

30 EASY

BIBLE

**DEVOTIONS
FOR FAMILIES**

How to Use This

If you're like most busy families, finding time to sit down together can be difficult. The purpose of this devotional is to give you, as a parent, a tool to meaningfully and intentionally connect with your kids, as you all grow together spiritually. Each of these devotionals includes a brief description you can read to your kids as well as a Scripture reading and questions you can discuss as a family. You can complete each devotional in less than ten minutes, but we hope you won't feel rushed. Some easy ways to make this into a win is to simply do this devotional together before or after a meal or right before bed. Look for a time that you are already normally all together as a family and just add this brief devotional time to the routine you have in place. That will make it much more likely that this becomes a habit you keep!

01.

Creation

Introduction

In the very beginning of time, God created everything! His amazing work is on display for us to enjoy. Our God made us to help take care of the beautiful world He built.

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-3, 25-27, 31

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Lesson/Application

Did you ever wonder how things came to be? It's hard to comprehend that someone made everything in our world and universe, but God did it! The very first book of the Bible in God's big story is Genesis, and it tells all about how He made every detail perfect, so living things could function. He took care to place things just right so everything would work together. Think about how plants give us oxygen, and we produce carbon dioxide for them. Look at a food chain that cycles. A hawk eats a snake, which has eaten a frog, which has eaten a grasshopper, which has eaten grass. Eventually that hawk will die and decompose, giving nutrients to the grass. God made all the non-living and living things around us. The way He crafted it all makes our world go round. Not only did he make the sun, land, plants, and animals, but He made YOU! People are perhaps His most wonderful creation. Just as He created Adam and Eve in the very beginning, He knit our bodies together in a perfect way. We were made to enjoy the things of this earth, and to worship God our Creator.

Question Time

1. Can you name 10 things that God made?
2. What is your favorite landscape that God made?
3. What is something special about how God made you?

02.

The Fall

Introduction

God created people to love and worship Him but gave them free choice. When man went against what God said, sin entered the world.

Scripture

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6

2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it will certainly die."

3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.

Lesson/Application

If there was a big red button with a sign next to it that said, "Do not touch" what would that make you want to do? Touch it, right? You would probably want to know what would happen when the button was pushed even though you would clearly be breaking the rules by touching it. Adam and Eve, the first two people God created had this same dilemma. In God's big story, He had crafted a perfect world. His creations lacked nothing. But He did not make humans to be robots. He gave them free will, which meant they could choose what they were going to do. When Satan, disguised as a snake, came on the scene, he tricked and tempted them. And they gave in. The moment they ate the fruit that God had forbidden, sin entered the world. Creation was no longer perfect. There were immediate consequences for them. When we make choices, we have consequences good or bad as well.

1. What makes it hard for you to do the right thing sometimes?
2. What is a consequence you might have if you do the wrong thing?

03.

The Flood

Introduction

After many years of people making bad choices, God sent a flood that destroyed the entire earth. Only a man named Noah and his family were found righteous and saved. After the flood, God

Scripture

Genesis 6:12-14, 19, 22; 7:17; 9:12-13

6:13 So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. 19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

7:17 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth.

9:12 And God said, "this is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

Lesson/Application

Do you like when it rains? A little shower or storm might be okay, but can you imagine torrential downpours for 40 days straight? Imagine that coupled with being cooped up on a boat with a bunch of stinky animals! That's exactly what happened to Noah and his family. In God's big story, many years had passed since His perfect creation. With free choice, lots of people had chosen to sin against God and do evil things. In fact, there was only one person in the whole world who was found to be righteous. God chose to save Noah and his family. They had to obey by building a boat and loading up a zoo. For people who had never seen a flood like this before, this took a lot of faith. No one else listened, and they all perished when the flood came. When it was all over, God made a covenant with Noah. He promised to never destroy the earth again by flood. He sent a beautiful rainbow as a symbol of this promise. We can remember that God keeps His promises to us every time we see those brilliant colors in the sky.

1. What are some things you would have done on the ark if you were Noah?
2. What are some promises that God keeps to us?

04.

God's Promise to Abraham

Introduction

God established a covenant with Abraham. He asked him to obey and start a new life; in return Abraham would be blessed and be the father of many nations.

Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3

1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Lesson/Application

Have you ever had to move to a new city? How about a new school or start a new job? Those can be scary things, especially if you don't know anyone. You have to trust that God will help you in your new assignment. That's what our devotion is about today.

Sometime after the days of Noah, God handpicked a man named Abraham to play a vital role in His big story. God had a plan to create a group of people whom He would save and lead. The beginning of this new nation would begin with Abraham. God made a covenant and promise to Abraham, asking Him to leave his land and his family and go to a brand-new place he knew nothing about. Talk about scary! Abraham chose to obey God and started a new life.

The blessings of God's promise eventually led Abraham to become what we call the father of many nations. God told Abraham that his descendants would be greater in number than the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore. As we read through more of God's big story, we will find out that God kept His promise.

Question Time

1. How would you feel if you had to leave everything and everyone you knew?
2. What is something hard that you have had to do recently?
3. How has God kept His promises to you?

05.

Abraham and Isaac

Introduction

Abraham faced many times in his life when He was asked to choose obedience to God. One of those times was extreme when God asked him to sacrifice his only son.

Scripture

Genesis 22:1-5, 9-12

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Lesson/Application

Is it easy or hard for you to obey? It probably depends on the situation. Imagine showing obedience that would cause tragedy and heartache. That would be a difficult order to follow. As God prepared Abraham to be the father of this special group of people, he called for obedience in his life even if it was something super hard. Remember, Abraham had been promised to be the father of many nations. He had to wait a very long time for that promise to come around. He and his wife, Sarah were finally blessed with a son named Isaac when they were very old. Imagine Abraham's confusion and wonder when God asked him to sacrifice his only son. The important part of this story is that Abraham obeyed. It had to be a rough and discouraging trip for Abraham up that mountain. But his obedience was rewarded. Just in time, God provided an animal sacrifice, and Isaac was spared. Abraham passed the test, and his obedience resulted in blessing.

Question Time

1. What is the most important thing to you?
2. How would you feel if you had to give up that very important thing?
3. Give an example of a time God has provided for your family recently.

04.

Jacob and Esau

Introduction

Jacob and Esau were twins born to Rebekah and Isaac. Although Esau was older and should have gotten the family birthright, Jacob was tricky and got this blessing for himself.

Scripture

Genesis 27:1, 4-10, 41a

1 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” “Here I am,” he answered. 4 Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.” 5 Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.’ 8 Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: 9 Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. 10 Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”

41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him.

Lesson/Application

Have you ever heard of sibling rivalry? This happens when there are brothers and sisters who don't get along. Are there any siblings in your family? Do they ever fight? Maybe the oldest sibling has more privileges. Maybe the youngest sibling always gets his or her way. The days of sibling rivalry go all the way back to the early days of the Old Testament. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers born to Rebekah and Isaac. Remember from last time that Isaac was the son of Abraham, with whom God had made a special promise. The descendants of Abraham were very important in God's big story, as they would be His chosen people. Usually the oldest son in each family received a special inheritance called the birthright. In Isaac's family, that should have gone to Esau since he was the oldest, but that didn't happen. After a silly and quick decision one day, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Later, Rebekah helped Jacob trick Isaac into giving him the blessing. Of course this made Esau very angry. God's chosen people would come through Jacob's family line. It caused a big separation in their family.

1. What does your family fight about sometimes?
2. Jacob and Esau became enemies. How can you prevent that from happening in your family?

07.

Joseph Sold in Slavery

Introduction

Joseph was treated poorly and sold into slavery by his older brothers. Although his life was not what he planned, he continued to trust God.

Scripture

Genesis 37:3-4, 13, 18-20, 26-27

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.” 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 “Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. 20 “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.” 26 Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brothers and cover up his blood? 27 Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

Lesson/Application

If you have a brother or sister, you might sometimes feel like they always get their way or like they are the favorite child. Parents don’t really pick favorites. They know that each of their children is a special gift. But there’s a story in the Bible where one father really did favor one child over the rest. He singled his son out and even gave him special gifts. Just like you might feel, the other siblings were jealous and mad. Joseph was a son of Jacob, so he played a major part in God’s big story. Last time we learned that Jacob, the son of Isaac had received a special blessing and birthright, making him in the direct line of God’s chosen people. Jacob wasn’t quiet about treating Joseph as the favorite child. The older brothers in the family got tired of this special treatment so much in fact, that they made a plan to get rid of Joseph. The brothers ended up selling Joseph away as a slave, making their father believe he was dead. While this was a terrible situation for Joseph, it set him on a journey into a different land where he had both good and bad experiences. Through it all, he trusted in God’s bigger plan.

1. How does it feel to be treated differently than everyone else?
2. Imagine something hard happening to you (like what happened to Joseph). How could you trust God through that situation?

08.

Joseph Reunited with His Brothers

Introduction

Joseph faced many trials, but God allowed him to come out of slavery and become successful in everything he did. After several years, when he came face to face with the brothers who had betrayed him, he chose forgiveness over anger.

Scripture

Genesis 42:2, 6-8; 45:4; 50:20

42:2 He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." 6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." 8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

45:4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!"

50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Lesson/Application

Imagine if someone did something so terrible to you that it caused you to become a slave and never see your family again. That would be awful, right? What do you suppose would happen if you ever saw that person again? You might have plenty to say to them, or you might want to get revenge. Today we will see how this same situation played out in the life of Joseph. We know that Joseph's jealous brothers had sold him into slavery, thinking they would never see him again. Although Joseph had a rough patch, God turned that hard time into success for Joseph. He even became the governor for all of Egypt. A terrible famine had come over all the land, and Egypt was the only place people could get food, thanks to plans Joseph had made for the country. Joseph's brothers were among those traveling there to get grain. Can you imagine how Joseph felt when he saw them? So many emotions must have been going through his head. His love overpowered all the bitter feelings and he forgave his brothers, even inviting them to come live with him. Joseph understood that in God's big story, sometimes he uses hard things to do good.

Question Time

1. What would your emotions and reactions have been if you were Joseph?
2. What is something your family has gone through that has been difficult, but turned out good?

Introduction

Moses was a special baby that God saved. His life became an important part of saving God's people.

Scripture

Exodus 2:1-10

1 Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, 2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. 5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. 7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" 8 Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Lesson/Application

A mean king, a beautiful princess, and a baby floating down the river in a basket sound like characters from a fairy tale, but they're actually from a true story! In God's big story, Moses was chosen as a mighty leader for God's people. His story started when he was just a baby. By this time in the Old Testament, God's chosen people, called the Israelites had been made slaves in Egypt. The cruel king there was forcing all Israelite baby boys to be killed. One mother was so set on her son being saved, that she hid him for as long as she could. One day she put him in a basket and floated it down the river, in the hopes that somehow, he would be safe. Baby Moses was not only found safe, but it was by the king's daughter. This princess wanted to keep the child for herself. Moses' scary beginning turned into God placing him just at the right place for a big job he would have later in life.

Question Time

1. Moses' mother did everything she could to keep him safe. What are some things your parents do to keep you safe?
2. What are some plans you think God has for your life?

10.

The Crossing of the Red Sea

Introduction

Moses grew up and became a great leader. God had him help free the Israelites from slavery and lead them to a better life.

Scripture

Exodus 14:13-14, 21-23, 27, 31

13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. 31 And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Lesson/Application

Have you ever swum underwater in the ocean and seen sea creatures scurrying around? There's plenty of wildlife to see in the sand and surf but you might have to dig for it. There was a time in God's big story when God did the digging for the people. He did an amazing miracle at the edge of the sea that allowed His people to be saved. Remember baby Moses? Well, he grew up and had all the privileges he could imagine growing up in the king's household. But one day he realized that the people of his heritage, the Israelites, were being terribly treated. God called him out to stand up to the Pharaoh, so the people would be released and freed. At first, he struggled with thinking he wasn't cut out for the job, but then accepted, following God's instructions. After some crazy plagues, the Israelites were able to leave Egypt. Moses led the way. They came to the Red Sea and saw that Pharaoh had changed his mind and was chasing them down. It was time for a God sized miracle. He parted the waters, so there were walls of H₂O on either side of a dry path. Imagine the sea creatures wondering what in the world was going on! God's people crossed safely to begin their new life.

Question Time

1. How is God fighting for your family right now?
2. If you were one of the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea, how would you describe your experience to someone who wasn't there?

11.

The 10 Commandments

Introduction

God gave His people rules to follow. The 10 Commandments are guidelines to help us love God and people.

Scripture

Exodus 20:1-5, 7-10, 12-17

1 And God spoke all these words: 2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; 7 You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. 8 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 12 Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Lesson/Application

Everywhere you go in life, there are rules, guidelines at school and expectations for how your parents want you to act. There are rules if you go to a trampoline park or play a game of kickball. Rules are designed to keep us safe and be the best we can be. In God’s big story, He instituted rules for His people, the Israelites. After Moses had led them across the Red Sea, they were on a long journey to find their new home. God knew that they needed guidelines, so He called Moses up to a mountain and gave him the 10 Commandments. In summary, this is what they say: Don’t have any other gods, make idols, or misuse God’s name, remember to have a day of rest, honor your parents, don’t murder, don’t take another person’s spouse, steal, lie, or be jealous. All of these things were passed down to help the Israelites love God and love people. The same rules were made for us too. They are all things that help us live our lives for God and treat others well. Sometimes rules can be hard to follow, but remember they are there to guide us into being our best.

Question Time

1. Is it easy or hard for you to follow rules? Why?
2. What would happen if there were no rules at your house?
3. How are rules good for us?

12.

The Spies are Afraid to Enter Canaan

Introduction

The Israelites were given a new land to inhabit. They had to wander for several years in the desert before finding their new home. Spies were sent to explore Canaan, giving both good and bad reports.

Scripture

Number 13:1-3, 21, 26-28

1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.” 3 So at the Lord’s command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites. 21 So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. 26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.”

Lesson/Application

If you had night goggles, a hidden camera, and a voice recorder, what do you suppose you might be doing? Did you guess, spying? Maybe you’ve spied on your parents wrapping gifts or on your sister and her friends, or even spied on what the neighbor’s next door were doing. Spying can be a tricky and dangerous task. During God’s big story when the Israelites were on their long journey from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, the time came for them to find out more about their new land. Moses appointed 12 spies for this job. They went into the unknown and found a beautiful land with everything they could ever need. It had huge grapes and other good food. But there was just one problem. The people living there were giants and seemed too hard to conquer. God’s people had a choice to make. Would they stay fearful and lost or would they forge ahead with God’s help and overtake their new land? Sometimes scary things come our way, and we have a decision to make. It’s always good to trust that God will help us through the hard times.

Question Time

1. What is something you like to spy on?
2. What is something that makes you feel afraid?
3. Who and what can help you when you are fearful?

13.

The Fall of Jericho

Introduction

The time came for the Israelites to overtake their new land. God used a very strange method to lead His people into battle and win over the city of Jericho.

Scripture

Joshua 6:1-5, 20

1 Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. 2 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. 3 March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. 4 Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. 5 When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in." 20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

Lesson/Application

Have you ever been told to hold your breath or stand on your head to get rid of hiccups? How about drinking cold water or eating a spoonful of sugar or vinegar? These are all strange remedies that work for some people. Sometimes, it takes something unconventional to solve a problem. God worked this way many times when He was leading His people to freedom. The Israelites were still wandering but finally the time had come to receive their new land. After Moses had died, Joshua was the newly appointed leader in God's big story. He often reminded the people not to be afraid and to remember that God was with them. As they prepared for battle against Jericho, God did not do things the usual way. He told the people to march around the walls of the city for seven days, and to blow trumpets and yell at the top of their lungs. And guess what? It worked! The walls of the city fell down and the Israelites were able to go in and take over. God's ways are not always what we would imagine, but they are always right and good.

1. How would you react if someone told you that walking and shouting would make walls fall down?
2. When has God helped you defeat an enemy?

14.

Deborah

Introduction

As the people fought for their new land, they continued to need guidance. God appointed leaders like Deborah to lead the Israelites to do His work.

Scripture

Judges 4:4-7; 5:1-3

4:4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. 5 She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. 6 She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘God, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. 7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’”

5:1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: 2 “When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves – praise the Lord! 3 “Hear this, you king! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song.”

Lesson/Application

Rock, paper, scissors...have you ever played this game to settle how someone gets cho-sen? That’s one way to choose fairly. Another way is by having someone else do the choosing. A judge is someone who listens to both sides and settles disputes. Maybe your parents have that job in your family if there’s an issue between you and your sibling. In God’s big story, the Israelites often had arguments. In order to keep them on track and help them follow His rules, there were judges appointed to listen and help keep the peace. Deb-ora-h was one of them. She wasn’t only a judge, but a leader, prophet, and mighty warrior. She helped lead the people into battle with God’s guidance. As the Israelites worked towards receiving their new land, they had many battles. When they listened to God, He helped them win. Deborah was a judge and leader who led the people into battle under God’s guidance. And she remembered to give Him praise.

Question Time

1. If there was only one cookie left, but three people in your family wanted it, what would be a fair way to solve the problem?
2. Who settles disputes in your family?
3. How can you remember to thank God this week for helping you through hard times?

15.

David and Goliath

Introduction

God used a young boy to defeat a giant. God can help us win physical, emotional, and spiritual battles.

Scripture

1 SAMUEL 17:4, 8, 11, 32, 45-46a, 49

4 A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. 8 Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. 11 On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. 32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." 45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

Lesson/Application

Picture someone as tall as a NBA player, as strong as the world's strongest man, and as mean as the playground bully? You're probably imagining someone that you wouldn't want to mess with! What if you had to stand up and fight against this monster? It would take a lot of bravery.

David was an unlikely hero. He wasn't tall, strong, or a bully. As just a boy, he had gone to check on his older brothers in battle. They were all frightened of a giant named Goliath and his army.

But David heard this and was unafraid. In fact, he was confident that with God on his side, he could defeat Goliath. With only a slingshot and five stones, he went out to meet the enemy. After pro-claiming that he was coming in the Name of the Lord, David did what he set out to do. Round and round went the slingshot, up in the air went the rock, and the giant came tumbling down.

David showed at a young age he could be brave and trust God. This in turn led to God using him in amazing ways in His big story. God can help us be brave when we face giants, too.

Question Time

1. If you had to face a giant, how would you prepare yourself?
2. Describe what a hero is to you.
3. What is one way you can be brave this week?

16.

Psalms

Introduction

Psalms was written to pen song lyrics. Many, written by David, were reminders of what was happening to the Israelites and also a way to praise and worship God.

Scripture

Psalm 100:1-5

1 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Lesson/Application

What kind of music do you like to listen to? There are so many kinds to choose from! Maybe you listen to the car radio when you're traveling. Perhaps you've been to a concert to hear live music. Or maybe you enjoy listening to music from your iPod or other device. Listening to and singing songs can not only be enjoyable for us but used as a way to praise and worship God. In God's big story, there are 66 books of the Bible. Each one is different and written for a purpose. The book of Psalms is a gathering of song lyrics. A long time ago, these would have been sung by the people. Many were written by David. Little David who defeated the giant grew up to do many great things for God. He even became a king! One of his special talents was composing praise and worship music to God. Sometimes the Psalms tell a story of hard times the Israelites went through. Other times, they are a beautiful poem written to glorify God. The people in the Old Testament needed reminders of how and why God is so awesome. We need those same reminders. God made us to be His people so we could love and worship Him. We should always be thankful to Him and praise His Name. He is good and faithful forever.

Question Time

1. What is your favorite worship song?
2. What are some ways your family can praise God?
3. What are three specific things about God that deserve our praise and worship?

17.

Proverbs

Introduction

God gave King Solomon wisdom. He used this understanding to help people make good decisions as they followed God.

Scripture

Proverbs 3:1-15

1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, 2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. 3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. 11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. 13 Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

Lesson/Application

Have you ever seen the show "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" It's where adults compete against 10 and 11 year olds to see who has the most knowledge about different subjects. There are some super smart kids on this show, and most of the time, they can out answer the grown-ups. Being smart and studying to know about math or science is a good thing. But being in tune with God's knowledge and how to apply it to our lives is an even better thing. It's called wisdom. Solomon was a king, the son of David, who possessed lots of wisdom. God gave it to him, and he shared it with God's people so they could make better decisions and have better lives. King Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs in God's big story. It's full of smart sayings. It's like a guideline to helping people do things that will benefit their lives. Proverbs reminds us that knowledge can't just come from ourselves or the world. It must come from God. Having this wisdom is better than anything we could imagine, even gold, silver, and precious jewels. We can pray for wisdom and understanding, and God will give it to us.

1. How do you think you can gain wisdom?
2. What is one wise choice you can make this week?
3. Proverbs is a book of wise sayings. Can you think of a wise saying to share with your family?

18.

Jonah

Introduction

God used prophets like Jonah to help turn people back to Him. Although Jonah didn't obey God at first, he was given a second chance to do the right thing.

Scripture

Jonah 1:1-4, 15, 17a; 2:1, 10; 3:1-3a

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. 4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah.

2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

3:1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh.

Lesson/Application

If you want to send a message to someone, how do you do it? The post office can deliver mail for us, we can send an email, or text from our phones. In the Old Testament, in God's big story, He used people called prophets to send messages. They had to walk or boat to other lands to communicate God's words. As years passed, the people struggled with making good choices. They were in a continual cycle of doing evil, then repenting and turning back to Him. God used messengers to get people to turn back to Him. From Isaiah to Malachi, there are several prophets that have their own book of the Bible, each telling a different story. Jonah is one of them. His story is unique because he wasn't always obedient to God. He started out by doing the opposite of what God asked. His job was to go to a place called Nineveh where the people were evil and desperately needed to turn back to God. Jonah didn't want to do this, so instead he hopped onto a boat and headed the opposite direction. God didn't let him get by with this. Jonah was tossed off the boat and swallowed by a ginormous fish. He spent three days praying and telling God how sorry he was. God spared Jonah's life and gave him a second chance. After he was spit out of the fish, Jonah obeyed. It's not always easy to obey, but when we don't, there are often consequences. We can be thankful that God forgives us when we mess up.

1. Describe what you think Jonah saw, thought, and experienced while in the big fish.
2. What message could you give to friends who don't know about God?
3. When is a time you had a consequence because you didn't obey the first time?

Introduction

When three men refused to worship anyone but God, He spared their lives from a fiery furnace.

Scripture

Daniel 3:5-6, 12, 16-18

5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from your Majesty’s hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Lesson/Application

If you’ve ever been near a fire, you know that it is very hot and smoky. If you get too close, you could even get burnt, which is not a fun experience. Can you imagine being inside a fire and coming out with no harm? That’s exactly what happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There were times in God’s big story when the Israelites were given over to their enemies because they would not follow God. During the time of the prophets, many of God’s people were in captivity in a place called Babylon. The king there did not follow God and forced everyone in the land to bow down and worship a giant statue that looked just like him. There were three guys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who remembered God’s command of having no other gods. When they refused to worship this idol, they were given the punishment of being thrown into a fiery furnace. God did an amazing miracle by saving their lives. The king could see them walking around and had them pulled out. They weren’t hurt and didn’t even smell like smoke! God used this situation to show His power and prove He was the one true God. The king commanded everyone to worship God after that. We should always stand up for our faith and never be afraid to love God.

Question Time

1. What emotions do you think the three men had when they were facing the furnace?
2. What are some things that might get in our way of worshiping the one true God?

20.

Daniel

Introduction

Daniel was thrown into a lion's den because he continued to pray to God. God saved his life to help the people see that He was all powerful.

Scripture

Daniel 6:11, 13, 16a, 19-22a, 25-26a

11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing He still prays three times a day." 16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. 25 Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: "May you prosper greatly! 26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel."

Lesson/Application

A hairy mane, big teeth and paws, roaring and ferocious...lions might be cool to view in the zoo, but we certainly wouldn't want to face one that wasn't behind a big fence! Getting thrown into a lion's den was a punishment used in Babylon for those who didn't obey the king. Daniel was a prophet in captivity who was given special privileges because of his help to the King. Some of the king's men were jealous and wanted to be rid of Daniel so they devised a plan to do so. They knew Daniel was faithful in his prayers to God. The sneaky men tricked the king into signing a decree saying everyone should only pray to the king. When Daniel was caught still praying to God, his punishment was to be thrown into a den of hungry lions. This distressed the king but had to be done. The next day, Daniel was found unharmed because God sent an angel to close the mouths of the beasts. The king commanded everyone to pray to the one true God. Daniel was put into a frightening situation, but he trusted God the whole time. We can trust that God is always with us when we face scary times.

Question Time

1. If you were facing a punishment like Daniel, would it be easy or hard to stand up for your faith? Why?
2. When is a time God helped you be brave?

21.

Esther

Introduction

God used Esther to save the Jewish people. She was brave to stand up to the king who could have killed her.

Scripture

Esther 3:13; 4:12-16

3:13 Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews – young and old, women and children – on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

4:12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Lesson/Application

Imagine there was a locked door. Behind it was a wonderful gift, not only for you, but for your family and friends. But you were the only one that had a key. Between you and the door stood your biggest fears, all the sad and scary things you could imagine. Would you be brave enough to pass through the tough stuff to unlock the door? This analogy is a lot like what a queen named Esther experienced. Esther wasn't always a queen. She was part of the Israelite nation, also called the Jews. She had been chosen and put into this high position. Some bad guys in the kingdom had it out for Esther's relative, Mordecai and the Jewish people. They tricked the king into saying that all Jewish people would be killed on a specific day. There sure were a lot of tricky people who tried to get rid of God's chosen people in His big story! God wouldn't let His people be wiped out, so Esther was asked to step up to the plate. She bravely went to the king to tell him of this evil plan. Stepping forward without the king's invite could have cost her life, but he accepted her plea and the Israelites were saved once again. Facing our fears can make us nervous, but when it's something important that God wants from us, we can be sure He will help make us brave.

1. What are some things you need God's help to be brave to do?
2. What is one purpose you think God has for your life?

22.

The Birth of Jesus

Introduction

The solution to our world's sin problem was for God to send a Savior. He sent His Son, Jesus to be born as a baby to Mary and Joseph here on earth.

Scripture

Luke 2:4-11

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Lesson/Application

When someone is having a baby, it's a very exciting time. People want to know if it will be a boy or a girl. They shower the family with gifts and parents make preparations like getting the nursery ready. One of the most exciting parts of God's big story involved a baby, too. All through-out the Old Testament, God's people looked to earthly leaders like kings to save them. But none of them could. God promised them that a King would come someday, one that would truly be a Savior for them. There are many prophecies about the coming of this Messiah, so the Israelites were always waiting and searching for his arrival. Imagine their surprise when the King came, but not in a royal robe, sitting on a throne. God chose to send His Son, the Savior into the world as a baby! And Jesus' entrance wasn't even one that made headlines. His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph had traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. While there, Jesus was born out where the animals were, in something like a barn because the city was so full and there wasn't even an extra room for them to stay in. In the quiet of that night, the first people to hear the announcement were nearby shepherds. They got to see and worship Him, and the news of the King spread from there.

1. How do you think the people expected a Savior from God to come?
2. If you were an animal in the stable where Jesus was born, how would you describe what you saw?

23.

A Miracle of Jesus

Introduction

Jesus began His earthly ministry in His thirties. He showed God's power by doing many amazing miracles.

Scripture

Luke 5:1, 3-11

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 5 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and held them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Lesson/Application

Sometimes fishermen like to tell what we call 'fish stories.' This means they might stretch the truth of how big their fish was. They might hold out their hands really far and say the bass they hooked was this big, when in reality it was only a tiny minnow. There's a time that Jesus' friends were fishing, and it was no exaggeration to say that they caught so many fish that their nets broke, and the boat began to sink! Jesus didn't remain a baby. He grew up, and when the time was right, He began to do the job God had sent Him for. He loved and taught people. He needed people to know that He was God's Son and could be their Savior. One way He did this was by doing miracles. These were amazing sights that could only be performed by God's power. Helping his special friends, or dis-ciples as they were called, catch a bunch of fish in a lake that didn't seem to have any, was just one miracle. Jesus turned water into wine, made the blind see, healed the lame, and much more. Using His power in this way brought glory to God and pointed people to His love. Jesus shared His amazing power because He cared about those around Him.

Question Time

1. If you were on the boat, what would you be thinking?
2. Do you know about some other miracles Jesus did? Can you name them?

24.

A Parable of Jesus

Introduction

In Jesus' ministry, He often taught using parables, earthly stories with a heavenly meaning, to help the people understand how they should love God and others.

Scripture

Mark 4:2-8, 14-20a

2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." 14 "The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the words and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop."

Lesson/Application

We all like to listen to a good story. They're interesting, filled with details, and make a good point in the end. Jesus was a storyteller. He often used stories, or parables, to capture the attention of the audience. They were things the listeners could relate to. Once they heard the story, He would tell them the meaning, which would be a way to help them understand God's big story better. Jesus came to seek and save lost people. Parables could help make things clearer, showing people their need for God. In the parable of the sower, Jesus compares farming to how we respond to God's word. Scattered seed can be eaten, grown but quickly burned or overgrown by weeds, or they can grow big and healthy. In the same way, people who hear about God might not listen at all, they might listen and believe but only for a short time because worries or wealth become more important. They can also grow and multiply, which is how we want to be. We become better by hearing God's word and sharing it with others.

1. What are the four things that can happen when people hear God's word?
2. Who is someone you could plant seeds in?

25.

Jesus' Death

Introduction

Part of the story of Jesus coming to earth had to include His death. Although cruel and unjust, it was the sacrifice that allows us to be free.

Scripture

Mark 15:17-19, 22, 24, 37-39

17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees they paid homage to him. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Lesson/Application

Have you experienced someone getting a consequence for a wrong that you did? Let's say you broke your mom's favorite glass, but your brother got blamed for it and grounded. That wouldn't be fair. In God's big story, we have come to a place where there was no fairness in what happened to Jesus. He took the punishment for everyone else's mistakes. Jesus spent a lot of time teaching those He was around. He reached out to everyone, not just certain people. He was the perfect example of how to love God and others. That's because He was God's Son. Not everyone believed this, though. There were those who thought He was not the Messiah who had come to save them. Those people plotted for a way to kill Him, and they accomplished that task. When the time came, Jesus was arrested and treated horribly. Although not found guilty of committing any crimes, He was sentenced to death. He was put on a cross and died in a terrible and cruel way. Not only was there physical pain, but by doing this, He was the ultimate sacrifice, taking in everyone's sin. You see, for years, God's people had to make animal sacrifices as part of the Law. These covered over their sins, year after year. Jesus' death was a once for all sacrifice. He was the Lamb who died to take away our sins. It's heartbreaking to think of what He went through, but it was the only way for God to save mankind.

Question Time

1. What does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross mean to you?
2. What are some words you think of when picturing Jesus dying on the cross?

26.

Jesus' Resurrection

Introduction

Jesus' death was not in vain. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead, proving He is the Messiah.

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-2, 5-10

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Lesson/Application

There's an expression that says, "I have to see it to believe it." That means you might not think something (especially if it seems impossible) really happened unless you see it with your own eyes. During the days of Jesus, many people probably thought this. We know Jesus died on the cross. He paid the price for our sins. This was extremely sad for all His followers. They couldn't believe that their Savior had gone. Thankfully, that wasn't the end of God's big story! Jesus' time on earth had a happy ending. Three days after He died, when some ladies went to check on his body, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty. God raised Jesus from the dead! Many people later encountered Jesus over the coming weeks. The birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus were all predicted through prophecies, but it took some people actually seeing Him with their own eyes to truly believe in Him. The amazing miracle of the resurrection is what makes us be able to know that, without a doubt, Jesus is God's Son. It sets apart followers of Jesus from any other religion. We can be sure that the God who saved the Israelites, and who sent His Son as a sacrifice, is the God who loves us very much and wants us to meet Him through Jesus.

Question Time

1. What is something you wouldn't believe unless you saw it with your own eyes?
2. If you were one of Jesus' friends, what would you have said or thought when you saw He was alive?

27.

The Early Church

Introduction

The people who followed Jesus met together to worship and share after Jesus' death. They gave us the example of how church should be.

Scripture

Acts 2:38-47

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Lesson/Application

Is it easy or hard for you to share? If you had a candy bar, would you share it with your sibling? Would you share a blanket with your friend? What about sharing all your money with people you just met? The people who followed Jesus were very good at sharing as they met together. After some time spent with people on earth, Jesus ascended into heaven. He told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them. He meant He would be preparing heaven for all Christians. Before leaving, He gave them a special gift, called the Holy Spirit. That's something that we can't see, but a part of God and Jesus that lives in us and guides our decisions when we choose to follow Jesus. Jesus challenged the people to continue spreading the Good News that was for everyone. They did this by gathering. They learned more about Jesus, shared, ate, and prayed together. Their gatherings grew and many more people came to know about Jesus' love. This example is a great one for us to follow. Does it sound kind of like church? That's because it was! This is how the very first churches were established. People coming together to love God and love others and inviting new people to share in worship is what church should be.

Question Time

1. What are some things your church does every weekend?
2. How could you 'be the church' by sharing with someone this week?

28.

Paul's Conversion

Introduction

God changed a man named Saul who was persecuting Christians, into a believer named Paul who committed His life to telling people about Jesus.

Scripture

Acts 9:1-6, 9, 17, 20

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 9 For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Lesson/Application

It's not likely to rain if the sun is shining in the sky. You probably won't find a \$100 bill in your pocket today. And it's improbable that you will get a perfect score on every test you take this school year. These are silly examples, but God used a serious example of someone very unlikely to do His work in His big story...his name was Saul. Saul was around when Jesus was on earth. He actually believed in God and followed the Law but refused to see Jesus as God's Son. He made it his mission to seek out those who did and hurt them. Imagine the surprise of everyone around, when Saul did a complete turnaround and started helping the same people he had been persecuting. Jesus spoke directly to Saul, and everything about him changed. His name became Paul and he started using his skills to preach about Jesus everywhere he went. God doesn't use perfect people to carry out His purpose. If that were the case, no work would get done, for we are all sinners. God knew that Paul would obey and work hard to carry out the mission of the Gospel. We can be used by God to spread His word; we just have to be willing.

1. How have you changed before you knew Jesus vs. after you've known Jesus?
2. What is a message you think God wants you to share with others?

29.

One of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Introduction

Paul spent the remainder of his life preaching about Jesus. His travels took him places where new Christians were made but also where many hardships happened.

Scripture

Acts 13:2-5; 2 Corinthians 11:25-27

13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. 4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Lesson/Application

Do you like taking trips? Most trips are fun like going on vacation or to visit family. Would you like to take a trip that involved shipwreck, beatings, prison, and danger? That doesn't sound like fun at all, but these are the things that happened when Paul went on his missionary journeys. From being stopped in his tracks on the Damascus road, Paul's next steps sent him running towards a mission to tell everyone about Jesus. His life was not easy, but he never gave up. Despite all of his hardships, his writings still point to the fact that it was all worth it. He was willing to risk everything to be doing God's work. Paul traveled with friends to several cities and countries. He was a missionary with the goal of reaching as many people as possible. He met people in each place and told them about Jesus. Sometimes they believed, and other times they didn't. When they refused the message, often persecution followed. This didn't stop him from continuing God's work. Even from prison, he shared the love of Jesus. Paul was a huge part of God's story. He wrote many of the books in the New Testament, inspired by God, to show us as Christians how to live.

Question Time

1. What would be something terrible that could happen to you while on a trip?
2. Who are some missionaries you know about? Where and what are they doing?

Introduction

Our end goal is to make it to heaven. It's a place God is preparing where we can live with Him forever.

Scripture

Revelation 21:1-5

1 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” 5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Lesson/Application

Imagine being in your favorite place with your favorite people and all of your very favorite things. Now imagine that you got to live that life forever! Sounds wonderful, right? Well, someday you can! We have come to the end of the written part of God’s big story. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we get a glimpse of what’s to come next. We might wonder what’s the point of it all? Why did God create everything, go round and round with the Israelites, then send a Savior for all people? Why is the message of Jesus still being passed along? Why does it matter? It matters because an end will come. God has always longed for all of creation to love and worship Him. There will be a time when those who have chosen to follow Jesus will get to do that forever. That time will be either when Jesus returns to the earth (Revelation talks about that too) or when we die. Either way, our goal is to be with God and Jesus in heaven forever. It will be more beautiful than we can imagine with streets of gold and brilliant jewels. But more than what we see, will be how we feel. No more sadness or pain. We will finally be back to perfection, just as God intended things to be. Knowing all of God’s big story is important so we can choose to give our lives to Jesus and be ready for this amazing place. With our choices, we can finish writing and be a part of God’s big story.

Question Time

1. How would you describe to a friend what heaven will be like?
2. Are you choosing to follow Jesus? What will your reward be for this choice?