Stop! Don't hurt the boy. I want him to live and not die. I know now that you love Me because you would have given Me your only son."

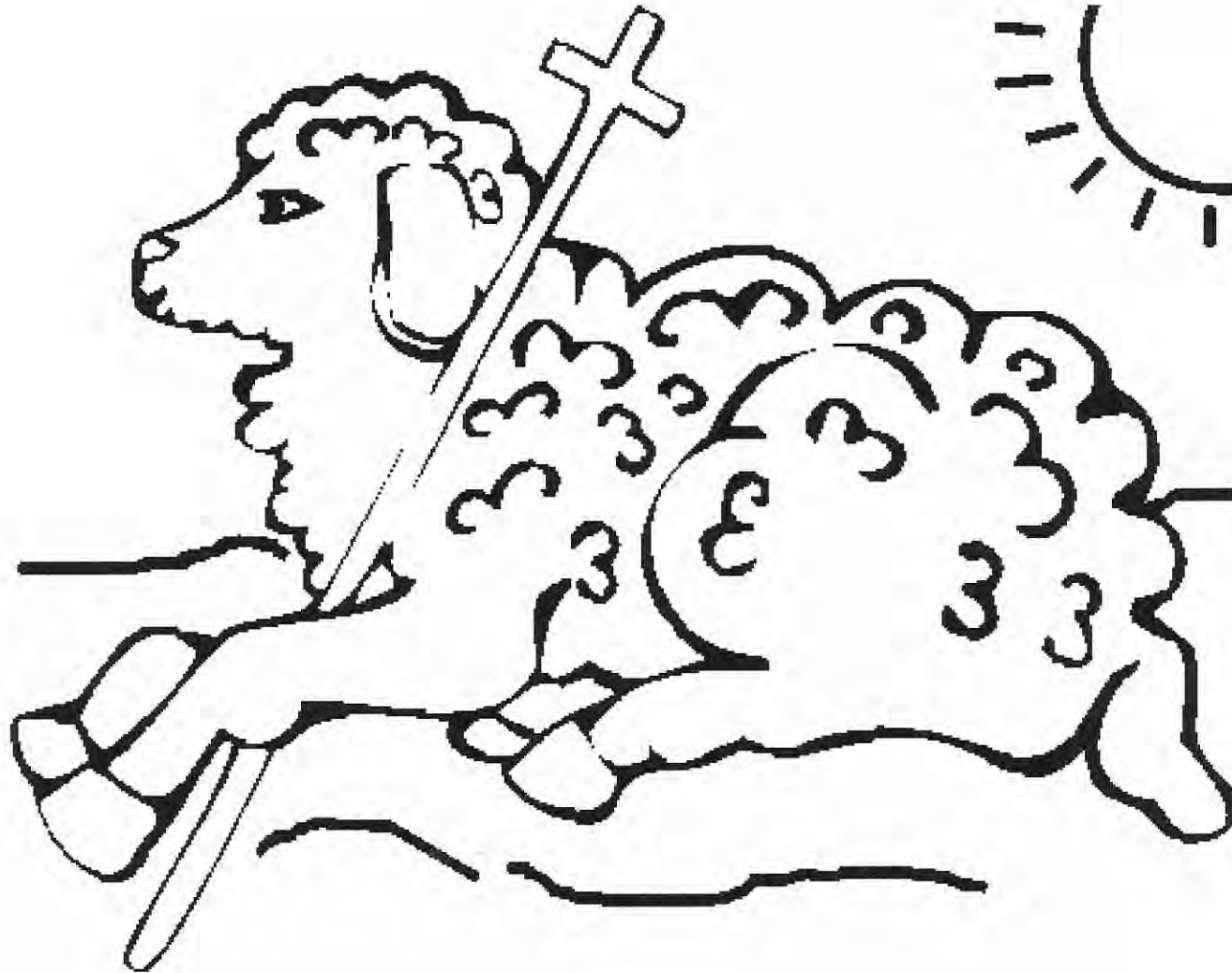
Abraham turned and saw the second present, a ram caught in some brambles. The ram would be the sacrifice instead of his son Isaac. And the second present points us forward to the third present that God provided:

Many years later God would give the whole world a present. It would be God's way to tell His people, "I love you." God's Son Jesus would climb that same hill carrying wood on His back. Jesus would trust His Father and do what His Father asked. It is what Jesus and His Father had planned before the world began. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, is God's present to you.



Fill in the missing word

1. God had a wonderful relationship with _____.
2. Abraham believed God and he did what God _____.
3. Abraham gave sacrifices to God with his lambs and _____.
4. God surprised Abraham and asked him to sacrifice his only _____.
5. Abraham took Isaac up the mountain and told him that God would provide the _____.
6. At just the exact right second when Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son God called to him and said, " _____!"
7. Abraham stopped and turned around and saw a _____.



Think about this:

Have you ever had to give someone a present that you wanted to keep for yourself? We have so much and yet we still want so much. How could Abraham give his only son to God even though he knew God had given Isaac to him? This is a great picture of trust.

The good news of the Gospel: Now we can put our trust in God who gave up His only Son Jesus for us. God gives us the priceless present of peace with Him, our heavenly Father.

Prayer:

Dear God, forgive me for not being very thankful, for wanting more and more. You gave up Your Son Jesus to fill my heart with joy and peace and Your love. You have given me what I could not get from anyone else. Thank You. Amen.

The Girl No One Wanted

From Genesis 29 - 30 * Pages 70 – 75

December 8

Do you like surprises? A surprise is something that is unexpected. Surprises catch you off guard. In many ways the Bible is a book of stories that surprise us. We see God making His promises come true in ways we couldn't guess would happen.

Abraham and Sarah were surprised with a son. Abraham and Isaac were surprised at the gift of a ram. The surprises continued as the promises were fulfilled.

Isaac had two sons: Jacob and Esau. Jacob ran away from his brother after a terrible trick that he had played on him. Jacob started running toward his uncle's home. But before he got to Laban's home the Lord met him, wrestled with him, and changed his name to "Israel." God promised him, "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land."

Jacob stopped by a well to get water and there he was caught off guard with a wonderful surprise. He met a beautiful woman, Rachel. She was Uncle Laban's daughter. It almost seemed too good to be true! Years passed, love grew, and the wedding day came when Jacob was to marry Rachel. Instead of fulfilling his promise to Jacob, Laban tricked him into marrying Leah, Rachel's older sister.

This was a surprise for Jacob, a shocking surprise. Rachel was the woman that Jacob loved. Rachel was the beautiful daughter. But Leah had beauty that Jacob did not see. God saw her heart and He loved her. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart."

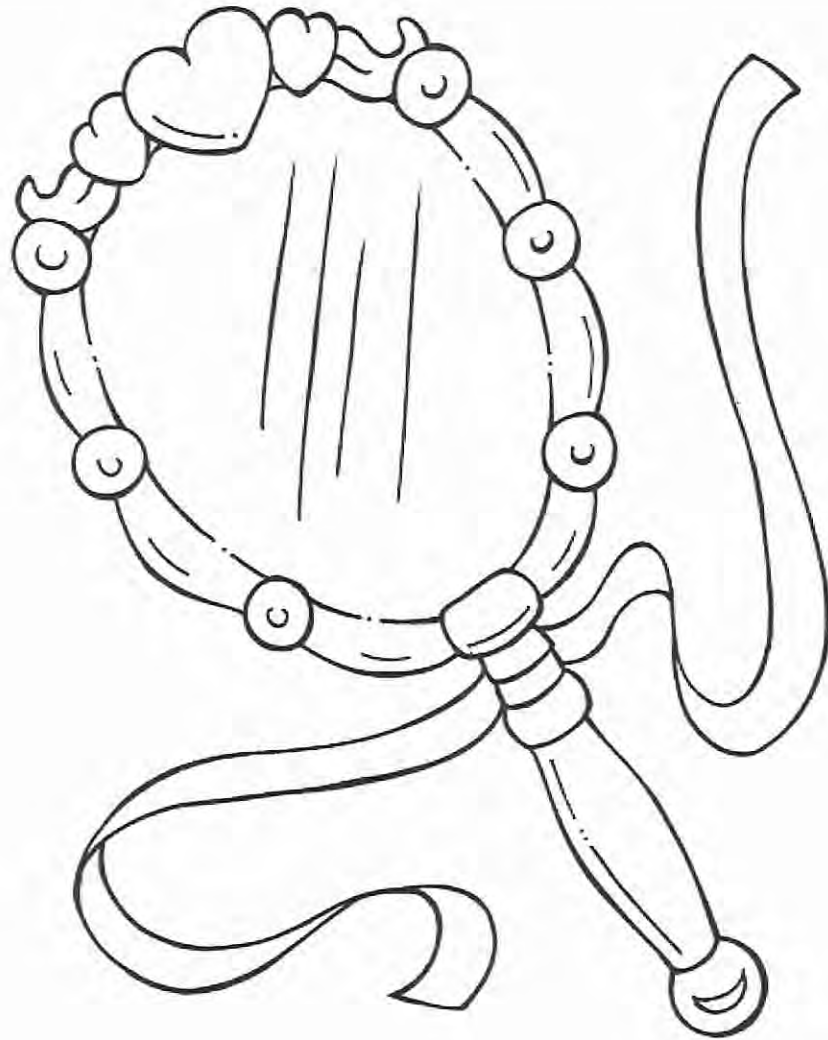
There are many twists and turns to the story, but the day came when Laban did give Rachel to Jacob as his wife. Now Jacob had two wives who together had twelve sons. The twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Leah, the wife that Jacob did not want, was the one clearly chosen by God to be the mother of Judah. There was a surprise that was coming, that Jacob and Rachel and Leah did not know during their lives. Judah was chosen by God to be the son through whom Baby Jesus was to be born.



Fill in the missing words

1. Jacob ran away from his older brother Esau and went to work for his Uncle _____.
2. Uncle Laban told Jacob that he would let him marry one of his _____.
3. Jacob was so happy and told Uncle Laban that he wanted to marry his youngest daughter, _____.
4. Jacob, who had tricked his father and his brother, now was tricked when he realized his wife was _____.
5. Finally, Jacob got to marry both of Laban's daughters, but he loved _____ more than he loved _____.
6. God gave Leah lots of baby boys and told her that one of her sons would be the great great grandfather of God's own Son _____.



Think about this:

The Bible tells us that God loves the weak, not just the strong. He loves the second, not just the first. He loves the poor, not just the rich. He loves the plain not just the beautiful. God's love is big and deep.

The good news of the Gospel: God's love changes our hearts. When we trust Jesus as our Savior then we know God's love, then we know how loved we really are.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You that You made me. You know me. You count the hairs on my head. You know all of my thoughts. You know me better than I know myself. Thank You that because of Jesus and His death on the cross I am in Your family. Forever. Amen.

The Forgiving Prince

From Genesis 37 - 46 * JSBB pages 76 – 83

December 9

Father Abraham's miracle son was Isaac. Isaac had two sons: Jacob and Esau. Jacob had 12 sons. Son #11 was Joseph, Jacob's favorite.

In fact, he showed how much he loved him by giving him a special coat. Do you think his brothers wanted a coat like his? Of course they did! Everyone wants to be special.

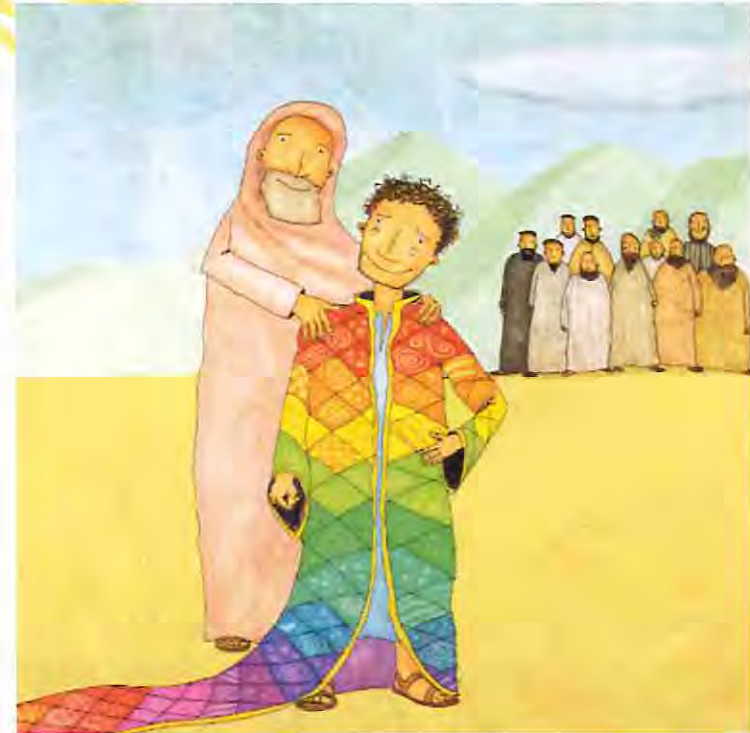
One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were caring for their sheep. The brothers were many miles from home when they saw Joseph in the distance. That special coat couldn't be mistaken. As Joseph was walking the brothers started plotting. Their jealousy had grown and grown and now it was out of control.

The brothers decided to kill Joseph. They were going grab him, kill him, and throw him into a pit and tell their father that a wild animal had gotten him. Isn't that so sad? Their hearts were going down and down, deeper and deeper into their own terrible pit of destruction.

So there was Joseph stripped of his coat in the depths of a pit. But God's hand was on Joseph. He was going to rescue him. It seemed unlikely but as you know all things are possible with God.

Along came a caravan on its way to Egypt. Judah suggested that they sell Joseph to these traders. They took Joseph's coat, dipped it in the blood of a goat and started on their long walk back to their father. They showed him Joseph's blood-stained coat, and to make matters worse they told their father that his favorite son was probably torn to pieces by wild animals. He had no comfort. He believed his son was dead.

Now there are 10 brothers with silver in their pockets that they cannot spend and hearts without remorse. Full pockets and empty hearts. Joseph, rejected and taken from his father, sold, given up for dead. Joseph lost his coat, the coat to show he was his father's favorite son. And what did Jesus do? Oh, He was rejected. He was sold. He went down into a tomb. Jesus was given up for dead. Jesus lost His coat. But you know how Jesus is different, how this story is different. Jesus did all this to win for us the white coat of His righteousness. Now we are rescued. We are right with God. We are the favored sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. We are loved by our heavenly Father. Forever.



Yes or No Questions

1. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and he gave him a beautiful coat.
2. Joseph did lots of nice things to show his 10 big brothers how much he loved them.
3. Joseph's brothers took him to live at Uncle Laban's house.
4. Joseph's brothers plotted and planned to get rid of him.
5. God put Joseph in Pharaoh's palace in far away Egypt.
6. Joseph was wise and Pharaoh put him in charge of all the tigers.
7. Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to find Joseph.
8. Joseph saw his hungry brothers in need of food and his heart was filled with forgiveness.
9. God used Joseph to rescue his brothers and Jacob and their families.



Think about this:

Do you know how much God loves you? Joseph got a beautiful coat that all his brothers wanted. They each wanted their father's love more than the coat.

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus died on the cross and then after our sins were paid for He rose from the grave. The Bible says that Jesus gives us His coat, His white coat of righteousness. We have our heavenly Father's favor. We have the coat! We don't see it, but Jesus does.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to earth, for being born in a lowly manger, for living a perfect life. Thank You for going to the cross to die for our sins. Thank You for rising from the grave. And thank You for the present, for Your coat, Your coat of righteousness. Now I am right with God, my heavenly Father. Amen.

God to the Rescue!

From Exodus 3 – 13 * Pages 84 - 91

December 10

God used a man named Moses to rescue His children from slavery and take them to freedom in the Promised Land.

While Moses was tending his sheep at Mount Sinai he saw a bush that was burning. This was strange enough. But stranger still was the fact that the bush kept burning instead of turning to ashes. It was just too strange to ignore. There in the bush the Angel of the Lord appeared.

And then Moses heard God calling to him. "Moses, Moses. Do not come closer. Take off your sandals, you are on holy ground. I am the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob." Moses hid his face – afraid to look – Moses knew God was holy and he was not.

God said, "I have heard My people crying. I am going to rescue them, out of slavery into freedom. Go to Pharaoh. I will be with you."

God continued, "Tell them I AM has sent me to you. My name is: I am who I am." Moses understood, he knew that I AM means: I have always been, since before the beginning and I will always be. There has never been a time when I did not cause everything to be.

And so Moses took his brother Aaron and they went to Pharaoh. He entered the throne room and said, "God said to let His people go!" Pharaoh heard what God commanded, but his heart was hard. He refused to listen to Moses or to obey God. God told Moses that Pharaoh would not listen but that He would lay His mighty hand on Egypt and bring His children out by great acts of judgment.

And God did just that: The Nile River turned to blood; frogs, gnats, locusts and flies filled the land. Four more plagues came upon the Egyptians and then death hit each family at midnight. The first born died after God had given His final command to let His people go. The Israelites covered the doorposts of their homes with blood, the blood of a perfect lamb. Death passed over them. Pharaoh's son died with all the other firstborns. Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, "Go! Both you and all the people of Israel. Go! Serve the Lord as you have said. Be gone! And bless me also!"

And with that Moses and all of the Israelites fled after 430 years of slavery in Egypt.



Fill in the missing word

1. Years passed and God's family, the Israelites, lived in Egypt under the rule of a new _____.
2. The new Pharaoh feared that the Israelites were too strong and so he decided that none of the baby boys should _____.
3. But God had other plans and He saved Moses and one day called to him from a _____.
4. God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him, "Let My people _____."
5. Moses went to Pharaoh and told him that God said, "Let My people go!" But Pharaoh said, _____!
6. Finally after the tenth sign when death did not touch any of the Israelites Pharaoh told Moses to take his people and _____!



Think about this:

It was time for God to rescue the Israelites. Freedom was real!
At God's command each family put the shed blood of a lamb on their door. They were saved by this shed blood. Death passed over them.

The good news of the Gospel: We look back and we know that we are saved by the shed blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. His blood has washed us clean of the stain of our sin.

Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, Christmas is a time when we celebrate the gift of life. We see the Baby Jesus in the manger and we celebrate His birth. When we remember that He died on the cross we celebrate our new life. By Jesus' birth and life and death we have life. This is a great gift that You paid for with the death of Your Son. Thank You for Jesus. Amen.

God Makes a Way

From Exodus 14 - 15 * Pages 92 - 99

December 11

Pharaoh and the Egyptians were happy to see the Israelites leave Egypt. They were afraid of their powerful God. They had given the Israelites gold and silver, fine clothing and jewelry just as God had said they would. The Israelites packed up and began the journey to their new home.

The Israelites didn't have a map. No, the Lord God Almighty showed them the way to go. He provided a cloud to lead them during the day and a pillar of fire to be with them at night.

The Lord led them to the edge of the Red Sea. God's children looked across the Red Sea. They pitched their tents by the shore. How would they get to the other side? They didn't know. There wasn't a bridge, they didn't have boats and it was too wide to swim across. They didn't know, but God knew. He would take them across to the other side.

As the Israelites were walking Pharaoh was in Egypt wondering. He was wondering who would work for him? Who would finish building his cities if he had no slaves? Pharaoh called for his chariot and told his army to get ready. They were going to get the Israelites and bring them back to Egypt. When the Israelites heard the horses, turned and saw the army coming in the distance, they were terrified!

Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. You will never see the Egyptians again."

The pillar of cloud which was leading them moved behind the Israelites. It became dark to the Egyptians. Moses stretched out his arm, and the Lord sent a strong wind which blew and blew. It blew so hard that the water moved and stood up like walls on each side.

Moses gave the order and the Israelites walked across the Red Sea to the other side. The sea floor was dry. Every man and woman, boy and girl walked in complete safety. When they arrived on the other side they turned and looked behind them. What a sight it was. The Lord told Moses to stretch out his hand so the waters would come back. The Egyptian chariots and the Egyptians never made it back to safety.

Moses and the Israelites saw the mighty hand of God at work to protect them. They praised the Lord God Almighty with songs and prayers of praise and dancing. Oh, how their hearts were filled with joy!



Choose one

1. The Israelites were so glad to leave Egypt OR The Israelites decided to stay in Egypt and help the new Pharaoh.
2. God gave the Israelites a map to show them where to go OR God gave the Israelites a pillar of cloud to lead them.
3. The Egyptians were so happy to let them leave OR The Egyptians came after the Israelites to bring them back to slavery.
4. The Israelites had to build an ark to get across the Red Sea OR God parted the waters of the Red Sea and they walked over on dry land.
5. The Egyptian chariots turned to dust when they touched water OR The Egyptian army drown when God released the walls of water on them.



Think about this: God took His children out of Egypt, away from slavery to freedom. God held back the Red Sea so they could get away from Pharaoh's army. They didn't have to run. They didn't have to fight. They never got wet. They walked on dry land. God kept them safe.

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus was not rescued from death. Jesus was not kept safe. Jesus conquered death for us. Jesus gives us new hearts so that we can love Him.

Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, Thank You for always being with me. You gave the Israelites a cloud to protect them. You protect me today. Help me to run to Jesus instead of running from Him. Thank You for holding me in Your everlasting arms. Amen.

Ten Ways to be Perfect

From Exodus 16 - 17, 19 - 40 * Pages 100 - 107

December 12

God spoke to Moses many times. When God spoke, Moses listened to Him. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush and Moses listened. God told Moses to take His family of 1000s of people into the land He had promised to give to Abraham hundreds of years before. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let God's people go and worship Him. God's people ended up safely on the other side of the Red Sea. God made the waters part and Moses and all of God's children walked across on dry land.

Moses and all of God's children were finally safe from Pharaoh. Now God wanted them to be safe in the new land. He wanted to teach them how to love Him. God wanted to teach them how to love each other.

God called to Moses and told him to come up the mountain, Mount Sinai. This was not a big hill; it was a very steep mountain. God called, Moses went. Climbing and climbing, higher and higher. When Moses got to the right place, God spoke to Moses. He told Moses what to tell all of His children. Moses listened to all that God said. God wrote His laws on two tablets of stone. They are called the Ten Commandments. They are like a mirror that shows us our hearts, a fence that keeps us safe, and they are like a path that in obeying leads us to the heart of God.

Moses loved to listen to God. He went up and down that mountain more than once. God had many things to tell Moses. When Moses came down the mountain the people gathered to hear all that God told him.

The people listened to Moses. The people said they heard God! They would remember what God said! They would obey! But God knew that all by themselves they wouldn't because they couldn't. They needed Jesus to live in their hearts to give them strength.

When we listen to God's Word today, the Bible, our hearts grow stronger. Jesus lives in the hearts of His children and strengthens them with love for Him and others.



Choose one

1. When the Israelites were finally free from Pharaoh they were so happy OR The Israelites kept complaining about their new life.
2. God gave His children food and water while they traveled OR God expected His children to take care of themselves.
3. The Israelites had blind hearts that did not see God's love OR The Israelites knew God loved them and showed them His love.
4. God gave His children laws for their own good and safety OR God gave His children laws to show their enemies they were so much better.
5. When we keep God's laws and rules we earn our ticket to heaven OR Jesus paid for our ticket to heaven because we cannot earn it ourselves.



Think about this: For all the years that the Israelites spent traveling to their new home God showed them over and over again that He was their Protector and Provider. He gave them whatever they needed. He showed them that His love never fails, His love never gives up. He gave them the Ten Commandments to show them how to live together and with others in peace. Sin in our hearts keeps us from loving God and loving others the way we were meant to.

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus kept every commandment perfectly. Jesus gives us His perfect record. When we stand before God's throne Jesus is with us, presenting His perfect record in our name.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank You that You know that I cannot do what I want to do and what I know I should do. Sometimes I don't even try. Thank You that You sent Jesus to live a perfect life for me. He gives me His record, His perfect report card. I love You. Amen.

The Warrior Leader

From Joshua 3 and 6 * Pages 108 - 115

December 13

It was finally time for God's children under Joshua's leadership to enter the Promise Land, the land God promised to give Abraham's family. Other people, who did not worship God, lived in the land, so the Israelites had to defeat them. But they would not win by the strength of their own hands. Their first battle would be unlike any other!

The Lord led the Israelites toward the Jordan River, which separated them from the Promised Land. They camped next to the wide, deep river. God gave instructions to Joshua and the other leaders.

That night Joshua went near to Jericho. He saw a Man standing there with a sword in His hand. Joshua asked: Whose side are you on? And the Man said: Neither. I am the Commander of the Army of the Lord. I have now come. Take off your sandals for you are standing on holy ground. And Joshua did so. He fell on his face and worshipped. Joshua knew the Man was the Angel of the Lord. This was Jesus. He would lead them. He would win the victory.

The people got ready to cross the Jordan. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant to the edge of the water. Joshua said, "God is with us. He will defeat our enemies." Then the priests stepped into the water, and the river stopped flowing. All the people crossed the Jordan on dry ground. When the Israelites were all on the other side, the water started to flow again.

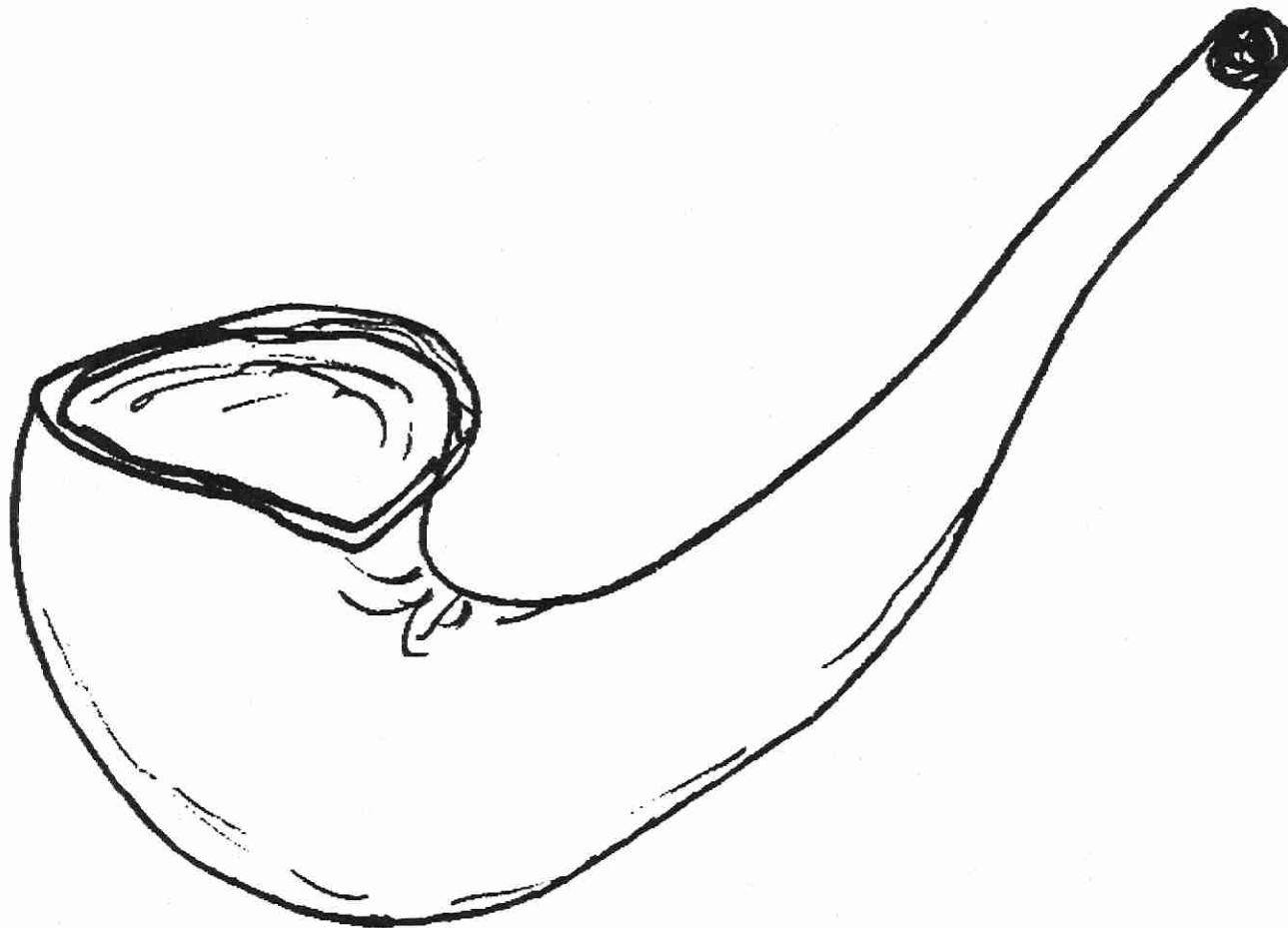
The Israelites set up camp and waited for God to give Joshua the plan. It was simple. God told Joshua that He had already delivered Jericho into his hands. "March around the city one time each day for six days. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, and have the priests blow their trumpets. Then all the people should shout, and the walls of Jericho will fall down. You can then go in and conquer the city."

Joshua followed God's battle plan exactly! God had fought for His people and won the victory. Now the Promised Land was at hand.



Fill in the missing word

1. The leader of God's children who came after Moses was _____.
2. Moses had led God's children as they wandered in the desert for _____ years.
3. The first job God gave Joshua as they entered the Promised Land was to conquer the walled city in _____.
4. God told Joshua that his battle plan started with marching his army around Jericho for _____ days.
5. On day 7 God told Joshua that his army should blow their trumpets and _____ as loud as they could!
6. Joshua and his army men trusted God and the walls of Jericho came _____.



Think about this: Joshua and his army were given a very surprising battle plan: march, blow trumpets, and shout. And they did just what God commanded. Who brought the walls of Jericho down? Yes, the Lord God Almighty won the battle. Joshua trusted God. There is nothing that God cannot do. He loves His children and protects us.

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus is our Captain. He is always with us. We are never alone. The Lord is for us. Jesus fought the greatest battle ever. He conquered death for us.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, You are always with me. You are for me. You promise to protect me. Forgive me when I don't trust You. Forgive me when I don't call on Your name. Thank You that Jesus is my Captain. Thank You for putting me in Your army! Amen.

The Teeny, Weenie...True King

From 1 Samuel 16 * Pages 116 - 121

December 14

About a thousand years before Jesus was born, Samuel, the prophet of God of Israel, was coming to Bethlehem at God's command to offer a sacrifice there. God had told him that he must anoint a new king of Israel from among the sons of Jesse.

Samuel made sure that Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice. After the sacrifice Samuel joined them for dinner. The horn of oil was by his side and Samuel looked at the sons of Jesse. Which one would be the new king of Israel? When Samuel saw Eliab, the oldest of the sons of Jesse he thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me!" But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't look at his face or his height. I have not chosen him, for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Samuel was in shock over the rejection of Eliab. The rule was: Always the first is chosen. Surely there was some mistake. But he would listen to God. One by one, six more of the sons of Jesse were brought before Samuel. Each time the Lord told Samuel, "No, this is not the one."

"Are these all your sons?" asked Samuel. "No," said Jesse. "I do have one more boy who's taking care of the sheep. He is the youngest and I had not called him in for the sacrifice."

"Send for him," said Samuel. Why did the prophet of God want to see the youngest, the last? The last is always last. Samuel looked at the young man when David entered. Now the Lord knew David's heart. God had searched David's heart and He knew it. The Lord said to Samuel, "Arise and anoint him, for this is he."

Then Samuel stood up, and as David knelt before him, poured the oil of anointing upon his head, the head of the new King.

David went back to taking care of his sheep. He was a king but he had only sheep to rule over. Yet God was with David. God sent His Holy Spirit into David's heart and prepared him for the time when he would be the shepherd of all the people of Israel.

The least became the greatest. The day was coming when David would sit on the throne as the mighty ruler over God's people.



Yes or No Questions

1. When God's children were in their new land they wanted to plant trees.
2. God was so happy that the Israelites wanted a real King.
3. The first king that God gave His children was named Saul.
4. God told Samuel, the prophet, to go and find a new king back in Jericho.
5. God had chosen the youngest son of Jesse to be the new king.
6. David was bigger and stronger and taller than any of his brothers.
7. God told Samuel that young David had a heart that pleased Him.
8. David did not rule as king for many years.



Think about this: In 1 Samuel 16:7 we read: *Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.* David had a heart that pleased the Lord. David did many wonderful things as king. David also did many things that were wrong and that did not please God. God knows that no matter how hard we try to please Him we can't. Sin is in our hearts. We need a greater King. We need a Savior.

The good news of the Gospel: God used little king David to point us to the real King, the greater King, His Son King Jesus. Jesus killed sin. When Jesus is our King, the King of our hearts, God is pleased!

Prayer: Dear Father God, You know that we are weak. We need a Savior to wash our hearts clean from the stain of sin. Thank You for sending Your perfect Son, King Jesus. I love You. Amen.

The Young Hero & The Horrible Giant

From 1 Samuel 17 * Pages 122 - 129

December 15

Before David wore a crown and lived in a palace, he was a shepherd. His big brothers were on the battleground waiting for the war against the Philistines to start. The Israelites stood on one hill and the enemy army, the Philistines, stood on another hill.

When David got to the battleground he saw that no one was fighting. David tried to find out why they were just yelling and not fighting. David heard the voice of a Philistine who was making fun of God's people, he was mocking God! David heard the voice and he saw Goliath, bigger and taller and stronger than any man David, or anyone else, had ever seen before. And the Israelite army just stood there quaking.

Goliath yelled out that he would fight one man for the big prize. There was not one Israelite who wanted to risk his life for the freedom of all of the Israelites. But God's love had been shining in David's heart for a long time and so he stepped forward to fight the giant. Little King David fighting Big Bad Army man Goliath?!

David convinced Saul, the Israelite king, to let him fight against Goliath. He refused to wear the king's armor. It didn't fit and he didn't need it. God had protected him when he had killed lions and bears that tried to attack his sheep. David pulled out his sling, went to the stream, and gathered five smooth stones.

Then David called Goliath to come and fight him. Goliath could hardly stop laughing when he saw David with his slingshot. David yelled out, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the Name of the Lord Almighty, the God whom you have mocked. The battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands."

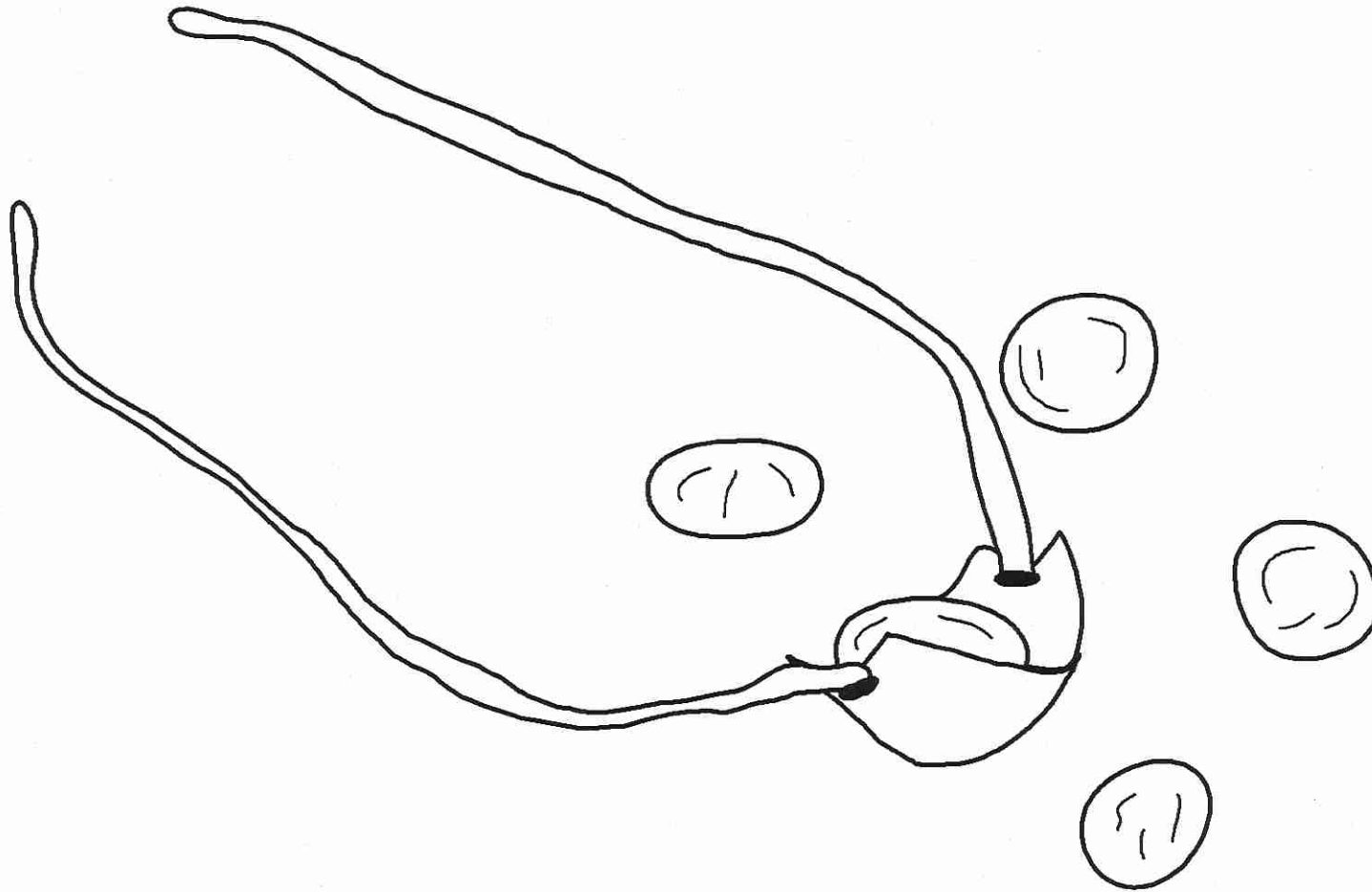
As David ran toward Goliath, he put a stone in his sling, whirled it around and let it fly out. Smack! It landed right in the center of Goliath's forehead and he fell down with a thud, a thud that rocked the earth.

Was David a brave shepherd? Oh, yes, he was brave. But bravery didn't win this battle. No, the Lord won the battle just as David had said. David knew the Lord would hand Goliath over to him. He said that the whole world would know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves His children.



Fill in the missing word

1. God's children, the Israelites, had enemies called the _____.
2. The Philistines had a secret weapon called _____.
3. The Israelite army stood on the hill and when they heard Goliath shouting at them they were filled with _____.
4. Young David left his sheep, went to the battleground, and took his brothers some _____.
5. David heard the giant Goliath when he called the Israelites to send over someone to _____ against him.
6. David knew that God would win the battle as he went to fight Goliath with 5 smooth stones and his _____.



Think about this: Remember how God chose David to be king one day because his heart was full of love? David's heart was full of love for God's people and for God Himself. When David heard how Goliath was mocking God's people he was filled with anger. David gathered his 5 smooth stones and raced to fight Goliath knowing that he had the true weapon to win the battle: the Lord God Almighty.

The good news of the Gospel: God sent His Son Jesus to earth to win the greatest battle of all. Jesus by dying on the cross and rising from death won eternal life for His children. We have Him today. We have the Holy Spirit who gives us peace and joy and makes our hearts strong.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank You that today I can know You and love You. Today You give me a new heart that You fill with love. Help me to love what You love. Amen.

The Good Shepherd

From Psalms 23 & 51, 2 Samuel 7 * Pages 130 - 135
December 16

Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

What is your favorite Christmas carol? Maybe you have more than one! People all over the world love to sing, even if they can hardly carry a tune. Men and women, boys and girls are made to sing. We sing when we are happy, we sing when we are sad. Sometimes we feel like a song is stuck in our head and we hum it for days.

God tells us to sing. It is good for us to sing. In the book of Colossians we read, *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

There are songs throughout the Bible. There is a whole book of the Bible that was written as a songbook called the Psalms.

Most of the Psalms were written by King David. Before David was King over God’s children he was a shepherd who took care of sheep. He slept with his sheep, he ate with his sheep, and he sang to his sheep.

David sang psalms of praise to God: *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! Psalm 8:1*

He sang psalms for his protection: *O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me. Psalm 3*

When David needed forgiveness for his sins he sang: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51*

The most well-known and beloved psalm that David wrote began this way: *The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want. Psalm 23*

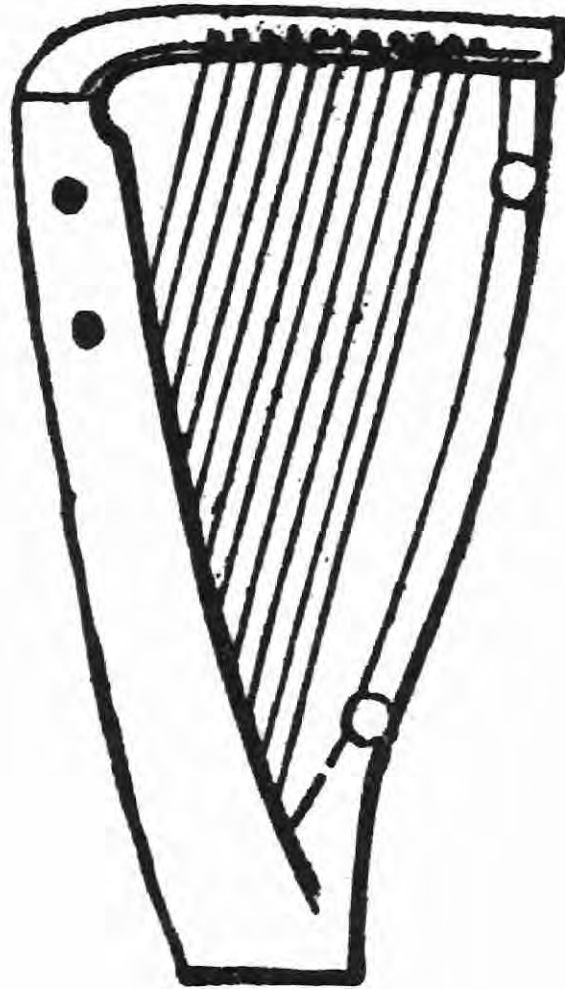
We sing and we sing to God, but here is something beautiful to know about singing. God sings too. God sings to you:

The LORD your God is in your midst, a Mighty One who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17



Fill in the missing word

1. Before David ruled as King he was a _____.
2. A shepherd is someone who takes care of _____.
3. Sheep are helpless animals and don't know how to take care of _____.
4. The songs David wrote are called _____.
5. You can read the psalms that David wrote in the _____.
6. The 23rd Psalm is very well loved and starts this way: The Lord is my _____.
7. In Psalm 51 when he had done wrong and was filled with sorrow, David asked God: Cleanse me from my _____!



Think about this: David knew that God made him, that God knew his heart, and that his sins were against God. David knew that God was his Good Shepherd who was with him in joy and in dark valleys. He knew that God could clean his heart and give him a steadfast heart.

The good news of the Gospel: We need the Lord to give us new hearts, clean hearts. The Bible tells us that Jesus washes us and makes us whiter than snow!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for all the blessings of Christmas time. It is a joyous time when we prepare our hearts to receive You as King. Thank You for coming to earth and for coming to me! Amen.

The Little Servant Girl & the Proud General

From 2 Kings 5 * Pages 136 - 143

December 17

General Naaman was the commander of the army for the king of Syria. He was a proud man who did not recognize God's hand nor did he love or serve God. Naaman had another problem too; he had leprosy.

God used a young girl to humble Naaman and turn his heart around. She was servant girl to Naaman's wife. She had been free but then was taken prisoner. Even so she loved God. She knew the problem and she had a solution. She wanted him to go to Samaria and see the prophet.

She begged him to see Elisha. Naaman went to his master and told him what the servant girl from Israel had said. The king gave him a letter to give to the king of Samaria. When the King of Samaria read the letter he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Why does this man send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? He's trying to pick a quarrel with me! This is a trick!"

Ah, but Elisha the man of God was not distressed. He sent the King a message, "Why have you torn your robes? Have the General come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." And so Naaman went with his chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house.

Elisha sent his messenger out to Naaman and give him these instructions, "'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

Even though this seemed simple enough, Naaman greeted the news with anger! "Where was the prophet? Why did he send his servant out instead of waving his hand and curing my leprosy? Why did he tell me to go wash in the Jordan? The dirty Jordan is nothing compared to the great rivers of Israel!" And Naaman went off in a rage!

His servants went to him and begged, "If Elisha had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? Please go wash."

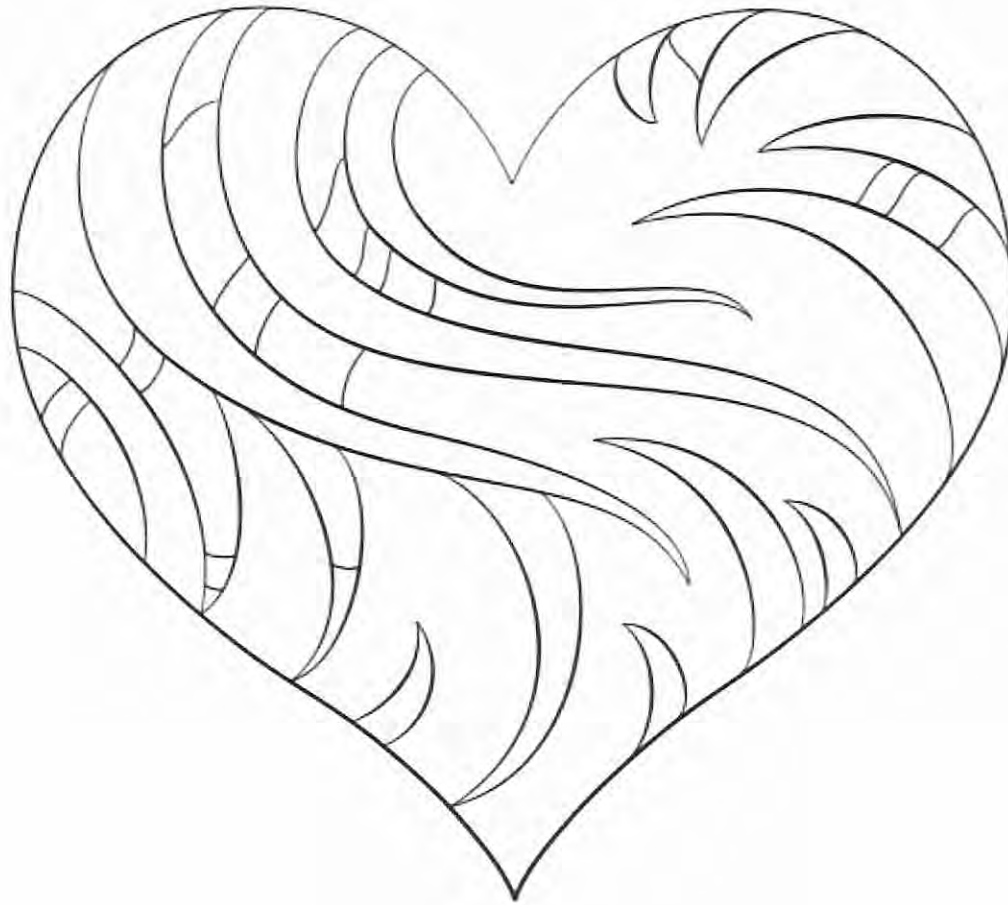
So Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan River seven times, as the man of God had told him. His flesh was restored and became clean and soft like that of a little baby.

Naaman went back to Elisha and admitted, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel." Elisha refused a reward. And Naaman vowed to worship only the Lord God Almighty.



Yes or No

1. Naaman, the army commander, needed to be cured of chicken pox.
2. His young servant girl knew who could help her master be cured.
3. The servant girl told Naaman's wife that he needed to go to Israel to see King David.
4. Naaman went to the home of the prophet Elisha.
5. Elisha refused to help the man who had taken a girl away from Israel.
6. Naaman expected Elisha to come and see him and do something to show he knew how important Naaman was.
7. Naaman was too afraid of the alligators in the Jordan River.
8. Naaman was healed and his skin was as soft as a baby duckling.



Think about this: This is the story of two hearts. What does it mean to be proud? What does it mean to be humble? Naaman, even though he was a sick man in great need of healing, was very proud. He expected everyone to admire what a great army man he was. His servant girl, who he had captured, poured out love instead of hate to him.

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus does not give us what we deserve. He humbled Himself on the cross and poured out love. His love is our best Christmas gift. It cost Jesus His life, and it is free to us!

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for Your love poured out to me. Help me to have a humble heart and be thankful for all You have done for me. I love You. Amen.

Operation "No More Tears!"

From Isaiah prophecies * Pages 144 - 151
December 18

Did you know that God is holy? We learn a lot about God when we believe He is holy. A man named Isaiah pointed people who lived long, long ago and people who live today to God. Isaiah was a prophet, one who points people to God. God used him to write one of the 66 books of the Bible called "Isaiah."

In the book Isaiah tells about seeing the Lord. He was sitting on His throne in the temple. His robe filled the temple. And heavenly beings called to one another saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory!"

How did Isaiah respond to such a glorious sight? He saw the purity and holiness of God and he knew he was a sinner. You may think that this made Isaiah so sad and you are right. Isaiah wrote many messages of warnings but he also wrote of hope. God filled Isaiah with praise and joy that overflowed. Some of his words about the coming King, the Messiah, God's Son we sing today especially during Advent.

*For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given;
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,
and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Later in his letter Isaiah told that the Savior would be rejected and suffer like a lamb who would die. He would be wounded for our sins.

God revealed these truths to Isaiah. God's children looked forward to the coming Savior. We look back and know that Jesus fulfilled every promise of God, every prophecy made by Isaiah. And we remember the verse in Isaiah chapter 1:18: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

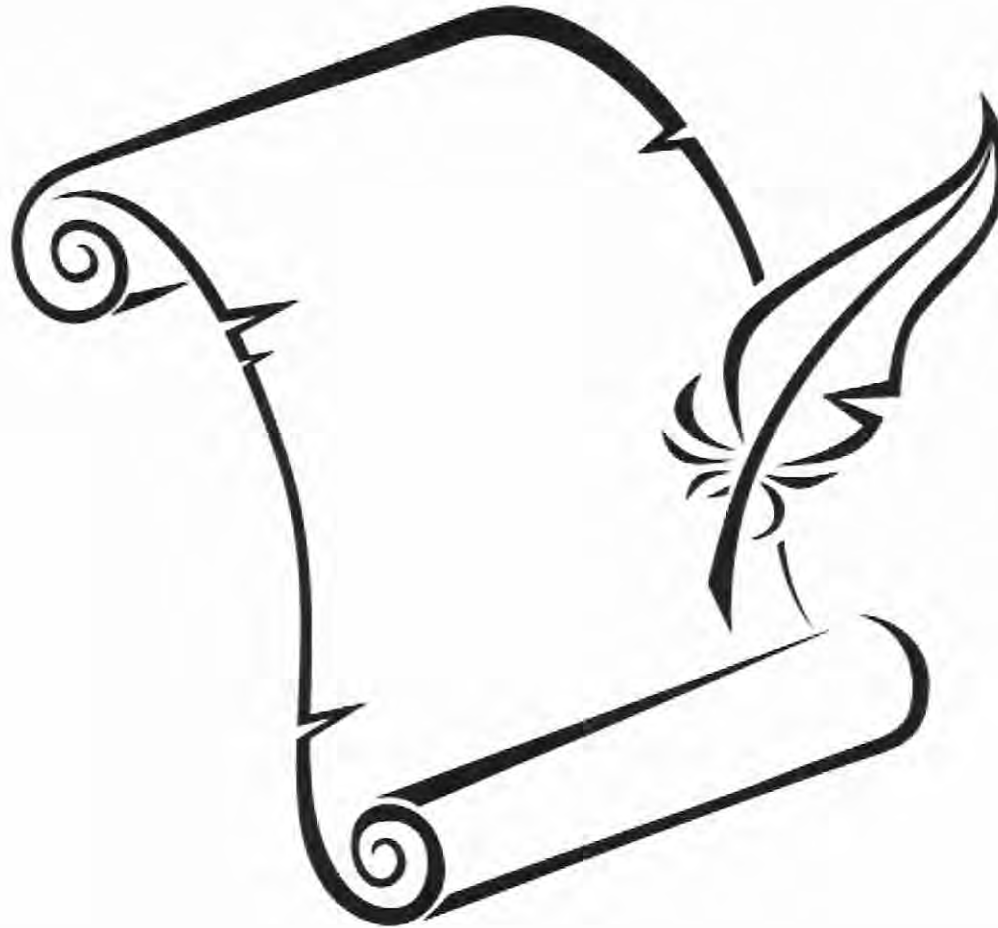
We are reminded that God is holy and we are not. Through the work of our Savior Jesus Christ we are being made holy.

During Advent we look forward to Emmanuel, God with us! We sing from Isaiah 7: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!*



Choose one

1. Isaiah was a prophet who lived before Jesus was born OR Isaiah was a prophet in Naaman's army.
2. Isaiah gave God ideas that he thought would comfort God's children OR God told Isaiah words to write to His children.
3. Isaiah wrote about how to take care of sheep OR Isaiah wrote about the Good Shepherd that God was sending to take care of them.
4. God told Isaiah how to cure blind people and crippled people OR God told Isaiah how His Son will change people.
5. God told Isaiah how His Son would suffer and die for His children OR God told Isaiah to help Him figure out His Secret Rescue Plan.



Think about this: Our heavenly Father knows our ways, He knows our hearts and what we need. God had a plan before He made the world of how He was going to send His Son to save us. His Son was born in a stable not a palace, He was poor not rich, He was humble not puffed up with pride. Jesus wore a crown of thorns not jewels.

The good news of the Gospel: We believe that Jesus came to rescue us, to save us, from the penalty of our sins. He fills our hearts by His Holy Spirit with light and love. Jesus is Christ with us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You that You came as a baby and grew up to be a man, a man who suffered out of love to bring us to Your Father. Amen.

Daniel and the Scary Sleepover

From Daniel 6 * Pages 152 – 159

December 19

As a young man Daniel, along with many others, was taken from Jerusalem as a captive into Babylon. The people of Babylon did not worship the Lord. In fact, they worshipped idols. Daniel refused to worship idols, he worshipped only the Lord God almighty. The Lord blessed him and gave him wisdom and understanding. King Darius made Daniel one of his 3 presidents over the 120 governors.

Well, the other two presidents and 120 governors did not like this at all. They knew Daniel loved God – whom they did not worship. So they hatched a plan to ruin him in the king's eyes. They went to the king and suggested that he make a law that for 30 days no one could pray except to the King. And if anyone prayed to anyone except the king he would have a terrible punishment – he would be thrown into the den full of lions. So the king agreed and signed a document.

Now when Daniel heard the law he went home and climbed up the steps and knelt down at his window and prayed to God just as he had always done. Daniel did this every day, and no law or document was going to change this. He loved God and he prayed to Him alone.

Of course, the king was told that Daniel kept praying to God not to him. The King had planned to make Daniel the head president so he was very distressed. Even though he tried to find a way, he could not change the law. So, the king commanded that Daniel be taken to the den full of lions. Before Daniel was thrown down with the lions the King said to him, "May your God, who you serve continually, deliver you!" Daniel was lowered into the pit and a stone was rolled over the opening.

After a sleepless night, the king hurried to the den and shouted, "Daniel! Servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lions?"

And Daniel answered, "O king, live forever, my God sent His Angel. He shut the lions' mouths. He found me blameless. I am unharmed!"

The king rejoiced and commanded that Daniel be taken out of the lions' den. King Darius wrote another decree. It said that all people should trust in the Lord because, "He is the living God!"



Fill in the missing word

1. Daniel was captured as a young man and taken to _____.
2. When Daniel was in the palace the king was very _____ with him.
3. The king's helpers, his advisors, saw how highly the king thought of Daniel and they were _____.
4. The helpers tricked the king into making a law that you could not pray except to _____.
5. Daniel could not be tricked so he prayed to God even though he knew he would end up in _____.
6. When the king saw that God had saved Daniel he made a new law that everyone must pray only to _____.



Think about this: Daniel knew God. Daniel worshipped God alone. Daniel knew that this might cost him his life, but he loved God more than he loved his life. He refused to pray to the king. Daniel kept the First Commandment: You shall have no other gods before Me.

The good news of the Gospel: God sent His Angel to be with Daniel when he was in the den full of lions. God rescued Daniel from death. We know that when Jesus was on the cross He was not rescued. He died for us so that we would always live with God.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You that You are always with me. You never leave. You never forsake me. Thank You for this story about Daniel and how You were with him when he was surrounded by lions. Thank You that You died to rescue me. I love You. Amen.

God's Messenger

From Jonah 1 – 4 * Pages 160 - 169

December 20

Who was *Jonah*? Sometimes he's called "the reluctant prophet." That means: God gave him a job and he didn't want to do it. And that's true! God spoke to Jonah and told him to go to the Ninevites and tell them to repent of their unbelief. The men and women, boys and girls of Nineveh did not love God. They worshipped all sorts of other false gods instead. God told Jonah to tell them that in 40 days He was going to judge them. God said, "Go, Jonah!" And Jonah said, "No, God!"

Jonah didn't stay home. He packed his bag, bought a ticket and got on a ship going in the exact opposite direction. The ship set sail. But God was watching and He was with Jonah. He sent a storm that terrified all the sailors. Jonah convinced the sailors that their only hope was to throw him into the raging sea. And so they did. The minute Jonah hit the water the storm stopped. The sailors were in awe! They prayed to the Lord to forgive them, they offered a sacrifice and made vows. The sailors turned from their gods to the true God, the Ruler of the wind and the waves. And Jonah?

God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah stayed in the belly of the great fish for 3 days and 3 nights. Jonah turned to the Lord. He prayed to God and called for His help. Jonah's hard heart that was full of pride in himself and bitterness toward the undeserving Ninevites was softening. Jonah sang a song of thanksgiving to God. Jonah said the words that every Christian must say:

Salvation comes from the Lord (Jonah 2:9b).

And with that profession of faith the Lord commanded the great fish to return Jonah to dry land.

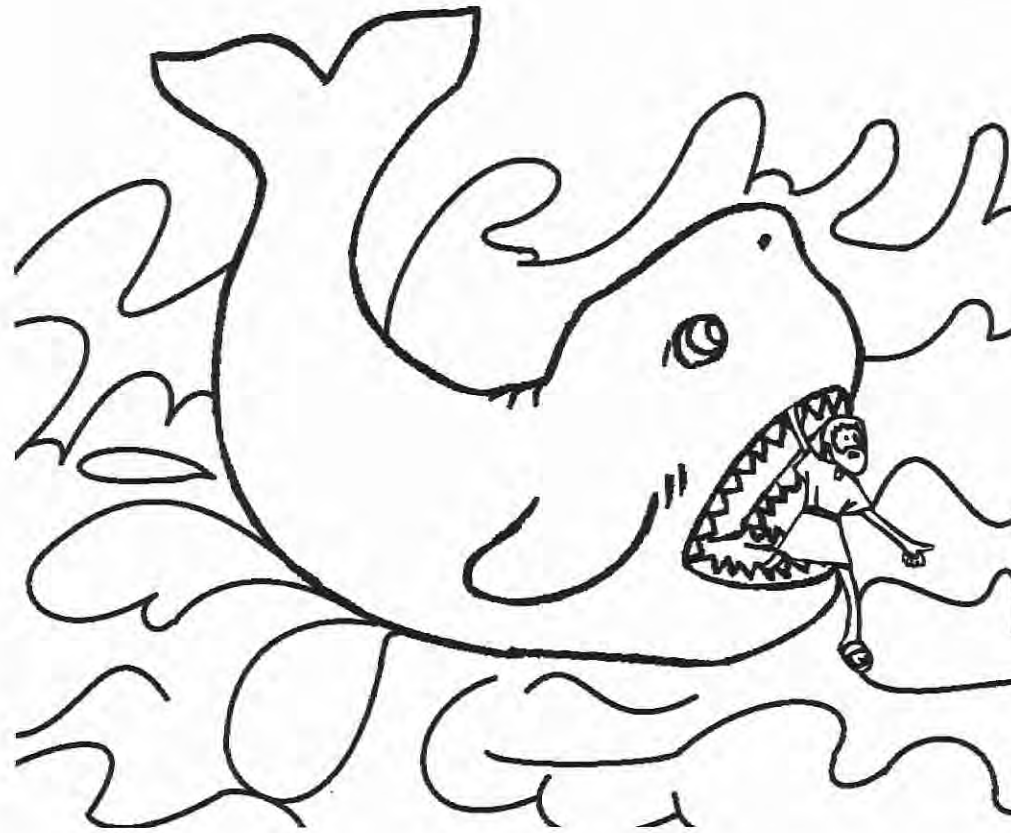
This time when the Lord said, "Go, Jonah!" Jonah said, "Yes, God!" Jonah went to Nineveh, the great city where the people worshipped many gods. Jonah boldly called the people to repent. And the people, from the King on the throne to the lowliest servant scrubbing the stable floors, at his first words of warning: Repented! Heard! Received! Believed!

Every citizen of Nineveh at his command from the Lord became a citizen of heaven!



Yes or No Questions

1. God told Jonah that He wanted him to go to Nineveh.
2. God was very tired of the people in Nineveh and wanted Jonah to ship them out to sea forever.
3. Jonah did not have any love for the people of Nineveh and did not obey God.
4. Jonah decided to swim to a small island away from God.
5. God sent a storm to stop Jonah from running away.
6. A huge fish swallowed Jonah.
7. Jonah was happy to be in the dark belly of the fish where God could not see him.
8. When Jonah finally went to Nineveh the people all repented of their sins and turned to God.



Think about this: Jonah ran from God. He did not want to obey God. He did not want to love the people God loved. But God is a loving heavenly Father. He rescues His children from our sin. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for 3 days before he repented. Did God hear him? Yes! God always hears His children when they cry out to Him.

The good news of the Gospel: It was 3 days before Jesus' resurrection. Jesus did not need to repent. He had never sinned. He died for our sins. We need to repent and turn to God. He always listens. He always forgives.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You that You listened to Jonah when he turned to You. Thank You that Jesus conquered the grave and death. Help me to run to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Get Ready!

From Old Testament Passages * Pages 170 - 175
December 21

Have you ever been tired of waiting? Maybe you remember waiting for your grandparents to come visit. Maybe you remember waiting for your birthday, or for your new baby sister or brother to learn how to walk.

In the Bible there were lots of people who waited. All the way back to Adam and Eve people were waiting. They were waiting for God to send the promised Savior, they were waiting for Jesus to be born.

Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Jonah all waited. All of those people loved God. They all knew that one day God was going to send His Son to the earth. Jesus was coming to earth to save them and us.

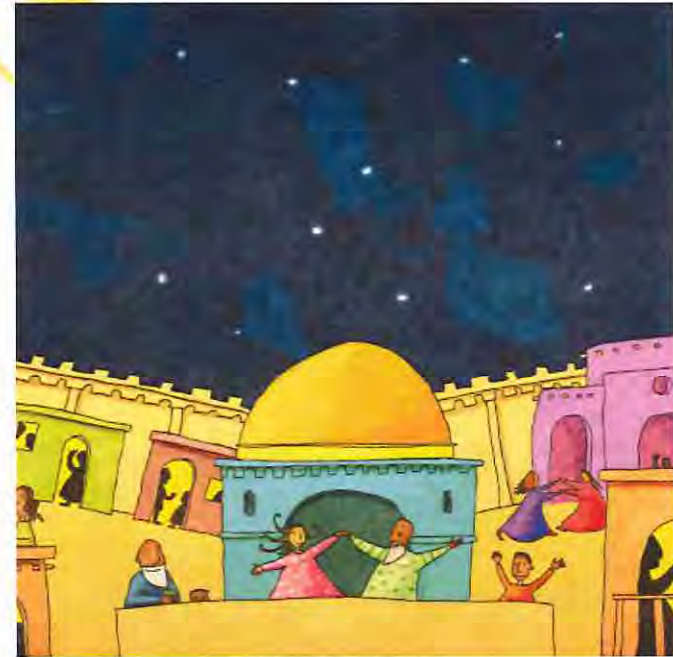
Jesus saves us from punishment for our sin, for wanting to be God. On the cross Jesus paid for our forgiveness with His blood. Remember the song: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Everyone was waiting for Jesus. They didn't know His name. They didn't know when He was coming. But God told His prophets where His Son would be born. And God told His prophets some things about who His Son's mother would be. And God told the prophets some things about how His Son would die.

Think about this. Over 2000 years later we are celebrating the birth of that baby. Why do we celebrate? Because Jesus was more than a baby. He was more than a special baby. Jesus grew up. He lived a perfect life, completely without sin. Never doing one thing that God did not love. And then He died on a cross. His blood washed away the punishment for our sins, for all the things that we say, all the things that we do, and all the things that we hide in our heart that do not honor God.

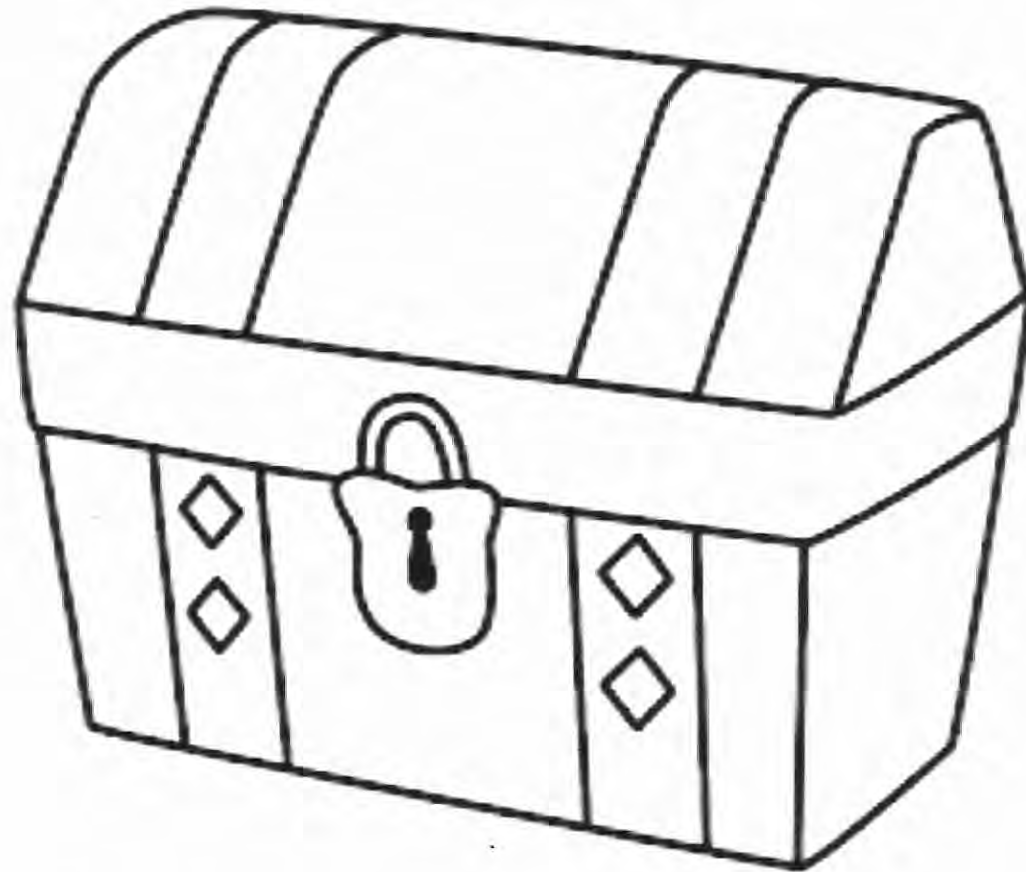
Now when God looks at you He sees you all washed, clean, no sin to pay for. He sees you wearing the white robe of righteousness, Christ's righteousness. We aren't waiting to be rescued. We are rescued!

Now we say, "Thank You Jesus for coming and saving me. Thank You for washing my sins away with Your blood. Help me to honor You and love You even more than I do today! Please get my heart ready to really celebrate You this Christmas!"



Yes or No Questions

1. Did God's people always follow Him with faith and love?
2. Did God's children forget how God had taken such good care of them?
3. Were God's children afraid that God would punish them?
4. Did God send prophets to remind them of His love?
5. Did God promise to send His Son to rescue us?
6. Is Christmas about the greatest rescue party ever?



Think about this: Do you have a treasure? Do you have something that you love more than almost anything else? The Bible is God telling us how much He loves us. God told Moses that His children are His treasure. Can you believe that? You are God's treasure. He celebrates you!

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience. He died on a cross instead of you. He died in your place. Jesus lived so that He could pay for your sins and bring you to God. You can go right into God's throne room today and tell Him how much you love Him.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank You that I am Your treasure. I don't understand it. Thank You for Your love, for Your "Never stopping, never giving up on me, unbreaking, always and forever love." Amen.

He's Here!

From Luke 1 – 2 * Pages 176 - 182

December 22

Do you like to ask questions? Do you sometimes just lie in bed and wonder about things? Christmas is a time when we get answers to a lot of questions—bigger questions, questions like: who is God, how can I know Him, does He love me? The Christmas story has plenty of people in it who were wondering too about little questions and big questions.

In Luke 2 we read that it was time to leave Nazareth. It might take 4 days to get to Bethlehem. Mary would ride the donkey, Joseph would walk beside her. Their destination was 70 miles away.

Why were they going to Bethlehem? Why was Mary going with Joseph? Why didn't she stay in Nazareth? She was ready to give birth to her son. She knew she was having a son because an angel had come. The angel told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son, His only Son, His Son who would be the Savior of the world.

But she couldn't stay. Caesar Augustus had decided that he wanted to count everyone who lived under his rule. The more people, the more powerful he would be. This meant that men had to go to the hometown of their family. Joseph's hometown was Bethlehem, the city of King David. It was a small town, not what you would expect to be the hometown of kings.

Maybe Joseph knew the real reason he had to go to Bethlehem and the real reason Mary had to come with him. The prophet Micah said 700 years earlier, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

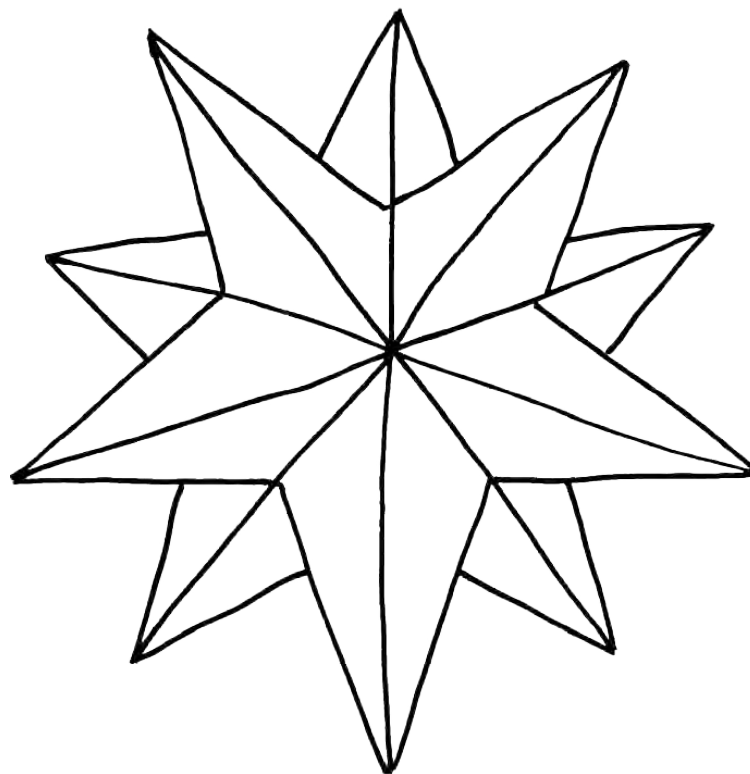
Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. Her Son had to be born in Bethlehem. God had decreed that the King of Kings would be born in Bethlehem, King David's city, even though David had moved to Jerusalem.

And so they went, not to the beautiful home of dear friends but to the home of animals, a stable. What a scene it must have been: Joseph, Mary, animals and a newborn baby—the Baby who was the Creator and Lord of them all.



Fill in the missing word

1. Mary was a young girl who was engaged to marry _____.
2. One day Mary received a surprising message from the Angel _____.
3. God had said that one day His Son would be born in the town of King David, His great great grandfather, the little town of _____.
4. When Mary heard the news that God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son she said that she was God's _____.



Think about this: At just the right time God sent Jesus into the world. Are you surprised that Jesus left the courts of heaven and came to earth as a helpless baby? Mary accepted the Angel's news with great faith. Mary and Joseph walked by faith and not by sight. They wrapped up God's Son in swaddling clothes. Jesus the one who made the starry skies slept in a lowly manger. He is Emmanuel, "God has come to make His home with us!"

The good news of the Gospel: Jesus was willing to be born in a stable. The helpless baby became a man who was willing to die alone on a cross. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, who wraps us in His robes of righteousness to be with Him forever. We are never alone.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I want to put You in a soft bed with a silken pillow for Your head. You know what is best. You came in humility so that I can always come to You. Thank You. I love You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Light of the Whole World

From Luke 2 * Pages 184 – 191

December 23

God's plans are surprising. We never could guess them. God had decided that His Son would be born to humble people in a humble place. Then He chose humble people, lowly people to be the first to meet His Son. God sent an Angel to a group of shepherds who were watching their sheep. Darkness was cast out and the sky was illumined. Quiet shepherds sitting in the dark now were filled with fear as the light shone all around them. He said, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord!"

And then suddenly the shepherds heard singing like they had never heard before and no one has heard since. Angels filled the sky and sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."

The angels left the shepherds and returned to their heavenly home as the shepherds ran as fast as they could run! And so, they left their sheep and hurried to Bethlehem. There they found Mary and Joseph with their Baby lying in the manger. It was just as the Lord had told them.

A quiet night on the hillside watching sheep had certainly ended in the most marvelous way! Did the shepherds go back to their sheep? Yes, but first they ran all over Bethlehem and told everyone they saw about the Child that had been born. Everyone who heard was amazed!

It was also quite amazing that anyone listened to the shepherds. Shepherds were not highly thought of, only a little bit better than lepers and tax collectors. And yet they were the first to hear the song that changed the world. God had come to earth.

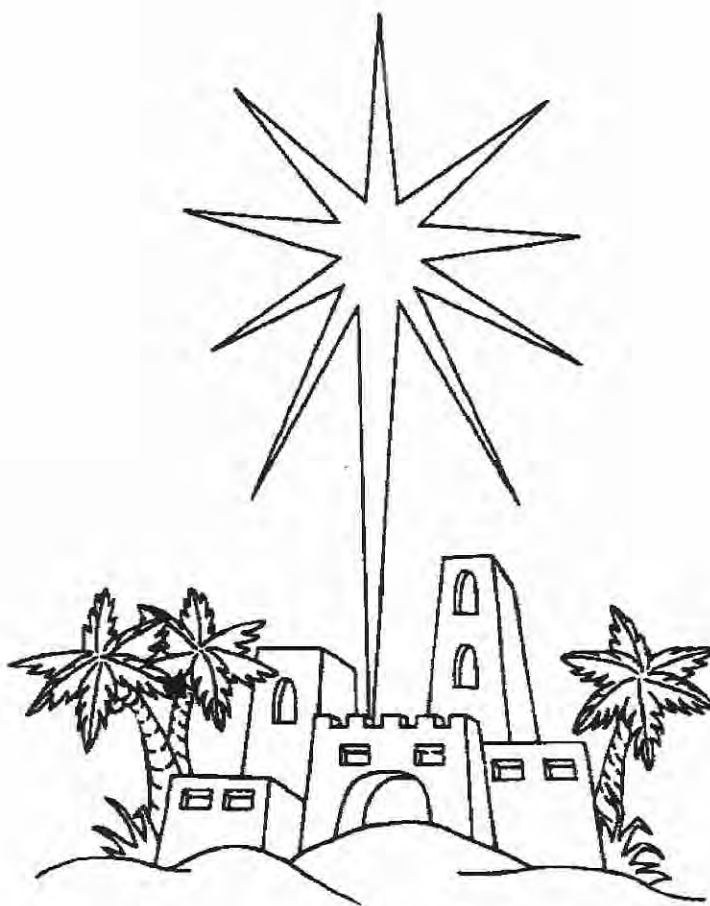
The biggest questions were being answered. God was bringing the peace that He had promised to Adam and Eve. His Son was born who was going to unite us to His Father. His birth was the beginning. It would cost Him His life to unite us. The cost was great but His love was greater.

A little Baby was bringing peace between God His Father and us. How was this peace going to come?—Through His death.



Choose one

1. On the night when Jesus was born the sky was filled with shooting stars OR the sky was filled with angels singing.
2. Shepherds were on the hillside when an angel told them to sing along with them OR to go to Bethlehem and see the new baby.
3. The shepherds were thrilled with the angel's good news so they finished their dinner and ran into town OR they left everything and ran into town.
4. The shepherds found the baby Jesus after they checked every stable in Bethlehem OR they found the baby in the stable under the bright new star.



Think about this: Can you run really fast? One night some shepherds raced to the stable where God's Son was sleeping. Their sheep-watching job in the darkness on the hillside outside of town was changed to flaming brightness. Angels filled the sky and sang, "Glory to God in the highest!" Their hearts filled with exploding joy as they raced to see the Baby. The humble shepherds were the first to hear the good news of the Servant King's birth. Isn't that just like God?

The good news of the Gospel: God sent His Son to earth as a baby, a real baby. Jesus was a baby who did what babies do. But Jesus grew up without sinning ever. He was perfect. He died on a cross to do what we cannot do. Jesus died to give us life, real life, abundant life now, life with Him forever.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for the glory filled night when the angels sang of Your birth. Oh Lord, when I sing Christmas carols now help me to remember that the baby Jesus became the Savior Jesus who loves me. Amen.

The King of All Kings

From Matthew 2 * Pages 192 - 199

December 24

There were men who lived in the far east who studied stars. Sometimes we call them wise men and sometimes we call them kings. We know they were rich and powerful men. They thought that the stars held great wisdom. Stars were good to study.

Today we know many things about stars that the wise men back when Jesus lived didn't know. The thing they did know about the star that they were now able to see was that it was special, it moved, and they had never seen it before.

The wise men lived very far away from Bethlehem. They had never seen this unique star and it filled them with wonder. They decided to go to the place where the star was pointing. They could not ignore the star.

We know they recognized there was something special about this star because they packed presents before they started on their discovery trip. They packed their camels and gathered their servants and started on the long journey. It probably took them one month or longer to get to Bethlehem.

Think about this: Shepherds saw and heard angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest!" Now wise men saw a star and followed it.

Angels and stars all pointed to the birth of a King, the birth of God's Son. They pointed to the Creator of the whole world, the one who made everything and He was a Baby.

The wise men, the kings, found the Baby and they worshipped Him. In fact, the Bible says they fell down and worshipped Him.

Did they know who they were worshipping? We don't know. But we do know that when they saw the Baby Jesus they did the right thing. They did just what we do now. We worship King Jesus, the risen Savior! How do we worship? We pray to Him, we sing to Him, we give Him our heart. And every day we say: Lord Jesus, I love YOU!



Yes or No Questions

1. The wise men from the east studied the stars for special signs.
2. When the wise men saw a special star they asked everyone they knew if a new born King was nearby.
3. The wise men traveled for weeks and weeks to take their gifts to the baby King.
4. When they asked King Herod about the baby he told them to go right to Bethlehem.
5. The wise men saw the star again and followed it right to Jesus.
6. The wise men met young King Jesus and worshipped Him.



Think about this: Kings are born in palaces. Kings grow up in palaces. The wise men from the east went right to a King's palace to see the new baby King. But the baby was not in the palace. The star showed them where to go. No, the baby Jesus was where any baby could be. He was in a little town, in a humble house. The wise men knelt and worshipped when they saw Jesus, the Almighty King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Their hearts knew He was the True King.

The good news of the Gospel: God comes to the poor, the humble, the outcasts. God knows that we need Jesus to show us the way to Him, the way to worship Him as our King. God sent Jesus to save us and bring us to Himself.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, I am like shepherds and wise men. I need You to be my Savior, to be my King, the King of my heart. I have nothing to give You except my heart. I love You. Amen.



Jesus said: I am the light of the world
Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life. John 8:12