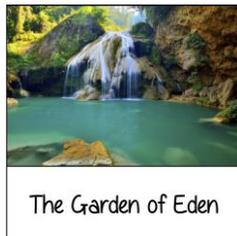


# God's Story Our Story



September 13, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Creating One, you placed us amid such glory and diversity. Teach us to look and listen and choose well. Teach us to delight in the naming of things. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. (Genesis 2:8)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**In the second of the creation stories we find in the Bible, we are told about the time before names, when the earth was yet young, and fertile. A time when humanity was represented by just one person in a garden, and we had not yet determined what to do with this generous gift of a world.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Genesis 2:4b-25, *The Garden of Eden*

Monday, Genesis 1:1-4a, *First Creation Story*

Tuesday, Genesis 3:1-24, *Sin and Punishment*

Wednesday, Genesis 4:1-16, *Cain and Abel*

Thursday, Genesis 4:17-26, *Beginnings of Civilization*

Friday, Genesis 6:1-8, *Human Wickedness*

Saturday, Genesis 6:9-22, *Noah Pleases God*

**How does humankind move from Eden to wickedness?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Do you think humankind is born with a sinful nature? Why or why not?**

**How do you demonstrate on a daily basis that you have been made in the image of God?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Practice meditating daily this week. See if you can get in touch with God. How does your practice of daily meditation change your attitude throughout the week?**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God remind you every day that you are made in God's image. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



September 20, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Holy and Faithful One, you appear before us daily. Teach us to receive you as a welcome guest, and to delight in the fulfillment of all you have promised. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." (Genesis 18:13-14)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**In the heat of the day, the Holy One appeared at the tent of Abraham and Sarah, and received the hospitality due a desert traveler. That day, they heard a promise: that even in their old age, they would have a child. And although that seemed to them a ridiculous proposition, so it came to be. The child born was named Isaac, which means "laughter."**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7, *Isaac Born to Sarah*

Monday, Genesis 16:1-16, *The Birth of Ishmael*

Tuesday, Genesis 17:1-27, *God's Covenant with Abraham*

Wednesday, Genesis 21:1-21, *The Birth of Isaac*

Thursday, Genesis 24:1-67, *The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah*

Friday, Genesis 25:19-24, *The Birth of Esau and Jacob*

Saturday, Genesis 27:1-46, *Isaac Blesses Jacob*

**How did Isaac's birth begin the growth of the nation that God promised to Abraham?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**When has a birth in your family or community changed everything? Tell the story to each other.**

**When has God worked in your life in a way that seemed laughable at the time? Do you think God has a sense of humor? Why or why not?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Find out who in your community is expecting a baby or adopting a baby or child soon. Make a care package for the family. Include items for the baby or child. Include a card or letter for the child's parents. In it write how God blesses families of all kinds.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God fill your days with laughter and light. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



September 27, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Holy One, you know something of rivers and blessings. Grant us this day a sacred encounter which sends us on our way with something to remember; which does not leave us the same. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:26b-28)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**Jacob is one of the patriarchs of the origin stories. He is the grandson of Abraham, the third generation of a family line that was the fulfillment of God's promises – blessed to be a blessing. Like his forebears, he had some doubt about the promises, and took matters into his own hands. That didn't go so well. He left home under the threat of a very angry twin brother, to make his own way in the world. Today's scripture shows us Jacob as a grown man with a family, as he prepares to go home again.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Genesis 32:22-30, *Jacob Wrestles God*

Monday, Genesis 32:3-21, *Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau*

Tuesday, Genesis 33:1-20, *Jacob and Esau Meet*

Wednesday, Genesis 37:1-11, *Jacob's Son, Joseph*

Thursday, Genesis 37:12-36, *Joseph is Sold by His Brothers*

Friday, Genesis 41:37-57, *Joseph's Rise to Power*

Saturday, Genesis 46:1-27, *Joseph Brings the Israelites to Egypt*

**How do God's people end up settling in Egypt?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**In what ways is your community blessed? In what ways do God's blessings seem like a struggle?**

**When have you wrestled with God? When have you wrestled with your understanding of God?**

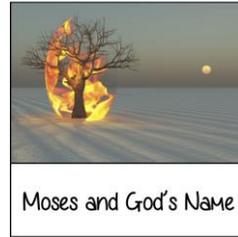
**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Arm wrestle or thumb wrestle members of your household. For each win, trade a chore.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God walk with you in your struggles and joys. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



October 4, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Holy One that exists independent of our noticing, call us to notice you. Teach us the way of listening and hearing. Teach us the way of looking and seeing. Teach us the way of learning and responding. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*[God] 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. (Exodus 3:6)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**The descendants of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, have made their way to Egypt, welcomed first as guests, then as guest laborers. They have grown numerous, and threaten the balance of power. So the powerful lash out, and deal harshly with them. Even in a foreign land, God hears their cries. God burns with passion for their welfare, and calls forth a human response. Moses, one who once lived among the ruling class of Egypt, now has a new mission.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Exodus 1:8-14 [15-2:10]; 3:1-10, *Moses and God's Name*

Monday, Exodus 7:14-8:15, *First Two Plagues*

Tuesday, Exodus 8:16-32, *Two More Plagues*

Wednesday, Exodus 9:1-12, *Two More Plagues*

Thursday, Exodus 9:13-10:20, *Two More Plagues*

Friday, Exodus 10:21-11:10, 12:29-32, *Final Plagues*

Saturday, Exodus 12:33-42, *The Exodus from Rameses to Succoth*

**How did the people of Israel follow God from slavery to deliverance? What were some of the promises God made to the Israelites throughout their journey?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Who in your community is enslaved to poverty or poor working conditions? What could you do to make a difference?**

**What name do you use for God? How does the name you use shape the way you see and interact with God?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Go to <http://slaveryfootprint.org/> to see how much slave labor was involved in your lifestyle. Make one small change to your lifestyle that contributes to the ending of slavery in the world.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God call you by name and claim you as God's own. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



October 11, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God of mountaintop and plain, let this be a day of remembering again what we choose to forget. In the repeating of these teachings, call us to faithfulness. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**Deuteronomy includes the second naming of the law, the words that are intended to shape the life of God's people. Out in the wilderness, with no guideposts but God and God's words, the people hear once again the commandments.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:4-6, *Hear, O Israel*

Monday, Exodus 12:43-13:2, *Directions for the Passover*

Tuesday, Exodus 13:3-10, *Festival of Unleavened Bread*

Wednesday, Exodus 13:11-16, *The Consecration of the Firstborn*

Thursday, Exodus 13:17-22, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*

Friday, Exodus 14:1-31, *Crossing the Red Sea*

Saturday, Exodus 20:1-21, *The Ten Commandments*

**What did God want written on the hearts of the people? Why?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What traditions exist in your community that help you remember what God has done in your lives?**

**How do you remember God's love on a daily basis? What rituals could you create so that remembering becomes second nature?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Cook a meal as a household or with close friends. Take turns sharing what you're grateful for, and how God has worked in your life.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God write God's love on your heart. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



October 18, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Holy One, whether we are foreigners to your word, or long-lost family, help us to hear the good news. Lead us to the place of belonging. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*But Ruth said, "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." (Ruth 1:16)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**The book of Ruth begins with desperation and moves on to tragedy. As a result, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, are forced to make some risky choices. Yet there is good news to be found, models of faith, welcome, and new beginnings. There is Gospel here between the lines of a story where God does not speak directly.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Ruth 1:1-17, *Ruth*

Monday, Ruth 1:18-22, *Ruth and Naomi*

Tuesday, Ruth 2:1-13, *Ruth Meets Boaz*

Wednesday, Ruth 2:14-23, *Ruth Meets Boaz*

Thursday, Ruth 3:1-18, *Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor*

Friday, Ruth 4:1-12, *The Marriage of Ruth and Boaz*

Saturday, Ruth 4:13-22, *The Genealogy of David*

**How do the three (Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz) rely on each other to get what they need?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Tell a story of someone in your community that has done something risky for a greater good? How did it turn out?**

**Who shares your faith with you? Where are your theologies similar? Where do they differ?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Go to a pick-your-own pumpkin farm. Ask the farmer how they grow, nourish, and harvest their pumpkins. If you carve your pumpkin, use the pumpkin meat to make a pumpkin pie. Roast the seeds for a tasty treat.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God fill your life with people who love you. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



October 25, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God of angel armies and of little lambs, help us to remember that both strong and weak have a place in your kingdom, and that you are with us in high and low places. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. (2 Samuel 6:2, 5)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

After generations with no king but God, the people of Israel clamored for a king. So God gave them Saul. In his time, Saul turned away from God, and David was anointed king over Israel. After many battles, David entered the city, the fortress of Zion, which became David's city, Jerusalem. The city was claimed with great celebration, with honor and glory given to God. David returned the stolen Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and the whole city celebrated. David, and David's line, did nothing small.

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 6:1-5, *David Anointed King*

Monday, Psalm 150, *Praise Psalm*

Tuesday, 2 Samuel 5:6-16, *Jerusalem, the Capital of a Kingdom United*

Wednesday, 2 Samuel 6:6-11, *The Ark Comes to Jerusalem*

Thursday, 2 Samuel 6:12-23, *The Ark Comes to Jerusalem*

Friday, 2 Samuel 7:1-17, *God's Covenant with David*

Saturday, 2 Samuel 7:18-29, *David's Prayer*

**Why was it important for the Ark of the Covenant to reside in Jerusalem?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What objects in your community represent more than the objects themselves? What do they mean to you and your community?**

**When has God done something for you that has made you want to dance with reckless abandon?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Rewrite the words to your favorite song. Turn the song into a piece that praises God. Record yourself singing the song and post it to your favorite social media.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God fill your heart with songs of praise. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



November 1, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God of our mothers and our fathers, you called this people together. Call us now to attend to your loving word and live in ways that befit your realm. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David." So Israel went away to their tents.*  
(1 Kings 12:15-16)

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**The generations continue to come and go, as pages in a flipbook. We have heard of David and his son Solomon. The names after Solomon begin to slide out of focus, as do the rulers' relationships with their God. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, comes to power amid a time of division. Even as his reign begins, he faces a choice of whose advice to heed, and how he should rule.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, 1 Kings 12:1-17, *The Kingdom Divided*

Monday, 1 Kings 12:18-24, *Jeroboam Reigns over Israel*

Tuesday, 1 Kings 12:25-33, *Jeroboam's Golden Calves*

Wednesday, 1 Kings 13:1-34, *A Man of God from Judah*

Thursday, 1 Kings 14:1-20, *Judgment on the House of Jeroboam*

Friday, 1 Kings 14:21-31, *Rehoboam Reigns over Judah*

Saturday, 1 Kings 16:24-34, *Ahab Reigns*

**What decision did Rehoboam make that divided the kingdom?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What issues divide your community? How could you work to come together?**

**When have you considered straying from your community? What happened? Was the issue resolved? How? How did God's presence in your life affect the outcome?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Find out if your congregation or community has a sister congregation or a sister city. Find out what you can do to foster friendship with your sister community. Do it.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God bring you peace and joy through unity. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



November 8, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God of the prophets and the prophets' heirs, make your mighty presence known among us. Empower us to be bold in your name. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*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 18:38-39)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**After the kingdom was divided, Israel fell into even more troubled times. The land was overtaken by drought and famine. In the north, with an Israelite king marrying a foreign queen, idol worship became the fashion, usurping the worship of the Lord. At the order of the queen, many of the Lord's prophets were killed. One, Elijah, hid in the wilderness to escape capture. At the Lord's command, he went back to challenge the king, confront the people, and discredit the prophets of Baal.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, 1 Kings 18:20-39, *Elijah at Mount Carmel*

Monday, 1 Kings 17:1-7, *Elijah Predicts a Drought*

Tuesday, 1 Kings 18:1-19, *Elijah's Message to Ahab*

Wednesday, 1 Kings 18:41-46, *The Drought Ends*

Thursday, 1 Kings 19:1-10, *Elijah Flees from Jezebel*

Friday, 1 Kings 19:11-18, *Elijah Meets God at Horeb*

Saturday, 2 Kings 9:30-37, *Jezebel's Violent Death*

**Discuss the journey of Elijah as it relates to Ahab and Jezebel. When did he trust God? When did he falter in his trust?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What things does your community idolize that might distract you from worshiping God?**

**Do you think God still responds to people today the way God responded to Elijah? Why or why not?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Volunteer to clean your church's altar, pulpit pews, or other furniture in your sanctuary. Be sure to check with the custodial staff to make sure you use cleansers that do not harm the furniture.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God hear your every word and respond with power and justice. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



November 15, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Faithful One, teach us to observe carefully. Help us to hear your word truly, and walk in your ways. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*  
(Hosea 11:1)

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**The prophets issue challenging words. Where we would hear the hopeful word of grace, we need to make our way first through a wilderness of hard lessons. The prophet Hosea offers words in this tradition, beginning with a sense of rejection, which mirrors the ways in which God's people have rejected the ways of the Lord. It does not end there. The Lord's word in Hosea offers both judgment according to the terms of the covenant, and promises of restoration for those who call on the Lord.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Hosea 11:1-9, *Hosea*

Monday, Hosea 1:1-2:23, *Israel's Infidelity*

Tuesday, Hosea 3:1-4:19, *God's Love for and Condemnation of Israel*

Wednesday, Hosea 5:1-15, *Judgment*

Thursday, Hosea 6:1-7:16, *A Call to Repent*

Friday, Hosea 9:1-17, *Punishment for Israel's Sin*

Saturday, Hosea 10:1-15, *Israel's Sin and Captivity*

**What did Israel do that upset God? What could they have done differently?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**How do you know if you and your community are pleasing or upsetting God?**

**What sits heavy on your heart? Ask for God's ear, and God's presence, justice, and love.**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Find out who has been exiled or ostracized from your community. Make a plan to welcome them. (Invite them for dinner or visit them.)**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God show you love and acceptance. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



November 22, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Faithful and Holy One, let new understanding spring forth within us.  
Let a new spirit spring forth from us, one in which you will delight.  
Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*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. (Isaiah 11:1-2)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

The words of Isaiah recount an honest assessment of the state of God's vineyard. All of the tools of the gardener have been brought to bear: watering and weeding, amending the soil, judicious pruning. As Isaiah speaks, it seems that these have been insufficient. This is not a pleasant planting: the vineyard is a wreck. God seems content to let it be overrun by chaos. But the promises are true. They will not fail. The day will come when true growth will begin once again.

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5, *Isaiah's Vineyard Song*

Monday, Isaiah 1:1-20, *The Wickedness of Judah*

Tuesday, Isaiah 2:1-4, *The Future House of God*

Wednesday, Isaiah 2:5-22, *Judgment*

Thursday, Isaiah 6:1-13, *A Vision of God in the Temple*

Friday, Isaiah 7:1-25, *Isaiah Reassures King Ahaz*

Saturday, Isaiah 9:1-7, *The Righteous Reign of the Coming King*

**How were God's people like a vineyard gone wild?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**In what ways is your community like a wild vineyard? In what ways is it producing good fruit?**

**What gifts or talents has God given you that enable you to produce good fruit for the world?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Use some available fruits and veggies to make juice (with a juicer) or a smoothie (with a blender). Pay attention to how good fruits and veggies fuel your body. Discuss ways you can produce good fruit with your talents or gifts.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God produce good fruits from within you. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



November 29, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**O Ancient of Days, turn over a new page in our hearts. Let us hear your words, your promises of old, made fresh for a new day. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant. (2 Kings 23:3)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**King Josiah's righteous rule was an unlikely exception, lodged amid a sequence of unfaithful kings ruling in Jerusalem and Judah. He managed to take this faithful road, somehow, without even having access to the book of the law. The day it was found must have been a mixed blessing: delight at rediscovering the holy, grief that so much had been set aside and forgotten. It was a blessed day when the people, led by their king, recommitted themselves to the Lord.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, 2 Kings 22:1-10; 23:1-3, *Josiah's Reform*

Monday, 2 Kings 22:11-13, *Hilkiah Finds the Book of the Law*

Tuesday, 2 Kings 22:14-20, *Hilkiah Finds the Book of the Law*

Wednesday, 2 Kings 23:4-14, *Josiah's Reformation*

Thursday, 2 Kings 23:15-20, *Josiah's Reformation*

Friday, 2 Kings 23:21-27, *The Passover Celebrated*

Saturday, 2 Kings 23:28-30, *Josiah Dies in Battle*

**What did Josiah do to reconnect God with God's people?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What Bible stories most closely reflect your community's values?**

**How do you live out those values?**

**Do you think you can make a difference in the world? Why or why not? How?**

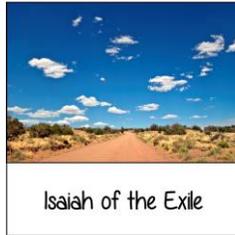
**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Think of an activity that you or members of your household did as kids that you no longer do, but wish you would? Spend some time in intentional play every day this week.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God entice you to play every day. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



December 6, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Maker of every good way, lead us in paths of understanding. Reveal yourself to us this day, offering good tidings to your people. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (Isaiah 40:1-2)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**For all of the hard words we hear from the prophets, there are also passages of heartrending grace and beauty. This passage from Isaiah is among those. God is leading God's people home, overcoming every obstacle. Good tidings abound.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Isaiah 40:1-11, *Isaiah of the Exile*

Monday, Isaiah 41:1-20, *Israel Assured of God's Help*

Tuesday, Isaiah 41:21-29, *The Futility of Idols*

Wednesday, Isaiah 42:1-9, *The Servant, a Light to the Nations*

Thursday, Isaiah 42:10-20, *A Hymn of Praise*

Friday, Isaiah 42:21-25, *Israel's Disobedience*

Saturday, Isaiah 43:1-7, *Restoration and Protection Promised*

**How do you think God felt toward the people of Israel?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**What words of comfort could your community use? How might prayer and a commitment toward God help your community?**

**Do you think God is more likely to comfort or condemn people? Why do you think so?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Quilt or tie a comfortable blanket for someone in need. Pray over the blanket as you make it. Give your blanket with a message that your prayers envelop the blanket and the people who use it.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God comfort you in your times of need. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



December 13, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Good and gracious God, you move in all places and all hearts. There is nowhere you cannot act to call your people back to you. Let your Spirit move here, to show us the way. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

*They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. (Ezra 3:11)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**Sometimes departures are voluntary; sometimes they are forced. So many of God's people left the Holy Land under duress, carted off to captivity in Babylon. But every empire has its time, and the Persians eventually took their place at the top of the worldly heap. Even far from the Holy Land, God proved faithfulness. God is not bound by place or time, ethnic origin, age, insider or outsider status. God will use whom God will, to be a bearer of good news. In this astonishing case, the people were set in motion, led home to Jerusalem and the Holy Land through the involvement of one foreign emperor, Cyrus, the ruler of Persia, who listened to the stirrings of the spirit.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13, *Rebuilding the Temple*

Monday, Ezra 3:5-13, *Foundation Laid for the Temple*

Tuesday, Ezra 4:1-5, *Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple*

Wednesday, Ezra 4:6-24, *Rebuilding of Jerusalem Opposed*

Thursday, Ezra 5:1-17, *Restoration of the Temple Resumed*

Friday, Ezra 6:13-18, *Completion and Dedication of the Temple*

Saturday, Ezra 6:10-22, *The Passover Celebrated*

**Why do you think it was important for the people to rebuild the temple? Why did some shout with joy and some weep?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**On what foundations is your community built? What ideologies shape your community?**

**What is the cornerstone of your faith? In other words, what gives your faith strength and a strong foundation? How can you strengthen your faith's foundation?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Make a vision board for your faith. Look through a variety of magazines for images and words that appeal to you. (You don't need a reason... just choose what you like.) Cut out the images and glue them to a poster board. Use this vision board as inspiration for strengthening the foundation of your faith.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God build a strong foundation of faith in your life. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



December 20, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**God, we stand in your presence, waiting to hear your word. Let it speak in our hearts so we can speak good news into the world, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

*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." (Luke 1:12-13)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**Zechariah and Elizabeth fit the profile of a Biblical couple unexpectedly expecting: older, unable to conceive, an angelic messenger, and an incredulous response. Zechariah, a priest of the Lord, received an angelic visitor while he was serving in the temple. Startled, overcome with fear, he did not at first believe what he had been told concerning the boy that would be born, seeking additional assurances. Because he didn't believe, the angel told him he would be unable to speak until this good word was fulfilled. Zechariah remained silent from the day he was told this news, until the day the child was named.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Luke 1:5-13 (57-80), *Zechariah's Song*

Monday, Luke 1:1-4, *Dedication to Theophilus*

Tuesday, Luke 1:14-25, *Zechariah's Encounter*

Wednesday, Luke 1:26-38, *The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

Thursday, Luke 2:1-14 (15-20), *The Birth of Jesus*

Friday, Luke 2:8-20, *Shepherds Visit*

Saturday, Matthew 2:1-12, *The Magi*

**How are John's birth announcement and Jesus' birth announcement similar? How are they different?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Who in your community is in need of extra care and attention this season? What could you do to bring joy into their lives?**

**Have you ever experienced a message from God in an unusual way? What happened? How did you know it was God speaking?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Spend Christmas morning serving food at a local shelter. During your household's Christmas meal, share what you are grateful for.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God bless you with all the joy and fullness of Christ's birth. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



December 24, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Heaven Born on Earth, let us wonder and dream with you. Place peace and hope, love and joy within us. Let us hear the sacred story of the nativity as a fresh gift on this night. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verse from today's reading.

*And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**This passage has been told in Christmas specials and children's books. It has been sketched, painted, and versified. Even those not familiar with the scripture may find themselves familiar with the words. "In those days, a decree went out..." putting the holy family on the move. Mary gave birth to her child in an unlikely place. Angels bore witness to "good news of great joy," and called the shepherds to their own witness and worship. Make haste to the manger. Treasure all these things. Ponder them in your heart.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Luke 1:5-13 (57-80), *Zechariah's Song*

Monday, Luke 1:1-4, *Dedication to Theophilus*

Tuesday, Luke 1:14-25, *Zechariah's Encounter*

Wednesday, Luke 1:26-38, *The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

Thursday, Luke 2:1-14 (15-20), *The Birth of Jesus*

Friday, Luke 2:8-20, *Shepherds Visit*

Saturday, Matthew 2:1-12, *The Magi*

**How are John's birth announcement and Jesus' birth announcement similar? How are they different?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Who in your community is in need of extra care and attention this season? What could you do to bring joy into their lives?**

**Have you ever experienced a message from God in an unusual way? What happened? How did you know it was God speaking?**

**DO:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Spend Christmas morning serving food at a local shelter. During your household's Christmas meal, share what you are grateful for.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God bless you with all the joy and fullness of Christ's birth. Amen.**

# God's Story Our Story



December 25, 2015

**Devotion:** Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

**Pray:** Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Heaven Born on Earth, we are somewhat less than wise, but we are seeking you out just the same. Hold fast. Shine for us so we can see the light and set our path by it. Amen.**

**Reflect:** Reflect on the key verses from today's reading.

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:13-14)*

**Study:** Study the reading and consider the background.

**After Jesus' birth, magi came from the East to worship him. The local powers in Jerusalem, including King Herod, were ill at ease. A so-called infant "king" needed to be dealt with, and swiftly. With the help of an angelic dream, the magi saw right through Herod, and kept Jesus' location secret until he was old enough to travel.**

**Read:** Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Luke 1:5-13 (57-80), *Zechariah's Song*

Monday, Luke 1:1-4, *Dedication to Theophilus*

Tuesday, Luke 1:14-25, *Zechariah's Encounter*

Wednesday, Luke 1:26-38, *The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

Thursday, Luke 2:1-14 (15-20), *The Birth of Jesus*

Friday, Luke 2:8-20, *Shepherds Visit*

Saturday, Matthew 2:1-12, *The Magi*

**How are John's birth announcement and Jesus' birth announcement similar? How are they different?**

**Connect:** Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

**What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?**

**Who in your community is in need of extra care and attention this season? What could you do to bring joy into their lives?**

**Have you ever experienced a message from God in an unusual way? What happened? How did you know it was God speaking?**

**Do:** By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

**Spend Christmas morning serving food at a local shelter. During your household's Christmas meal, share what you are grateful for.**

**Bless:** Close your devotion with a blessing.

**May God bless you with all the joy and fullness of Christ's birth. Amen.**