

THE JESSE TREE



God's Loving Plan to Save
the Whole World.

Advent Devotional For Families
www.dosmallthingswithlove.com

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“It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness. He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you.”

St. John Paul II

INTRODUCTION TO THE JESSE TREE

Advent is a time of waiting. We spend the four weeks of Advent awaiting the birth of our King and Savior, Jesus Christ, at Christmas. Waiting is not something new for the faithful. The entire Old Testament, the period of time before the birth of Christ, is characterized by waiting.

But why did God make the Israelites, His chosen people, wait? Simply, God asked the Israelites (as He asks us too!) to wait because He wanted to restore them and teach them to love. And that took time.

At the beginning of time, God created the world, and it was perfect. Sin had not yet entered the world, so the first people, who were created in the image and likeness of God, lived in holy happiness. But, at the words of the serpent, our first parents doubted the goodness of God and disobeyed Him.

We have inherited this doubt and disobedience from Adam and Eve. Even when they left the garden, God refused to leave their side. Slowly, He set about teaching them and their descendants that He is our God, He is good, and His ways need to be our ways.

He also promised that He would send a Savior and redeem all that was lost with that first sin. But, God knew that we weren't ready for the Savior, not yet. There were many important lessons to learn--many His people would learn, and then forget. Again and again, the people God was trying to love and guide would turn away from Him.

But, even though His people disobeyed Him, even though they forgot Him and worshipped false gods, even though they failed miserably to be His people and let Him be their God, He continued to love them. God had made a commitment to these people, one He would never allow to be broken by their rejection of Him.

Despite everything, God kept His promise. He entered history as man, a baby, sending His beloved son, Jesus Christ, to live among us and save us. Jesus taught us the final lesson that would restore what was lost with that first sin. He taught us that God's love has no limits and He craves nothing more than to forgive us and be our loving Father.

The Jesse Tree traces the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Although not everyone included is a direct relative to Jesus, they are all part of His National Family, meaning they were all used by

God to teach the Israelites more about the nature of our loving God and prepare them to receive their Savior.

And so, as you wait through this Advent season, wait with the ancestors of Jesus, many of whom died long before the birth of our Savior. Ponder the lessons God attempted to teach His people so that they would be ready to receive the Savior of the world. God, grant that we might be ready to receive Your son at Christmas.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book was created with the dual intention of making your Jesse Tree experience easier and more meaningful. Although there are countless ways to use the Jesse Tree with your family during Advent, many leave you with a few too many options and can overwhelm you with long Bible verses and no explanation. So, I have worked to solve all of these problems.

First of all, there are 29 different days in this book. Most years you will NOT use all of the days provided here. You will only need all 29 days if Christmas falls on a Sunday and Advent is as long as it can possibly be. Therefore, most years you will skip a few days. For this reason, starting with Zechariah, I have added the date that you should read about this character, even if it means skipping a few of the people leading up to Zechariah so that you arrive at Christmas 'on time.'

For example, for a year when Christmas falls on a Tuesday (like it does in 2018), you will need to skip a total of five characters. Skip which ever ones you like, or do two characters so days. Your choice!

Also, this book includes all of the Bible verses you will need to read for each ornament. You,

of course, can go directly to the Bible and read a longer version of each story (for these longer citations, please see the back of the book).

However, since many of us use the Jesse Tree with younger children, I thought it would be best to pick just a few key verses and add an explanation for each ornament.

The explanation, found under the “What This Means” heading, attempts to do three things: explain the story in further detail, connect the story to other stories we have already read, and offer a simple, but powerful lesson we can apply to our lives today.

Finally, included with the purchase of this book are the printable ornaments. You should have received them digitally shortly after your purchase. If you did not receive them, or would like to download them again, just head to: **dosmallthingswithlove.com/jtornaments**.

As a family, decide how you want to create the ornaments for your Jesse Tree. You can print, color and decorate your ornaments all at once and each night simply hang another one on the tree or you can make the ornament creation a nightly, prayerful part of your Jesse Tree experience.

There are several options for your physical “Jesse Tree.” My family uses a small Christmas Tree my

husband used in his single days. You can also hang your ornaments from a wreath, or along your mantle. Another option is to bring in an evergreen branch from outside and use that as your “Jesse Tree.”

Another option is to use the mini ornaments and printable tree poster (also found at www.dosmallthingswithlove.com/jtornaments). This is perfect for the classroom and serves as a “Advent Countdown” as well.

Regardless, please remember that this is an Advent activity. Consider lighting your Advent wreath each night as you pray and truly enter into a season of waiting before the celebration of Christmas begins.

Jesse

Sunday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-4

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the stump with the branch growing forth reminds us that God keeps His promises, no matter what.

The prophets proclaimed that from the line of Jesse, the father of King David, the Savior would enter the world. However, although David was a good and faithful king, many of his descendants were not. They turned from God and without the protection of God they were overcome by their enemies and taken from their home as slaves. In fact, they wandered so far from God that the great family tree of Jesse was reduced to a stump.

But our God keeps His promises, even if we fail to keep ours. We were destroyed and disobedient, but not disowned. God remembered His promise and sent His own son into the world as a descendant of Jesse. Jesus is the branch that grew out of the stump of that family tree and redeemed the entire world.

The Jesse Tree will introduce you to many of the members of that family tree. Through all those hundreds upon hundreds of years, God was busy writing a story of love for His beloved people. He was hard at work teaching them to love and preparing them to receive His own Son as their Savior.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to never doubt your faithfulness. Give us patience and courage as we wait, trusting fully that you are God, and you love us.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Monday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:26-28, 31

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of our world reminds us that God created us and all that is around us, out of Fatherly Love.

The light, the wind, the water, the land, the trees, the birds and animals, God created all of these things as a beautiful gift for us. What is even more amazing, God created us in His very image and likeness. But who is God that we might be like Him?

God is Love, but not a small, fleeting type of love. No, God is the eternal source of Love. He is the Father that will never abandon His disobedient children. He is our Father that was willing to give us everything, including the suffering and death of His own Son.

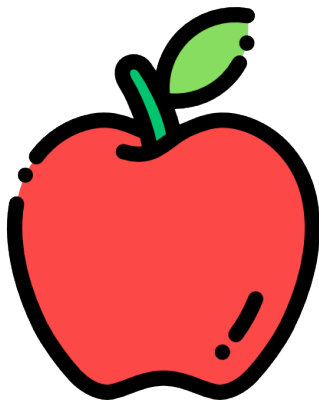
And so, just as God created the world as a gift for us, we were created to be a gift to others, giving of our time and talent each day. We give ourselves to others in loving service, and to our loving Father in obedience.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the beautiful gift of creation! You are a good and loving father. Help us never to run from you, but to obey and love you, as your faithful children.

Adam and Eve

Tuesday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:1-6

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the apple reminds us of the first sin of disobedience, when Adam and Eve ate from the tree forbidden by God. The apple should also remind us of all the times we have chosen to disobey God.

Why did Adam and Eve eat that apple? They were in a lush garden with many other trees and wonderful things to eat. Why couldn't they just obey God?

They disobeyed God for the same reason we often disobey God. They didn't trust that God really cared for them. It took just a few words from the serpent for Eve to believe that God was withholding something from her, that He really didn't love her and that she knew better than God. So she took matters into her own hands and disobeyed.

Their disobedience led to shame and separation from God. Once they had eaten from the tree they hid from God in the garden. As punishment, they were kicked out of the garden and since that time God has been trying to teach us that He really does love us and that freedom is found in obeying His commands.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, please forgive us for all of the times that we have doubted your love for us and disobeyed you. Help us to ignore temptations and instead trust in your goodness.

Cain and Abel

Wednesday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

Genesis 4:3-5, 8-12

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the sickle reminds us that God is not satisfied with empty acts. He desires the conversion of our hearts.

Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. They inherited the sin of their parents and toiled as a result of it, growing crops and raising animals. And yet, God was with them and they obeyed the practice of offering a sacrifice to God in thanksgiving. Since Cain worked in the field, he offered God some of his crop. Abel worked with the flocks, so he offered God his best animals. Both were good sacrifices, but then why was God pleased with Abel and not with Cain?

Because of Cain's heart. Where Abel approached God with humble, honest thanksgiving, knowing that all he was and had came from God, Cain approached God with pride. And when God rejected his sacrifice, Cain turned his anger upon his brother, and killed him.

Sin had entered the world and turned brother into murderer. Abel, just like Jesus Christ, lost his life due to his righteousness, and still God did not forget His promise to be a loving Father. He gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, and did not strike down Cain. He punished Cain, but even Cain was not forgotten and abandoned by our loving God.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to approach you with a pure and holy heart, not just empty deeds. Search us, know us, and make our love for you perfect and free from pride or anger.

Noah

Thursday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

So the Lord said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.

(...) The fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

Genesis 6:7-8, 7:11-15, 23

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the rainbow reminds us that God once flooded the whole world to wipe out wickedness, but He took tender care of Noah and his family because of their faithfulness to Him.

Great deeds and accomplishments matter very little to God. What matters to God is faithfulness. Can you imagine how the wicked people of the time treated Noah and his sons while they built their ark and loaded it with animals? He must have looked foolish!

And yet, Noah believed, obeyed, and followed God's instructions, and when the floods came, God protected him and his family. God guided the ark and after Noah and his family were safely on dry land again, the first thing they did was offer sacrifice to God in faithful thanksgiving. Then God put a rainbow across the sky as a promise that He would never again destroy the earth, at least not by flood.

Centuries later, God would flood the world with something different--His infinite love. He would send His beloved Son into the world and offer Him up as an eternal sacrifice for our sins and wickedness. This time God would destroy sin not with water, but with the very blood of His beloved Son.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, flood our hearts with your loving waters. Wash away all wickedness and sin so that we might faithfully obey and follow you.

Abraham

Friday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own son shall be your heir.” He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1,3-6

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the stars in the night sky remind us of God's abundant love and the fact that God will keep His promises.

Abraham and his wife Sarah were old. They had no children, and at their age there seemed no hope of ever having any. And yet, God took Abraham out one night, and told him to look up and count the stars. That is how many descendants he would have.

It seemed impossible. In fact, Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed when he told her! But impossible does not exist for God. Shortly after this vision Sarah conceived and gave birth to a son. Against all odds, Abraham became the father of a great nation, one that would refuse to worship the idols of their neighbors. The descendants of Abraham, who started with that first son conceived in old age, would be the chosen people, the Israelites, the very ancestors of the Messiah, for whom they waited.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to trust you, even when it seems impossible. Help us to believe in your faithfulness and follow where you lead.

Isaac

Saturday, Week 1



SCRIPTURE

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." (...) When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Genesis 22:1-2, 8-13

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of a ram reminds us that God will provide. The story of Abraham and Isaac can seem gruesome. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice--kill--his own son, the son he had prayed and hoped for in his old age, and Abraham was willing to obey! Abraham loved his son, but he trusted the Lord even more.

God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a test, a test that Abraham passed. Abraham knew that nothing is impossible for God. God had promised him a large family, and even if God demanded that Abraham kill his only son, God would come through on that promise. How? He didn't know. He simply trusted. Abraham knew that God is God, He could even raise his son from the dead, if that was His will.

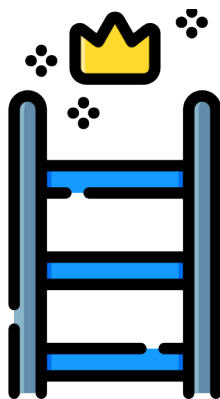
The story of Abraham and Isaac helps us to understand the boundless love of our Lord. Fathers want to protect their sons, and yet God willingly offered up His own Son for the redemption of the world. Where Abraham was spared this final act of sacrifice, God did not spare Himself. He provided for us all the perfect and spotless victim, His own Son, and through that sacrifice our sins have been forgiven.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to follow your will without whining or hesitation. Help us to trust that you will provide and even if the path is rough, you will be there to guide us.

Jacob

Sunday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”

Genesis 28:12-16

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the ladder reaching to heaven reminds us that God and His angels are active on Earth fulfilling His promises to His faithful.

Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, but he was not perfect! He could be a little sneaky and liked to do things his own way, and yet God remembered His promise to Abraham to be the father of a great nation.

Jacob would become the father of 12 sons, and from those 12 sons would come the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. Talk about a big family! God's plan was to create a nation of people through which He could bless the entire world. Jacob and his sons were part of that plan.

Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching to heaven and the angels constantly moving up and down the ladder demonstrates God's active work on this earth. His promise to Jacob is the same to us: He will protect us and guide us if we remain faithful to Him.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to see and cooperate with your holy work here on earth. Use us as your tool to accomplish this work and teach us to glory in your ways!

Joseph

Monday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

Genesis 37:3-8

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the coat of many colors reminds us that we are all God's beloved children, to whom He will remain faithful. But, just because we are beloved by God, as Joseph was beloved by his father, we will not be spared suffering. Soon after Joseph told his brothers his dream, they decided to get rid of him. They planned to kill him, but decided in the end to sell him into slavery, telling their father that he was dead.

As a slave, Joseph was taken to Egypt. Although he was a faithful servant, his master soon threw him in prison. This could have been the end of the story for Joseph, but Joseph remained faithful to God, and God did not forget him.

Joseph began to interpret the dreams of fellow prisoners, and soon his ability brought him before Pharaoh himself. Impressed by Joseph, Pharaoh made Joseph a powerful man in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, and Joseph worked hard to help the nation survive years of famine. Years later, Joseph's brothers came before Joseph, seeking help amid the famine. They bowed before him, just as he had seen in his dream! He had every reason to hate his brothers, but instead of punishing them, Joseph forgave them and cared for them.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to live as your beloved children, proud to call you Our Father. Teach us how to minister to our brothers and sisters in love and charity, and to forgive them when they sin against us.

Moses

Tuesday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then the Lord said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..... So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you."

Exodus 3:2, 5-12

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the burning bush reminds us that although God may feel distant, He is always listening and hears our prayers.

The Israelite nation entered Egypt during the time of Joseph. While there, they prospered and grew in number. In fact, they grew into such a numerous people that the Egyptians feared them and eventually enslaved them.

For generations, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and they cried out to God, begging for Him to rescue them. And God heard their cries. God picked Moses, an Israelite boy raised in the house of Pharaoh, to save the nation. Moses was an unlikely choice for the job--even he doubted his own abilities! But God put Moses' doubts to rest with one little statement, "I will be with you."

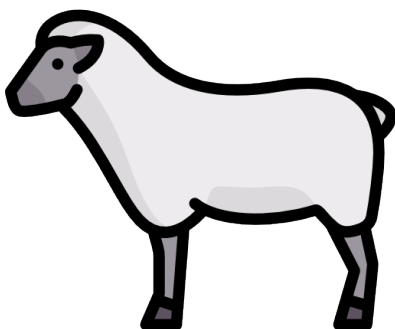
Armed only with a shepherd's staff, Moses returned to Egypt, to face Pharaoh and free his people from slavery. He walked confidently knowing that God, the only God, was with him.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to never doubt that you hear us and see our suffering. Thank you for always being with us.

Passover

Wednesday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this observance?’ you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.’”

Exodus 12:21-27

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of a lamb reminds us that God will protect us, even if it requires spilling His own blood.

Freeing the Israelites from slavery was not an easy task. Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he doubted God, preferring his own idols. God sent terrible plagues upon Egypt. He turned the Nile into blood, He sent frogs, lice, and boils to torment people and animals. God sent locusts that consumed all plants. Darkness covered the land for three days, and still, Pharaoh refused to yield to the God of Israel.

Then God sent the final plague. He sent His destroyer to Egypt to kill the first-born in every family, from Pharaoh to slave to animal. But God would protect His chosen people from this fate. He directed Moses to have the entire Israelite nation kill a young lamb and spread the blood of that lamb above their door. That way, when God passed by He would know that they were His faithful people and He would spare them.

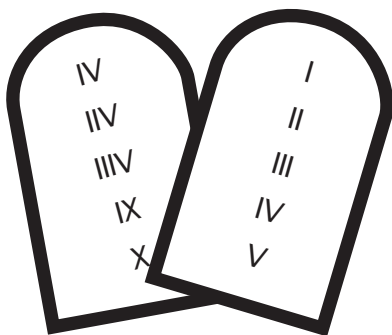
Years and years later another spotless lamb would be sacrificed and His blood would save us and the whole world from the damnation we deserve. This spotless lamb was Jesus Christ, God Himself.

— OUR PRAYER —

Dear Lord, help us to seek only your protection.
Hide us in your wounds and hold us close to
your side. Teach us to never stop thanking you
for your sacrifice and the protection we have
been given through your blood.

Ten Commandments

Thursday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

Exodus 19:3-6

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the stone tablets reminds us that loving God requires obeying His laws.

After the Israelites left Egypt, God continued to protect them. Pursued by the Egyptians, God parted the Red Sea and allowed them to pass through on dry land. God then led them to Mount Sinai, where God had first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. God desired to make a covenant with the nation, and once again establish them as His special people. But, in order for Him to be their God, they needed to obey His rules, the 10 commandments.

Often times, we can have a negative reaction to being asked to obey rules. We feel like we should be able to do whatever we want, but God tells us that He knows of a better way for us to live, a way of life that will lead to our happiness, harmony in our community, and the eventual redemption of our souls. God's commands directed His people to worship only Him as God, honor our parents, to not lie, steal, or kill.

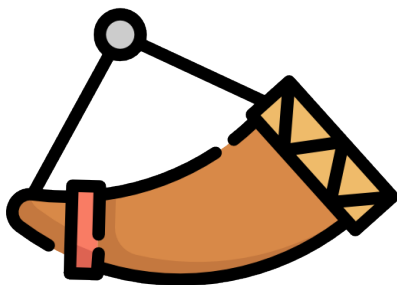
The Ten Commandments are simple rules that teach our hearts to love.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to trust that you know what is best for us and that your rules will lead us to happiness. Give us the courage to obey your every law.

Joshua

Friday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

The Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. When they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead.” So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark of the Lord.”

Joshua 6:2-6

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of a horn reminds us that when we let God lead us, anything is possible.

After God led His people out of Egypt, they wandered in the desert for 40 years. Why did God do this to His chosen people? Because they needed to learn to trust Him and follow where He led.

Finally, after all of those years and many trials, God led the people into the land He had promised them. There was only one problem. There were already people living in that Promised Land, including the people of the fortified city of Jericho, and they didn't have any intention of leaving.

But the Israelites did not throw their hands up in frustration. Instead, they followed Joshua's example and trusted in the Lord, even though God's plan seemed crazy. For six days, the army of the Israelites marched around the walled city of Jericho, led by the Lord in the Arc of the Covenant. On the seventh day, they marched once more while the priest blew the horns and the people yelled. And what happened? The walls of Jericho fell and the Israelites, led by the Lord, were victorious.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to prayerfully discern your will and faithfully follow your plan.

Gideon

Saturday, Week 2



SCRIPTURE

So the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" Every man stood in his place all around the camp, and all the men in camp ran; they cried out and fled.

Judges 7:20-22

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the clay jar reminds us that no enemy is bigger than our God.

Many years after God brought His people to the promised land, they forgot about God. They even started to worship other gods. Since they no longer obeyed God, God couldn't protect them and soon the Midianites overpowered the Israelites and began to treat them very cruelly.

In anguish, the Israelites once again called out to God. God heard them and choose Gideon to lead them to freedom. Gideon assembled an army, but just as God had done with Joshua, the battle plan didn't call for swords. It did, however, call for lots of trust.

In the dark, Gideon and his small army of 300 men surrounded the enormous Midianite army. All at once they blew their horns, and smashed clay jar. The Midianites were so surprised and scared that they ran away and once again, God rescued His people.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to place our trust fully in you. No matter how big the enemy or the temptation, help us to remember that you are bigger and you will fight for us.

Ruth

Sunday Week 3



SCRIPTURE

But Ruth said to her mother-in-law Naomi, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!”

Ruth 1:16-18

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the wheat reminds us that we are all invited to be part of God's special family.

Ruth was not born a descendant of Abraham. She was a foreigner who, after the death of her husband, remained devoted to her mother-in-law, and traveled with her back to Bethlehem, where God's chosen people lived.

There, Ruth lived with and took care of her mother-in-law. One day, while out gathering wheat, Ruth met a man named Boaz. Even though Ruth was an outsider, Boaz accepted her and encouraged her to love the Lord. They married, had children, and went on to be the great-grandparents of King David, the line through which Jesus would enter the world.

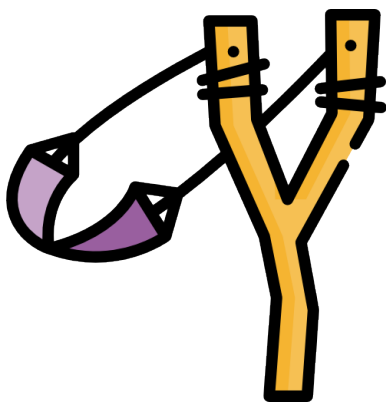
The story of Ruth reminds us that God has a special plan for each of us. No matter what we look like, where we were born, or what sins we might have committed in the past, God is still eager to include us in His beautiful story of Love He.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to never doubt how special we are to you. Teach us to remain loyal to you and play our part in your great story of love.

David

Monday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

But David said to Goliath, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied, that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give you into our hand.” When Goliath drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck Goliath on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

1 Samuel 17: 45,47-49

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the sling shot reminds us that although we are small and weak, with God fighting our battles, we are strong.

Notice what David says to Goliath when he faces him, “I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts.” By saying this, David is saying not only that God is on his side, but that he is allowing God to direct his every move. On the surface, David was small and unimportant. He was the smallest in his family and spent his days tending sheep while his brothers went to battle, and yet God did not see him as small or unimportant. God saw the heart of David, a heart that would remain devoted to God and to His people. This devotion and absolute trust in God is what brought down the mighty Goliath.

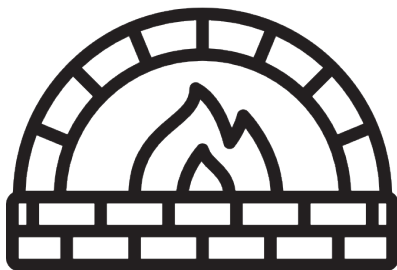
This story took place when David was a child. After this, David was soon crowned king of Israel, and he was a good and holy king. He shepherded his people and taught them how to have a relationship with God, their Father in Heaven.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to never feel small and unimportant. Allow us to always remain close to you and through that closeness find strength and courage in you.

Elijah

Tuesday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.”

1 Kings 18: 36-39

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the stone altar ablaze with fire reminds us that there is truly no god besides God.

David was a good and faithful king, but not all of his descendants that would become king after him were good. Many were wicked. One king, King Ahab, even turned his back on God and instead worshiped the false god, Baal. Many of the Israelites followed his example and also worshiped this false god.

In response to their unfaithfulness, God called Elijah to bring them back. To do this, Elijah challenged the priests of the false god to a contest. They build a stone altar and placed an offering upon it. Then, they were to call upon their god to set the offering on fire. The priests of Baal prayed, but nothing happened.

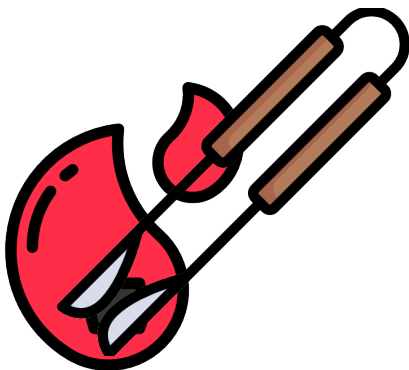
Then it was Elijah's turn. Before starting, he dumped water on everything, to make setting the sacrifice on fire even harder. Then he prayed and immediately God sent fire from heaven. The entire sacrifice, and even the water around it, ignited. God had once again demonstrated that He alone is God and the people, once again, returned to Him.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to worship only you. Protect our hearts from worshipping the false idols of this age: money, fame, honor, and beauty. Remind us daily that you alone are God.

Isaiah

Wednesday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Isaiah 6:1-3, 5-8

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the tongs carrying the hot coal reminds us that we all can do the work of the Lord and carry His message to the world.

After Elijah, many of the Israelites became very religious, but few of the things they did actually honored God. They prayed, but they were cruel to the poor. They made sacrifices to God, but they lived wicked lives. So God called Isaiah to convert their hearts.

But, Isaiah felt that he was not the right person to bring God's message to these people. So, an angel flew to him and placed a hot coal from the altar of God on his lips, and when God asked for a volunteer to go to His people, Isaiah was ready.

Isaiah went to the people of Israel and worked to convert their hearts and give them hope! He shared about God's great plan, that He would send a light to the world, and that this man who would come to save the world would also have to suffer and die. For the most part, however, God's people refused to listen.

— OUR PRAYER —

Dear Lord, help us to believe that we too can do your holy work on this earth. Purify our lips and our hearts that we might bear your message to the world.

Jeremiah

Thursday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim. As for you, do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.”

Jeremiah 7:13-16

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the tears reminds us that there are real consequences for sin.

Isaiah had warned the Israelites that there would be consequences if they did not change their lives, but they wouldn't listen. Then, God sent Jeremiah as a last attempt, to try and convert His people. Jeremiah loved the nation of Israel, and he begged them to turn to God, but they refused to change.

Their stubbornness broke Jeremiah's heart. Jeremiah said he wished his head was full of water and his eyes fountains of tears so that he could cry out day and night for his people.

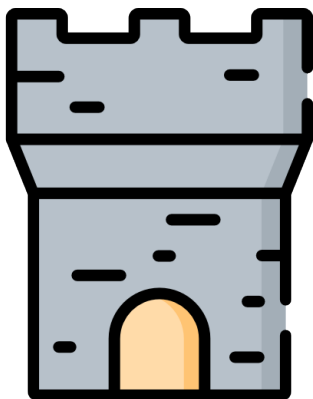
Finally, God destroyed Israel for its sins. Babylonian soldiers came and destroyed the city. They took God's people as slaves and forced them to leave the land that God had given them. But God did not abandon them, even then. He would raise up great and faithful men in Babylon and try, once again, to convert the hearts of His people.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, please forgive us for our sins.
Remind us that all the blessings we have received
come from You and we owe you everything in
thanksgiving.

Habakkuk

Friday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:1

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the watchtower reminds us that God's timing is perfect and often we are called to simply watch and wait.

Unlike many, Habakkuk listened to the pleas of Jeremiah and returned to God with a faithful, contrite heart. However, since so few returned to God, the Babylonians were still allowed to conquer the nation of Israel. Those faithful to God and those who were wicked were all carried off as slaves.

When Habakkuk saw the innocent punished alongside the wicked he grew frustrated with God and called out to Him in anguish. Then, he patiently waited for God's reply.

In response, God shared a message of justice and hope with Habakkuk. God would punish the Babylonians for their greed and cruelty and He would not, even now, abandon His beloved people.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to be patient and wait upon your word. Help us to silence ourselves and the world around us so that we might hear your voice.

Daniel

Saturday, Week 3



SCRIPTURE

Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Daniel 19-23

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the lion reminds us that if we remain faithful to God, He will remain faithful to us.

During the time of Babylonian exile, God's people suffered, and yet God was with them and even there He raised up a few faithful, holy followers. Daniel was one of them.

Daniel as a good man who worked hard and had gained the trust of the Babylonian king. Many other men grew jealous of Daniel and began to look for a way to tear him down. Eventually, these men convinced the king to create a law forbidding the worship anything except the king.

Daniel remained faithful to God. He refused to worship the king and continued to worship God, so he was sentenced to death in the lion's den.

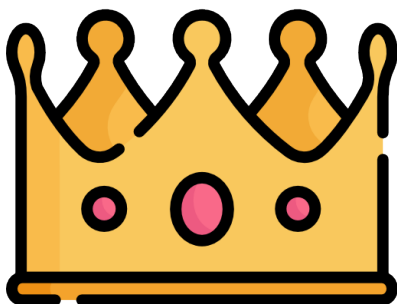
And yet, God protected His faithful servant. Daniel remained in the lion's den all night, and the lions never touched him. When the king saw this miracle in the morning, he too was won over by the Lord, the God of Daniel and Israel.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to remain strong and courageous, even under the threat of persecution. Teach us that the closer we are to You, the safer we are.

Queen Ester

Sunday, Week 4



SCRIPTURE

So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king.” Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?” Esther said, “A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

Esther 7:1-6

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the crown of Queen Esther reminds us that all the power we might possess is given to us by God and we should use that power to serve God and others.

While God's people were living as slaves in Babylon, Babylon was destroyed by Persia. Many of God's people remained there, scattered and abused. The strangers they lived among did not like the Israelites, and one man, Haman, was determined to kill every last one Israelite.

But, the king of Persia loved an Israelite woman named Esther. He put a royal crown on her head and promised to give her anything she asked for. She became a powerful queen and because she remained faithful to God, God was able to work through her. From her seat of power, Esther remembered her people, just as God remembered His people, and when she had the opportunity, she worked to save them from the hands of Haman.

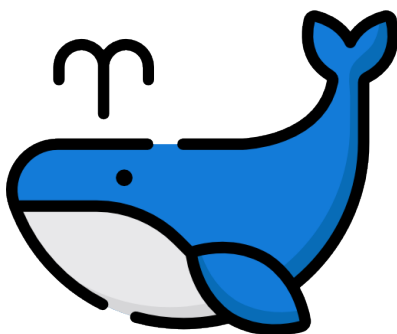
Because Esther was willing to use her power to serve the Lord, the nation of Israel remained and the Tree of Jesse was preserved so that it might bring forth the Savior of the world.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to place all of our trust in you and remember that whatever blessings we enjoy should be used for Your greater glory.

Jonah

Monday, Week 4



SCRIPTURE

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 1:1-4,15-17

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the whale reminds us that God created all of us for a specific purpose and it is our duty to do the work God sets before us.

Like Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, God called Jonah to go and preach His message in order to convert His people and save them from punishment. But, unlike the others, Jonah refused to go. Instead, he ran in the opposite direction.

Jonah boarded a ship heading away from Nineveh. Soon, God sent a storm that threatened to destroy the ship. When the sailors figured out that the storm was Jonah's fault, they threw him overboard. The storm stopped and God sent a fish to swallow Jonah, thus saving his life.

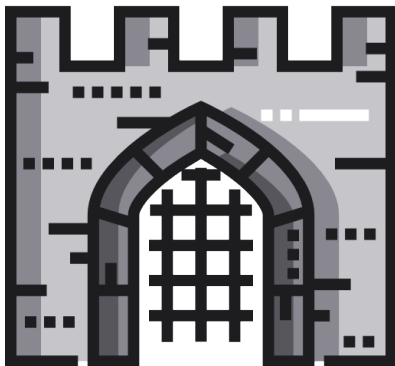
From the belly of the fish, Jonah prayed in thanksgiving to God and God heard him, directing the fish to spit Jonah out on dry land. Then God spoke to Jonah again, telling him to go to the city of Nineveh and preach a message of repentance. And this time, Jonah went. He preached and people listened. So, even though he fled, God followed him and remained faithful until Jonah was ready to do God's will.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, give us the courage to answer your call and follow where you lead.

Nehemiah

Tuesday, Week 4



SCRIPTURE

They again did evil before you, and you abandoned them to the hands of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them; yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you rescued them according to your mercies. And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your ordinances, by the observance of which a person shall live. They turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. Many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen. Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Nehemiah 9:29-31

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the brick wall and gate remind us that God is merciful and if we approach Him with repentant hearts, He will allow us to start again.

Nehemiah lived in exile among strangers, but things were changing. He heard how those that remained in Jerusalem suffered and he begged the king to allow him to return there. The king agreed and Nehemiah set out for God's city.

When he returned, Nehemiah got to work rebuilding the city. He rebuilt the walls of the city, the gates, and even the holy temple. It was difficult work, but as he and other faithful worked, they strengthened not only the city, but their faith. They recommitted themselves to the Lord and repented for all the past sins of the nation.

Nehemiah worked hard to build up the broken nation of Israel. He restored the structures of the Holy City and strengthened their faith and dependance on God. This work helped prepare their hearts to receive the Messiah.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to be truly sorry for our sins and approach you with a humble, repentant heart for you alone can restore us to fullness.

Zechariah

December 21st



SCRIPTURE

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. ”

Luke 1:5,7,11-15

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the paper and pencil remind us that God's plan might be mysterious, but it is infinitely better than any plan we might have.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful people, but they suffered from the shame of infertility, and now they were so old that it seemed impossible they would ever have children. But God had a better plan.

One day in the temple, God sent His angel Gabriel to Zechariah to proclaim that not only would he be a father, but his son would be the final and the greatest prophet. But, Zechariah refused to believe. The consequence for this doubt was that Zechariah became mute until the day his son was born.

When his son was born, many people there wanted to name the child after his father, but Elizabeth insisted that his name was John. They turned to Zechariah. He signed for a piece of paper and wrote, "His name is John." At that bold act of faith, Zechariah's voice was returned, and, moved by the Holy Spirit, he broke out in beautiful praise of our God and His wondrous ways.

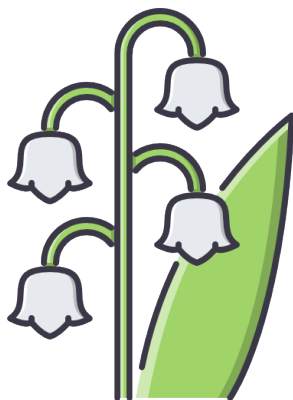
The son of Zechariah and Elizabeth was John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus Christ, and the final prophet that would work to prepare God's people for the coming of their Savior.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to trust in your plan and never doubt what you are capable of.

Mary, Jesus's Mother

December 22nd



SCRIPTURE

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Luke 1:46-55

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the lily reminds us that God can work through the most unlikely people. All He demands from us is a our trust and a pure heart.

After God's people were returned to the Promised Land, they waited for the Messiah to come. They were expecting a great warrior to lead them to military victory, but for over 400 years no one came. Many of God's chosen people began to feel that God had forgotten them. But He hadn't.

One day God sent His angel to a young girl. Her name was Mary and she was betrothed to a man named Joseph. Even though she was unmarried, the angel told her that through the power of the Holy Spirit, she would conceive a son and this son would be the Savior of the World.

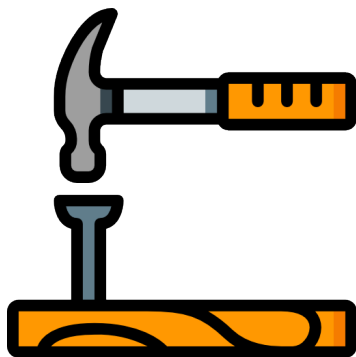
Mary was shocked and asked how this could be possible, and yet, she said "yes" to God's beautiful plan. While visiting her cousin Elizabeth soon after, Mary broke out in praise to God. He had remained faithful to the end and cared about even His smallest servants. Throughout all of history, He really had written the most beautiful story of love for His people and Mary was humbled and filled with joy to be part of it.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to say "yes" like Mary, with a pure heart, full of trust in Your divine plan.

Joseph, the step-father of Jesus

December 23rd



SCRIPTURE

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-21,24-25

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the hammer and nail remind us of the great St. Joseph, who was the protector of Mary and Jesus on this earth, and who will intercede for our protection now from heaven.

Joseph was a righteous man, but God's plan put him in an awkward position. The woman he was about to marry was pregnant before they were married. Determined to protect her, Joseph did not publicly shame her. Instead, he was about to take care of things privately when an angel appeared to him in a dream.

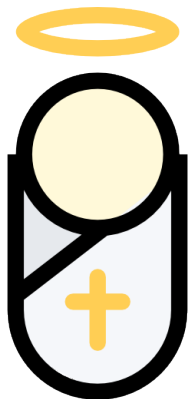
After receiving the message of the angel, Joseph did not hesitate. He married Mary and went to work being the father of the Messiah. He never doubted God's plan, even though he had no idea how this tiny baby would save us all from our sins. He just remained faithful and when the baby was born, he named him Jesus, just as the angel had directed him. Joseph didn't know how God's plan would play out, but he faithfully obeyed and trusted in the goodness of God.

— OUR PRAYER —

Dear Lord, You entered this world as a helpless infant and accepted the protection of a man, Joseph. Help us to embrace our own helplessness and crawl under the wings of Your protection.

Baby Jesus

December 24th



SCRIPTURE

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Luke 2: 8-12,15-17

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the infant Lord reminds us that God entered this world not as a warrior ready for battle, but as a helpless baby.

The entire story, from the moment Eve bit into the apple was leading up to this moment. God had promised that He would send us a Savior, someone that would restore what was lost in the Garden of Eden, and God made good on that promise.

But, before the world could receive this Savior, they needed to learn to live as God lived. God made them His chosen people, He brought them out of slavery and into the land He promised them. He gave them the king they had asked for, and when they turned their back on Him, He allowed them to be taken away as slaves. And yet, through it all God remained faithful.

Despite all of the wickedness and sins of His people, God sent His own son to purchase for them the rewards of eternal life. He would become the blood sacrifice needed to wash away the sins of the entire nation and gather into one the whole world.

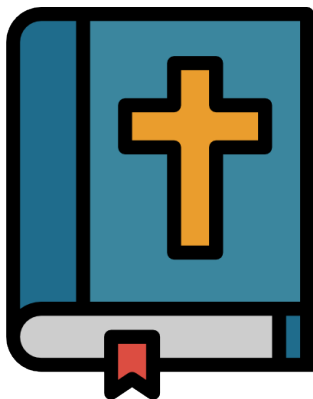
All of this would be done by a baby born in a barn. The Lord of the Universe humbled Himself, completely, out of love for His people and enter human history as a helpless baby.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of your son, born into this world as an infant. When we gaze at your son, free us from pride and fill us with joy at the wonder of your plan.

Jesus the Christ

December 25th



SCRIPTURE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

John 1:1-5,14,16

WHAT THIS MEANS

The image of the Bible reminds us that all of the stories contained within its pages come together as one incredible tale of how much our God loves us.

As the son of God, Jesus existed from the very beginning of time. He is one with God and the Holy Spirit and this Triune God was there at the very moment of creation. They were there at the first sin, the exile from the garden, the first murder, the flood, the promise to Abraham, the near sacrifice of Isaac, the vision of Jacob, and the troubles of Joseph.

They were there, working a beautiful plan of love, in the burning bush, the passover, the 10 commandments, the fall of Jericho, the triumph of Gideon's army, and the loyalty of Ruth. God was there also at the crowning of King David, when Elijah called down fire from heaven, when Isaiah preached about His beautiful plan, and for the tears of Jeremiah. God was even there during the years of exile. He waited with Habakkuk, protected Daniel, heard Esther, pursued Jonah, and encouraged Nehemiah.

And then, when the plan was nearly complete, God, through His angels, spoke to Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, preparing them for the One that was to come, God Himself, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had been with them for every step of this incredible story.

OUR PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to never doubt your loving care for us. Remind us of all the care you took to teach us your ways of love.

EXTENDED BIBLICAL STORIES

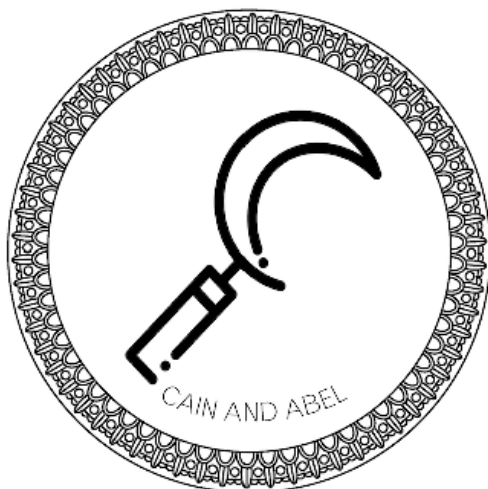
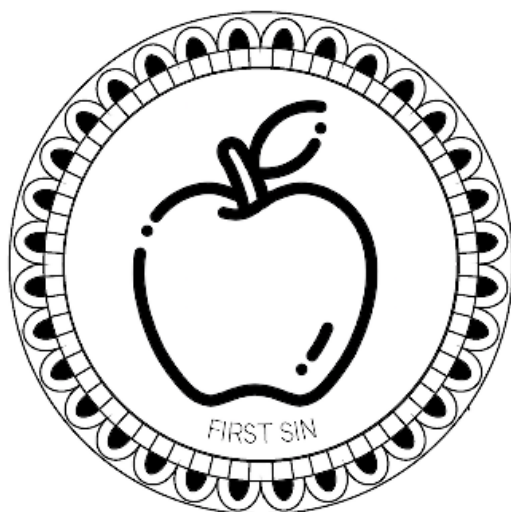
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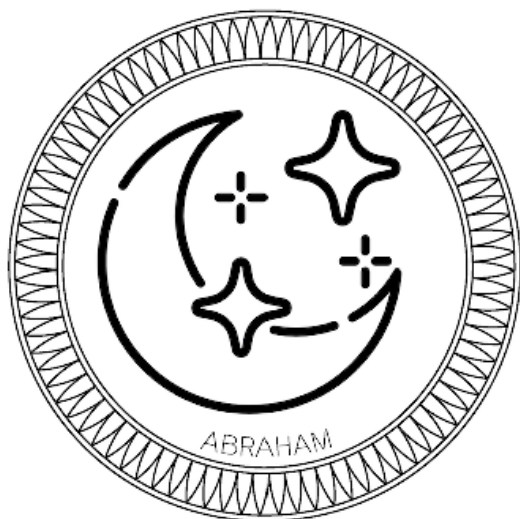
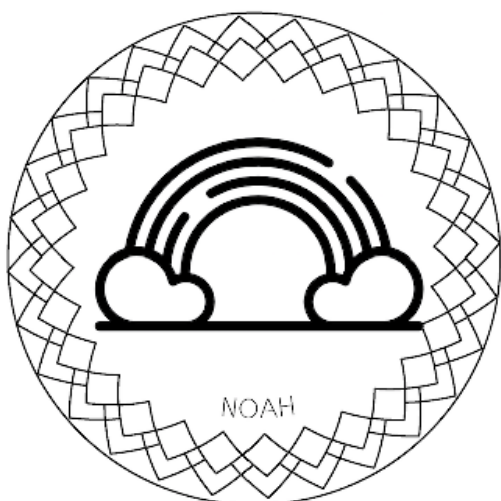
1. Jesse: Isaiah 1
2. Creation: Genesis 1-2:3
3. The First Sin: Genesis 2:4-3:24
4. Cain and Abel: Genesis 4:1-16
5. Noah: Genesis 6:5-22, 7:17-8:12, 8:20-9:17
6. Abraham: Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-6
7. Isaac: Genesis 22:1-19
8. Jacob: Genesis 27:41-28:22
9. Joseph: 37:3-36, 50:15-21
10. The Burning Bush: Exodus 2-4:20
11. The Passover: Exodus 12-14
12. The 10 Commandments: Exodus 19-20
13. The Fall of Jericho: Joshua 1:1-11, 6:1-20
14. Gideon's Army: Judges 2:6-23, 6-8:28
15. Ruth: 1-2, 4:13-22
16. David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17:32-51
17. Elijah: 1 Kings 17:1-16, 18:17-46
18. Isaiah: Isaiah 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7
19. Jeremiah: Jer. 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:11

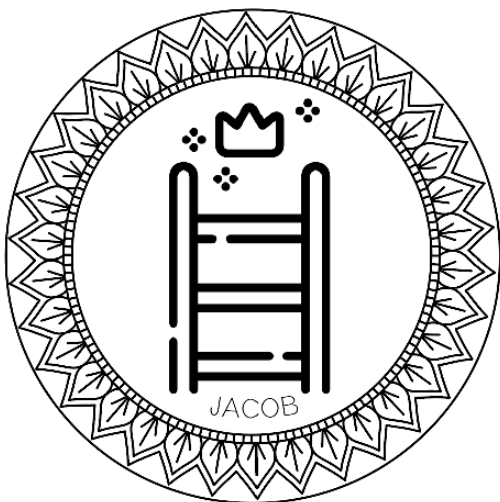
20. Habakkuk: Habakkuk 1:12-2:1, 3:16-19
21. Daniel: Daniel 6:1-28
22. Esther: Esther 2, 3:8-11, 5:1-8, 7
23. Jonah: The Book of Jonah
24. Nehemiah: Nehemiah 1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22
25. Zechariah: Luke 1:8-26, 26-38
26. Mary: Luke 1:26-56
27. Joseph: Luke 1:18-25
28. Jesus' Birth: Luke 2:1-20
29. Jesus, the Word: John 1

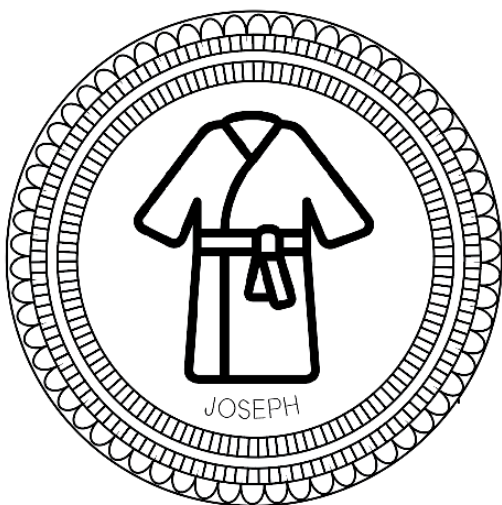
ORNAMENTS

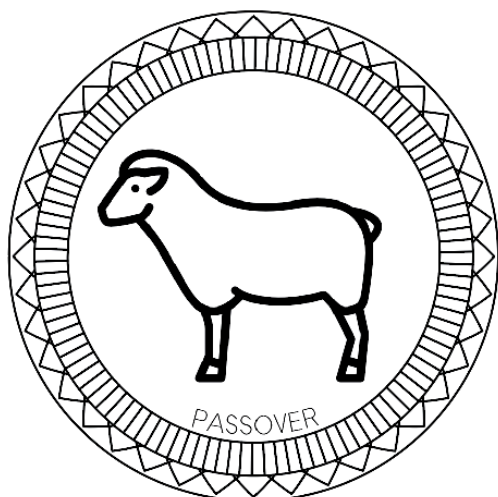


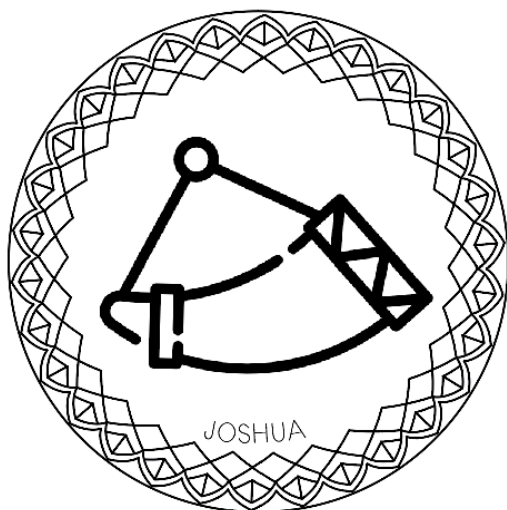


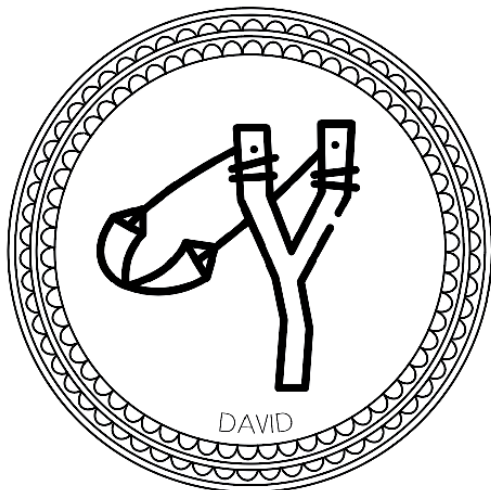
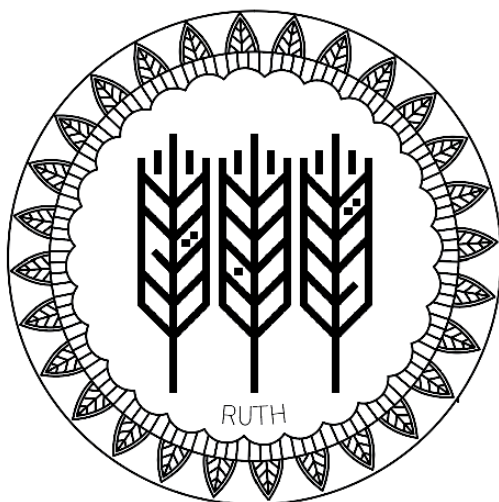


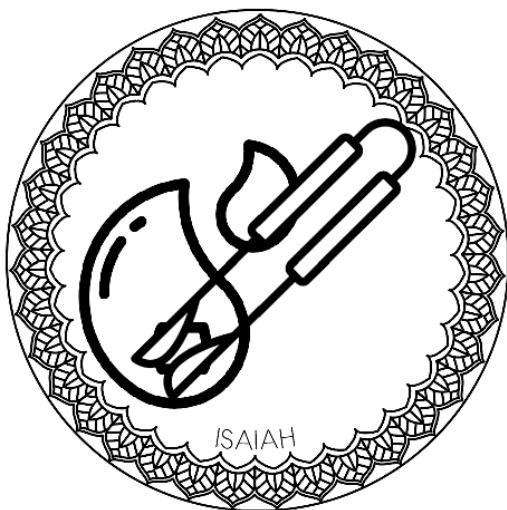
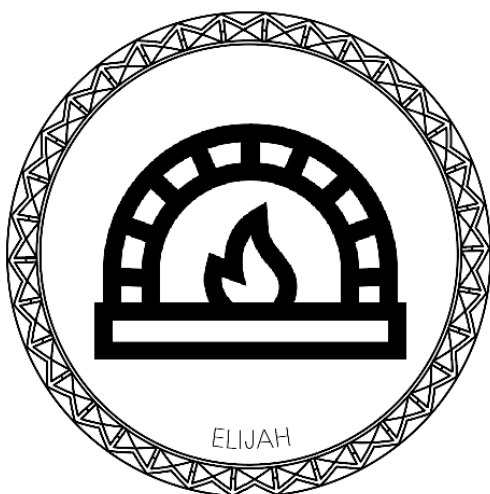


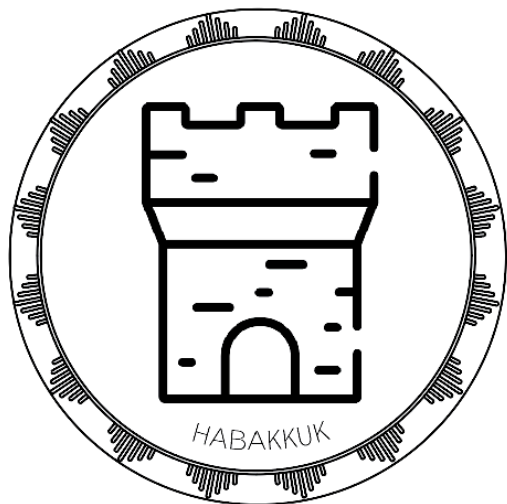
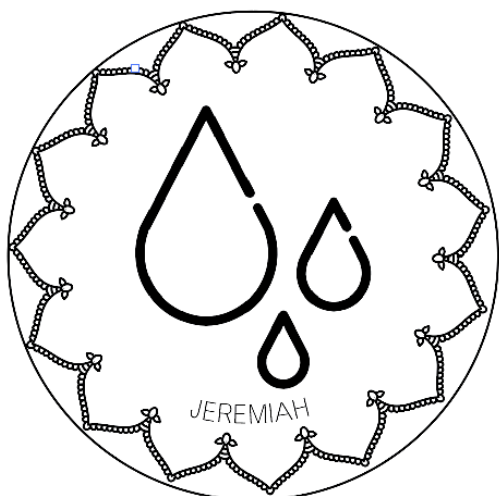


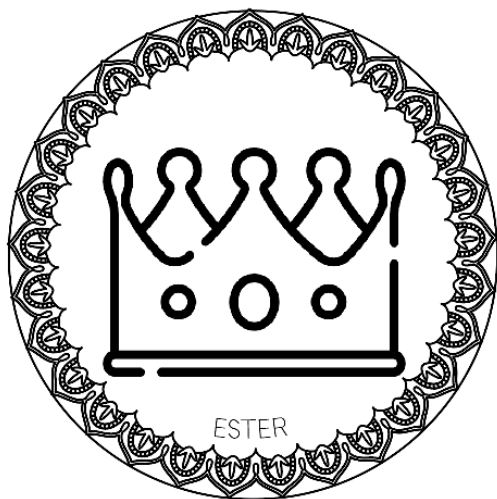


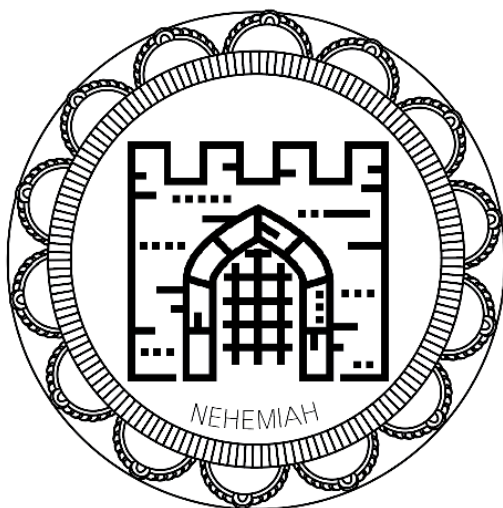




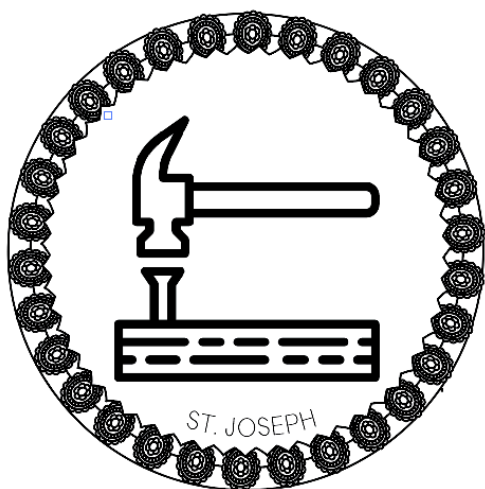


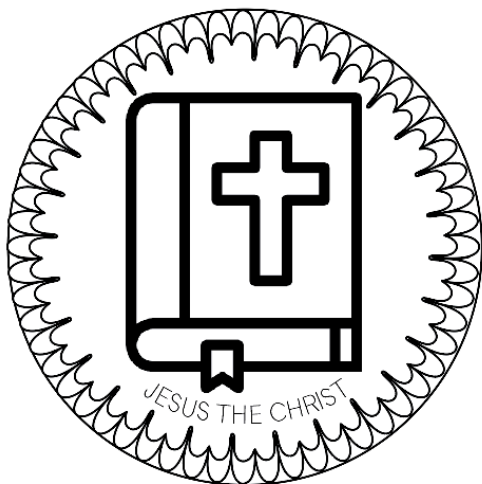












You can also find these ornaments digitally as well as other printable Jesse Tree resources at www.dosmallthingswithlove.com/jtornaments

THE AUTHOR



NANCY BANDZUCH is a wife and mother of four little ones. She lives just outside of Kansas City and enjoys stitching, reading, making mud pies and dreams one day of owning goats. She loves her Catholic faith and enjoys sharing it with others on her blog and podcast.

After years of doing the Jesse Tree with her family, Nancy developed a love/hate relationship with it, and yearned for a better, easier, more meaningful way to use this devotional with young families. That is what she has worked to create here.

You can connect with Nancy on her blog: **www.dosmallthingswithlove.com** or one of her two podcasts: **Just One Small Thing: Everyday Wisdom for Catholic Women** and **Catholic Sprouts: Daily Podcast for Catholic Kids**.

COVER ART BY



ANNIE VAETH is a wife and mother to three adorable children. She is a transplant to Southern California where you can find her doodling, cycling or planning home school field trips. She has been painting and drawing all her life and has a passion for creating contemporary Catholic art.

You can find Annie on Instagram and Facebook **@papermonastery** where she posts videos and pictures of her latest art projects.