

Family Devotions

Creation: The Beginning of Life as We Know It

THE STORY

Day One – The Story of Creation

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 1 through break on page 5

This reading covers: Genesis 1-2

Summary: God shows how wonderful he is when we look at everything he created.

Do together: Get a blank piece of paper for each person and as many crayons, markers and colored pencils as you can find. Take a moment and be as creative as you can be. You can color, draw or just scribble. Can you see how each person's work is unique? Do this again with a second blank sheet of paper. Is everything different again? Just think of how creative God was when he made the world and everything in it!

Think about: God expresses his beauty through his creation, especially you! You were made one-of-a-kind exactly the way he wants you to be.

Also read: Psalm 139:13-16

Prayer: Father, Thank you for creating me exactly the way you want me to be. Thank you for my family and how you have made us different, but brought us together. Help us to be grateful for our differences and to love each other always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – The Fall

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 5 through break on page 8

This reading covers: Genesis 2-3

Summary: We miss out on God's best when we choose to disobey him.

Do together: Play Simon Says. Take turns being Simon. How much fun is it when you are called out because "Simon didn't say?"

Think about: We all have people to obey. Mom and Dad obey the government and their bosses. Children are to obey their parents. We are all to obey God. And when we choose not to obey there are consequences (like sitting out during Simon Says).

Also read: Ephesians 6:1-3

Prayer: Father, I know that your way is the best way for me to live. Help me to follow you and obey you. Also, help us to obey others that you have put in our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day Three – The Flood

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 8 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Genesis 6-9

Summary: God chooses to start over again with a man named Noah.

Do together: Take a moment today to do something kind for each other. Maybe you could serve a snack or do an extra chore. Perhaps you could read a book to someone or play a game together.

Think about: In Genesis 6:8, the Bible says, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." What would it look like if you lived in a way where you found favor in the eyes of the Lord? How would it look for you to live in a way that puts a smile on God's face?

Also read: Luke 2:52, 3:21-22

Prayer: Father, help me to live in such a way that I put a smile on your face. Help me to show love and kindness to my family. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Following God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 13 through top of page 15

This reading covers: Genesis 12-13

Summary: Abram follows God and obeys him even when he doesn't understand.

Do together: Plan a special treat for your family without telling anyone. It could be a favorite dessert or new coloring books. Give them a complicated set of directions to find this special item.

Think about: Discuss God's command to Abram to leave his home and go to a strange land. Ask the children how difficult it would be for them to leave the familiar and go somewhere strange. Examples are: leaving the familiarity of their own room to stay in a hotel while on vacation; leaving the familiarity of staying home to go to preschool for the first time; leaving the familiarity of seeing relatives to visit other people.

Also read: John 14:21

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the way you guide us every day – at home, at work and at school. Help us to be a good example of faith and obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Faith and Trust

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Top of page 15 through bottom of page 15

This reading covers: Genesis 12-14

Summary: Abram demonstrates faith by trusting God.

Do together: God promised Abram that he would have as many descendants as the stars in the sky. Take your family outside and imagine what Abram would have felt. Try to count the number of stars that you can see. What would Abram have been thinking about God's promise?

Think about: Talk about the word "faith." What is its meaning and how it can be applied to daily life? Share a personal story of how faith has worked in your life. Then ask each child to share a personal story of faith.

Also read: Hebrews 11:1-12

Prayer: Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief. Help me to truly trust in you each day for all my needs. Then, let me reap the benefits of that trust. I love you Jesus. Amen.

Day Three – Promises

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Bottom of page 15 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Genesis 21

Summary: God shows he keeps his promises.

Do together: Make a list of positive attributes of each family member. Let the children contribute their ideas to the list.

Think about: Talk about the babies in Abraham's line (Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob and Esau). Talk about wanting your own baby and how special your child's birth was to you. Let your child share a favorite moment from his/her early years. Abraham and Sarah enjoyed their baby Isaac. He came as a result of God's promise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to appreciate our family more than we have in the past. Let us see the positives in each family member and overlook the negatives. Show us how to forgive each other as you have forgiven us. Give us each the goal of making the others happy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Family Devotions

Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh

THE STORY

Day One – Choose God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 19 through bottom of page 22

This reading covers: Genesis 37-41

Summary: I can choose to follow God no matter what.

Do together: Blindfold two family members. Have the older lead the younger from room to room for a minute or two. Try to give everyone a turn being led or leading, being careful to watch for impending danger as they walk around without sight. After a few minutes, remove the blindfold from one of the leaders, and allow that one to see as they lead the other. Afterwards talk about which was easier, leading blind or leading sighted. Talk about which seemed safer and more secure, being led by a blind person or led by a sighted person.

Think about: God's eyes can always see. He is never unsure of where he is going. He never trips and falls, he never bumps into anything. He is never confused or disoriented. He never takes us somewhere and lets us go so that we are by ourselves to find our own way. If we want God to be our leader, what does that mean we have to do?

Also read: Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Prayer: Thank you, God, that you are the only leader we could ever have that will not let go of our hand, no matter what. Thank you that you will not bump into anything or fall down. We know we can always be safe if you are holding our hand. Please help us to not let go of you, and to let you lead us every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – God's Care

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Bottom of page 22 through break on page 24

This reading covers: Genesis 42-49

Summary: God is taking care of me, even when I don't know it.

Do together: Play the game called "Guess Who." With each question, the child answers with one or more of the following people: MOM-DAD-TEACHER-DOCTOR -GOD

- Who makes sure you have shoes to wear?
- Who makes sure you are learning what you need to learn?
- Who makes sure you get the right medicine when sick?
- Who makes sure you have some surprises sometimes?
- Who takes care of all the people who take care of you?

Think about: God takes care of all of us, even though we cannot see him or hear him. He takes care of the people who take care of us. So really, it is God who makes sure we have all of the things we need. He is taking care of us even when we don't see him. Let's thank him for that.

Also read: Psalm 65

Prayer: You make sure we have everything we need. You take care of us by taking care of the people who love us. You take care of us by giving us good things. Help us to remember that everything you do for us is for our good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God’s Plan

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 24 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Genesis 50

Summary: God is working, even when I don’t see him

Do together: Prior to the activity, plan a special surprise for the family. Buy some special cookies at the store and hide them, or bake some brownies that no one can see until you are ready. When you’re ready, announce that you have a big surprise. Bring out all the goodies and tell everyone that you have been planning this special time, even though no one knew it.

Think about: What kind of surprise did Joseph’s brothers have in our story? They found out that Pharaoh’s helper was the brother they did not like. They had not seen him for a long time and he looked very different. As you enjoy the spontaneous celebration, tell the children that you are celebrating the fact that God is also behind the scenes, planning special things in their lives. In the story, God was working out the plan for Joseph and his brothers to be together again. And none of them knew it!

Also read: James 1:17, Jeremiah 29:11

Prayer: God, we know that you have a special plan for each one of our lives. We know that sometimes we can’t see the plans that you are working on, but we do know that your plans are always for our best. Help us to trust you to do what is best for us all the time. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day One – God’s Choice

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 28 through break on page 32

This reading covers: Exodus 1-4

Summary: God can use anyone he chooses.

Do together: Play a game where doing things simultaneously gets harder and harder. Pat your head. Now pat your head and rub your stomach. Now, pat your head, rub your stomach and stick your tongue in and out. Now, pat your head, rub your stomach, stick your tongue in and out and bounce on one leg. Now, pat your head, rub your stomach, stick your tongue in and out, bounce on one leg and keep turning to face a different wall.

Think about: There are some things we feel very comfortable doing because we can do them well, like just patting our head. There are some things that are harder to do, like that last combination maneuver! What are some subjects at school you find more difficult than others? What are some sports or other activity you have to work hard at? Sometimes God might ask us to do things we are uncomfortable doing or that don’t come easily. Remember how he asked Moses to be a leader? God knew that Moses was the right person to do the job. Remember what he told Moses? “I will be with you.” That made all the difference! God has chosen each and every one of us for certain things and he promises to be with us too.

Also read: Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11

Prayer: Holy Spirit, Please be with us so we can do the things you have chosen us to do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day Two – God is in Charge

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 32 through break on page 38

This reading covers: Exodus 5-14

Summary: By bringing his people out of Egypt, God shows he is in charge of everything.

Do together: Take turns pretending to be a King (or Queen). Have the King sit on a throne (pillows stacked on the couch), and order subjects to bow down before him. Whatever the King says, the others do. End pretend time by explaining that a King is always in charge. He makes up rules and people obey them.

Think about: Pharaoh was the King of Egypt and thought he was in charge of whether or not God’s people could leave. But who is really in charge of everything and everybody, even kings? How did God show his power over Pharaoh? Isn’t it wonderful to know that God loves you and is totally in charge of your life? The rules that he makes for us to obey are always for our good.

Also read: Romans 8:28; Matthew 28:18

Prayer: God, you are our King. Thank you for loving us and being in charge of everything we do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day Three – Trusting God Everyday

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 38 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Exodus 15-17

Summary: God wants us to depend on him every day.

Do together: Draw a “My Food Comes From” chart. At the bottom of a page, have everyone draw a picture of an apple. Next draw an arrow pointing upward and draw a picture of a grocery store. Another arrow; then a picture of a tree. Another arrow and finally a picture that symbolizes God – perhaps a cloud, a smiling sun and the word “God”.

Think about: Just as God made sure the people of Israel had meat and bread to eat, he also provides us with all the things we need to live every day. What are some other things besides food that God gives our family? Did you notice how the people in the story complained a lot and worried about things? How do you think that made God feel that they didn't trust him or appreciate all he had done?

Also read: Matthew 6:25-34

Prayer: Father, Thank you for the food we eat and for all the other things you give us every day. In Jesus name, Amen. the story for families

Family Devotions

New Commands and a New Covenant

THE STORY

Day One – Rules about God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 40 through page 42

This reading covers: Exodus 20

Summary: God gives us rules to help us relate to him.

Do together: Have everyone get a piece of paper and cut out what looks like a tablet (see page 38 for a picture). Write the first sentence of the first four commandments on your tablet (starting on page 38: #1 Do not put..., #2 Do not make..., #3 Do not misuse..., #4 Remember to keep...). Post this up on the door to your room or the refrigerator to show that you are going to keep these commandments for God.

Think about: The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. What are some things that we may place in front of our time with God each day? We hear a lot of people misusing God's name in stores, in school, at work. How can we help people to hear us using God's name in an honoring way? What would it look like for your family keep the Sabbath day holy?

Also read: Matthew 22:34-38

Prayer: Lord, help us to love you with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds and put you first each day. We love you Lord. Amen.

Day Two – Rules about Others

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 40 through page 42

This reading covers: Exodus 20

Summary: God gives us rules to help us relate to each other.

Do together: Cut out another tablet just like in Day One but now write commandments 5-10 on them (starting on page 40: #5 Honor your father and mother, #6 Do not commit murder, #7 Do not commit adultery, #8 Do not steal, #9 Do not give..., #10 Do not long for...). Post this next to the first tablet to show everyone how you are going to keep these commandments with each other.

Think about: The rest of the commandments deal with our relationship with others. What is one way we can honor our fathers and mothers? What would other people think about our relationship with God if we stole something or lied about something? What do we long for that belongs to a friend or neighbor? We should be satisfied with what God gave us and thank him for filling all of our needs.

Also read: Matthew 22:39-40

Prayer: Lord, help us to show our faith by how we show Christ's love to others in our speech, thoughts, and actions. Thank you for filling our needs. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God’s Presence

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 40 through page 42

This reading covers: Exodus 25-26

Summary: God sets up a way to be with his people.

Do together: Build a tent out of chairs and blankets to tell the story of the sacred tent or tabernacle. Bring the Ten Commandment tablets you made in Days One and Two into the tent to finish it off.

Think about: Before Jesus came, God had Moses and the Israelites build this sacred tent so that he could be with them. Today, what are some ways or even places that God is with us? God has given us the Holy Spirit so that he can be with us wherever we go or wherever we stay.

Also read: John 14:15-18

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for always being with us and never leaving us. Thank you for your Holy Spirit that you have given to us so that we can always have you close to us. Thank you so much for setting up a way for us to be with you. Amen.

Day One – God is Good

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 44 through middle of page 45

This reading covers: Numbers 13

Summary: God shows his people the land he has ready for them.

Do together: Sing together this song. If you don't know the tune, just read the words. "God is so good, God is so good, God is so good; He's so good to me. God answers prayer, God answers prayer, God answers prayer; He's so good to me. Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord; He's so good to me."

Think about: God showed his people the wonderful land he had ready for them. He wanted to provide good things for them. Have children list ways God has been good to them. Then discuss each item or situation and praise God for them.

Also read: James 1:17

Prayer: God, you have been so good to us. Your greatest goodness is seen in the gift of your Son Jesus. Then, you continued to give. Thank you for a wonderful family, a great neighborhood, all the blessings of food and clothing. Thank you for the little things too, Lord; the toys, the fun times and the treats we get. And most of all, thank you for you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Saying "No" to God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Middle of page 45 through break of page 46

This reading covers: Numbers 14

Summary: God's people say "no" to going where he wants them to go.

Do together: Play a game of "Yes and No." Ask questions the children may or may not know the answers to. For example:

1. Does helium make a balloon go up?
2. Does a stop sign have four sides?
3. Did Jesus walk on water?
4. Did John walk on water?

Think about: Discuss the affects yes and no answers have on people and on the outcome of certain situations. For example, when a man asks a girl to marry him, her answer will change his entire future. In a similar way, when God asks us to do something, the outcome depends on our answer. If you want to know what God is asking you to do, you only need to look in the Bible.

Also read: Isaiah 6:8

Prayer: Lord, help me to say "yes" to you and "no" to anything that is wrong. Show me in the Bible how to obey you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Following God Completely

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break of page 46 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 34

Summary: While Moses was a very special man, he did not follow God completely.

Do together: A game of easy, hard and impossible requests.

Easy:

1. Walk to the other side of the room.
2. Bend over and touch your toes.
3. Twirl around three times.

Hard:

1. Add 313 and 222 in your head.
2. Make a sentence out of the letters in the word "emancipate."
3. Tell a joke that makes me laugh.

Impossible:

1. Stand on your head.
2. Make a bag of gold appear out of thin air.
3. Guess what number I am thinking of between one and one million.

Think about: Following God isn't something we do only some of the time. We don't follow him only when things are easy. We should follow God completely every day in all things.

Also read: Proverbs 3:5-6

Prayer: God, give us the strength, wisdom and desire to do what you ask. Show us how to follow you completely every day. Help us to know your will by reading the Bible and praying every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Family Devotions

The Battle Begins

THE STORY

Day One – Be Strong and Brave

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 50 through break of page 51

The reading covers: Joshua 1

Summary: Since God would be with Joshua, he could be strong and brave.

Do together: Have an arm wrestling match with the family members. The winner has to do the dishes.

Think about: Who is the strongest one in our family? What is the big job that God told Joshua to do in our story? Do you think Joshua was afraid? What does God keep telling Joshua about going into the land? Are you afraid of anything? What can you do when you are afraid? Who can help you be strong and brave?

Also read: Psalm 56:3

Prayer: Thank you, God, that you are stronger and braver than anyone in our family. Thank you that when we are afraid, we can trust in you. Please help us to be strong and brave for the things that scare us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – The Fame of God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break of page 51 through page 52

This reading covers: Joshua 2

Summary: Even people who don't know God have heard about God

Do together: Open up the newspaper and find an article about someone that you can safely read to the family. Do we know this person? Do we know about this person? We can know about other people because friends tell us things or we read about them in the paper.

Think about: Our Bible story tells us about a lady named Rahab. Rahab had never seen any of the wonderful things that God had done for the Israelite people. She had never prayed to God herself, but she had heard about the things that their mighty God had done. She knew that God was so mighty and so powerful that she wanted him on her side. She hid the spies and took care of them so their God would be glad. Do you have any friends who do not know God? Maybe we could pray that they would know him because of us. We can show them that God loves them, just like the children of Israel did for Rahab.

Also read: Romans 5:8

Prayer: Dear God we are so happy that we know you. Please help us to show our friends who you are. Please help us to show our friends your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Strange Battle Plan

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 52 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Joshua 6

Summary: We don't understand God's ways

Do together: Have everyone work together to build a simple wall from blocks or Legos. Then, as everyone marches around the wall tell the children that when you say go, they should all whistle and click their tongues. After the kids obey this simple command act very surprised that the wall is still standing. I wonder why the wall did not come tumbling down. I wonder why it is still standing tall and sturdy when we clicked our tongues and whistled.

Think about: Help the kids to realize that our ways are not the same as God's ways. In order for the wall to come down you would have had to make it fall with your hand or your foot. God can do things that we cannot. We don't understand it, but we accept it because it is true.

Also read: 2 Samuel 22:31

Prayer: Father, you are a mighty God. You are strong, and smart, and you can do things that we cannot do. We thank you that we can trust you to do things your way, even when they seem very strange to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Family Devotions

A Few Good Men... and Women

THE STORY

Day One – Who Will You Listen To?

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 56 through break on page 57

This reading covers: Judges 2-4

Summary: God's people listened to others rather than obey him.

Do together: Using hand puppets, dolls or other figurines to represent two children, act out a scene where one pretend child asks the other pretend child to do something wrong (shoplift some candy, tease a playmate, help cheat on a test, etc.) After Mom and Dad put on the play, have everyone take a turn improvising how they would respond in the situation.

Think about: Would you do something if you knew it was wrong? What if all your friends were doing it and said it was okay? That's what happened to the Israelites after they had arrived in their new neighborhood (Canaan.) There were sinful people living all around them who worshipped idols and did really bad things. At first the Israelites remembered everything God had told them, but before long they got accustomed to the things the other people were doing and started doing those things too. What is the name of the book that tells us how God wants us to live? Why do you think it is important that you read and study God's word? What should you do when others want you to do things you know your parents and God wouldn't want you to do?

Also read: Colossians 3:20; 1 John 2:5-6

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to always obey you and do what is right. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day Two – Samson's Secret

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 57 through page 59

This reading covers: Judges 13-16

Summary: Samson tells a secret and it is used against him.

Do together: Play "I Have a Secret" charades. Take turns announcing you are a certain kind of animal but you can't tell anyone. Everyone has to try to guess what kind of animal you are as you act it out. Remember, you can't say the name of the animal; it's a secret. You can only pretend to be the animal.

Think about: What was the secret Samson had that kept him strong? Why did Delilah want Samson to tell her his secret? Did Samson get into trouble after he told his secret? Which do you think was most on Samson's mind while he was with Delilah: what he wanted to do or what God wanted him to do? Are there times when you behave the way you want to instead of the way God wants you to? That's our "sinful nature" showing, and it happens to everyone. But do you want to know a secret? Our sinful nature will shrink and our goodness will shine through when we do things like pray, read the Bible and try to imitate Jesus in everything we do.

Also read: Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 4:8

Prayer: Father God, I'm sorry when I don't pay attention to what you want me to do and instead follow my sinful nature. Help me think about you every day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Day Three – Making Things Right

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) break on page 60 through the end of the chapter

This reading covers: Judges 17

Summary: Though Samson made a mistake, God gave him strength to make things right.

Do together: Draw a picture of Samson. (Remember he was strong and had long hair!)

Think about: How do you think Samson felt when he was taken out of prison and placed in the middle of the temple so everybody could laugh at him? Do you think he felt alone and afraid? He finally realized he needed God's help. What did he do that tells us he remembered God loved him and could help him do something good for the Israelites? When you feel afraid or alone or sad because you've done something bad, who can you turn to in prayer?

Also read: Psalm 18:1-3

Prayer: Jesus, sometimes I'm afraid or sad but I know you are always listening and ready to help me and comfort me when I pray. Thanks for loving me like you do. Amen.

Day One – Total Commitment

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 62 through break on page 64

This reading covers: Ruth 1

Summary: Ruth shows what total commitment looks like.

Do Together: For Chapter 9 your family will act out the book of Ruth each day. These are the characters that you will need, but you can always add some people in like Naomi's husband and sons who die in the first scene. You can either pass the book from one person to another or someone can rewrite each person's parts from the book so that each character has his/her own script.

Roles:

Narrator - either a boy or girl

Naomi - preferably the oldest girl in the family

Ruth - preferably the youngest girl in the family

Orpah - preferably another young girl

Boaz - a boy in the family

Think About: How did Naomi feel when there was a famine, she had to move, her husband died, then her two sons died? Why did Ruth stick with her mother-in-law and not move back home? What did this show about Ruth?

Also Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Prayer: Lord, help us when we feel like nothing is going right. Help us to be like Ruth and help others when they are in the same situation. Thank you for those who act like Ruth and help our family. In your name we pray, Amen.

Day Two – Family Care

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 64 through break on page 67

This reading covers: Ruth 2-4

Summary: Boaz shows what it means to truly care for your family.

Do together: Continue with your play from the night before. Now enters the character Boaz and you start to see God's plan unfolding. Make sure you stop this act with "And she lived with her mother-in-law" so that you leave the cliff-hanger of what happens between Ruth and Boaz.

Think about: What kind of man is Boaz? Name some of his characteristics or traits. What do you think is going to happen between Ruth and Boaz?

Also read: Colossians 1:9-12

Prayer: Lord, make us like this man Boaz who has integrity and cares for others. May we lead our lives in a way that is pleasing to you, so that we can see your story as it unfolds in our lives. Thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God’s Story

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break of page 67 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Ruth 4

Summary: At the end of Ruth’s story we see that God’s story is still unfolding.

Do together: Finish out your play starting with the narrator’s bolded text at the bottom of page 65. You get to hold a wedding ceremony and show the new baby boy, Obed. You may want to celebrate the finale of Act 3 by serving ice cream.

Think about: Why did God bless Naomi, Ruth and Boaz with this baby boy? How does God bless us when we persevere through hard times? Who do you think is the ultimate hero of the story and why? Be sure to make it known that the little baby, Obed, is the grandfather of a man named David and ancestor of Jesus.

Also read: James 1:2-5

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for keeping us and providing friends and family when we go through tough times. Also, thank you for your blessing when we come out of those tough times. Make us a hero in your story. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day One – God Answers Prayer

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Page 69 through break on page 71

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 1

Summary: Hannah prayed for a son and God answered.

Do together: Have each child write a prayer request on a slip of paper (or do it for them). Date each slip of paper and place it with the others in a jar to be prayed over all three days and in future days.

Think about: Discuss each prayer request one. Talk about the likelihood of each request. Are they possible? Impossible? Remind the children, using Hannah as an example, that God can do anything. Like Hannah, we can put our requests before God and expect that he will do what is best.

Also read: Matthew 6:9-13

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for everything you have already done. Now, we set before you these simple prayer requests. To the God of the universe, these should not be difficult at all. We trust you with them and expect you will do what is best for us. So, we thank you in advance for answers. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Hearing God

Today's reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Break on page 71 through top of page 73

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 3

Summary: Samuel needed help learning to hear God.

Do together: Play the "Calling to Service" game. Have the children line up at the far end of the room. Then call each one by name. If you say the name twice, the child can take a full step toward you. If you say the name only once, they must remain still or be penalized. When called only once, for every step the child takes, he/she must step backward two steps. Repeat to the end of the game.

Think about: Talk about God's persistence when he calls. Use Samuel as an example. God called him three times before Samuel knew that it was God and not Eli calling. God continued to call a fourth time. Why do you think God was so persistent with Samuel? Why do you suppose he kept calling Samuel and didn't just forget it and call someone else?

Also read: Isaiah 6:8

Prayer: Please, God, help us to know when you are calling. We want to live up to our position as servants. We want to trust in your decisions for our lives. Please help us to be more like Samuel. We want to obey. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God’s Way

Today’s reading: (from *The Story for Kids*) Top of page 73 through end of chapter

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 8-10

Summary: God’s people didn’t want to follow God’s way; neither did their first king.

Do Together: Tell the children this story: A bunch of people were sitting on a fence minding their own business. Along came Jesus on one side and Satan on the other. They both beckoned people to follow. Little by little everyone dropped off the fence and began to follow their leader. Many chose to follow Christ; others chose to follow Satan, until only one man remained on the fence. Jesus had left with his followers. Satan had left with his followers. But Satan came back. “Come on,” he said to the guy on the fence. “Let’s go.” The man on the fence shook his head. “No,” he said. “I’m sitting on the fence. I am not going to choose one or the other. Perhaps I can have both.” Satan looked back and grinned. “You have to come with me,” he said. “I own the fence.”

Think About: Talk about God’s way versus man’s way. Why is it better to go God’s way? What can happen when man turns away from God and does his own thing? Can man be restored to God after disobeying? Remember the saying: “Slow obedience is no obedience.”

Also read: Joshua 24:15

Prayer: I want to choose you. Help me every day to make good choices; choices that please you. In Jesus’ name, Amen. the story for families

Day One – One Big Bully

Today's reading: Page 77 through break on page 79

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 16-17

Summary: God's people are afraid of the giant.

Do together:

Play a flashlight game. When it is dark, herd everyone into a bedroom and sit on the floor together. Turn the lights off and the flashlight on. Shine the flashlight toward the ceiling and while everyone is watching the ceiling, stretch your arm high in the air and just into the light of the flashlight. Pull your hand slowly closer to the light and see how big and scary your hand looks on the ceiling. Let the children try it too.

Think about:

Goliath was a big, big man with big, big hands. He stood very tall and very strong and very large. He was not afraid of anything, but all his enemies were very afraid of him. God's people were his enemies. All of King Saul's army was frightened of Goliath. Even David's brothers who were fighting in the army were afraid of him. Was David afraid of that bully, Goliath? Why wasn't David afraid? Also read: Psalm 56:3. This verse will be referred to every day during this chapter for emphasis. It is a simple verse to remember, and a wonderful verse for your family to set to memory.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you that you are bigger, and stronger, and mightier than any enemy we will ever have. Thank you that you are always on our side. We can trust you to keep us safe and help us to do what is right. We love you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – The Giant Falls

Today's reading: Break on page 79 through page 81

This reading covers: 1 Samuel 17

Summary: By trusting in and fighting for God, David defeats Goliath.

Do together:

Look up Philippians 4:13. Read it aloud and then think of a short cheer to say as a family that reminds you all of this verse. Something like, "God can do it all!" or "It's God who gives me strength!" Whenever something difficult comes up in the family, use the little cheer to remind one another where your strength lies.

Think about:

God gave David a big job to fight Goliath. David knew that God would help him and that God can do everything because he is bigger and more powerful than anyone. So David trusted God, and did what God asked him to do. We can do anything that God wants us to do because God is on our side.

Also read: Psalm 56:3 again.

Prayer:

God you are mighty and strong and powerful. You give us your power to do everything that you want us to do. We never have to be afraid to do your will. Please give us your courage and help us to follow you in all things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God is My Strength

Today's reading: Bottom of page 82 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Psalm 59

Summary: David prays and expresses faith that God will protect him.

Do together:

Have the children teach the family one song from their kids worship time at church. If it involves movement, get up and move! Sing it together a few times.

Think about:

David loved God so much that he often made his prayers into songs. Many of the Psalms in the Bible are songs that David wrote to praise God and to thank God for protecting him. Most of the songs we sing at church are songs made up from Bible words. If you have a Bible concordance, you might see if you can find any scripture that matches your family's song today. Singing praise music is a wonderful way to get actual scripture into the hearts of your children and yourself.

Also read:

Psalm 56:3 once more. Perhaps the children have memorized this by now. Maybe you can even make up a song for the words and turn it into your family's own praise song.

Prayer:

Dear God, we love you so much. We trust you for all that we need. We trust you for our food and our home and our safety. We know you will always take care of us, because you love us even more than we love each other. Thank you for your love and care for us. In Jesus' name, Amen. the story for families

Day One – Turning Around

Today's reading: Page 84 through top of page 86

This reading covers: Psalm 51

Summary: When told about his sin, David tells God he is sorry and is going to change.

Do together:

Draw the outline of a tee shirt. Write "S I N" on the front of the shirt. Then with Liquid Paper, correction fluid or tape, or a white crayon, cover up the letters so that they can no longer be seen.

Think about:

Tell everyone about a time you spilled some food on your clothes or played outside and got them muddy. What did you have to do to get them clean? David wrote a song after he realized he had made a mistake with Bathsheba. He sort of compares his sin to dirt and to God's forgiveness as making him clean. When you tell God you are dirty (sorry that you have sinned) and ask him to wash you clean (forgive you) will he do it?

Also read: Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9

Prayer:

Father, when I do things you don't want me to do, make me realize it so I want to do better. Thank you for always forgiving me when I say I am sorry. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Giving Freely

Today's reading: Top of page 87 through top of page 89

This reading covers: 1 Chronicles 29

Summary: God's people find great joy in freely giving to him.

Do together:

Draw a picture of a big treasure chest filled with gold bars, silver coins, necklaces and bracelets, diamonds, rubies and other jewels.

Think about:

It sounds like David had plenty of sad times, but still David loved God with all his heart. What did he want to build in order to show God how much he loved him? Which do you think made God the happiest: having a pretty temple or seeing that David and the people wanted to express their love to him by giving back some of what he had given them? Do you think it makes God smile when you and your family give gladly to show him your love?

Also read: Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:7

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I can't think of one thing I have that isn't a gift from you. You are so good to me and my family! Let me always be thankful to you. Let me always be a cheerful giver! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Day Three – Trust God

Today's reading: Top of page 89 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Psalm 23

Summary: David writes a beautiful song expressing his trust in God.

Do together:

Number a page from 1 to 7 and then answer each question either T or F to test your sheep IQ.

1. A baby sheep is called a puppy.
2. A female sheep is called a ewe.
3. A group of sheep is called a flock.
4. Sheep are covered in white feathers.
5. The sound sheep make sounds like this: Baaaaaah.
6. There are white sheep and black sheep.

Think about:

Lambs and sheep need lots of care from their shepherd. They need food, water and protection so they don't get in trouble or get hurt. Why do you think David compared himself to a sheep and God to his shepherd? Sheep trust their shepherd and follow his voice. Do you trust Jesus to be your shepherd? Can you think of a time when you were scared or sad and you remembered to trust God?

Also read: Proverbs 3:5; John 10:11-15

Prayer:

Father God, David's song makes me smile because it reminds me just how much you love me, just like a shepherd loves his sheep. Help me always trust in you and always follow your voice just like sheep trust their shepherd. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – A Really Smart Guy

Today's reading: Page 91 through break on page 95

This reading covers: 1 Kings 3; various Proverbs

Summary: King Solomon asks God to help him be wise.

Do together:

Go around the table and take turns making a Wish List. Put on this list anything that you would like to have: a new bike, a vacation, a new car. Have fun! Be creative!

Think about:

God told King Solomon he would give him anything he asked for. But Solomon didn't ask for a lot of money or to live a long time. Instead, Solomon asked God for wisdom so he could make good decisions. Wouldn't wisdom be good to have? Wouldn't it be great to make good decisions? How would you be different if you had wisdom and made good decisions?

Also read: Proverbs 3:13-14; James 1:5

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for giving me so many good things. But even more than these things, please give me wisdom so I can make good decisions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – God's House

Today's reading: Break on page 95 through break on page 97

This reading covers: 2 Chronicles 6-7

Summary: Solomon builds a house for God

Do together: Use building blocks, Legos, or other materials to build a house.

Think about:

Since God is everywhere, we know that God is too big to fit into a building. But God let King Solomon build a special place called a Temple where God could be worshipped. This was a beautiful building made of the best materials in the world. But get this – the Bible says that you are the temple of God! You were made with the best material in the world. You are a special place for God to live.

Also read: 2 Chronicles 3; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Prayer:

Dear God, how wonderfully you have made me. How special I must be. Help me to live to show the world that this temple is yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Falling Hard

Today's reading: Page 98 through end of chapter

This reading covers: 1 Kings 10-11

Summary: Even a king can make bad choices.

Do together:

Play the game called Concentration. Using a deck of playing cards, select two of each card (2-twos, 2-threes, 2-fours, etc.). You will end up with 26 cards. Start with just the twos through sevens. Shuffle those 12 cards (2 of each). Place the cards face down in three rows with four in each row. Take turns turning over only two cards. Look carefully at the cards. If they match, remove the cards. If not, turn them back over and let the next person take a turn. Do this until all cards are matched. For a more challenging game, start with more cards.

Think about:

In the game you just played, you had to choose which cards to turn over. But these were not just random choices. By paying attention to the game, you could think about what cards to turn over and make a good choice. Life is all about choices. But we have to pay attention and be sure to make good choices. If we are not careful, we will make bad choices. What are some decisions you have to make every day? What would making a good choice look like? What would making a bad choice look like?

Also read: Joshua 24:15

Prayer:

Dear God, help me to pay attention to what I'm doing so I can make good choices. Thank you for your wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Falling Away

Today's reading: Page 100 through page 101

This reading covers: 1 Kings 14

Summary: God's people turn away from him.

Do together:

Have a scavenger hunt. You and the children go through your house and gather any items that are not honoring to God. You might find music or movies, games or toys, books or magazines.

Think about:

Discuss the things you have gathered and decide as a family what you should get rid of. Why should these items not be in your home? Notice how easily we can turn away from God by some of the simple things we have.

Also read: Exodus 20:3

Prayer:

Guide us, Lord, not only to clean our house, but also to clean our lives and our hearts. Help us to place nothing before you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Good King

Today's reading: Page 101 through break on page 103

This reading covers: 1 Kings 15

Summary: King Asa committed his whole life to following God.

Do together:

Pretend to make your child into a puppet. Take two 24-inch slats of wood, cross them at their centers and attach with staples. Then attach four 3-foot pieces of thin nylon cord to the end of each stick. Attach the four cords to the wrists and ankles of a child. Now make them move in particular directions wherever you want them to go, like puppets, and move their hands as you wish.

Think about:

Discuss how you controlled the child to go where you wanted him/her to go and do what you wanted him/her to do. Tell them that God does not do that. He gave us free will and then watches to see if we make right choices in our actions and the places we go. Also talk about how we must choose what friends we hang out with and where we go with them.

Also read: Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Prayer:

Lord, let my guide be your word and let my strength be you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Bad King

Today's reading: Break on page 103 through end of chapter

This reading covers: 1 Kings 16

Summary: King Ahab disobeyed God more than anyone had ever done.

Do together:

Take the same slats of wood and cords and this time attach them to your own wrists and ankles. This time, let the children control your steps and actions.

Think about:

Ask the children how it felt to be able to control a person. Does God control us that way? What does God do? What is our responsibility - to behave as puppets or to be sensible, functioning human beings who simply make right choices based on the word of God?

Also read: Psalm 119:9-11

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you did not create puppets. You created human beings with free wills. Let my will be in tune with yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Running Scared

Today's reading: Page 105 through bottom of page 110

This reading covers: 1 Kings 17-19

Summary: God takes care of Elijah as he is running away from his enemies.

Do together:

Have everyone go around the table and list their favorite food. If you want to lengthen this activity you can have the children use paper and crayons to create a menu of their favorite foods.

Think about:

When Elijah went on a long journey, how did God take care of him? If you were on a long journey, what would you want God to do for you? God keeps us safe all the time. Sometimes he keeps us safe when we are not even thinking about it. Name one thing today that you know God did for you that you didn't even think about at the time.

Also read: Nahum 1:7

Prayer:

God, thank you that you show us in your Bible how you take care of those who love you. Thank you that you take care of us too. So many times you do things for us that we do not even know. Help us to remember you in those times and to remember to thank you for all you do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Pass it On

Today's reading: Bottom of page 110 through top of page 111

This reading covers: 2 Kings 2

Summary: Doing God's work was passed on from Elijah to Elisha.

Do together:

Make a human chain from the dining table to the kitchen sink and pass the plates and glasses from one to another assembly-line fashion, until the table is clear.

Think about:

Clearing the table was an easy job, but the job that Elijah had in our story was much bigger. He was trying to get the people of his land to remember God and to obey God. After he had worked very hard he knew that it was almost time for him to go to heaven. So he found a helper who could do the work after he was gone. What would have happened if Elisha had decided he did not want to be a helper and he refused to take over the job for Elijah when he was gone?

Also read: 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Prayer:

God, Thank you for the jobs you have given each one of us. We know that when we work together we do our best work. And we know when we do our work with a good attitude then the work goes faster and is more fun. Help us to be good workers. Help us to be workers who are happy to help and eager to please each other and especially to please you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Please Come Back

Today's reading: Page 112 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Amos 3-5, 9

Summary: God uses his prophet Amos to call his people to return to him.

Do together:

Talk about a time when someone or something in your family was lost. Maybe the family pet or even one of the children has been lost. Talk about how everybody felt when the person or thing was gone and how it felt when everyone was finally reunited.

Think about:

God wanted his people to come back to him. He used several men called prophets to send his message to the people, but they would not listen. How do you think God felt when that happened?

Sometimes we do not listen to our Mom and Dad. God has given them to us as leaders in our family. How do you think God feels when we do not listen to Mom and Dad?

God still loves us very much, but he wants his children to live the life he wants to give them. So when we obey our parents and the people God gave to help us in life, we are really obeying him too. How do you think that makes God feel?

Also read: Mark 10:13-15

Prayer:

Father God, we are happy to be a family who loves you. Please help us always to listen to you and the people you give us. Help us to please you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Family Devotions

The Beginning of the End (of the Kingdom of Israel)

THE STORY

Day One – Penalties of Disobeying

Today's reading: Page 116 through bottom of page 118

This reading covers: Isaiah 3

Summary: Isaiah says there will be consequences if God's people don't change.

Do together:

Play "I Spy." Take turns picking some object in the room and telling everyone, "I see something you don't see and its color is..." Everyone else keeps guessing what it is until they figure it out.

Think about:

What does a red stop light at a busy intersection warn you to do? How about a "Caution Wet Floor" sign in a restaurant? Are such warnings for our own good? What could happen if we don't pay attention to them? The same thing happened in The Story. Isaiah was a prophet. He knew what bad things would happen to God's people if they didn't change their ways, and he tried to warn them. Did they listen? What were some bad things that Isaiah said would happen? Should we pay attention to what the Bible says to us?

Also read: Colossians 1:25-28

Prayer:

Dear Jesus thanks for giving us the Bible in which you warn us about things we shouldn't do and teach us the way you want us to live. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day Two – Words of Hope

Today's reading: Bottom of page 118 through middle of page 119

This reading covers: Isaiah 14, 19

Summary: Isaiah tells God's people about the love God will show in the future.

Do together:

Draw a picture of a fortune teller and his crystal ball. Isaiah didn't use pretend magic to predict the future like a fortune teller. Isaiah knew what would happen ahead of time, because God gave him that information through his thoughts and dreams.

Think about:

Remember the story about Cinderella? It's really sad at first when Cinderella has to work hard and gets teased by her ugly stepsisters, but it has a happy ending. What happens? Well what happened to Israel is sort of like that. Because of all their sinning, they had lots of trouble, but Isaiah could see the future and knew there would once again be happier times. They would get to go back to their homeland and would once again put their trust in God. Can we always trust God? Is there ever a time – even when you do something bad – that God doesn't love you?

Also read: Psalm 9:10; Isaiah 40:31

Prayer:

Thank you, dear Father, for loving me so much that even when I do things that make you sad, you never leave me. I know I can always trust you to be with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Punished for You

Today's reading: Middle of page 120 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Isaiah 53

Summary: Isaiah tells about a time in the future when God will make the perfect sacrifice.

Do together:

Talk about your family rules. What are the three most important rules? What are the benefits for following these rules? What are the consequences for disobeying them? If you break a rule, who must pay the penalty? What would you think if you broke a rule and someone else offered to pay the penalty?

Think about:

When Isaiah talks about the servant who was pierced because we had sinned and who was punished to make us whole again, who is he talking about? How did Isaiah know all those things about Jesus when Jesus hadn't even been born yet? Do you think the people were happy when they heard about God's plan to save them through Jesus? Does knowing Jesus died on the cross for you make you happy?

Also read: John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21

Prayer:

Jesus, It makes me smile when I realize how much you love me. Thank you for being my friend, and thank you for being my Savior. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day One – Last Chance

Today's reading: Page 123 through break on page 126

This reading covers: Jeremiah 1-2, 5, 13

Summary: Jeremiah tells God's people this is their last chance to turn back to God.

Do together:

Using a timer or the second-hand of a clock, have the leader say "go" and then keep track of 10 seconds. Have the others close their eyes and raise their hands when they think 10 seconds have gone by. The leader should say "stop" when 10 seconds has passed. See who can get closest to 10 seconds without going over. To make the game harder, keep increasing the amount of time that goes by (30 seconds, 1 minute, etc.).

Think about:

How close did you get to the correct time? What happened when you waited too long to raise your hand? Time was running out for God's people to choose to follow him. They were in danger of waiting too long. If they didn't change now, God's punishment would follow. As you live day-to-day, don't wait to do the right thing. Act now, so you don't miss your opportunity.

Also read: Joshua 24:14-15; Hebrews 3:12-15

Prayer:

Dear God, today is the day I want to choose you. Right now is the time for me to do the right thing. Help me to follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Sadness

Today's reading: Break on page 126 through break on page 130

This reading covers: 2 Chronicles 36; 2 Kings 25; Lamentations

Summary: Jeremiah's heart is sad as he reflects on God's judgment of his people.

Do together:

With crayons and paper, draw what sad looks like. That might sound unusual, but what colors would show sad? What do people look like when they are sad? How would you draw the sky, or trees, or flowers to make them look sad?

Think about:

We don't like to think about sad things. God's messenger Jeremiah was sad because God's people were being punished for not following him. God was sad, too, because he wanted his people to follow him and love him more than anything else.

Also read: John 11:33-36

Prayer:

Dear God, it must really make you sad when I don't follow you or obey you. Your heart must hurt when I go my own way. I know this is true because you love me so much and want the best for me. Help me stay close to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Tell It

Today's reading: Break on page 130 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Ezekiel 1-2, 36

Summary: Ezekiel is told to bring God's message to the people, whether they listen or not.

Do together:

Gather the family around the table. Give everyone paper and pencil. Choose one person to be the leader. Take the leader out of the room and give him/her a set of instructions that s/he will tell the rest of the family to follow (draw a box, put an "x" inside the box, write your name on the paper, etc.). Before the leader returns to the room, tell the rest of the family not to pay attention to the leader and to draw or write whatever they want.

Think about:

How did the leader feel when no one was listening to him/her or following the instructions? Now what if the instructions you had were from God and no one was listening? God gave Ezekiel, one of his messengers, a hard job to do. He was supposed to tell people about God, but God knew they wouldn't listen. It didn't matter. Ezekiel did what God told him to do.

Also read: John 6:66-69

Prayer:

Dear God, I want to be like Ezekiel and do what you want me to do, no matter what. I want to follow you, even if other people don't. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Doing Right

Today's reading: Page 135 through page 138

This reading covers: Daniel 6

Summary: Daniel did what was right before God and others.

Do together:

Play a game in which you stand with your back to your children and they stand in a line behind you. They are to kneel and stand up repeatedly. When you turn around, if you catch any kneeling, they lose a point. Those standing receive a point. Do this until someone has five points.

Think about:

Now discuss the fact that Daniel was caught kneeling in prayer and was going to be thrown into the lion's den. In Babylon, that was the law. However, in your house, those caught kneeling in prayer are to be praised. Surprise! Just like in the game of golf, the lowest score wins!

Also read: John 14:21

Prayer:

Help me to do what is right just like Daniel. I want to live in a way that pleases you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Staying Faithful

Today's reading: same section as Day One

This reading covers: Daniel 6

Summary: Daniel stayed faithful even though it would get him into trouble with the king.

Do together:

Have the children be lions and one parent takes the part of Daniel. The other parent, or an older sibling, takes the part of the delivering angel. Someone narrates the story while the others act out the parts.

Think about:

Discuss the story of Daniel in the lions' den. Questions:

1. Where were the Jews during this captivity?
2. Why was Daniel thrown into the lions' den?
3. How did the king respond when he heard Daniel had survived?

Also read: Psalm 20

Prayer:

God, you are an awesome protector! Thank you for the story of Daniel where I learn that I can always trust you to take care of me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Words of Hope

Today's reading: Break on page 139 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Jeremiah 29-31

Summary: While in a foreign land, God brought his people a message of hope.

Do together:

Play a game of Hide and Seek, only this time call it "Captivity and Freedom."

Think about:

Share a time when you felt captive, either in a job or a place. Then ask the children to talk about times when they felt trapped and alone. When we feel this way, we can always remember that God has great plans for our future.

Also read: Proverbs 3:5-6

Prayer:

Father, thank you that even in the dark times you are with me. I know I will be okay if I trust and follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Time to Go Home

Today's reading: Page 142 through break on page 144

This reading covers: Ezra 1, 3

Summary: After years in a far away land, it was time for God's people to go home.

Do together:

Talk about a long trip the family has taken together. Discuss the frustrations of travel and the hassle of being away from home. What do we miss the most? What do we wish we could take with us when we leave? Talk about how good it feels to come back to your own house, your own bed, your own toys, your own friends.

Think about:

God's children in our story were gone for a long time. But they were not on a vacation. They were away from home because of their disobedience. When we come home from a long trip with unpacking to do, and grass to cut, and laundry to get done, we are still glad to be in our own house and the things we are comfortable with.

Also read: Psalm 60:1-4

Prayer:

Thank you for our home. Thank you for the memories that we are making in this home and the way we are all growing up in you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Think ahead: Plan a small-scale work project that the family can do together before devotions tomorrow. Choose something that every member of the family can help with.

Day Two – Time to Work

Today's reading: Page 145 through break on page 147

This reading covers: Haggai 1; Zechariah 8

Summary: God used his messengers to challenge his people to work on his house.

Do together:

Hopefully, you had time to do the work project you had planned. If not, talk about working together to get a big job done. Talk about how it feels when all is finished and you can stand back and see the completed task. It feels good!

Think about:

When you did your job, who was the biggest encourager? Who kept us going? How did we feel when the work was done? Sometimes we have to do work first, before we play. And after a big job is completed, it always feels good to stand back and enjoy the results. God's people had a big job to do. God sent his helpers to encourage them in their task and to keep them going.

Also read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you that you never give us more than we can handle. Even when you ask us to do a big job, you are there to encourage us, and you send helpers to encourage us. Thank you for helping us to finish our job. Thank you for the example of people in the Bible who finished their jobs too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Time to Celebrate

Today's reading: Page 148 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Ezra 5-6

Summary: God guides his people to complete the work, which calls for a celebration.

Do together:

Enjoy a small family party. You can be as creative as you like and include aspects your family particularly enjoys.

Think about:

Explain that you are celebrating a job well done, just like the people in our Bible story celebrated. Aren't you glad it didn't take many years to do the job you did yesterday? The people in the Bible story took a very long time to build the temple. They looked forward to this celebration for many, many years. They had not worshiped God in his Temple for a very long time. They were very happy!

Also read: Psalm 145

Prayer:

God, Thank you that you are always with us. Even when we are working hard and doing a big job, you are with us. We know you are happy when we work together. And we know that you like to celebrate with us when we are done. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Family Devotions

The Queen of Beauty and Courage

THE STORY

Day One – A Beautiful Queen

Today's reading: Page 151 through break on page 152

This reading covers: Esther 1-2

Summary: With God's help, Esther became queen.

Do together:

Draw a picture of beautiful Queen Esther. Don't forget her purple robe and gold crown.

Think about:

Being considered by the king to be queen was a big deal. Do you think Esther was nervous or afraid? She probably was, a little bit, but she trusted God and knew he was with her. She also knew her cousin, Mordecai, loved her and was thinking of her. No one knew it, not even Esther, but God had already decided that she would become the queen for a very special purpose. Did you know God has a special plan for your life too?

Also read: Proverbs 19:21; Ephesians 1:11-14

Prayer:

Father, thanks for being with me when I'm nervous and afraid. Show me my purpose, so I can do your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – A Bad Man

Today's reading: Break on page 152 through break on page 153

This reading covers: Esther 3

Summary: Haman wanted to hurt God's people.

Do together:

Three items in each group have something in common. One item is different and not like the others.

Find the one that doesn't belong and explain why.

Green beans Gold fish Car

Potatoes Earrings Truck

Meat Loaf Necklace Motorcycle

Carrots Bracelet Dog

Think about:

Why do you think Mordecai wouldn't bow down before Haman? Would that be like worshipping someone other than God? Do you remember what God told his people about worshipping idols? The Jews who lived there were different from other people, because they worshipped only the one true God. It was a scary time for the Jews, but do you think God would help them overcome? Here's a hint: God planned all along that Esther would become queen, remember?

Also read: Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:28

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being my Forever Friend and always walking with me no matter how scary things might be. I know it's okay to be different when it means doing what you want me to do. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day Three – Be Brave

Today's reading: Break on page 154 through end of the chapter

This reading covers: Esther 4-9

Summary: Esther showed courage as she allowed God to use her to save her people.

Do together:

Pretend to be a rodeo rider on a mean bull. The bull is bucking and jumping and you are doing all you can to stay in the saddle. Pretend to be a lion tamer inside a cage with only a chair and a whip between you and the lion. Pretend to be a high wire artist, walking across a skinny wire high above the ground with no net. You can wobble, but don't look down.

Think about:

When Esther realized she was the only one who could talk to the king, she knew she was taking a risk. The king might be mad, because he hadn't invited her in to see him. He might even kill her! Esther was scared but she had courage to do what she did because she loved her people. She knew she was the only one who could save them. What was it that gave her courage? There's another person in the Bible who did a really brave thing, because he loved all people and he was the only one who could save them from their own sin. Do you know who it was?

Also read: Psalm 121; John 3:16

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me so much that you risked your life and gave it up to save me. Give me courage when I'm worried or afraid because I know you are with me. In your name I pray, Amen.

Family Devotions

Rebuilding the Walls

THE STORY

Day One – Sad News

Today's reading: Page 157 through break on page 159

This reading covers: Ezra 7; Nehemiah 1

Summary: Nehemiah is sad when he hears that things in Jerusalem are not good.

Do together: Every day we hear about sad things around us. Look at today's local news and see if there is something that makes you sad. Now, see if there is any way you can help with the situation. It might be helping with those who are hungry or children whose families need some help.

Think about: Nehemiah was sad because the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and other people were making fun of his friends. But this sadness turned into action, as we will see tomorrow. It's one thing to be sad; it's another thing to do something about it. When you look around, what do you see that makes you sad, something that just isn't right? Now, what are you going to do about it?

Also read: John 13:17; James 2:15-16

Prayer: Dear God, sometimes when I look around I see things that make me sad. Help me to not just feel sad, but to do something to help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Keep Working

Today's reading: Break on page 159 through break on page 161

This reading covers: Nehemiah 4

Summary: The people kept working, even when others try to stop them.

Do together: Build a wall together. Make sure you don't have enough of one particular item to complete the task. Mom and Dad, help the kids think of other ways to build when you run out of one item. Don't let not having everything you need keep you from completing the project.

Think about: Sometimes, when you are trying to do something good, there are obstacles in the way that make it hard to keep going. When that happens, do you just stop? Or, do you look for another way to get the job done? Nehemiah knew that God wanted him to rebuild the walls to the city, so he kept going, even when there were things in the way.

Also read: Proverbs 14:23

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving us jobs to do to help you and help others. Keep us moving forward, even if things get difficult sometimes. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – God’s Word

Today’s reading: Break on page 161 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Nehemiah 8

Summary: The building completed, it was time to build their lives on God’s Word.

Do together: Make a scroll. Take two popsicle sticks and a piece of paper 4” tall and 8” wide. Lay the paper down so it is wide in front of you. Write, “Ezra opened the book,” which is found in Nehemiah 8:5. Glue or staple a popsicle stick to each end. Roll each side toward the middle.

Think about: Ezra knew that it would take more than buildings and walls to help people look to God. They needed to hear and know his Word. The same is true for us today. It is nice to have a church to attend, but we need to hear and know God’s Word. That’s why we are doing The Story! Ezra opened the book so the people could hear God’s Word. Make sure you open The Story for Kids every day so you can hear God’s Word, too.

Also read: Psalm 119:97-104

Prayer: Thank you for your Word. Help me to read it every day. Also, help me to take what I learn and live it out. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day One – Jesus’ Mother

Today’s reading: Page 164 through page 166

This reading covers: Luke 1; John 1

Summary: Mary let God use her even though she didn’t fully understand.

Do together: Supply construction paper, drawing paper, markers, crayons, scissors and glue. Have the children depict the angel Gabriel visiting Mary.

Think about: Discuss the role of angels in the announcement of Christ’s birth. Have the children share their own ideas about these visions. How do they think they would have answered had they been Mary or Joseph?

Also read: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-33

Prayer: How incredible to know that you used a very ordinary person to be the mother of Jesus. You also used your heavenly messengers to bring this good news. Help me to be ready to hear you when you speak, and to follow you when you show me what to do. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Day Two – The Birth of Jesus

Today’s reading: Page 167 through break on page 169

This reading covers: Matthew 1; Luke 2

Summary: Jesus’ birth was a joyous event bringing hope to all people.

Do together: Have the children set up a nativity scene. You could use finger puppets or draw the characters on paper and cut them out. Be sure to include angels, shepherds, sheep, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Wise Men and King Herod.

Think about: Discuss each character as it goes into the scene. Talk about their involvement in The Story. Have the children talk about what it might have been like if they had been there too. Repeat together the praises of the angels: “May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!”

Also read: Isaiah 9:2-7

Prayer: What a great day, the day Jesus was born. You brought hope and peace into the world. Thank you for this awesome gift. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day Three – Jesus as a Boy

Today's reading: Break on page 169 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Luke 2

Summary: Jesus shows children how to grow.

Do together: Get out the family photo album. Have fun looking at pictures of your family over the years. Notice how much everyone has grown.

Think about: The Bible tells us that Jesus grew up, too. Even though he was God, he still started as a baby, became a boy and grew into a man. Along the way, the Bible tells us he grew up well. At the very end of this chapter of The Story for Kids we read, "Jesus became wiser and strong. He also became more and more pleasing to God and to people." What would it take for you to grow up in each of these ways?

Wiser:

Stronger:

More pleasing to God:

More pleasing to people:

Also read: 1 John 2:5-6

Prayer: Thank you that you gave me an example of how to live when you sent your Son Jesus. He was a real person and someone I can relate to. Help me to grow like he grew. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – This is God's Son

Today's reading: Page 172 through break on page 174

This reading covers: Matthew 3-4; John 1

Summary: John the Baptist tells everyone who Jesus is.

Do together: Pull out the birth announcements you sent out when your children were born. Let the kids look over the announcements and see the information, and perhaps the picture. Talk about how excited and happy you were to announce their birth. If your child was adopted, what a wonderful time for you to emphasize the gift they were to you. Adoption is a beautiful picture of what God has done for us. He chose us! Wow!

Think about: When it was time for God to tell the world Jesus had come to take away their sins, he used John to bring the message. How excited John must have been to give the special news to the people. Jesus came to give everyone a chance to go to heaven. He came to die so the people's sins could be forgiven once and for all.

Also read: Luke 19:5-10

Prayer: Father, Thank you that you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for us. Thank you that you knew we needed him, because we cannot save ourselves. Help us to tell our friends the good news about Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Jesus the Healer

Today's reading: Break on page 174 through break on page 176

This reading covers: Matthew 4; Mark 1-3

Summary: Jesus cared about people.

Do together: Think of someone who could use some encouragement from your family. Have the children make cards of greeting, support, good wishes, or some expression of encouragement that is appropriate. As they draw pictures and think of something to say inside the card, you can discuss the Bible story. (Do not put the cards in an envelope or distribute them to the recipients. We'll do that tomorrow.)

Think about: Jesus cared so much about people that he did everything he could to help them. He sometimes made them well if they were sick. But always, always he loved them. Since we are just people, and not God, we cannot make others well. But we can show them God's love and pray for them.

Also read: 1 John 4:11-12

Prayer: Father today we pray for our friends. Please help them to feel your love today. Help the cards we are making to remind them of your love. Be close to them today, God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Jesus’ Helpers

Today’s reading: Break on page 176 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Mark 3

Summary: Jesus had some special followers who would share his message.

Do together: Address the envelopes for the homemade cards from yesterday. Have the children do what is age-appropriate. Maybe they can address the envelopes themselves. Maybe all they can do is affix the stamp.

Think about: When the cards are ready to mail, or before you actually walk to the neighbor’s house to deliver them, talk about how important it is to share God’s love and the message of Jesus. We are God’s special helpers to do the jobs he has for us. Telling others about him and doing things to show his love are the most important jobs we will ever have.

Also read: Matthew 25:34-40

Prayer: Dear God, we pray for our friend again today. We ask that you would help us to be your special helpers to show others your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day One – Good Teacher

Today's reading: Page 181 through break on page 183

This reading covers: Matthew 5; Mark 4; Luke 10, 15

Summary: Jesus teaches me how to follow God.

Do together: Have a treasure hunt! Hide some small objects – quarters or Hershey kisses, for instance – in another room or outside. Then start searching.

Think about: The parables Jesus told the people had important meanings. What was Jesus trying to tell the people with his story about the one lost sheep? How do you feel to know that Jesus loves everyone – even those who are very bad and run from him – because he wants them to know him and believe in him? What was Jesus trying to tell the people with his story about the Samaritan who helped a man he didn't even know? Can you name some ways you can be a "good neighbor" to people? In one of his sermons, Jesus mentioned a lot of people who, at first, might seem to have it bad, but as it turns out, by doing the right thing, they were "blessed." What does it mean to be "blessed?"

Also read: Matthew 22:35-40; 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for your stories and sermons that teach us important truths about you and how we should live. Help me love others because you love me. In your name I ask this, Amen.

Day Two – How do I Pr ay?

Today's reading: Break on page 183 through end of page 186

This reading covers: Matthew 6

Summary: Jesus teaches his followers how to talk with God.

Do together: Draw a picture of you talking on the telephone or sending an e-mail on the computer.

Think about: What's God's telephone number? Does he have an e-mail address? Those are silly questions, right? When we want to talk to God, how do we do it? Jesus even gave us a sample prayer and told us some ways to make our prayer time meaningful to us and pleasing to him. What are some things you can do when you pray to keep your mind from wandering? Do you have to use fancy words when you pray? Should you be a show-off about it? Do you even have to speak the words aloud, or can you just "think" your prayer? What sort of things can you say to God?

Also read: Psalm 139:1-3; Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for teaching us how to pray. Thank you for listening – even to my thoughts. Open my heart so I understand when you talk to me too. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day Three – Miracles

Today's reading: Page 186 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Matthew 14; Mark 4, 6; John 6

Summary: Jesus is the best miracle of all.

Do together: Draw a picture of Jesus performing one of the miracles you just read about.

Think about: Could you make it stop raining just by clapping your hands? Could you take one peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich and end up with enough food to feed all the people in a big gymnasium? You might be able to swim, but can you walk on water? No way! Jesus was able to do those kinds of things we call miracles. Why was he able to do them? Why do you think he did them: to show off or to help people believe in him?

Also read: Psalm 77:10-15; John 10:22-30; Acts 2:22-24

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to earth in order to die for my sins. Help me always to love you, trust you and serve you as you are the greatest miracle of all. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day One – You are the Christ!

Today's reading: Page 192 through page 193

This reading covers: Mark 8-9

Summary: God revealed to Peter who Jesus really was.

Do together: What is it? Get several small paper lunch bags or another type of bag that you can't see through. Place a common item in each bag (for example, an apple, a button, a pencil, etc.) Pass the bag around and, without looking into the bag, see if you can guess what the item is.

Think about: It can be fun playing guessing games, but when God sent Jesus, he didn't want people guessing about who he was. So God helped a man named Peter understand the truth that Jesus was God's Son.

Also read: John 1:29-34; 3:16

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for showing me who Jesus is: he is your one and only Son. Knowing this, help me to follow him closely. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Come to Jesus

Today's reading: Page 193 through break on page 195

This reading covers: Mark 10; John 7-8

Summary: Children show us how to simply believe in Jesus.

Do together: Make a list of all the electrical items in your home. Now, go through the list again and talk about what you would do if you didn't have electricity.

Think about: Even though you don't know everything about electricity, you use it every day. And even though you don't know everything about God, you can come to him every day. Faith is all about believing, even when we don't understand it all.

Also read: Hebrews 11:1-6

Prayer: Dear God, thank you that I don't have to know everything to believe in you. Thank you that I can have faith in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Jesus Knew What to Do

Today's reading: Break on page 195 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Matthew 21; Mark 11, 14; Luke 22; John 12

Summary: Jesus was clear about what God wanted him to do.

Do together: Decipher this...SUSEJ WENK TAHW OT OD (Jesus knew what to do).

Think about: During Jesus' final week on earth he entered Jerusalem to the cheers of everyone around. At the same time, Jesus knew what was just ahead. He told his followers what would soon happen; he was going to die. But rather than be afraid of this, Jesus told his followers that this was the reason he came in the first place.

Also read: John 12:23-29

Prayer: Dear God, thank you that Jesus knew what you wanted him to do and that he was willing to do it. Because he died on the cross, I can know you and your plan for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Don't Worry

Today's reading: Page 202 through break on page 205

This reading covers: Matthew 26; John 13-14

Summary: Although Jesus is about to leave his friends, he tells them not to worry.

Do together: Have fun by just repeating things. You can say the alphabet, sing a silly song over and over or recite Bible verses. Anything that you do repeatedly.

Think about: Do you ever worry? Worry is thinking about something that concerns you over and over again. The more we think about it, the bigger the problem seems to become. Jesus' followers were worried that Jesus was going to die. What would happen to them? What would Jesus soon do to erase their worries?

Also read: Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer: Dear God, thank you that I don't have to worry because I know you love me and will always be with me. Help me to trust you more and more each day. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen

Day Two – Whatever God Asks

Today's reading: Break on page 205 through break on page 207

This reading covers: Luke 22; John 18

Summary: Jesus chooses to follow God's way for his life.

Do together: Write Plan A and Plan B on separate sheets of paper. Plan A is God's way. Plan B is our own way. Place the papers in a hat or basket. Then offer the following circumstances and have the children draw a slip from the hat. 1. It's a sunny day and a carnival is in town. Should you go to school or play hooky? 2. Mom is having company and needs your help. Should you head for the kitchen or disappear to a friend's house? 3. Dad needs someone to mow the lawn. Should you get into your work clothes or pretend to be doing homework? If they draw Plan A, they should talk about God's plan. If they draw Plan B, they should talk about our plan.

Think about: Every day we are faced with choosing between God's way and our own way. How do we know what to do? We can read the Bible to learn more about God's way. We can help each other make good choices so we follow God's Plan A.

Also read: Isaiah 55:6-9

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for showing me how to follow God no matter what. Help me to choose God every day. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day Three – A Sad Day

Today's reading: Break on page 207 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Matthew 27; Luke 23; John 19

Summary: Jesus is badly hurt and eventually dies, all because he loves us.

Do together: Turn the lights out in one room and have everyone sit around in a circle in the dark. Tell the children this is how it was for Jesus when God the Father turned away from him while he hung on the cross. Describe the various sufferings of Jesus, the crown of thorns, the nails, whipping. Then explain that the absence of God the Father was the worst suffering of all, leaving Jesus alone in total darkness.

Think about: Discuss the effect of sin and how it separates us from a pure and holy God. Since God is light, his absence leaves us in total darkness. Help the children understand the importance of restoration and confession to God. Then turn the lights back on.

Also read: John 1:1-9; 1 John 1:9

Prayer: Jesus, I can't fully understand what you did when you died to take away my sins. Thank you for making it possible to live in the light. Help me to walk in the light every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Jesus is Alive!

Today's reading: Page 213 through break on page 214

This reading covers: Matthew 28

Summary: Jesus died for us. On the third day, he rose again!

Do together: Write a very brief outline of the history of your family. Include those things that are important to the members of your family. Marriage, births, deaths, vacations. Emphasize that just because some of the family members may not have been present at the different occasions, they still happened. When the first child was born, the third child was not there to welcome them. That does not mean the first child did not arrive as Mom and Dad said.

Think about: Before Jesus died, he told his friends he would rise again. Jesus' friends were not sure about this. Would it really happen? After Jesus was crucified he rose again on the third day, just like he said he would. We were not there, but we know it happened, because God told Jesus' friends to write it down, and we can read about it in the Bible.

Also read: Luke 18:31-33

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank you that you died for our sins. We know you rose again after you died. Because you were able to do so, we can trust that all the other things you said are also true. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – It's True

Today's reading: Break on page 214 through page 216

This reading covers: Luke 24; John 21

Summary: Jesus shows himself alive to his followers.

Do together: Play a rousing game of Hide-and-Seek with the kids. You may want to do this before you read The Story today.

Think about: Wow! Don't you just love a good game of Hide-and-Seek? That is a game that has been played by children forever. When children are very young, they think that, when someone hides, they are really gone forever. Isn't that funny? When Jesus died and then rose again, his friends did not know where he was. It may sound funny to us, but they may have thought he was gone forever too. But Jesus showed himself to his friends so they would be able to understand that he was going away, but they would see him again.

Also read: Matthew 16:21

Prayer: Dear Jesus, even though we cannot see you right now, we know exactly where you are. You are in heaven with your Father, God. If we ask you to be our Forever Friend we will see you again someday. You are not trying to hide from us. We can find you in the Bible anytime we want. We love you, Jesus. Amen.

Day Three – Tell the World

Today's reading: Page 216 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Matthew 28

Summary: Jesus' followers are given the job to tell the world about him.

Do together: Make a phone call as a family to someone you love and who needs to hear that Jesus loves them. Make it a simple and casual greeting. "Hi, Grandma. I just wanted to tell you that I love you and that Jesus loves you too. I am learning about Jesus' love as I read the Bible."

Think about: Talk about how important it is to tell other people about Jesus' love. This is one of the reasons that Jesus wants us to be here on earth, instead of in heaven with him. He wants us to tell others about his love and how they can have him for their Forever Friend. He told his disciples to tell the message to everyone all over the world. He also gave them a very important promise. "I am with you always," he said. Jesus does not send us out alone to do such an important job. If he is our Forever Friend, he is in our hearts to help us always do the job.

Also read: Matthew 28:18-20

Prayer: Jesus, we love you! We know that telling others about your love for them is one of our most important jobs. Help us to share your message of love with others. We trust you to be with us and to help us do the best we can. In your name, Amen.

Day One – Power

Today's reading: Page 218 through break on page 220

This reading covers: Acts 1-2

Summary: God sends his power to his people through the Holy Spirit.

Do together: Draw a picture of Jesus going back up to heaven.

Think about: Before Jesus went back to heaven he promised his disciples the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit arrived on Pentecost, a festival when many Jews had come together to celebrate. What did the Holy Spirit sound like? What did he look like? What did the Holy Spirit enable the believers to do that they couldn't do before? How did Peter use the special abilities supplied by the Holy Spirit, right there and then? All believers – you too! – have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them lead a life that pleases God.

Also read: John 14:26; Acts 2:38-39; Galatians 5:22-23

Prayer: God, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside me, to give me comfort and encouragement and to make me feel connected to you at all times. With the Holy Spirit's help, I want to always speak boldly about you just as Peter did. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Day Two – The First Church

Today's reading: Break on page 220 through end of page 220

This reading covers: Acts 2

Summary: Jesus' followers lived out their faith together.

Do together: Form a line and then pass a small ball from person-to-person using chins or between knees (no hands). Make note of the fact that everyone has to work together.

Think about: Name some people with whom you share common interests or who you enjoy being with. The first believers wanted to do life together because they all shared a love of Jesus and the belief that he was their Savior. Name some things they did together. Were these things Jesus had taught them? How did their examples of loving, sharing and caring make others want to know more about Jesus too? Think of someone you know who you could tell about Jesus – not only with words but by setting a good example. What kind of good example could you set?

Also read: 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Hebrews 13:115-16

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for helping the first church grow and grow. Please be with the leaders of my church family to help them do your will. Give us the joy and commitment those first believers had in sharing what we have with others, including the good news about you. I pray in your name. Amen.

Day Three – A Big Change

Today's reading: Page 221 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Acts 8-9

Summary: Saul went from hurting God's people to helping them.

Do together: Take turns being blindfolded. See if the "blind" person can guess objects placed in his or her hands. Some suggestions: in-the-shell peanut; paperclip; uncooked pasta; checkers, domino or chess piece; carrot; tennis ball, golf ball or baseball; a Gummi Bear candy.

Think about: Why do you think Jesus blinded Saul: to punish him or to make him realize he was for real? After his personal encounter with Jesus, talking to Ananias and receiving the Holy Spirit, Saul changed his ways. What new name did he go by? Instead of wanting to punish people for being believers, what did he spend the rest of his life doing? The moment Saul realized he was a sinner and that Jesus was his Savior, he was a new person in God's eyes. Have you become a brand new person? You can by trusting in Jesus.

Also read: John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for being my Savior, for taking away my sins and for making me a brand new creature. I pray in your name, Amen.

Day One – Prison No More

Today's reading: Page 226 through break on page 228

This reading covers: Acts 16

Summary: In prison for telling people about Jesus, Paul and Silas were set free by God.

Do together: Stage a jail scene. Put children in a makeshift cell. Tell them what the prisons must have been like in Paul's day. They didn't have clean cells, good food and TV sets. Free them only after they have sung a song praising God.

Think about: Talk about the imprisonment of Paul and Silas and how their faith never waned, even though they had suffered much. Even in prison, they praised the Lord. What are some hard times you have gone through? Maybe you are in a hard time right now. Will you praise the Lord even when things are tough?

Also read: Psalm 18:1-3

Prayer: Jesus, it's amazing to realize that Paul and Silas offered their praises to you even when they were in jail. Help me to praise you no matter what is going on in my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Day Two – A Teacher to Help

Today's reading: Break on page 228 through middle of page 232

This reading covers: 1 Thessalonians 1-5; 1 Corinthians 1, 12-15

Summary: Paul was a great teacher God used to help his people know how to live.

Do together: Reminisce about your favorite vacation. Where did you go? What did you do? Did you travel far or stay close to home? What do you remember most about this trip?

Think about: If you have maps at the back of your study Bible, look at the ones that trace the three missionary journeys of Paul. How far did he travel? How many different places did he go to? What would those cities have been like in Paul's day? Everywhere Paul went, God used him to teach others about Jesus. No matter where you go, God can use you to tell others about him. You can also show others about Jesus by living in a way that pleases God.

Also read: Colossians 3:15-17

Prayer: Father, thank you for great teachers like Paul. Thanks also for the teachers you put in my life; my parents, leaders at church and others who are following closely to you. Help me to understand that you can also use me as I follow you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Day Three – Our Helper

Today's reading: Middle of page 232 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Galatians 5

Summary: We should walk with the Holy Spirit, the helper given to us by God.

Do together: Using art supplies, have the children draw pictures of their favorite fruits.

Think about: After Jesus died and went to heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit to be with us. Now, as we live for Christ, we have the very power and presence of God in our lives. Because this is true, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to live through us. When this happens, we can see the results. These results, called fruit, are found in today's reading.

Also read: Ephesians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:29

Prayer: Father, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Help me to let him live through me. I need to do my best to follow you, but I also need to let you live through me. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Day One – Trouble Ahead

Today's reading: Page 234 through page 235

This reading covers: Acts 20, 22

Summary: Because God sent him, Paul goes to Jerusalem knowing trouble is there.

Do together: Ask the children what rule the family has that no one likes to follow, but everyone knows is for their best.

Think about: When Mom and Dad tell us something is for our own good, we have to trust them, because we know how much they love us. When God tells us to do something because it is for our own good, we have to trust him, because we know that he loves us. Paul knew God wanted him to go to Jerusalem. Paul also knew there would be trouble. He knew that maybe it would not be safe, but God kept him safe. Tomorrow we will see a big problem on a ship. But God will keep Paul safe.

Also read: Hebrews 11:1

Prayer: Father God, you always know what is best for us. Sometimes we get scared but we know we can always trust you to take care of us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Two – Shipwreck

Today's reading: Page 236 through break on page 240

This reading covers: Acts 27

Summary: Paul's faith in God saves all those aboard.

Do together: Play a game of "Follow the Leader." What do you like best, being the follower, or being the leader?

Think about: God gives us all kinds of leaders in our lives. The best kind of leader is one who loves God and leads us where God wants us to go. We know we can trust that kind of leader. Paul and the ship full of men were in big trouble. The ship was going to crash, and they were going to be stuck somewhere. Paul told them all not to be afraid. He said that he knew God was going to take care of them and no one was going to die. He had a strong faith in what God promised him. Do you think he was a good leader? Who are some leaders in your life?

Also read: Hebrews 11:1 again. Practice saying it with the children.

Prayer: Father, we are very thankful for the leaders in our life. We want to pray for each of them: for our teachers and our leaders at school; for mom and dad and the leaders in our family; even for our brothers and sisters. Help all of them to follow you as they help us to follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Stranded

Today's reading: Break on page 240 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Acts 28

Summary: Paul helps people even when stranded on an island.

Do together: Turn dinner into a chance to serve one another. Have older children serve the younger children as the table is set and food is served. Then give the younger children a chance to serve the older children at the end of the meal.

Think about: Helping others is important. One of the things we do to show God's love to others is to be helpful to them. When we help people with a good attitude, they can see Jesus in us. Paul was a good helper. He helped to take care of the people who were on the ship that crashed. No one was killed, just like he said, but they still needed to work together to take care of each other. Who can you help tonight? Who can you help tomorrow? We should look for ways to be helpful.

Also read: Hebrews 11:1 – Hopefully everyone has this one memorized by now. See if they can say it without looking.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us to see ways to be helpful to others, so that others may see your love through us. We thank you for those that help us every day. In your name, Amen.

Day One – Jesus

Today's reading: Page 243 through break on page 245

This reading covers: Revelation 1

Summary: While all alone, John sees his friend Jesus in a dream.

Do together: Talk about a dream that you had recently. What was it about? Did it make you happy or sad?

Think about: John was one of Jesus' disciples. He had been with Jesus for several years when Jesus lived on the earth. When Jesus went back to heaven, John started telling others about his friend. Unfortunately, this got John in trouble and some mean people sent him away to an island to live all by himself. While on this island, John had a dream. He saw a lot of things in this dream about the future. But more than anything, he saw his friend Jesus in his dream.

Also read: Isaiah 6:1-4

Prayer: Help me to see Jesus more than anything else. Help me to look for him in all that I do. I pray in his name, Amen.

Day Two – Praise

Today's reading: Break on page 246 through break on page 248

This reading covers: Revelation 4

Summary: We can learn to praise God on earth like they do in heaven.

Do together: Go around the table and say words which describe someone who is nice. Use words like kind, helpful, loving, friendly, etc. See how many words you can come up with.

Think about: In heaven, there is praise for God continuously; it never stops. Because God is so good, there is no end to the words that can be used to describe him. Make it a point to praise him every day.

Also read: Psalm 148; Psalm 150

Prayer: God, you are so good. I want to understand this more as I learn more about you. Help me to see your goodness all around me and let this cause me to praise you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three – Jesus’ Return

Today’s reading: Break on page 248 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Revelation 21, 22

Summary: Jesus will come back again and take us to a new city.

Do together: If you could make the perfect city, what would it look like? Describe or draw pictures of the buildings and people that lived in this perfect city. Tell about what things people would do and describe the places they would go.

Think about: God has a perfect city ready for us. One day, if we know Jesus as our Forever Friend, we will get to live with God in this place. There will be many awesome things there, but the best thing of all will be that God will be there living with us.

Also read: John 14:1-6

Prayer: Thank you that you are taking care of me today and will be taking care of me forever. I can hardly wait to see what the city you built is like. Thank you for making it possible for me to go there because of what Jesus did. I pray in his name, Amen.

Thank you for journeying through *The Story for Kids* with us. It has been our great joy to have guided your steps during these days together. It is our hope that you will continue to spend time as a family with God in his Word each and every day. During our time together you have discovered that the Bible is a book you can understand, learn from, and even love. You now have a sense of the big picture and have seen that all of God’s Word is really telling one story – *The Story*. We also hope you have come to find out more about your story in the pages of the Bible. The heart and soul behind all of this is a bedrock belief that God has revealed himself to us through his Son and his Word. We firmly believe that your life will be changed as you meet with God in the pages of the Bible.