



# Be the Story Curriculum for Narrative Lectionary

## Year D- Gospel of John Fall Semester

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By Pastor SiriAnna Strommen

## A Few Reminders

**The Lesson:** Each lesson is meant to last between 20-30 minutes. If you have longer than that, you may need to proactively come up with another activity such as music, or games, or something active for the kids.

**Centering Breath:** This may be a difficult part for kids to do, but it is amazing to see the effect it has on kids when they get into it and take on the challenge. The point is to teach kids a tool for calming and centering themselves that they can use when they feel anxious, or simply want to connect with God. This is a Spiritual Practice.

**Timeline:** The reason many churches are using the Narrative Lectionary is because it tells the story in order. No matter your age, it is helpful not just to learn Bible stories, but to understand that there is a flow and arc to the Bible. It isn't random. By reviewing the timeline you are building that storyline for the kids and reinforcing the stories. But, of course, it is also a great catch up for kids who missed a week or two.

**Wondering:** This curriculum avoids giving a definite interpretation of the story and instead encourages kids to wonder and come up with multiple meanings. I may reinforce a few ideas with activities, but that doesn't mean other ideas are wrong.

**Activity:** The activities chosen are NOT YOUR ONLY OPTION! If you don't like them, please use something else. You know your kids best. However, the activities I chose were meant to be diverse week to week (not a coloring sheet or craft every time), and ultimately to open up a part of the story in a real way. While there is nothing wrong with coloring a picture of Paul after studying him, if we can do an activity that helps us to understand Grace that might stay with kids longer.

**Feedback:** I love hearing what creative additions or twists teachers have taken on the lesson. Please send me your ideas of what worked!

Blessings to you all!

This is holy work, inviting children to find themselves in the Story of God.

## Pastor Siri

**Sample Schedule**

**9:45-9:55** Gathering Time

- Welcome
- Singing the Old Testament or New Testament song together using a chart with the books as a guide
- Introduce theme of the day. What part of the Bible is it from? (Point to chart)
- Collect offering for the charity of your choice. Keep a record and tell the kids weekly how you are progressing on your goal.
- Celebrate birthdays

**9:55-10:10** Music

**10:15-10:45** Lesson of the Day

## September 12: The Creation

**Note:** The repetition of “and there was . . . the first day”, reveals that this story was probably used as a liturgy in worship. It is so full of rich imagery! If you pay attention (and a smart kid points it out), the sun was created after several “days” had past. That alone should let you realize this isn’t a scientific treatise but a religious statement. It isn’t HOW the heavens were made, but WHO made the heavens and WHY. Because this liturgy is so image-based, you are going to get the kids to work together to build an “altar” of Creation. The Activity will be part of the story.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Tell the kids what the Timeline will be for.

**Activity:** Acting out the Creation. You will need:

- A basin and pitcher of water (baptismal connection here is great!)
- Two large candles and something to light them with.
- Various kinds of plants- live are best!
- Stuffed animals with as much variety as you can: fish, birds, wild animals, domesticated, too.
- At least one boy and girl to represent “humanity”.
- Assign jobs to each other kids. Have them listen hard to the story to hear when their part comes.
- Turn off the lights in the room. Begin reading. . .

**Story:** Genesis 1:1—2:4a or SPARK pg. 2

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder what it would be like to see the universe begin!
- I wonder how science and astronomy helps us understand God’s creation
- I wonder how God wants us to help with caring for the creation

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you love us all the same, but we often focus on how we are different. We see the differences as better or worse and sometimes we can leave someone out or not play with them. Help us to see each other with your eyes. Amen.

**Secondary Activity:** Because it is the first day of the year, feel free to do a project that personalizes the room. Here are some options:

- Take a picture of each kid. Have the kids decorate a background (construction paper) or frame (popsicle sticks). Later, place their pictures in the frame.

- Have them draw the outline of their hands on paper. Let this be a bird or a flower, of another creation they choose! Let them decorate their “hand” and add it to the timeline as part of the creation.

**Add a picture/symbol/word to the Timeline.**

## September 19: The Binding of Isaac

**Note:** This story is rather disturbing when we think about it. However, there are several ways to understand this horrific request by God:

One, it was rather normal for tribal gods to ask for child sacrifice in this time period. By stopping the sacrifice and offering a ram as an alternative, God is separating Godself from all other regional gods, and “updating” sacrificial worship to something far more humane.

Two, many scholars have noted that Isaac was no little child at this point in the story. He surely could have deduced what was about to happen, not to mention overpower his father if he wanted to save himself. In this case, the story is as much about Isaac’s faith as Abraham’s.

Three, we often link this story to Jesus’ death as the lamb of God. Jesus offered himself to us so we could live and not die.

The SPARK Bible does not include this, but it is an important story, so I have paraphrased it below for small children.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go through the timeline so far.

**Story:** Genesis 21:1-3; 22:1-14 or RETELL:

*Abraham was so happy to finally have his son, Isaac. Year after year he watched his son grow up and was so thankful that God had finally given him and his wife Sarah a child. It was their only child.*

*But one day, God asked Abraham to do something strange. “Take your son Isaac, your only son, and bring him to me on the mountain. You will give him to me.”*

*Abraham was confused and so sad. Why would God give him a son only to take him away? But Abraham packed his things and took his son with him.*

*Isaac was a good son and obeyed his father, even when he was confused about what they were doing. When they finally made it to the top of the mountain, Abraham began to build an altar out of stone and wood. Isaac helped, wondering all the while what they were going to give to God.*

*Finally, Abraham began to tie Isaac up in ropes to lay him on the altar as a gift for God. But just then, an angel said, “stop!” and when Abraham looked over, there was a ram caught in a tree nearby. Abraham understood that this ram was the gift he would give, that Isaac was free!*

*Abraham gratefully gave the ram to God, knowing now that his son Isaac was safe and well, and that God was pleased to know both Abraham and Isaac trusted him.*

### Sample “I wonder” statements:

- I wonder if Isaac was scared
- I wonder if Abraham was scared
- I wonder why Abraham thought God would want him to sacrifice his own son
- I wonder if Isaac understood or not
- I wonder if we ever are asked to sacrifice something we love to do the right thing
- I wonder if we ever misunderstand what God wants for us
- I wonder how God tries to get our attention sometimes

### Who are you in the Story? What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, sometimes we don’t understand your love for us. Sometimes you need to get our attention to help us realize that you want us to love you and those around us. Thank you for sending Jesus to us to teach us that you will do anything for us. Amen.

**Activity:** You need rope (enough to wind a kid up in), several strips of cloth (enough for each kid to have two or three), and permanent markers.

1. Give each kid a marker and several strips of cloth
2. Have them write down things they have heard that make them sad that they don’t believe are true. It could be that someone called them a bad name. It could be that someone made fun of them. It could be what they saw or heard someone do to someone else! It could even be ideas about God they don’t think are true. (If they aren’t writers, you can write the word or draw a picture on the strip)
3. Tie these strips to the rope evenly throughout
4. Ask for a volunteer to stand in the center of the room.
5. Bind the child up as much as the rope allows, around their arms and torso, down their legs.
6. Talk about how the mean, scary things we hear or say or do or believe about ourselves and others can bind us up. That makes God sad.
7. Ask for a volunteer to be “Jesus”, the lamb of God. That child gets to unravel the rope and set the kid free.
8. Repeat as long as it’s fun!

**Add a picture/symbol/word to the Timeline.**

## September 26: Jacob's Dream

**Note:** Jacob cheats his own twin brother out of his inheritance and blessing, then runs away in fear. He has a mystical vision of angels going up and down a ladder. This means several things; God doesn't just come to the perfect "holy" people, we are never alone, and God's awesome presence can be found anywhere if we have the eyes to see. Often when we think of a ladder, we think of climbing up to God. Yet, through Jesus we learn that God is willing to come down to us.

This also does not appear in the Spark Bible, however, the story is a great story. You may use the paraphrase below.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go through the timeline so far.

**Story:** Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23; 28:10-17 or RETELL:

*Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. Esau was just a couple minutes older. That meant that Esau would get what the oldest sons always got: a special blessing and the father's money when he died.*

*But Jacob and his mother Rebecca had a naughty idea! Because Isaac was old and couldn't see, Jacob dressed up like his brother Esau, made the same soup Esau did, and brought it to his father, pretending to be Esau! Isaac was fooled. Jacob asked for his blessing right there and Isaac blessed him.*

*When Isaac and Esau realized what had happened, it was too late! What was done was done. Jacob ran away, scared his brother would hurt him for what he'd done.*

*Later, Jacob found a place to sleep and lay his head on a rock for a pillow. That night he had a dream that a ladder was going up to heaven and to God. There were angels going up and down the ladder.*

*Jacob heard God say, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your grandfather, and Isaac your father. Your children and grandchildren will live in this land and will be as many as the sand you see around you. And I will never leave you."*

*When Jacob woke up he was both excited and scared. He said, "God must be here! And I never even knew it!" He set up his pillow stone as a little altar to remember his dream.*

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder how Esau felt being cheated by his brother
- I wonder what this vision really looked like
- I wonder if Jacob was scared
- I wonder if anyone in our church has ever had a vision of angels
- I wonder if angels are with us right now!

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?



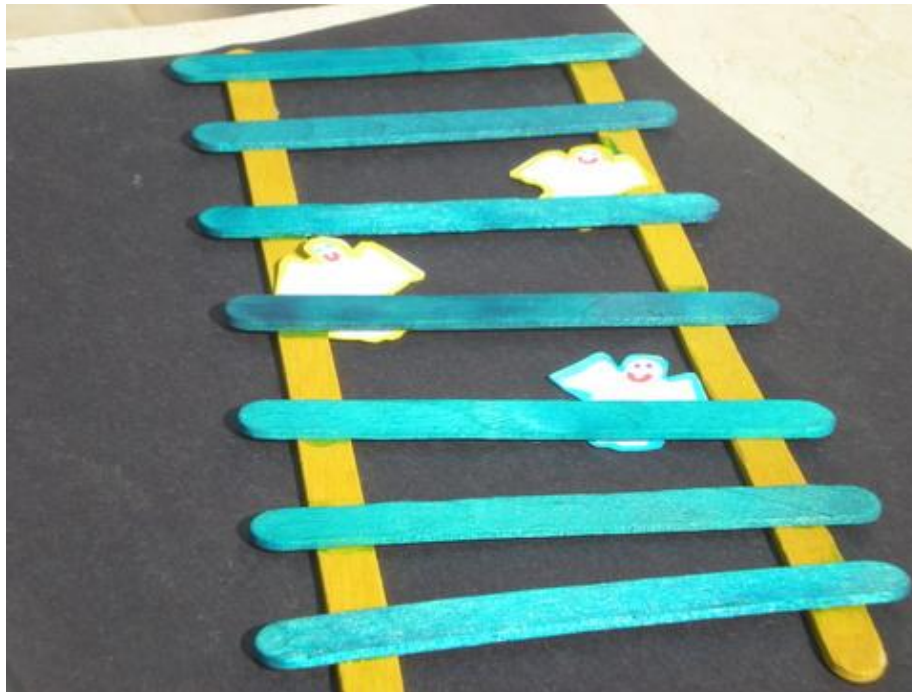
**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you are always closer than we realize. Your angels surround us, even though we can't see them. Fill our hearts with love and praise for you. Amen.

**Activity:** You will need popsicle sticks, glue, markers/paint/decorations, ANGELS\*, and ribbon.

1. Each kid will get about 8 to 10 popsicle sticks
2. They can color/paint/decorate them as they wish
3. Take four, two on each side, and make them the back structure
4. Glue the other sticks across sideways to make a ladder
5. \*Add a few angels: cotton balls, cut out angels you printed off, or let the kids draw them. You decide!
6. Older kids can choose a phrase to write on the ladder sticks, one word per stick starting with the top and going down: GOD COMES DOWN TO ME, GOD IS ALWAYS WITH ME, GOD HEARS MY PRAYERS, ANGELS WATCH OVER ME.
7. Glue or attach a ribbon to the top of the ladder so it can hang over a doorknob or bedpost.
8. Encourage the kids to hang this somewhere by their bed at home.

**Add a picture/symbol to the Timeline.**





## October 3: God's Name Is Revealed

**Note:** This classic story offers several profound ideas. It reminds us that God cares for the suffering people and calls leaders to make a difference. Often times the people God calls don't feel ready or able to do the job, but they are never alone! And finally, the name God gives to Moses is really a play on the verb "I Am". It isn't a noun, but rather more like "I am what I am", "I continue to be", or "I will be what I will be"; in other words, I don't have a name and don't box me in!

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Exodus 2:23-25; 3:1-15 or SPARK pg. 72 "The Burning Bush"

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder how God felt to know there were people suffering in slavery
- I wonder how God feels today when God sees people sad and hurting
- I wonder if God sends people like Moses to help today
- I wonder if Moses felt scared seeing the burning bush
- I wonder who the people are in need of rescuing today
- I wonder who God wants me to help

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, we cannot understand what you are! But we know that you care about us when we are hurting, sad, angry, or confused. We also know that you want us to help others who are hurting, sad, angry, or confused. Give us the courage to help others and know you are with us always. Amen.

**Activity: FOR OLDER KIDS**

- Divide your white board into two sections: Nouns and Verbs
- Have the kids imagine they are outside camping in the woods. Have them list as many nouns as they might expect to see: birds, deer, water, wind, trees, rocks, ground, air, tent, fire, etc.
- Next, have them think about these nouns as moving, as being VERBS. What do they do? Write down as many verbs as you can: drinking, running, sleeping, flowing, blowing, laughing, dancing, etc.
- Ask them which side seems more like God. What would it mean for God to be a deer or a river or a tree? What would it mean for God to be the blowing, breathing, moving of all of life?

- Discuss how we usually think of God as a person, place or thing, and usually in one way (parent). When God gives Moses the divine name, it intentionally tries to AVOID being too narrow.
- Ask them what their favorite new image/verb is for God this week.

### FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- Show the kids pictures of fire, water, rock, eagle, mother, father, wind blowing. Have the kids identify what they are and what they DO! (Burn! Flow! Fly! Hug!)
- Have the kids look at the picture again and imagine God as each item. What does God do?
- Have the kids draw a picture of God in their favorite new way.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

## October 10: God Provides Manna

**Note:** This story is about God providing for our basic needs. The food God gives the people isn't fancy, but it is just what they need from day to day. Two important things to note, however; God won't allow any hoarding. The food rots if kept overnight. We tend to hoard when we don't care if others have had enough, or because we don't trust there will be anything in the future. God is trying to form trust with the people, but also community. Everyone has enough to eat, and then tomorrow there will be more.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Exodus 16:1-18 or SPARK pg. 90 "Manna, Quail, and Water"

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder if it was hard to believe there would be food tomorrow

- I wonder how God provides our daily bread
- I wonder if we struggle to share with each other so everyone has enough
- I wonder what enough really is for us

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, it is very hard to trust you and your promises, especially because we can't see you! Help us to trust that you will never leave us and are working for good always. Amen.

**Activity: What is “enough”?**

- Prepare beforehand several snacks in separate bags:
  - Bag One: A really good big fruit salad, oreos, peanut butter, juice box, even something homemade (the point is, this is the best bag and it's full!)
  - Bag two, three: graham crackers and water
  - Bag four, five, six, and more: one small stick pretzel
- Pass out the bags randomly and have the kids open theirs and display their contents.
- Discuss your reactions. Is this fair? Who decided?
- Talk about how our world is much like this. It's like one person gets more than they can eat, with left overs, some have just enough, and many have almost nothing.
- How do they feel about it? How does God feel about it?
- Now, remembering the story of Manna, how would God divide up the snacks in the room.
- Re-divide the snacks until everyone is happy with what they have.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

## October 17: God Calls Samuel

**Note:** Samuel is one of the most faithful characters in the Old Testament. This is his call story. I find it interesting that even though he lives with the priest Eli in the tabernacle, he doesn't seem to know God. Eli hasn't taught him very much, apparently. Samuel is called as a young person to speak to Eli and the message is rather dire; Eli's sons are doomed for their bad behavior. I find Eli's role just as interesting as Samuel's.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** 1 Samuel 3:1-21 or SPARK pg. 122 "God Calls Samuel"

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder if Samuel was scared to hear his name in the night
- I wonder if Samuel was scared of God's voice
- I wonder if other people have heard God's voice and confused it with something else
- I wonder what God might want me to do even as a young person

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, we may not have a voice in the night calling us, but you do speak to us in our hearts. Help us to be quiet and trust that you are with us, so that we might hear what you are saying to us. Amen.

**Activity: "Eli says"**

- Play the game "Simon Says", but with "Eli says". Just as Eli helped Samuel figure out who was calling him, we have to listen to people in our life to help us do the right thing and listen to God.
- Include commands such as "Eli says kneel down and pray. Eli says listen as quietly as possible for God".
- You can even whisper commands.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

## October 24: God Calls David

**Note:** Samuel is now an adult and has been shepherding King Saul, the very first king of the people of Israel. But God was disappointed in Saul and wants to choose a new king. The biggest difference between Saul and David wasn't that Saul was bad and David was perfect. It was rather because David had a close relationship to God while Saul didn't. Here God can see into David's heart to his character and faithfulness.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13 or SPARK pg. 126 "David is Chosen"

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder if Samuel ever wondered what God was thinking
- I wonder if David was surprised to be noticed
- I wonder if God can see into my heart
- I wonder what it would be like to see people's heart instead of what they look like on the outside

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you see beyond what we look like and into our hearts. You love our hearts and want us to be kind and faithful. Give us the strength to use our love to help others, the way David did. Amen.

**Activity: IF GOD LOOKED INTO YOUR HEART**

- Give the kids a sheet with a heart drawn on it
- Have them list all the positive qualities about them: caring, sharing, quick to help, smart, nice to their pets, good at \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).
- Talk about how all our gifts are not for us to keep. They are meant to be shared to make the world a better place.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

## October 31: Solomon's Temple

**Note:** David established military peace for the first time in the people of Israel's history. He built himself a beautiful palace and a dynasty with many children. But God would not let him build the first temple. David was a king of war, and God wanted to wait. Now, with Solomon, God allows the first temple to be built. It will be the center of sacrifice and worship for centuries.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** 1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:1-13 or SPARK pg. 136 "Solomon Builds the Temple"

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder what that first temple looked like
- I wonder how big it was compared to our sanctuary
- I wonder how people felt having a beautiful temple to visit

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you really are everywhere in the whole world and in our hearts. But it is nice to have a place to go and pray, sing, and learn. Help us to be respectful and aware of all the places where you can be. Amen.

**Activity: Sanctuary tour!**

- Most kids aren't aware of all the symbols and parts of a Sanctuary, the sacristy, where the altar guild prepares communion, etc.
- Plan with your pastor, or an altar guild member, to walk the kids through the symbols of the sanctuary, the elements of worship, and what goes on behind the scenes.
- Key pieces: candles, bread and wine and other communion ware, baptismal font, Bible, pulpit, altar, railing, cross, etc.
- Discuss what might be the same in Solomon's temple, and what might be different.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**



## November 7: God Speaks to Elijah

**Note:** This story is not in the Spark Bible, but it is beautiful. The prophet Elijah is exhausted and afraid. God leads him to a mountain where God will be revealed. But after a fire, earthquake, and might wind, God finally comes in a still, small voice, or the sound of sheer silence. How often do we look for God in big bombastic events and miss all the subtle ways God is around us?

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** 1 Kings 19:1-18 Elijah at Horeb or RETELL:

*Elijah was a prophet for God. But he had a hard job. He lived in Israel at the time of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. But they were not a good king and queen. Elijah told them what they were doing wrong, so Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah.*

*Elijah ran away. He lay under a tree and for two nights an angel appeared to him and gave him water and bread. Then, he went to Mount Horeb.*

*At the mountain, God said, "what are you doing here?"*

*Elijah said, "I have worked for you so hard, but now my life is in danger! I am scared!"*

*God said, "go and stand before the mountain. I am going to come visit you."*

*Now, there was a huge mighty wind, but God was not in the wind. There was an earthquake! But that wasn't God either! There was even a fire, but God wasn't in the fire. Finally, there was pure silence. That is where God was.*

*God gave Elijah the peace and quiet he needed to feel better. God sent Elijah back to do his difficult job.*

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder if Elijah was scared by all the fire and wind
- I wonder if Elijah was surprised God was in such a quiet thing
- I wonder if I am really quiet if I can hear God
- I wonder what God sounds like

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you are in so many places! I see you in a sunset, in birds flying, in a rainbow, in smiling people, but you are also in quiet places. Help us to practice being quiet so we can hear and feel you. Amen.

**Activity:**

- Print out the activity sheet and complete the project. (Shown in the completed form)



Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.

## November 14: Justice Rolls Down

**Note:** There are lots of little prophets in the Old Testament. Amos is most famous for his scathing sermon. He tells the people that all their singing and worship is hateful to God if they leave worship and spent the rest of the week cheating the poor and ignoring the vulnerable. Justice is what God wants first, before our praise and worship.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Amos 1:1-2; 5:14-15, 21-24 or the following summary:

*Amos was a prophet in the days of King Uzziah and King Jeroboam. He saw a vision two years before a huge earthquake. He told the people, "God is very mad! God is roaring like a lion! 'Oh, people, do good and not bad! When you see something wrong, you should be mad and try to fix it! The truth is, I do not like your Sunday worship services, and I don't like your singing! You clap your hands and sing, you give offering to church, but I don't want it! Do you know why? Because when someone is sad you ignore them. When someone is hungry you don't care! If you let all the care and love and help in your heart rush out like a huge river, like a never-ending stream, then I will be happy again!'"*

**Sample "I wonder" statements:**

- I wonder if the people listening were surprised to hear this message
- I wonder if the people listened to Amos and God
- I wonder if we can be like the people in this story
- I wonder how we can show our care and help to people who need it

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you want us to love each other and take care of each other. It makes you sad when someone is hurt, alone, or forgotten. Help us to praise you with our singing, but also to praise you by loving the people around us. Amen.

**Activity: OLDER KIDS: Rigged Monopoly Game**

**Beforehand:** You'll want enough monopoly game boards to have about 7 people per board. You can also have one group play and let others be observers. Take money, property cards, houses/hotels and divide them into 6 labeled bags:

- Bag 1: Give 8 properties, 4 hotels, 8 houses, and \$3000 in assorted bills
- Bag 2 and 3: Give 4 properties, 3 hotels, 4 houses, and \$ 1500 in assorted bills
- Bag 4, 5, and 6: Give 1 property, no hotels, 1 house, and \$1000 in assorted bills

- Instructions for the Banker

**Introduction:** There is no preparation for the game. Don't tell people what they are going to do, simply ask 7 people to each monopoly game, letting them know this will be "speed" monopoly and will end after 15 minutes no matter what.

**One person is the banker.** Here are their instructions for their eyes only: (write on paper)

- Hand out the 6 pre-packaged bags to the 6 players
- When Bag 1 person passes "Go", they get \$400, instead of \$200 for the rest.
- You may give out loans if you want, but always to Bag 1 if they want.
- You can deny anyone from buying property or houses, except Bag 1 can get a deal. You can offer property to Bag 1 at a cheaper cost.
- If Bag 1 lands on "income tax", you can lower the amount if they ask.

**Playing the Game:** Let the game play out. Do not answer questions, there is no more to know. The players can decide for themselves how to proceed.

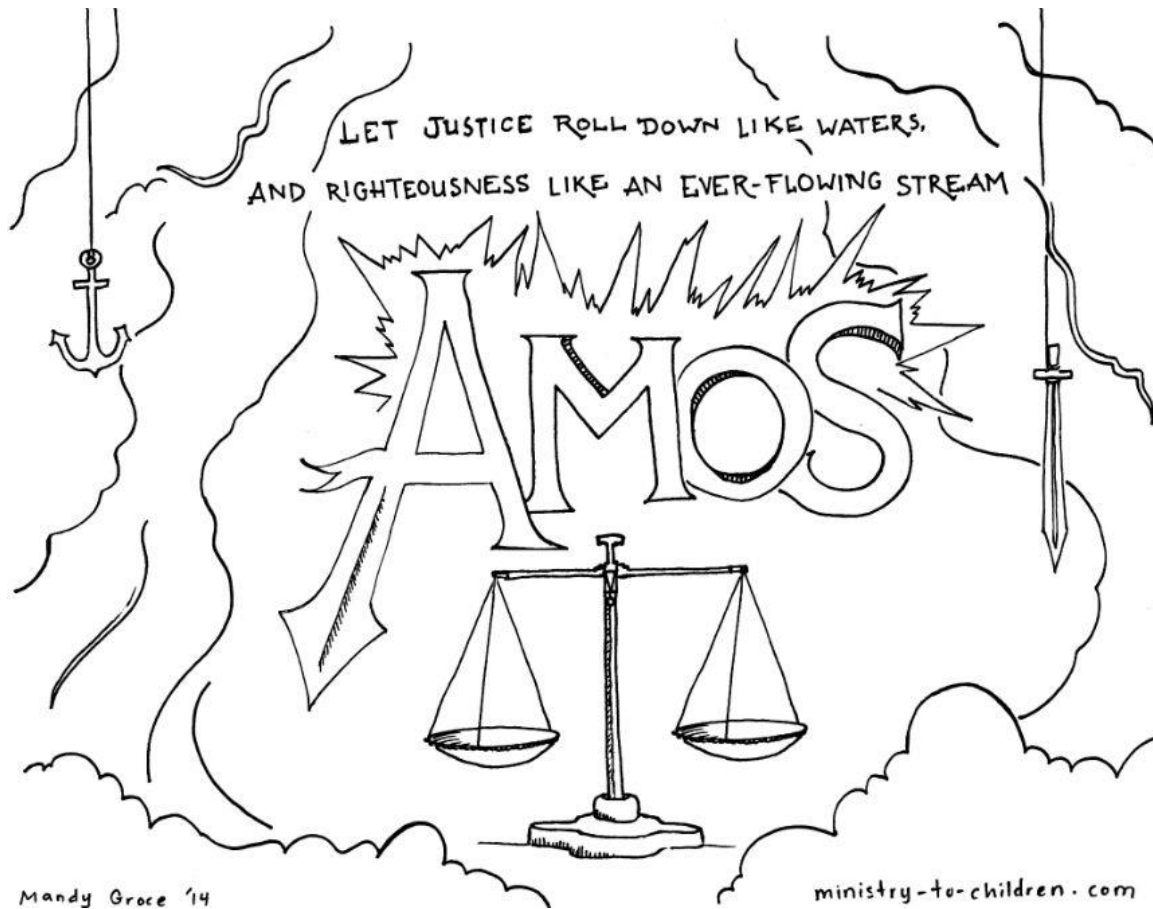
**Afterwards:** Chances are there will be a few strong emotions about the game. Discuss the following in large or small groups:

1. What did you notice?
2. How did the privileged feel playing the game?
3. How did the underprivileged feel?
4. To those who were privileged, why were you doing so well?
5. To those who were poor, why were you doing so poorly?
6. How does this game relate to real life? How might it be different?
7. How might we have changed the game? (Change the rules?)

### **FOR YOUNGER KIDS: Amos Coloring Sheet- Talk about Justice!**

1. Bring some kind of scale. Any will do!
2. You can weigh fruit and other objects in the room. Try to pick some really light and some really heavy objects! Talk about how things weigh differently. Things are different!
3. Now ask if they think 10 "Grapefruits"\* will weigh the same as 10 "cherries"\*.
4. You can do an experiment: how many "cherries" make up the weight of a grapefruit?
5. Amos the prophet wanted people who had the strength and power of grapefruit to be balanced with all the cherry people, not to squash them! Justice was that the cherries people were taken care of and not forgotten by the bigger stronger fruit.
6. Color the Amos "scales". (You can even draw cherries on one scale and grapefruit on the other!)

\*Whatever objects you choose that are heavy/light!



Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.

## November 21: People who walked in darkness

**Note:** The Prophet Isaiah is one of the most famous prophets in the Bible. We read his words a lot during Advent and Christmas. In this passage the people have been exiled away from Jerusalem and are suffering. Part of this passage has been used in Handel's "Messiah" and other Christmas themed songs (both Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant have a version!). We often think this is a passage that talks about who Jesus will be.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Isaiah 9:1-7 or SPARK pg. 172 “God’s Peaceful World”

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder if Isaiah’s words of hope were helpful to the people
- I wonder if we ever feel so bad we need someone to give us happy news
- I wonder what good news we talk about in church that is like Isaiah’s message
- I wonder if there are leaders like this around us today

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

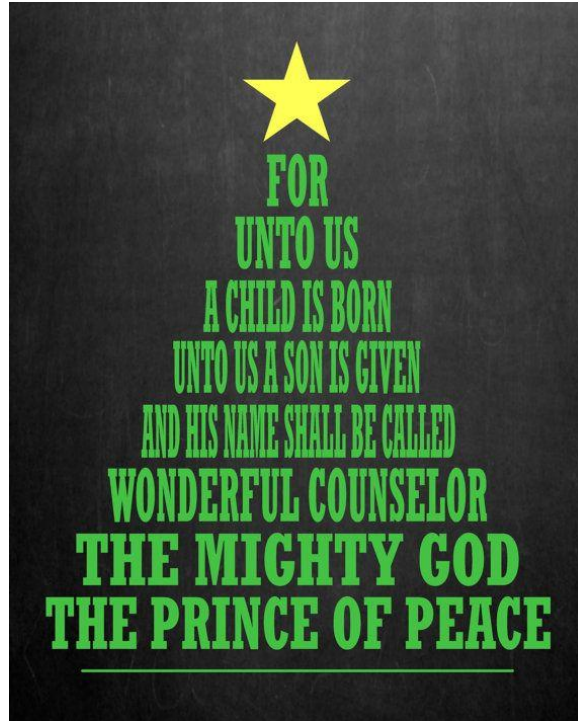
**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you sent Jesus to be a great leader, one we can learn from even today. We can try to be good leaders, too, just like Jesus. Amen.

**Activity: Christmas Tree Names of Jesus- TWO CHOICES**

- Choice One: Print the Christmas Tree names of Jesus and cut them in strips
  - Glue on green construction paper in order to make a Christmas tree
  - Decorate as they wish
- Choice Two: Find wood strips, anywhere from popsicle sticks to wood planks
  - Have the kids paint a star and the words “For Unto Us a Child is Born” on the wood strips. Glue or nail the boards to a longer center.
  - Kids can do this as a class project to make one tree, or they can each have their own, depending on time, availability, and size of project





Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.

## November 28: Jeremiah's Letter to Exiles (First Sunday in Advent)

**ADVENT RITUAL:** Light your first Advent Candle together.

You can sing: ELW #240

*“Light one candle to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall bring salvation to Israel. God fulfills the promise.”*

**Note:** The Jewish people are now in exile. It is an extremely difficult time and they long for home. This is an interesting passage, because God is telling them to settle in. It will be seventy years before they can go home, so in the meantime, they should live life again. Furthermore, they shouldn't sit in bitterness, hating the very people around them. They should seek the welfare of their city and become a part of the community. I would orient the kids a bit to this history before you read them the story.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14 or SPARK pg. 178 “A Good Ruler”

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder what it would be like to be away from home for a long time
- I wonder if the Jewish people were very sad and wanted to go back to Jerusalem
- I wonder if it was hard for them to hear that they would stay in Babylon for a long time
- I wonder if God ever tell us to accept a situation we aren't happy with
- I wonder if some things we can change and other things we cannot

**Who are you in the story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

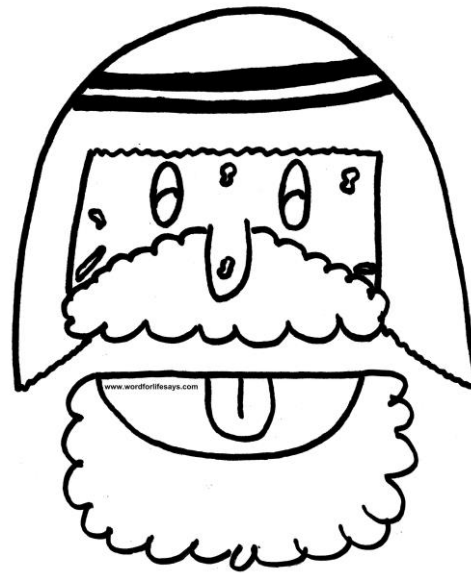
**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you are with us, even when we feel sad or angry. Sometimes we can change what we don't like, sometimes we cannot. Give us patience when we are going through a difficult time. Amen.

**Activity: Seeking the Welfare of the City**

- **OLDER KIDS:** Have the kids draw a picture of their city/town/neighborhood. Encourage them to include as many landmarks and favorite places as they can.
  - On the back of the picture have them list things they love about their community

- Have them list a few things they would change if they could
  - Ask the kids how they can use their voices or hands to make things better. (Write letters to mayor, pick up garbage on the streets, refuse to litter, etc)
  - Have the kids write down a few ideas of how they can seek the welfare of their city
- YOUNGER KIDS: Jeremiah Puppet
    - Give each kid a brown paper bag.
    - Using markers, googly eyes, bits of yarn for hair, let kids come up with a Jeremiah puppet (You can also just glue a face on and have them color the face)
    - Practice making him talk saying, “God remembers you! God loves you!”



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**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

## December 5: Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones (Second Sunday in Advent)

ADVENT RITUAL: Light the Advent Candles together.

You can sing: ELW #240

*“Light one candle to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall bring salvation to Israel. God fulfills the promise.”*

*Light two candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.”*

**Note:** This great story is not in the SPARK Bible. Ezekiel the prophet gets a vision of a valley of bones, representing both the past death of many warriors, and the present life-less state of the Jews. In this vision, God puts life back into the people, symbolic of the life God will give to the Jews.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Ezekiel 37:1-14 or RETELL THE STORY with props. (This is a great one to use percussion and xylophones if you have them!)

*Ezekiel was a prophet who lived a difficult time. Many of the Jewish people had been forced to leave their homes, and many others had been killed in battle. Ezekiel was concerned that everything was always going to be sad and lost.*

*But then God took Ezekiel to a valley filled with old bones. God told Ezekiel to speak to them and ask them to listen to God’s word. Ezekiel did. Suddenly, the bones and they began to rattle! The bones connected to each other! They started to grow muscle and skin! Finally. God told Ezekiel to tell the breath to come into them. Ezekiel did and a great wind came and filled the bodies with breath so they were alive again.*

*God said, “Ezekiel, these bones are kind of like the people of Israel. But just as I gave these bones life, so I will give them life too. Then you will understand that I am your God forever.”*

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder if Ezekiel was surprised or scared or excited when he saw what was happening
- I wonder if Ezekiel told anyone what he’d seen
- I wonder how God gives us new life when we feel sad or lost or hopeless

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, after the winter comes spring. After the darkness of night comes the bright of the morning sun. Even after we die we know we have new life with you. All around us we see how you bring life and newness where we only see death. Thank you for your surprises. Amen.

### **Activity One:** Playing the Story

- Turn out the lights, play some soft meditative music.
- Have the kids curl up in balls on the floor as quiet as can be.
- You can tell them how sometimes we feel scared or sad or alone
- “BUT GOD SEES YOU!” You can shake an egg shaker (or anything that rattles) and have them begin to shake their hands and heads.
- “AND GOD FILLS YOU WITH HOPE!” You can shake something stronger, or bang a drum, and have them slowly stand, shaking out their arms and legs.
- “AND GOD WILL GIVE YOU NEW LIFE!” And have them take in a huge breath and exhale and another breath.

### **Activity Two:** Make a person!

- Use Q-tips for bones. Glue them onto black construction paper.
- If you want to do more, you can cover the body with “skin”. Use any kind of thin paper that is “flesh” colored- from black to light cream.
- Then, have them give their person eyes and a mouth and hair. You can do this with actual string or color with a marker on the paper.
- Dress your person with paper clothing and glue on.

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**





## December 12 Isaiah 55:1-13 (Third Sunday in Advent)

**ADVENT RITUAL:** Light the Advent Candles together. You can sing:

*“Light one candle to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall bring salvation to Israel. God fulfills the promise.*

*Light two candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall lead the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.*

*Light three candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He is coming, tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining!”*

**Note:** This beautiful passage from Isaiah is God’s invitation to come and experience the joy and delight of the divine relationship. The world leaves us empty, but God wishes to give us all we need to be fully alive and to thrive.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Isaiah 55:1-13 or read the paraphrase below:

The prophet Isaiah had a message from God to the people. God said:

*“Hey, everyone! Come to me and I will give you what you really want.  
Why do you run around looking for love from people and places that can’t give it to you?  
You spend money on things that don’t make you happy for long.  
Listen, I know what is good for you. I know what will make you happy.  
Come and listen to me and I promise you, we’ll be friends forever.  
Remember how King David and I were friends? I want to be friends with you, too!  
If you look for me, you can find me. And I know what is best for you.  
I can see things you can’t see, and I know things you don’t know about the whole  
universe! The good things I promise will come true.  
And what I want is a world where you and the mountains, hills, and trees are all singing  
happy songs and clapping your hands in joy.”*

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder what it was like to hear this message from God
- I wonder what silly things I do instead of listening to God
- I wonder what it looks like to be friends with God

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?



**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

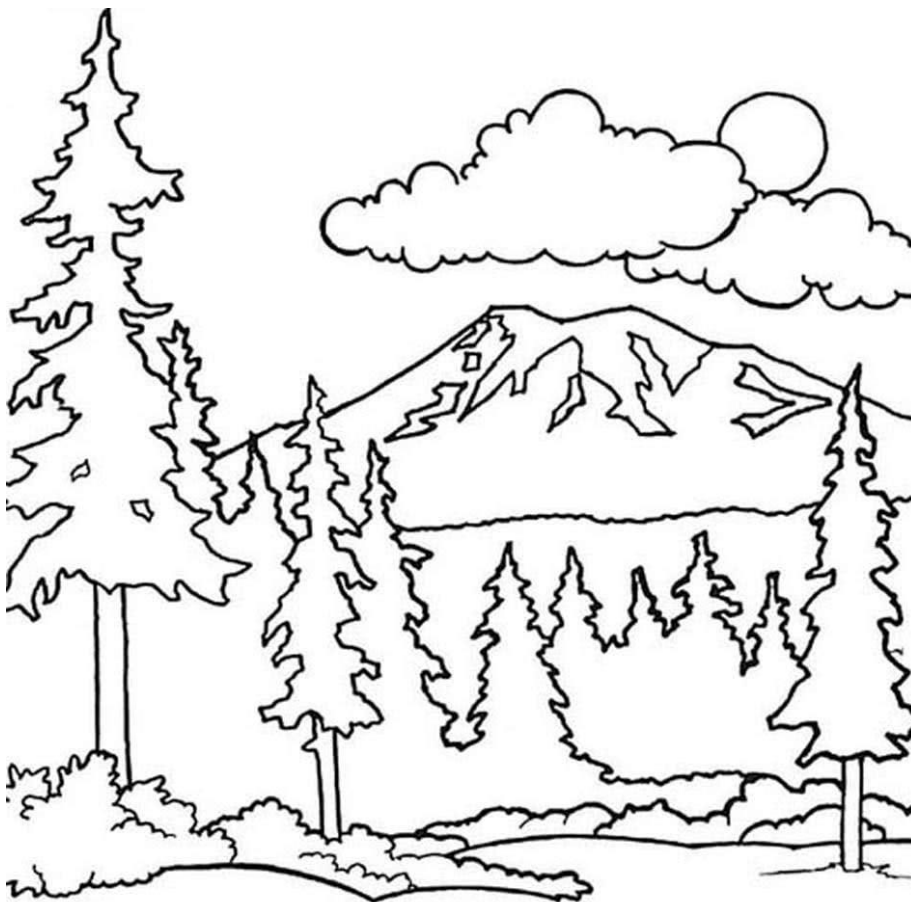
**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, you want to be my friend. You want to take care of me and show me what is best my whole life long. Thank you for loving me so much! Amen.

**Activity One:** If kids can already draw on their own, try drawing singing mountains and clapping trees. Otherwise, here is a coloring sheet for kids. See how many happy faces they can add to the trees and mountains!

**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

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## December 19: Jesus is Born (Fourth Sunday in Advent)

ADVENT RITUAL: Light the Advent Candles together.

You can sing: (Song on facebook page if you need it)  
*“Light one candle to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall bring salvation to Israel. God fulfills the promise.*

*Light two candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He shall lead the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.*

*Light three candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the King of glory.*

*Light four candles to watch for Messiah, let the light banish darkness,  
He is coming, tell the glad tidings, Let your lights be shining!*

**Note:** For many churches, this is either a Christmas pageant day, or a day without Sunday school. If you do have a lesson this week, I suggest bumping our Isaiah 55 passage for a retelling of the Christmas Story.

**Begin with Centering Breath:** Cover your eyes and fill up your tummy with air and quietly, slowly let it out. Do this slowly and quietly five to ten times.

**Timeline:** Go over the stories so far on the timeline to help the kids understand the narrative flow of what we are learning so far from the Bible.

**Story:** Luke 2:1-20 or SPARK. Pg. 212 “Jesus is Born”

**Sample “I wonder” statements:**

- I wonder what Mary felt during this whole story
- I wonder what Joseph felt
- I wonder how the Shepherds felt seeing angels and baby Jesus
- I wonder if anyone else was there

**Who are you in the Story?** What does the Story mean for you Today?

**Ask for Prayers:** At this point you can ask kids what they want prayed for today. Include these somewhere in the prayer of the day.

**Prayer of the Day:** Dear God, thank you for Christmas. Thank you for letting us know you love us by becoming a baby. Help us to remember that Christmas about your love for us. Amen.

**Activity: Cradle Craft**

- Use 2 popsicle craft sticks, craft straw, brown and beige construction paper
- Cut the brown construction paper into a triangle and a circle for the baby Jesus' face in the beige.
- Using glue, construct the cradle scene.



**Post a picture/symbol on the timeline.**

**NEXT SEMESTER IS ON IT'S WAY!!!**