


# preparing the way for Jesus

**Count down to Christmas  
with Focus on the Family's  
2020 Advent calendar**

*devotions by Pixel to Craft  
card designs by Anneka Jack*



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This year's Advent season, the countdown to Christmas, begins Sunday, Nov. 29, which is the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. What do you do during Advent? Families often enter a faith-filled journey that helps them focus on God's gift to humanity, a Saviour, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger.

Jesus' unselfish act demonstrated that people are important to God. His birth, life, death and resurrection completed God's plan, set in motion in the Garden of Eden, to save humankind from its own sin.

So this year's Advent calendar celebrates our relationships with people and provides a simple way to be the hands and feet of Jesus to neighbours, friends and relatives. Reach out to those around you with a homemade Christmas card that you and your children make together as you commemorate Christ's birth and encourage others in God's hope.

Each day also includes a devotion that your family can read together at meals to remember the messengers, prophets, obedient servants and celebrants that God used to prepare the way for His Son's moment on earth.

If you'd like to add an Advent wreath to your preparations for Christmas, the directions can be found at [FocusOnTheFamily.ca/Wreath](http://FocusOnTheFamily.ca/Wreath). Then light an additional candle at dinner every Sunday.

Advent ends Dec. 24, the day before we celebrate Jesus' birth. But you don't have to wait for Advent to begin making special cards to give to people in December. Find directions for the cards at the beginning of each week of Advent.





week  
one

# week one card | *easy version*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 paintbrush
- 2 sheets of 8" x 11" card stock
- 1 paper plate
- gold nontoxic tempera paint
- card template (find in appendix)



## DIRECTIONS

1. Find the template in the appendix as shown in image No. 1. Print on card stock. Fold in half so that the printed side is on the inside of the card.
2. Pour gold paint onto a paper plate.
3. Open card and lay flat with the printed side facing down. Firmly press the palm and fingers of your child's hands into the paint. Then, press the hands on the front cover of the card in an upside down "v" shape, as in image No. 2.
4. Use a paintbrush to paint an oval for the head above the handprints and two lines for the gown below the handprints, as in image No 3.
5. Let dry
6. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

# week one card | *advanced version*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 paintbrush
- 2 sheets of 8" x 11" card stock
- 1 paper plate
- gold nontoxic tempera paint
- cardboard
- Stanley knife
- ruler
- card template (find in appendix)



## DIRECTIONS

1. Complete steps 2-5 of the easy version of this card using a blank sheet of folded card stock.
2. Find the template in the appendix as shown in image No. 1. Print on card stock.
3. Place the card, printed side facing up, on top of a piece of cardboard. Using a Stanley knife, carefully cut the six horizontal lines, using the edge of a ruler as a guide. Your cuts should look like image No. 2.
4. Fold the card in half. Open and carefully pull forward the three thick pieces of paper so they fold out. Close the card to crease the strips of paper opposite of the fold of the card. The card's wording should now be three dimensional.
5. Flatten both pieces of card stock. Place the angel image flat against the table. Glue the blank side of the second card stock to it but only on the outside edges. Let dry.
6. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

DAY 1 | *Sunday, Nov. 29*

## Big News Bringer: Gabriel

*Scripture: Luke 1:26-38*

**H**ave you ever delivered big news to someone? Depending on the specifics, you may have found it either a thrilling opportunity or a dreaded responsibility.

Big news was Gabriel's business. Tasked by God to deliver important messages, he'd once been sent to help the prophet Daniel understand a complex vision of the end times (Daniel 9:20-27).

But Gabriel's mission to Mary was perhaps the biggest news yet. Would such news be overwhelming to the girl?

"Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" Gabriel began.

Then as Gabriel stood before Mary, his bright figure filling the room, he recognised that she was troubled. His first job was to reassure her.

"Do not be afraid," he told Mary. "You have found favour with God."

Mary would give birth to a baby boy, the long-promised Messiah. The moment that generations had waited for was finally here: The Lord was coming to save His people.

Gabriel knew that she'd have questions: How can this be? I'm not married yet.

As Gabriel delivered answers, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," he may have thought Mary took the news remarkably well. Indeed, the girl seemed to simply . . . trust.

"I am the servant of the Lord," she said. "Let it be to me according to your word." In other words, she was saying, I will trust in His plan.

If only everyone faced big news as this young teen had.

*REFLECT:* Every family faces big moments, events that redirect plans. How can you have Mary's response, to trust that God will be with you?

*PRAY:* Pray that God will grant you an attitude of humility and trust when facing big news.



DAY 2 | *Monday, Nov. 30*

## Searching for a King: Samuel

*Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:6-12*

In school, did you ever pick teams for a game of football or basketball during recess? You knew which players you wanted: the fast, the tall, the powerful. You wanted to win.

The prophet Samuel had similar qualities in mind when God sent him to Jesse's home in Bethlehem to anoint Israel's future king. Kings had a certain look to them in those days, a look that helped citizens feel secure. People wanted powerful kings who would protect them against enemies. Back then, kings didn't just give orders; they often joined the fight, too.

But God was looking for something else. As Samuel began to meet Jesse's tall, powerful sons, God rejected each of them. He said Samuel should not evaluate the new king by his outward appearance, but by his heart. God told Samuel to anoint the last of Jesse's sons, a seemingly un-kinglike shepherd boy named David. Samuel obeyed, and after David grew into a young man, he did indeed become king.

Generations later, God said to look to Bethlehem for the new king. And in that humble little city, Israel's true King was found—taking the form not of a mighty warrior but of a humble child sleeping in a manger.

*REFLECT:* Big decisions often seem to have a clear and obvious answer—until you recognise that God values different qualities.

*PRAY:* Ask God to help your family make better choices, ones that guide you all with His wisdom and interest in unseen characteristics.





**DAY 3** | *Tuesday, Dec. 1*

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## **An Epic Celebration: The Heavenly Host**

*Scripture: Luke 2:8-20*

It's the night of the big show. The choir is dressed in its shining finest. The music has been honed to perfection since the beginning of time. This performance will be epic, a celebration of the greatest moment in human history: the arrival of the Saviour.

And where is this angelic choir scheduled to perform? At a majestic concert hall or to an audience of earthly kings? No, the army of angels descends in the dark to a scraggly hillside outside a small town, to perform for a group of shepherds gathered around a campfire as their sheep graze nearby. "Fear not," one angel says. "I bring good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Needless to say, shepherds weren't exactly the cultural elite of the time. You can imagine what more "proper" folk would say about a bunch of guys who spent most of their time taking care of animals. Yet this was the first audience to hear the news of God's Son's arrival on earth. The Lord of hosts sent His army to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

*REFLECT:* Have you overlooked people who could use the Good News?

*PRAY:* Ask God to help you see what He sees—the people around you who are just as much in need of God's love as you are.



DAY 4 | *Wednesday, Dec. 2*

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## Hope in Small Places: Micah

*Scripture: Micah 7:7-8*

“There’s not much here.”  
Ever said that about a town, perhaps one you’re driving through on a road trip while looking for a good place to eat lunch or a park to stretch your legs? You cruise the main street, unimpressed.

“Can’t we go somewhere else?” you ask.

Then you see a sign proclaiming that this town is the birthplace of a famous leader or writer. See that little white house with the green trim? It was once her home. You think, *OK, maybe this place is worth a closer look.*

Hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, the prophet Micah spoke out against the leadership of Israel, warning them that their corruption and rebellion against God’s ways would not go unpunished. But Micah also spoke of hopeful things to come, the arrival of the Saviour in the town of Bethlehem.

“A small town without much there,” he pointed out. But from that town came a great leader. Bethlehem—once the city of David—became known as the place of the Saviour’s birth.

A similar thing is true for believers today. When we agree to let Jesus live within us, to be Lord of our lives, we are changed. Our identity is defined by Him.

*REFLECT:* What about your family’s life is different because the Lord Jesus resides in your home?

*PRAY:* Ask God to remind you of your identity in Christ when you begin to feel unimportant.



DAY 5 | Thursday, Dec. 3

## A Real Hope for a Saviour: Jeremiah

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:13-16

“Oh, I wish I could . . .”

We all wish for things. When we're young, we desire some awfully big things. We may wish for a bazillion dollars or for incredible strength. Or perhaps we wish that Grandma were still alive or that we hadn't said something hurtful to a friend.

Hope is greater than a wish. It's an anticipation of something that really can happen. When a student spends a lot of time preparing for a big presentation, she hopes that the production will go well. If she hasn't prepared, though, she wishes for a good presentation.

The prophet Jeremiah lived hundreds of years before Jesus came. He spoke out against the corruption and evil of his time, telling God's people that God would not let their sins go unpunished. And he longed for the Messiah to come. This was no mere wish. Jeremiah believed that the Saviour would come because he was counting on a promise. He confidently hoped for the Saviour's arrival because the Lord had proclaimed it.

Jeremiah delighted in God's promises. His hope was anchored in God's words: "Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

*REFLECT:* What promises from God give you hope? In what ways can you live with hope in those promises?

*PRAY:* Ask God to grant your family confidence in His promises and to remind you that He is faithful and will never abandon you.



**DAY 6** | *Friday, Dec. 4*

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## **Humble Messenger: Isaiah**

*Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7*

“**W**hy did you decide to . . . ?”

If you could meet a local politician, you might have some questions—if you could work up the courage to ask! It’s a big deal to face someone who has such influence.

When that someone is the Creator of the universe, though, there’s really only one thing to say: “Yes, Lord, I’ll do it.”

When God brought Isaiah into His presence, He had a job for the prophet. God despised the injustice and rebellion that Israel’s leaders had perpetrated, so He wanted Isaiah to declare that this conduct would have consequences. Foreign invaders would come and take over Israel’s land.

But there was light on the horizon, too—the Lord would send a new King to Israel. A child would arrive, who would grow to become the counsellor and teacher for His people. This Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Isaiah assures his people, will be born. God keeps His promises, Isaiah declared. God is passionate about helping His people achieve the purposes He has for them.

And God delivered. Seven hundred years later, God came to live among the people of Israel in the person of Jesus. He set aside, for a time, His heavenly qualities and became human flesh. That future King—the Wonderful Counsellor—had arrived!

*REFLECT:* “Send me!” said Isaiah, even though he wondered if he had what it took to complete God’s assignment. Sometimes you may doubt you are able to do what God asks of you. How can you overcome your fears?

*PRAY:* As a family, ask for God’s wisdom to accept His plan for your lives.



**DAY 7** | *Saturday, Dec. 5*

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## **A Voice in the Wilderness: John the Baptist**

*Scripture: Malachi 3:1-6*

**E**verybody is preparing for Christmas—and there is so much to do! Gifts to buy, get-togethers to plan, greetings to send. And don't forget about cleaning! We want things to be just right.

John the Baptist was in the preparation business, too. And his ministry had been prophesied in the Old Testament. He wasn't concerned about presents, parties or cleaning the house. He lived a humble life out in the wilderness, making clothing from camel hair and eating locusts with wild honey (Matthew 3:4). He believed that the Messiah was coming soon, and that his mission was to get people's hearts ready to accept Him. So John taught people to repent from sin in order to prepare for the One who could truly take away the sins of the world.

After John was gone, people began to forget about him. Jesus had begun His earthly ministry by then, but as crowds listened to Jesus near the river where John had baptised, they remembered the prophet's words—and it helped them believe that Jesus was the Messiah. "John did no sign"—he didn't perform miracles, they said. "But everything that John said about this man was true" (John 10:41).

*REFLECT:* It would be great if people said this about your family: "Everything they said about Jesus was true." In what ways can you courageously speak only truth?

*PRAY:* Ask God to remind your family that many people will learn of Jesus through your witness.

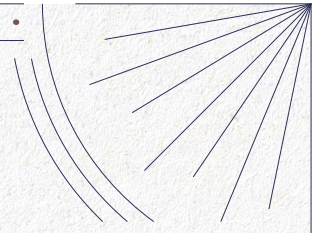




week  
two



# week two card | *easy version*

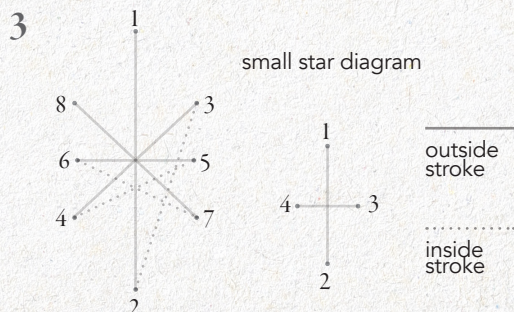


## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 sheet of blue 8" x 11" card stock
- 1 sheet of cream 8" x 11" card stock
- sharp pencil
- cardboard
- twine
- scissors
- white coloured pencil
- inside and outside card template (find in appendix)



centre star diagram



## DIRECTIONS

1. Find the template in the appendix as shown in the image above. Print on blue card stock. Fold in half. The blue sheet design faces outward.
2. Find the template from image No. 2 and print on cream card stock. Trim along the dotted lines. Fold in half. The cream sheet printing is on the inside.
3. Place cardboard under the blue piece of card stock so the dots face up. Use a sharp pencil to poke holes through the paper at each dot.
4. Tie a knot at the end of the twine. Thread twine through the top of the star (dot 1), starting from the inside and moving to the outside of the card.
5. Thread twine through the hole at the bottom of the star (dot 2) from the outside to the inside of the card. Continue to lace the twine through the holes of the centre star using the diagram in image No. 3. When done, tie a knot on the inside of the card at dot 8. Trim any excess twine.
6. Trace the small stars with a pen, connecting dots 1 to 2 and 3 to 4 to form a "t" for each dot grouping.
7. Glue the cream card stock to the inside of the card, centred both horizontally and vertically.
8. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

# week two card | *advanced version*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 sheet of blue 8" x 11" card stock
- 1 sheet of cream 8" x 11" card stock
- cardboard
- scissors
- sharp pencil
- 1 yard of thin, white ribbon
- 1 yard of gold embroidery floss
- 1 sewing or bookbinding needle
- inside and outside card template (find in appendix)

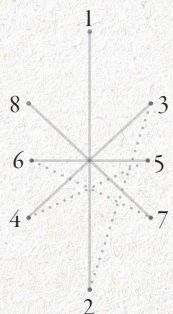


## DIRECTIONS

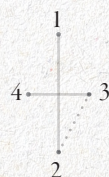
1. Complete steps 1-5 of the easy card version, but use thin, white ribbon instead of twine for the centre star.
2. Using a sharp pencil, poke holes through all the dots at the ends of the smaller stars.
3. Thread six strands of embroidery floss through your needle. Knot the end of the floss. Starting on the inside top star of the card, thread the smaller stars according to the diagram in image No. 3. When you finish each star, make a knot at the end. Trim excess floss.
4. Do steps 7 and 8 of the easy card version to complete this card.

centre star diagram

3



small star diagram



— outside stroke

⋯ inside stroke



DAY 8 | *Sunday, Dec. 6*

## An Eyewitness Account: Shepherds

*Scripture: Luke 2:15-17*

Have you ever visited a new place or saw a new movie that you just had to tell a friend about? And the friend's response was probably typical: "I'll have to check it out." Yes, they believed you. It's just that . . . well, they needed to see it for themselves.

When the angelic choir disappeared into the darkness, leaving the shepherds alone on that hillside outside Bethlehem, the shepherds probably had questions. They didn't doubt the news—the sights and sounds of the heavenly hosts convinced them of the truth. But curiosity moved their hearts, so they decided to visit the new King.

"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened," they said to one another.

So they left the sheep and followed the star into town, where they found a dirty stable and a newborn baby sleeping in a manger. They knelt in the dirt. *Here He was! The long-promised Saviour.*

Afterward, the shepherds could hardly contain their excitement. They told everyone they met about what the angel had said. Most people were surprised, though some were likely skeptical—people who needed to see for themselves or didn't believe a baby could be their Saviour.

But many believed. They understood, through hearing the words of the world's first evangelists, that the Messiah had arrived!

*REFLECT:* You have a choice to make when you hear the news about the Saviour. How have you responded?

*PRAY:* Thank God for the ways He reveals himself to you and your family, even though you've never seen Him with your eyes.



DAY 9 | *Monday, Dec. 7*

## Following a Star: The Magi

*Scripture: Matthew 2:1-16*

Ever had a big dream you couldn't let go of? Someone you wanted to meet, something you wanted to have, somewhere you wanted to go. It can be difficult to free yourself from such ambitions once they're in your head.

In a way, the wise men of the Christmas story were chasing their own dream. These scholars could see a bright star sparkling in the Eastern sky. Having read the prophecies, they thought the star was a sign. A new ruler had been born. They wanted to meet Him, so they loaded up for the trip, packing provisions for the long journey and precious gifts appropriate for a king.

Were the Magi disappointed when they finally arrived? They'd been expecting a new ruler, born in a fine palace. They had even stopped at King Herod's palace to ask about the star and Christ's birth.

"Not here," the king's scholars said, consulting the old prophecies. "Try Bethlehem."

There was no grand palace in Bethlehem. But there was a small house where a young boy lived with His parents. The wise men brought their gifts before this new King. They knelt before this new *kind* of King, who had not come as a mighty ruler, but as a humble servant.

*REFLECT:* It can be difficult when people and events are different than what you expect. But as in the case of the Magi, they can turn out to be better than you ever imagined. What helps you adjust to change so you don't miss out?

*PRAY:* Ask God to help your family not to have unrealistic expectations as you plan for the future, that His wisdom and His will would influence your dreams.



**DAY 10** | *Tuesday, Dec. 8*

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## **Paranoid and Power Hungry: King Herod**

*Scripture: Matthew 2:16-18*

**A**s word of Christ's birth spread, not everyone was thrilled with the news. When the wise men showed up at King Herod's palace, inquiring about the location of the new King of the Jews, Herod was disturbed. He liked being king, and he thought he was good at it. He was proud of the temple he'd built and of the fortresses and cities he had constructed. He liked ruling over others, and he had a history of ensuring that no one could take that power from him.

So Herod plotted in secret to find this new King in order to remove the threat to his power. "When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him," he told the wise men (Matthew 2:8).

They didn't, and Herod couldn't track down the child. He was jealous at the thought of a new King who might someday unseat him from his throne. This led him to order a horrific slaughter of all the boys under age 2 in the area of Bethlehem.

And this is why Jesus had to come—so that humans might be rescued from sin and darkness forever.

*REFLECT:* In a way, Jesus is a threat to everyone. He threatens your desire to be in control, to be the kings and queens of your own lives. You either let Him be Lord, or you try to remove His influence, to your own detriment.

*PRAY:* Ask God to reveal the areas of your life in which you don't really want to give up power and to help you trust in His will and His ways.



DAY 11 | *Wednesday, Dec. 9*

## 'Can This Really Be?': Zechariah

*Scripture: Luke 1:11-23*

Have you ever prayed for something and assumed God had decided not to grant you your request? When enough time goes by, it's easy to have such thoughts.

Zechariah had asked God for a child, but he hadn't received one, and he and his wife were now too old to have children. He worked as a priest, serving God faithfully, and probably decided years earlier that God wouldn't grant his request.

So when the angel Gabriel showed up one day at the temple, announcing to Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a baby, the old priest had a moment of disbelief. Then the angel said that Zechariah's son, John, would grow to become the prophet who would announce the arrival of the Messiah. That was a lot to take in, given the tall, powerful form filling the room with light.

"How shall I know this?" he asked. "I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

A reasonable question, one might think. Zechariah and his wife were old. But the priest's doubt cost him his ability to speak during the time of his wife's pregnancy. God was going to show the people that nothing was impossible when His power showed up.

And everything in the angel's message came true. When John was born, Zechariah's speech returned. He promptly praised God.

"The Lord . . . has visited and redeemed his people," Zechariah exclaimed (Luke 1:68).

*REFLECT:* Have you noticed that God's timing rarely lines up with your preferences, but He has big things in mind if you wait on Him?

*PRAY:* Ask God for the wisdom and ability to rely on His timing.



DAY 12 | *Thursday, Dec. 10*

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## Moved by the Holy Spirit: Elizabeth

*Scripture: Luke 1:24-25, 39-45*

**H**ave you ever felt an expectant mum's belly when the baby moves inside? It's an exciting time, especially for the mum. Is that an elbow? A tiny foot? You might be able to imagine Elizabeth's joy when her son moved inside her. This was no hiccup or nudge. The baby *leaped* within her!

Elizabeth had company at the time. Her young cousin Mary was visiting, and when the two women came near each other, Elizabeth's baby jumped. In that moment, Elizabeth must have remembered the angel's words to her husband, Zechariah: Their son, John, would prepare Israel to meet the Messiah, and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth.

Indeed, the baby's physical response to Mary's arrival must have been a confirmation of the angel's message. God's Spirit moved both mother and son, enabling them to recognise the arrival of the Messiah. "Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" she exclaimed. In other words, she expressed her honour that the Messiah's mother came specifically to visit her.

*REFLECT:* The Holy Spirit is always at work, guiding you toward godly decisions, prompting you to avoid sinful traps, helping you recognise that you need Jesus as Lord and Saviour. How do you respond when you feel the tug of the Spirit telling you to go, do and say the things God wants you to?

*PRAY:* Pray that God will give you a special sensitivity to His Spirit this Christmas season, that you will be moved to action when He prompts you.



DAY 13 | *Friday, Dec. 11*

## A Little Space for a Guest: The Innkeeper

*Scripture: Luke 2:6-7*

“**W**hat can we do?”  
Ever asked that question while observing some wrong or unfairness? It’s out of our control. How can we really help? Sometimes the world’s problems do feel too big for our actions to have any real consequence.

When travel-weary Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem during the big census, they likely encountered a similar attitude among Bethlehem residents who told them, either in words or actions, that they didn’t have space for any more guests.

“Everyone is back in town for the census,” they must have said. “So sorry; we wish we could help!”

The census had transformed quiet Bethlehem into a travellers’ hotspot. Innkeepers and homeowners had filled every extra space to put a bed. And besides, Mary appeared to be very pregnant, perhaps ready to give birth, and her condition would bring its own complications.

But this tired couple clearly couldn’t spend the night out in the cold. Someone finally stepped forward. *We can do something. Maybe they can take a little corner back where the animals sleep. We can clean up that extra manger if the baby comes.*

Surely the innkeeper didn’t recognise the significance of the moment. The Son of God would grow up never having a home of His own. He would continue to depend on the kindness of people who saw a need and said, “It won’t be much, but we can do something.”

*REFLECT:* Jesus isn’t going to push His way into your life. It’s your choice to create the space for Him. When you do, magnificent things happen.

*PRAY:* Pray for God’s wisdom in giving Jesus space in your schedule, your heart and your home.



DAY 14 | *Saturday, Dec. 12*

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## Witnesses to the Messiah's Arrival: Simeon and Anna

*Scripture: Luke 2:25-39*

“**Y**es! I finally got it!”  
Christmas morning brings lots of glee—kids tearing the paper off of gifts and squealing with delight at what's inside. Can you remember a Christmas morning when you ripped open a gift that you had been waiting *years* for? And have you ever thought, *This gift completes my life*?

Simeon was a faithful, devout man who had waited a long time for his own big gift. You see, God made a promise to him: Simeon would not die until he met the long-promised Messiah.

As the years slipped by, he probably met many firstborn male children visiting the temple. But when Joseph and Mary arrived with Jesus, Simeon knew right away that this boy was special. Imagine Simeon's joy when he saw that little boy, knowing God had kept His promise, and that here at last was the Messiah the Jews had been waiting for.

A prophet at the temple named Anna shared Simeon's excitement. The woman was an older widow and had also waited for years to be given a gift.

Perhaps she exclaimed, “This is the child who will redeem Israel. Praise be to the Lord!”

*REFLECT:* Among the gifts and parties and activities of Christmas, do you stop to recognise the significance of Christ's birth? Would you echo Simeon's words, that Jesus completes your life?

*PRAY:* Thank God for the reality of a Saviour, that He fulfilled His promise to send a Rescuer who has the power to take away the burden of our sinful choices.





week  
three



# week three card | *easy version*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- scissors
- glue stick
- 1 8" x 11" brown card stock
- 1 8" x 11" green card stock
- inside and outside card template (find in appendix)

## Optional:

- small pompoms
- markers
- metallic confetti



1



2



3



## DIRECTIONS

1. Find the template in the appendix as shown in image No. 1. Print on brown card stock. Next, find the template from image No. 2 and print on the reverse side of your brown card stock. Fold in half.
2. Print the triangles found in the appendix on green card stock.
3. Cut out the three triangles and glue them on the brown card stock according to the outlines on the front cover of the card, starting with the largest triangle.
4. Decorate with markers, pompoms and glitter.
5. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

# week three card | *advanced version*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- scissors
- glue stick
- 1 8" x 11" brown card stock
- 1 8" x 11" green card stock
- inside and outside card template (in appendix)



## DIRECTIONS

1. Find the template in the appendix as shown in image No. 1. Print on brown card stock. Next, find the template from image No. 2 and print on the reverse side of your brown card-stock print. Fold in half.
2. Print the triangles in the appendix on green card stock. Cut out all 12 of the green triangles.
3. Gather the four large triangles and fold each triangle in half horizontally. Unfold and lay flat.
4. Glue the top, right side of one large triangle to the bottom, right side of another large triangle. The left side of each triangle should be free. Continue gluing and stacking the remaining two large triangles until all four large triangles have their right sides glued together.
5. The large triangle at the bottom of the stack will be attached to the card. Glue the back of this triangle to the outline of the large triangle on the front of the card.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for the medium-sized and small triangles.
7. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

**DAY 15** | *Sunday, Dec. 13*

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## **Protector and Provider: Joseph**

*Scripture: Matthew 1:19-25; 2:13-15*

**A** new King was coming! The Son of the Most High! Good news for everyone, right? For Joseph, engaged to Mary, the news that his fiancée was going to have a baby was probably shocking. They were not yet husband and wife!

But one night an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and explained how and why Mary had become pregnant. Joseph believed God—that He had chosen Mary to be the mother of the Messiah. Joseph, a humble carpenter, realised he would play an important role in God’s mission to save humanity. And so Joseph chose to protect Mary and provide for her and the child.

After Jesus was born, an angel showed up again in Joseph’s dreams, guiding the new father and his family to safety and provision. We never learn what Joseph said in response to these dramatic events, but his swift obedience to the Lord demonstrates a strong, quiet character—and an example for us all.

*REFLECT:* In what ways do you see God directing your family away from danger and protecting you when circumstances are outside your control?

*PRAY:* Ask God to give you peace as you learn to trust in His direction—especially when your own plans seem scrambled beyond recognition.



DAY 16 | *Monday, Dec. 14*

## Joy in the Family: Ruth

*Scripture: Ruth 1:16-17*

**H**ave you ever wanted to completely quit on something? It might have been tempting for Ruth, a Moabite, to move away from her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi. After tragedy struck and Ruth lost her husband, she had an opportunity to start over, to return to her hometown and try to rebuild her life. Naomi even said it might be best if Ruth really *did* leave because she was in a tough place herself. Naomi's own husband had recently died, and she had no way to provide for her daughter-in-law.

Wouldn't most people prefer a familiar life over a new country and culture? But Ruth was committed to her mother-in-law and *her* well-being, so she decided to remain loyal to Naomi and embrace Naomi's people and God. They returned together to Bethlehem, the eventual birthplace of Jesus. Many women in Bethlehem said Ruth treated Naomi better than seven sons!

Because of her faithfulness and hard work, Ruth met and married a kind Israelite named Boaz. And so Ruth was welcomed into the nation of Israel. But her loyalty was rewarded in an even greater way—she is part of Jesus' ancestry! Ruth's story again demonstrates God's interest in pursuing and redeeming outsiders. God used her life to bring about the eventual birth of Jesus—the ultimate Pursuer and Redeemer.

*REFLECT:* Sometimes you have to give up the easy, expected behaviours in order to do the right thing. What good decisions have been difficult for you to make?

*PRAY:* Ask that God would give your family strength when right decisions are more difficult than the wrong ones.



DAY 17 | Tuesday, Dec. 15

## Life on the Margins: Rahab

Scripture: *Josua 2:3-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19*

“What do you do?” That is one of the first questions a lot of people ask when they first meet someone. We often make quick judgments of others based on how they look, where they live or what kind of job they have.

Many probably judged Rahab. She lived a life of poor decisions, probably some from others that affected her and some of her own. The results of these decisions and actions caused people to not respect her. But unknown to them, perhaps she wanted something more.

When Israelite spies arrived to scout out Jericho, Rahab offered to protect them. She had heard stories of the God of Israel, the loving Lord of all creation who would forgive her and love her. So Rahab protected the Israelites from Canaanite soldiers, giving major assistance to the spies' mission. Because of her help, Israel gained significant intelligence for their battle against Jericho. As a result, she was welcomed into the nation of Israel.

Her actions showed evidence of her newfound faith in the God of Israel. This woman, who lived the type of life that caused her to be an outcast, found acceptance with God's people. And God's love for her was so great that He included her in the lineage of Christ. As we prepare for Jesus' birth, we can remember that Jesus didn't come only for "good" people; He came for everyone—including those who have made really bad decisions and have messed up. Rahab's story reminds us that God can redeem anyone and that He uses the most unlikely of us in His plans.

*REFLECT:* Who are some of the outsiders, the people on the margins of society, in your world? What would you do if they came to your church?

*PRAY:* Ask God to give you His heart for a lost world.



DAY 18 | *Wednesday, Dec. 16*

## A Rebuke and a Repentance: David

*Scripture: 2 Samuel 12:13; John 3:23-38*

**H**ave you ever had to admit to doing something awful? That unpleasant feeling you get before you confess something is actually a gift from God—He helps us recognise our sins through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts us of sin and nudges us toward confession, repentance and better behaviour.

And sometimes the Holy Spirit works in a sort of partnership with a person. This is what happened during King David's reign. Nathan, a prophet of Israel, bravely challenged the king for abusing his authority.

As King David heard Nathan's rebuke, David recognised the sin of what he'd done. And he repented. When David confessed, though he still had to suffer the consequences, God's grace was present.

Over time, the Lord guided and mended David's heart, helping him to better serve God. David and his wife Bathsheba eventually had a son named Nathan—the same name as the prophet who called out David's sin and helped bring him to repentance.

This boy, Nathan, may have been a continual reminder to David of God's grace and faithfulness. God wants us to remember that, too, because He included Nathan in Jesus' family line. We can see God's grace everywhere—even in a name buried in a rarely-read list of other names—including the clearest sign of God's grace: Jesus. He became human to show us how to live and to save us from our sin.

*REFLECT:* Conviction isn't meant to heap shame or punishment—Christ has paid the full penalty for your sins. Conviction is what helps you recognise that you did something wrong, and it leads to repentance. How should you respond when the Holy Spirit convicts your heart?

*PRAY:* Thank God for the gift of conviction—of understanding when you sin against God and providing a way to return to Him through forgiveness.



DAY 19 | *Thursday, Dec. 17*

## Wisdom and Wealth: Solomon

*Scripture: 1 Kings 3:5-13; Ecclesiastes 12:11-14; John 10:10*

What if you could put literally anything on your Christmas wish list, and you were assured that you would actually receive it? Would you use that once-in-a-lifetime chance to become a better person—or just become better off?

God gave a similar opportunity to Solomon when he became Israel's new king: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5, NIV).

Many new rulers might have asked for more land or storage buildings full of gold. But Solomon recognised that the people of Israel were not his—they were the Lord's. And, in a way, Israel's territory wasn't really his, either. It had been expanded and protected through the battles his father, King David, had fought and won.

So Solomon knew he would need great wisdom to manage the people and possessions God had entrusted to him. And that's what he asked for: wisdom to do right.

God was pleased by the request, so He gave Solomon both remarkable wisdom *and* incredible wealth. But as the years of King Solomon's reign passed, the wealth and power he had attained corrupted him, also hurting his relationship with God. Solomon realised that the things he valued were ultimately meaningless without doing right in God's eyes.

But God brought Good News. Many centuries after Solomon's life, his descendant Jesus arrived. Jesus entered our world of meaningless pursuits and showed us the way to His kingdom—an abundant life of joy and peace for those who follow Him.

*REFLECT:* Jesus says He wants to give you His abundant life. What does that look like in your life today?

*PRAY:* Ask that God would help your family to use the gifts He has given you to advance His intentions for your lives.



DAY 20 | *Friday, Dec. 18*

## Desperation and Redemption: Tamar

*Scripture: Genesis 38:8-26; Romans 2:1-4*

Why is it so easy to see the flaws in other people, but it's difficult to see those same flaws in ourselves? If we're being truthful, we'd recognise that we all struggle with hypocrisy. We fail to consistently follow the principles we claim to rely on and the life we really lead.

Tamar had been married to two of Judah's sons, both of whom died. It was Judah's duty to care for the young widow's needs. He'd agreed to this when he welcomed Tamar into the family. But after his sons' deaths, Judah tried to get out of his obligation, quietly abandoning his responsibility to provide for the girl's needs.

Over time and through many circumstances, Judah had to admit to being a hypocrite. He then accepted his responsibility to care for her. He even suggested that Tamar had taken the more righteous path, given the circumstances that he'd put her in.

As we have read about the cast of characters in Jesus' lineage, we may be surprised that God would include such a dark tale in His story of our redemption. But God didn't shy away from making Tamar's children Jesus' ancestors. Hypocrisy is in the heart of every human, but it doesn't disqualify anyone from God's grace and mercy. And Jesus came into the world to redeem *all* of our dark stories—Judah's and Tamar's and yours.

*REFLECT:* How do you react when someone points to your hypocrisy? How can you better align your actions with your beliefs?

*PRAY:* Ask God to nudge your heart toward choosing wisely in the moments when your behaviour is in danger of contradicting the principles of your faith.





DAY 21 | *Saturday, Dec. 19*

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## Shame and Redemption: Bathsheba

*Scripture: 2 Samuel 12:13-25; Romans 8:28*

King David and Bathsheba, a married woman, had an affair. It was not just a bad choice on their part. This affair sparked a storm of tragedy. David arranged to have Bathsheba's husband murdered, and their child from the affair died shortly after he was born.

Yet even in this dark valley, God did not forget Bathsheba. Over time and after repentance, she had more children, and her son Solomon became one of the greatest kings in Israel's history, the wisest ruler in all the land. Mary and Joseph are both descendants of David and Bathsheba, one through Solomon and one through another son, Nathan.

When Mary gave birth to baby Jesus, she may not have known that she, too, was giving birth to a king of the Jews, who is the King of *all* kings. What a great reminder that even in the darkness of sin and death, we can repent, and God can weave our imperfect stories into a complex and beautiful tapestry of redemption for ourselves and others.

*REFLECT:* Can you recall a time when God used an awful circumstance in your family's life for your good and His glory?

*PRAY:* Ask God for forgiveness of your sins and for the peace that comes from knowing He is continually working in your life.





week  
four

# week four card

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

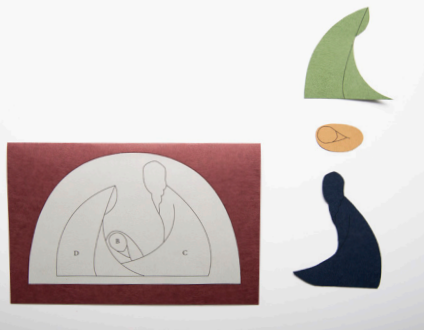
- 18" x 11" maroon card stock
- 18" x 11" cream card stock
- 18" x 11" gold yellow card stock
- 18" x 11" olive green card stock
- 18" x 11" dark blue card stock
- scissors
- glue stick
- card template (find in appendix)



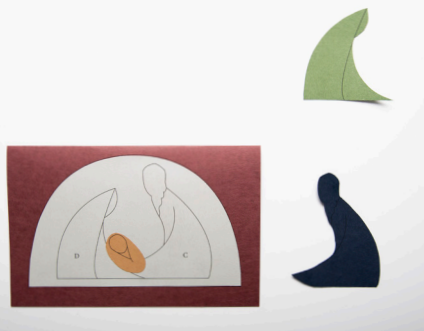
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2



3



## DIRECTIONS

1. Print the template found in the appendix that looks like image No. 1 on maroon card stock. Fold in half. Print the Nativity background scene on cream card stock. Print the baby on gold card stock. Print Joseph on dark blue card stock. Print Mary on olive green card stock.
2. Centre the background to the front of the card. Glue it in place. Let dry.
3. Match the baby to the baby on the background. Glue in place. Repeat for Mary and Joseph.
4. Write a note, sign your name and give to a friend, neighbour or relative.

DAY 22 | *Sunday, Dec. 20*

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## An Obedient Servant: Mary

*Scripture: Luke 1:26-38, 46-55*

How would you respond if a shining angel of God came to your home? What if he told you the plans and expectations you had for your life would be altered forever?

When Mary was told that she was going to have a baby, she was puzzled. In human terms, there was no way she could be pregnant.

"How can this be?" she asked.

Mary needed an explanation on how this defiance of natural law could work. And when the angel clarified, she surrendered herself to God, trusting that His plan for her life was best (Luke 1:46-55). Indeed, it's likely the Lord chose Mary *because* of her great faith and her servant's heart. God wanted to work through someone like her because her child would grow to offer His life in the greatest act of servanthood the universe had ever seen.

And Mary would live to see it all—everything from her son's beautiful beginning to His violent death. His miraculous ministry, His arrest and trial, His death on the Cross that covered the sins of all, and His resurrected form. Mary couldn't have known all the details about God's design to redeem the world, but she knew that He was good and that His plans were trustworthy.

*REFLECT:* God's purpose for your life won't be all fun and games, but it will be *good*. How can you be more willing to offer yourself to God's intentions for your life?

*PRAY:* Ask God to give you a heart like Mary's, willing to trust in His ways even when it doesn't seem pleasant or make sense.



DAY 23 | *Monday, Dec. 21*

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## A Sacrifice for Sin: Adam and Eve

*Scripture: Romans 7:7-12*

Have you ever done the exact thing a parent or teacher told you not to do? When we read the account in Genesis 3 of humanity's first sin, which Adam and Eve gave in to, we see their swift and sorrowful expulsion from the Garden of Eden, an immediate separation from God's presence. Eden was the place where people's relationship with God flourished. It was where the Creator and His creation walked together in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8). No more could this be. God was pure, and humans were impure. They simply couldn't be together.

Yet God still cared. And loved. He used animal skins to clothe Adam and Eve, covering their nakedness and their shame. The death of the animals to provide their skins were the world's first sacrifice to cover a sin, a glimpse at the final sacrifice Jesus paid to cover the price for the sins of the whole world. And it all started when He put on human skin to clothe himself and came to earth.

Without such a sacrifice to atone for sin, we might live eternally separated from God. But God is love (1 John 4:8); Christ's sacrifice bridges the gap. With His birth, death and resurrection, He provided the way for us to come back into a relationship with Him.

*REFLECT:* What is it about having rules—even if it's just one rule—that makes us want to break them?

*PRAY:* Thank God for the gift of Jesus, who paid the price for our sin. Ask Him for wisdom and guidance to make good decisions when faced with temptation.



DAY 24 | Tuesday, Dec. 22

## A Test of a Faithfulness: Abraham

*Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14; 1 Peter 4:13*

Remember when your teacher would read off the attendance list, and when your name was called, you responded, “Here”?

That was how Abraham responded one day when God called his name. “Here I am,” Abraham said. His words were clear: *I am available.*

But Abraham certainly couldn’t have been eager to accomplish the task God had for him: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering.”

Yet Abraham proceeded to obey the Lord, making preparations for the sacrifice. Many have wondered what he was thinking at the time. *Why would God want his son dead? Wasn’t Isaac the start of Abraham’s many descendants whom God had promised him?*

As the two climbed into the hills, Isaac carrying the wood strapped to his back, the boy asked what animal they would use for the sacrifice. “God will provide . . . the lamb,” Abraham said.

And the Lord did indeed provide a sacrifice, a ram caught in the thicket. Many centuries later, God again provided a sacrifice, a Lamb—in the form of a baby. He sent His only Son to earth to save humankind from death. That baby is the Lamb of God. We celebrate His birth on Christmas Day.

*REFLECT:* Sometimes God allows bad things to happen in your life. You can let it draw you closer to Him or harden your heart against God. How have you learned to trust God during dark times?

*PRAY:* Ask God to help your family trust in His longer-term plans and provisions when you face painful times.



DAY 25 | *Wednesday, Dec. 23*

## Salvation Comes From the Lord: Joshua

*Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9*

**H**as anyone ever told you how you got your name? Does it have a special meaning or relevance in your family?

When an angel informed Joseph that Mary's baby already had a name, he was likely surprised.

"You shall call his name Jesus," the angel instructed him. "For he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus? As in . . . *Joshua? Yahweh is Saviour?* To Jews of the day, it was a well-known name. And it told Joseph something about why the baby would be important. The name linked Jesus to a major figure in the long story of God's work to redeem His people.

Joseph would have undoubtedly remembered all the old accounts of Joshua, one of Israel's great heroes. Joshua was a gifted leader, a commander of Israel's army. He served as Moses' assistant governing Israel, and Moses later anointed him to take over the job. Joshua never lost faith in the Lord's promise to give the Promised Land to the Israelites, and so God used Joshua to save His people and bring them into that land.

A good name for a saviour! Joshua, though flawed, led God's people into the land He'd promised. The greater Joshua, the perfect Jesus Christ, leads us to a land where there is no suffering or pain, a place where we will dwell forever in God's presence.

*REFLECT:* What promises of God bring you the most hope?

*PRAY:* Thank God for His transformative work in your life, that He continues to pursue you and fulfill His promises.



DAY 26 | *Thursday, Dec. 24*

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## One Big Moment of Bravery: Esther

*Scripture: Esther 4:12-17; Hebrews 4:15-16*

What's the most nervous you've ever been? The night of your big trumpet solo? The morning of the regional track meet? It takes guts to face those big moments.

Joseph and Mary were probably nervous, too. They had to travel far from their home, with Mary ready to deliver her child. Then when they arrived in Bethlehem, they were unable to find a decent place to stay. They must have been nervous when Mary went into labour—giving birth to a child, their first, who was the Saviour of the world.

Another woman, many centuries before, also faced a big moment. The young queen Esther had a much bigger moment than what most of us will ever face. Visiting the king without being summoned was an offense punishable by death in the days of King Ahasuerus—even for the queen. But the lives of many were at stake. So she put on her royal robes and walked bravely into the king's court to begin a desperate plan to save her people. It began with her asking the king to attend a special banquet (Esther 5:4).

This was not a social dinner. She wanted to have the king's ear, to inform him of an evil plot that threatened the existence of her family and her people. Her plan succeeded. Esther helped the king recognise that his right-hand man was working in secret to exterminate the Jews.

Esther risked her life to save the people of Israel from physical death, showing us, long before the time of Jesus, that one person's courage and sacrifice can save millions.

*REFLECT:* Doing the right thing can take a bold moment of bravery. How can you gain the confidence to make these big choices?

*PRAY:* Thank God for the self-confidence He gives you when you become part of His family.





**CHRISTMAS DAY!** | *Friday, Dec. 25*

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## **He Dwelled Among Us: Jesus**

*Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11*

**W**hen you pray, how do you picture the God who listens? What *does* God look like? It's a question as old as time. Throughout Scripture, God is represented in many ways. A father and a fire. A whirlwind and a whisper. Like a mighty warrior, He attacks evil. Like a mother hen, He shelters His chicks under His wings. He is feared, adored and worshiped.

On a night long ago, Mary may have studied the face of her newborn boy. She was exhausted, likely still in pain from childbirth. She was perhaps the first to glimpse a profound truth: God had emptied himself of His divine qualities, choosing to take on weak, flawed human flesh and to dwell among us.

What a journey! He would endure heat, hunger and thirst. He would experience the range of emotions, encounters and experiences that define the human condition.


Why did God choose this way to redeem us? He wants us to know that He understands how we feel. He has experienced what we experience, yet He serves us with the full heart and character of the Creator. He would say it to His followers: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

What does God look like? Look to Jesus, and you will know.

*REFLECT:* What does it mean to your faith that the Creator of the universe knows what it's like to be *you*?

*PRAY:* Thank God that He is a God who can relate to your experiences. Ask Him to draw you closer to Him when you feel as though no one understands you.






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# appendix

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May the angel's tidings of good news  
and God's great joy be with you  
throughout the coming year!

*"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring  
you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'"  
(Luke 2:10, ESV)*



tidings

of good

news

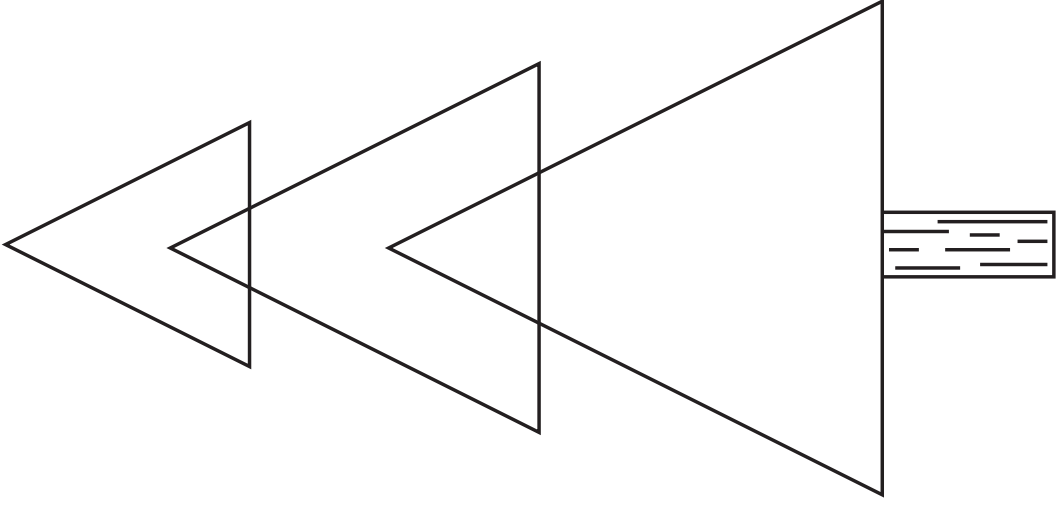
& great joy

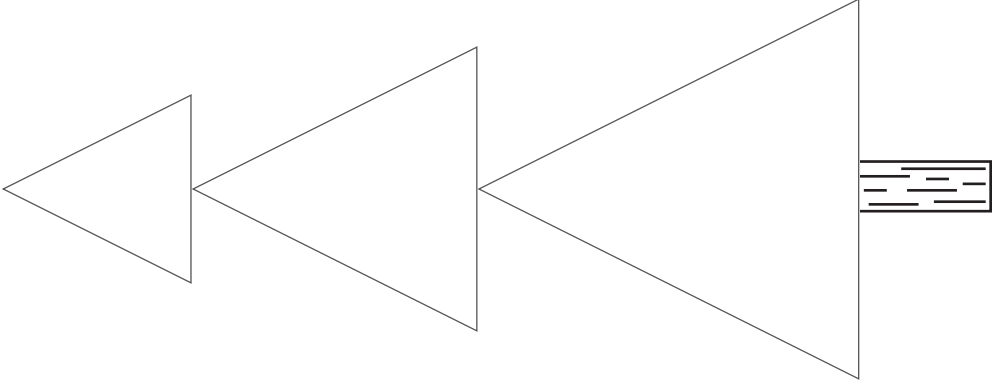




A star.  
A silent night.  
God's gift to all.

*"And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before  
them until it came to rest over the place where the child was."  
(Matthew 2:9, ESV)*





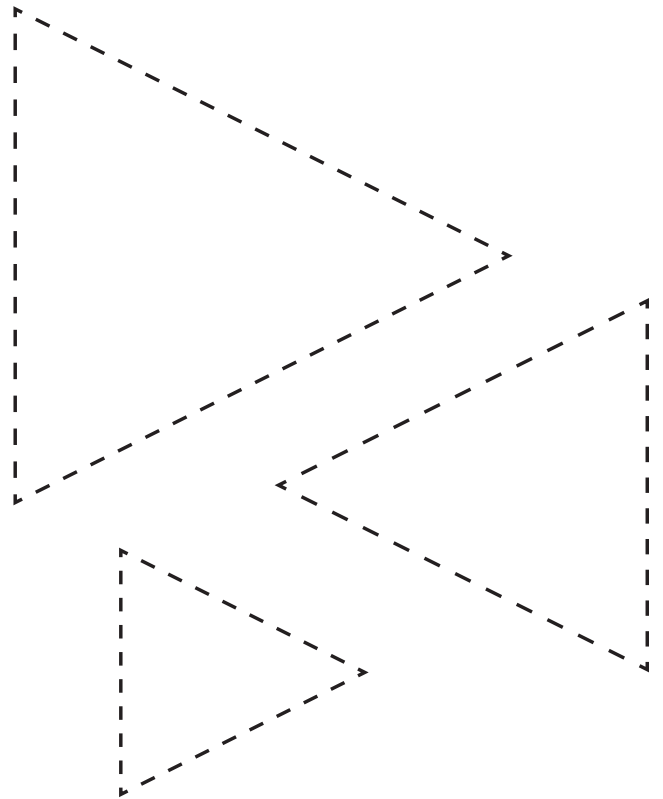
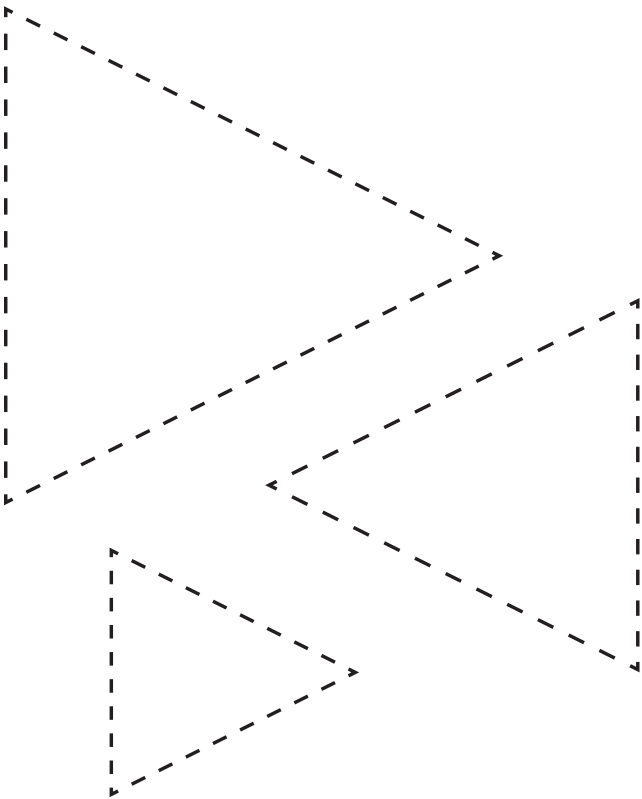
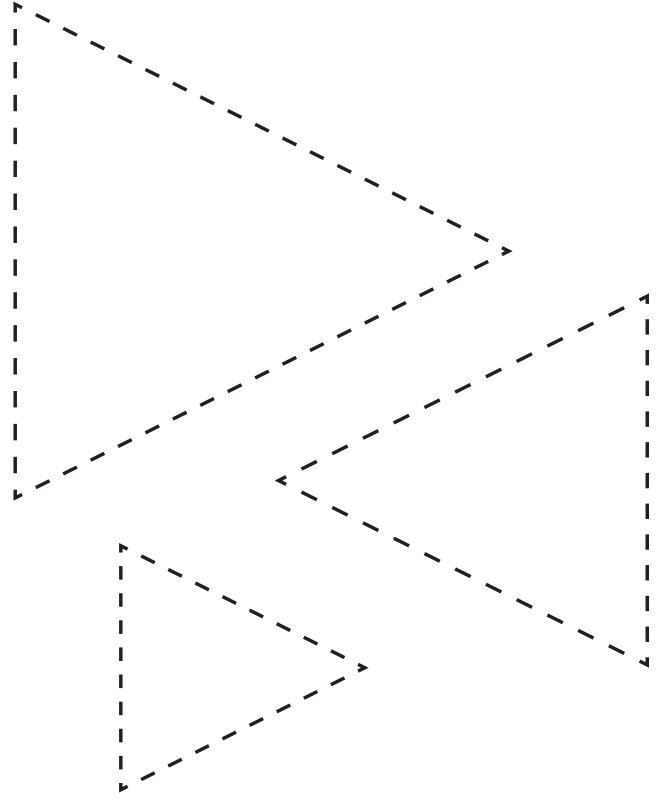
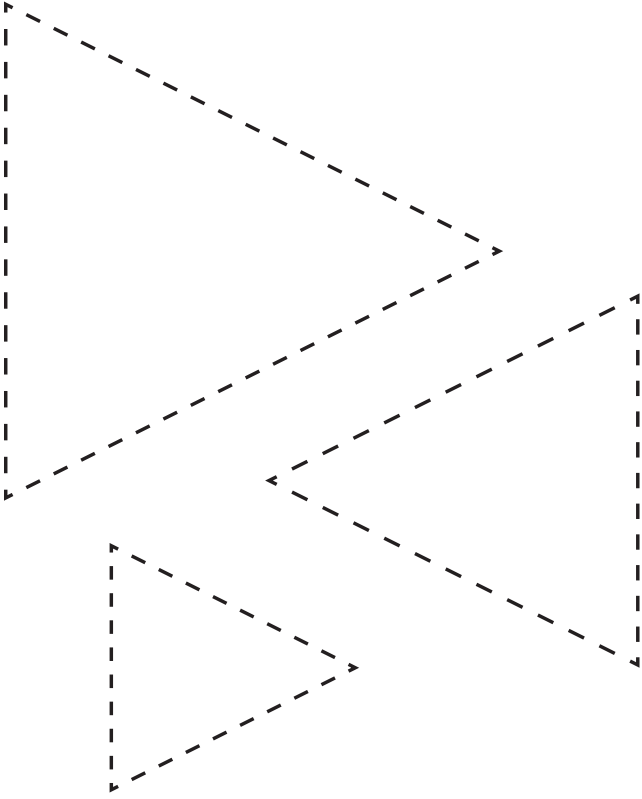


Jesus came to invite everyone  
into His family.

*"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree."  
(Romans 11:17, ESV)*

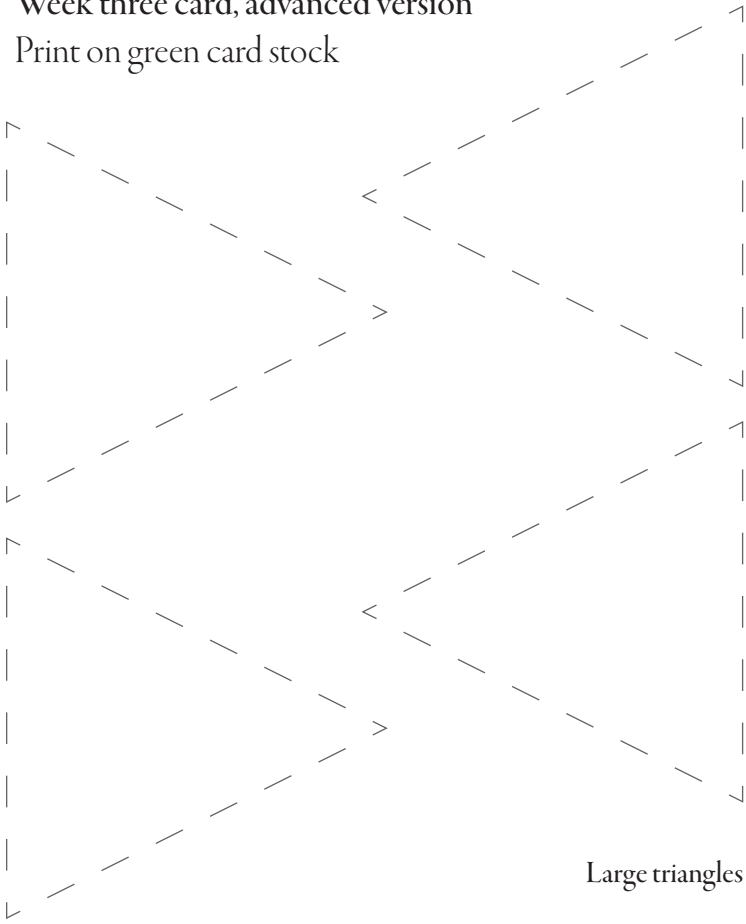
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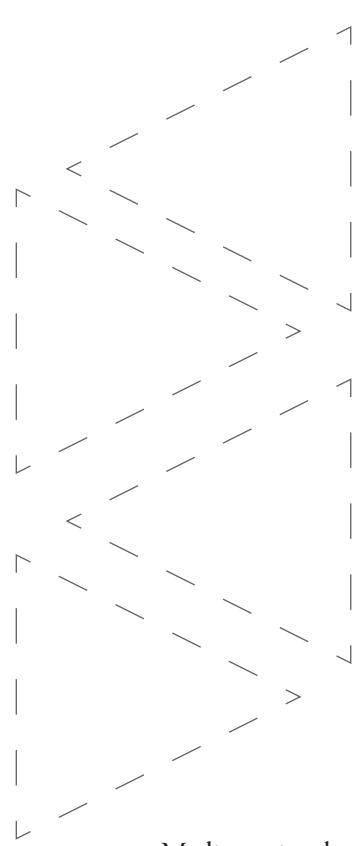


Week three card, advanced version

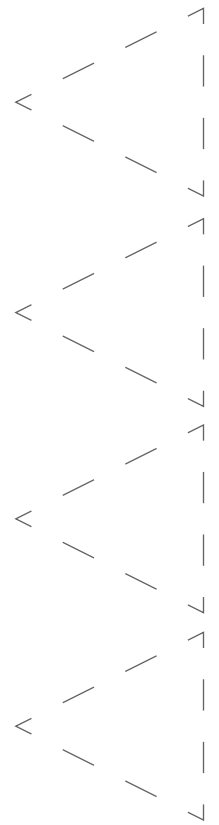
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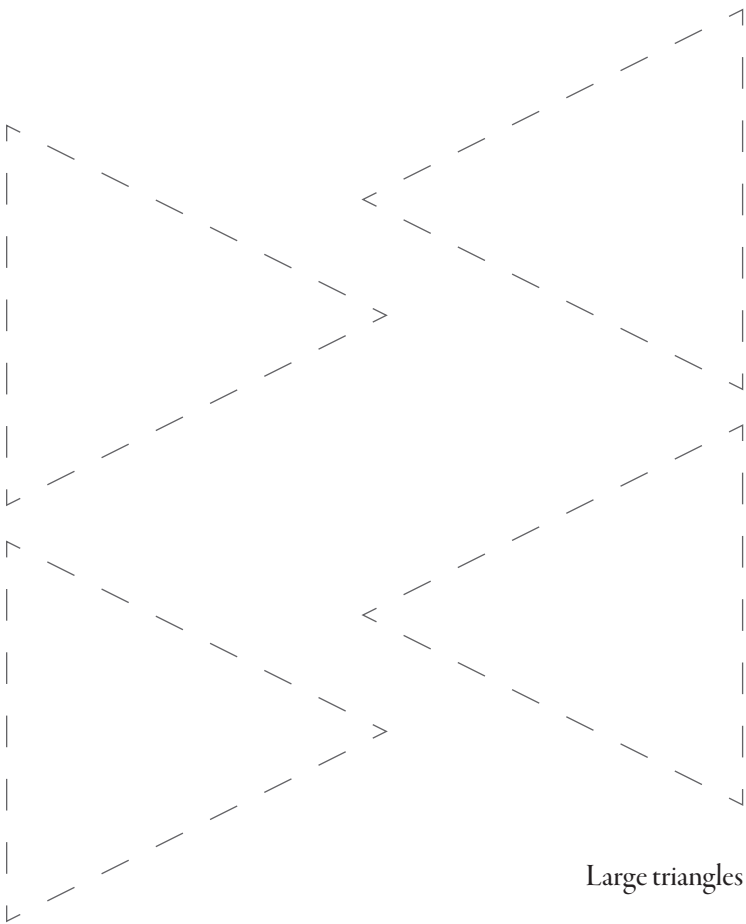
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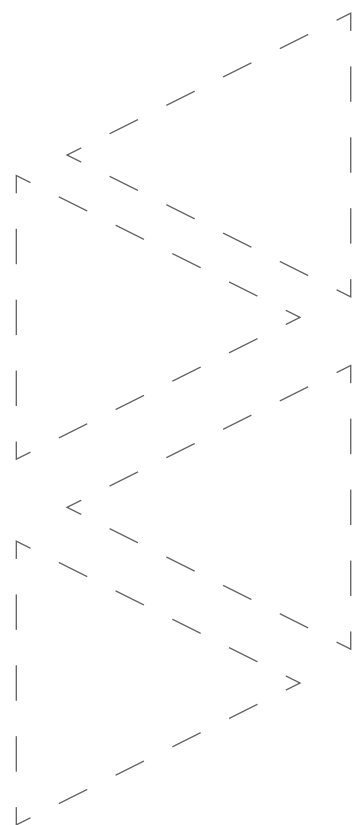
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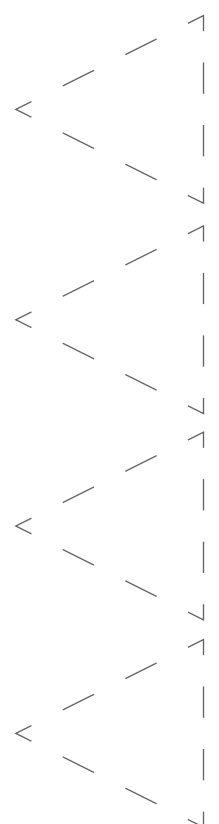
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Large triangles



Medium triangles



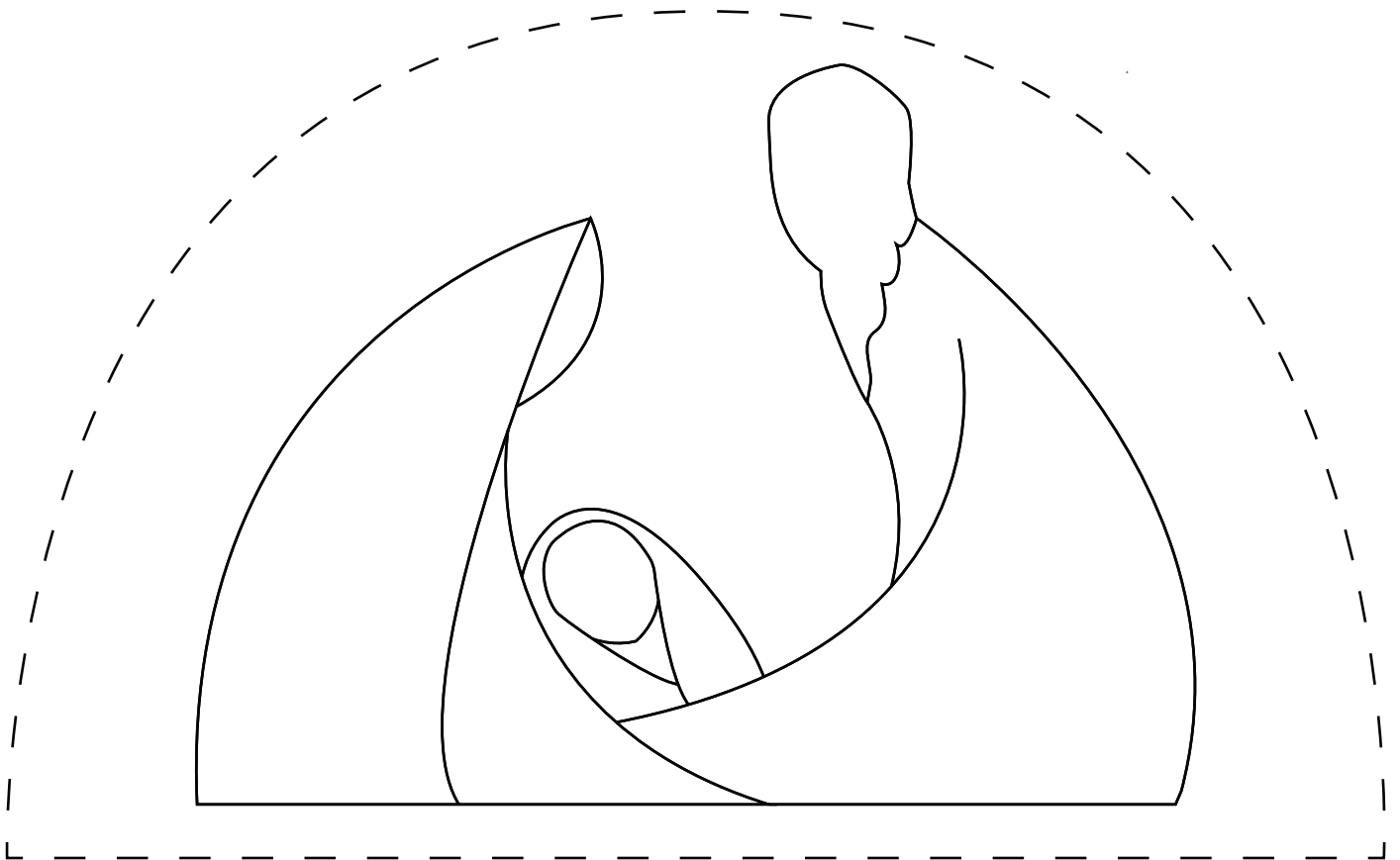
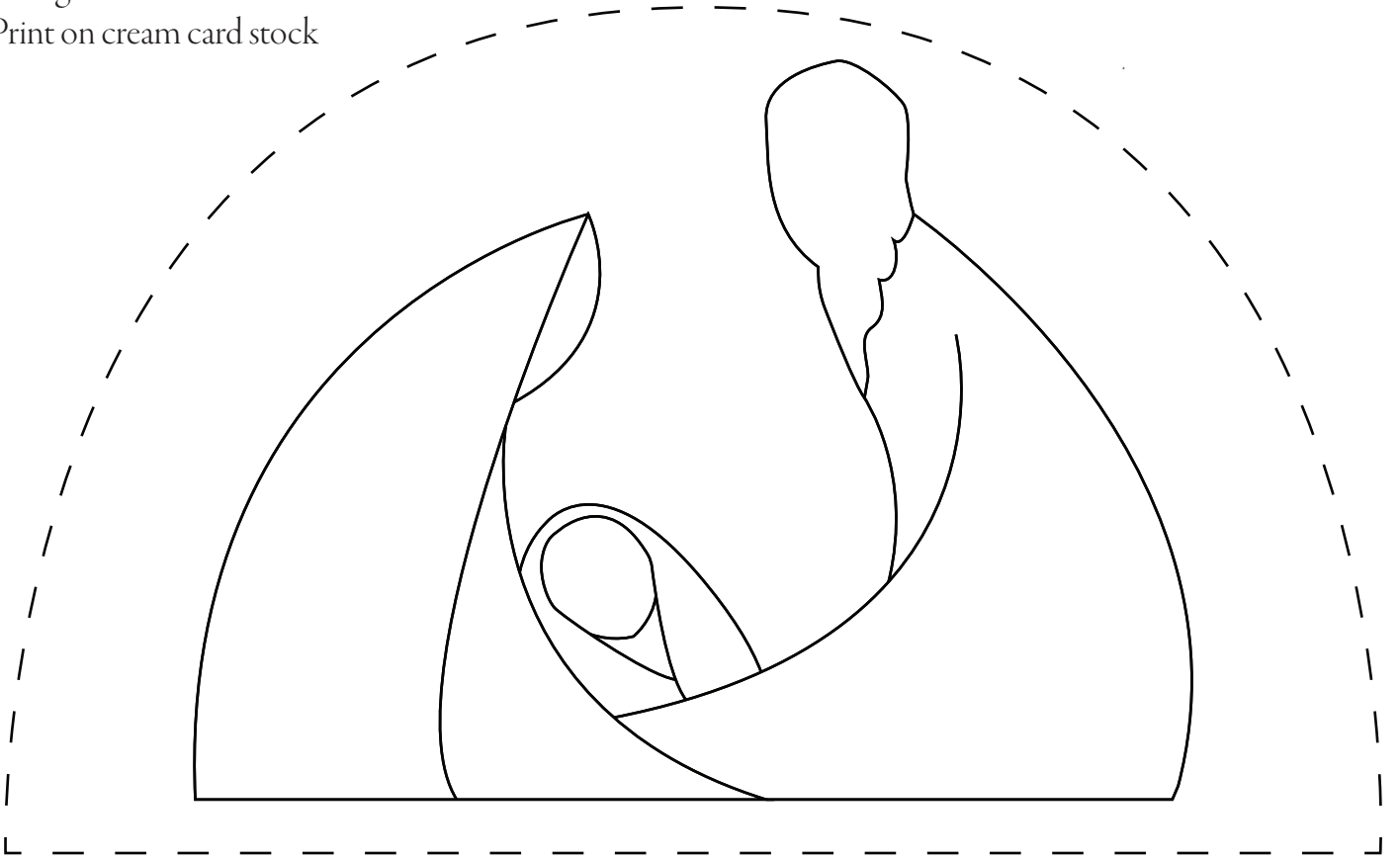
Small triangles

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God Everlasting Father, Prince of peace."  
(Isaiah 9:6, ESV)

Week four card

Background

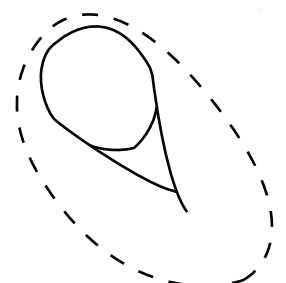
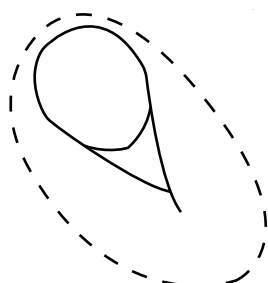
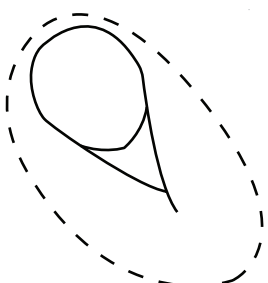
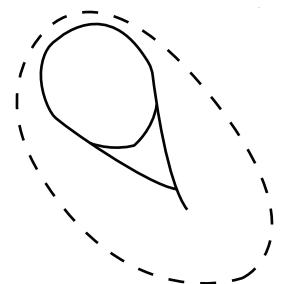
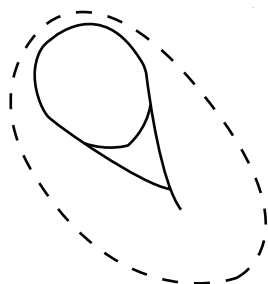
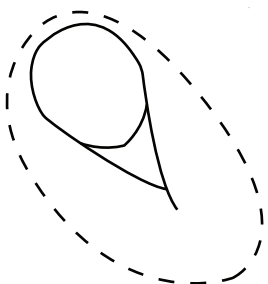
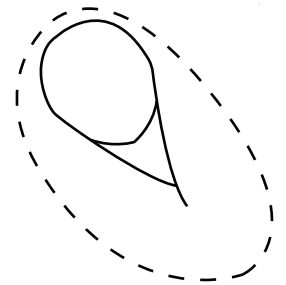
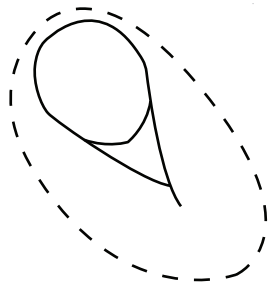
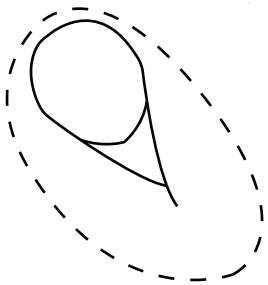
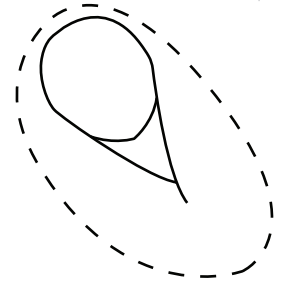
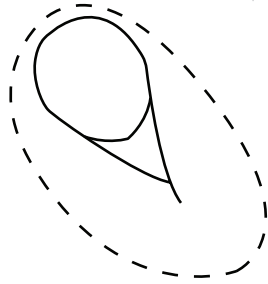
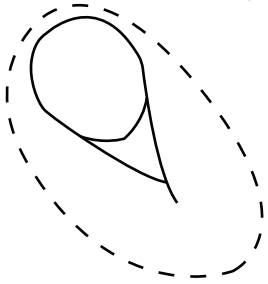
Print on cream card stock



Week four card

Baby

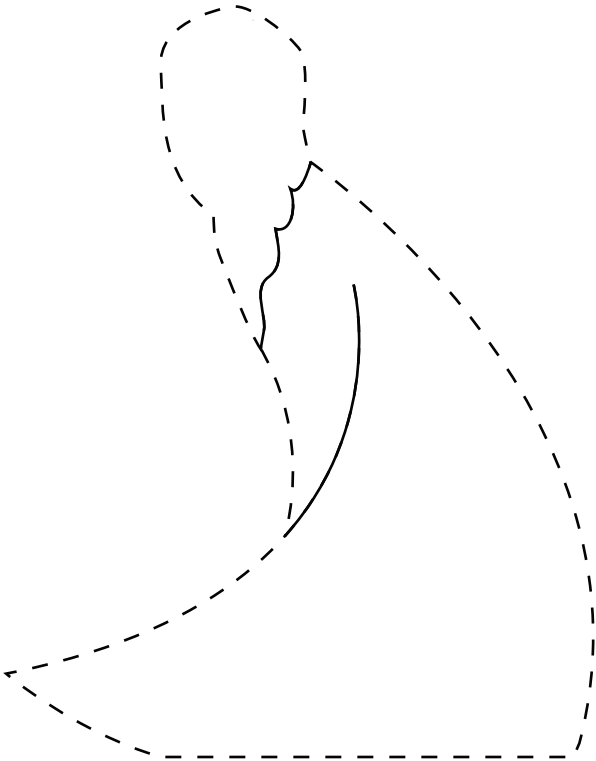
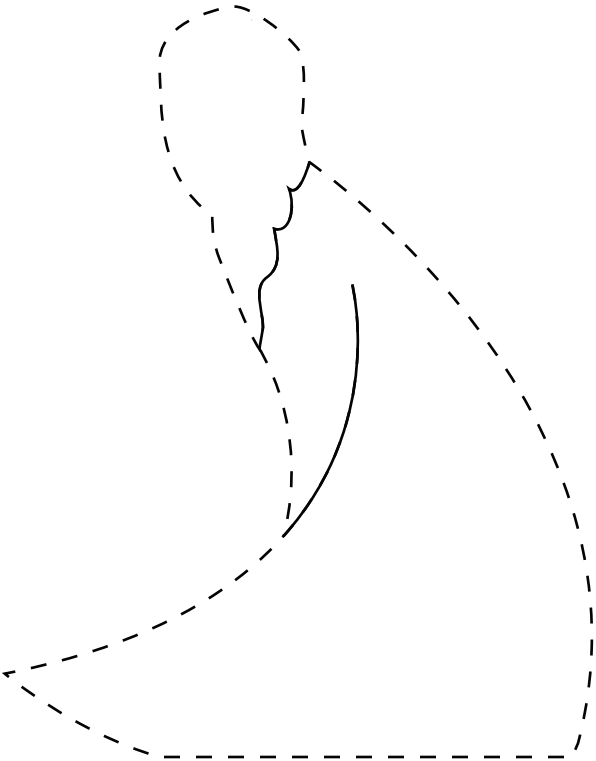
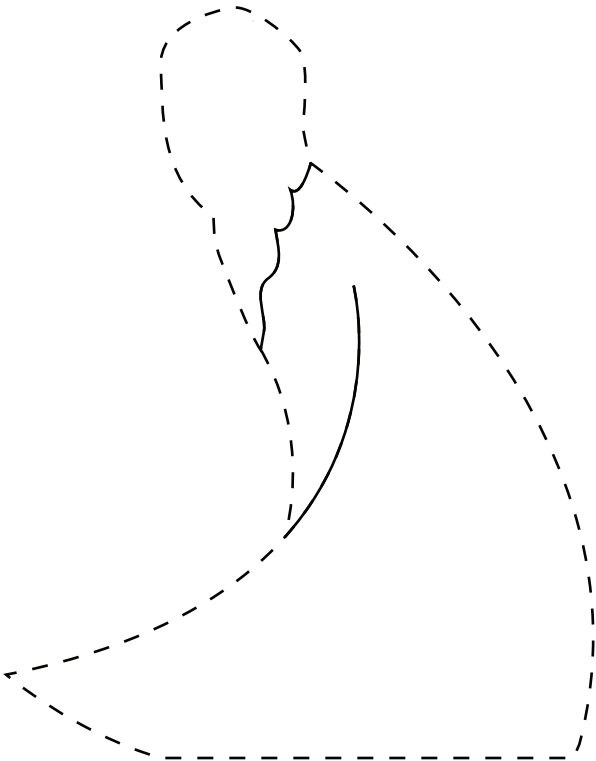
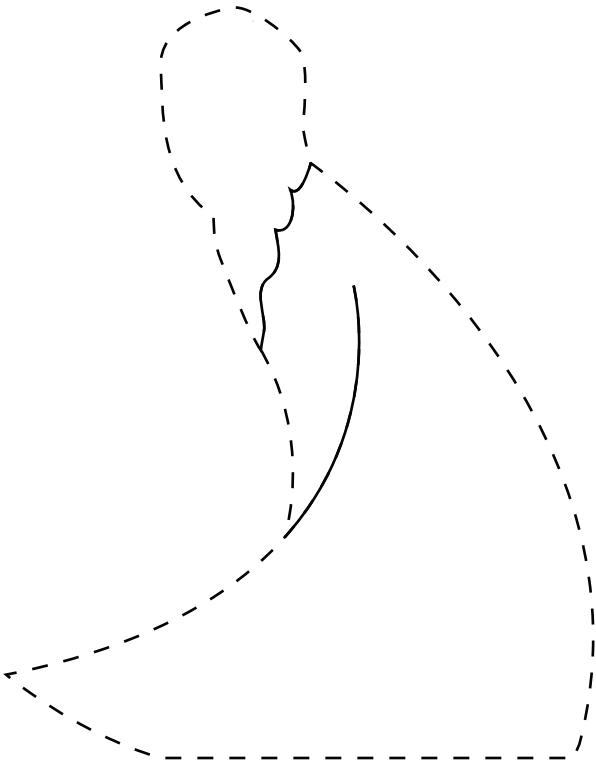
Print on gold card stock



Week four card

Joseph

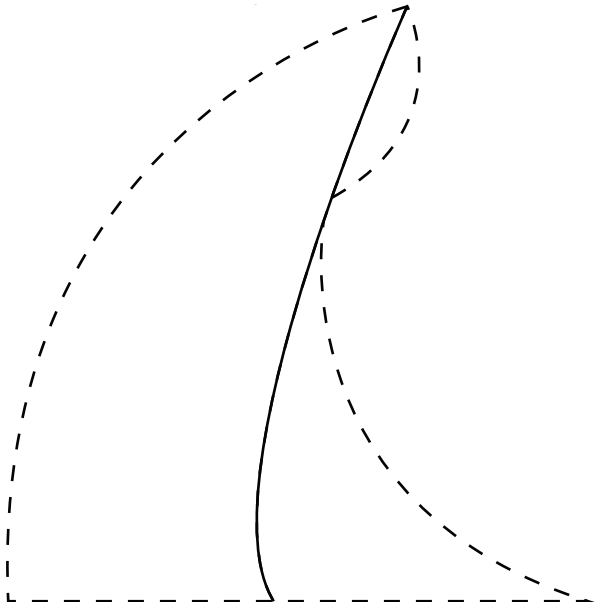
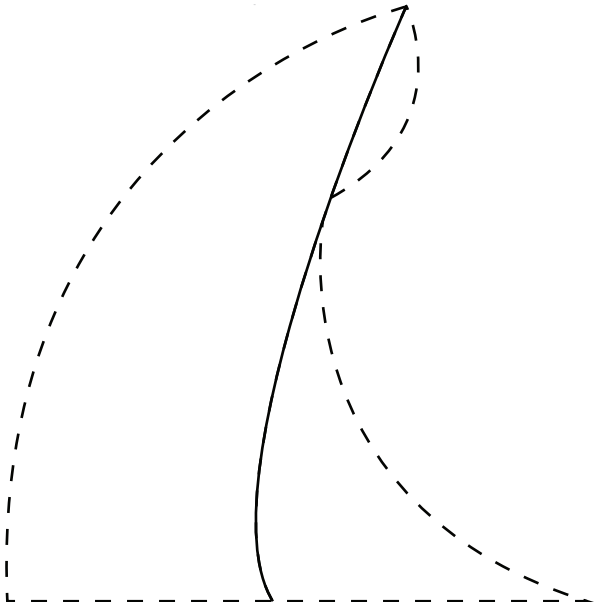
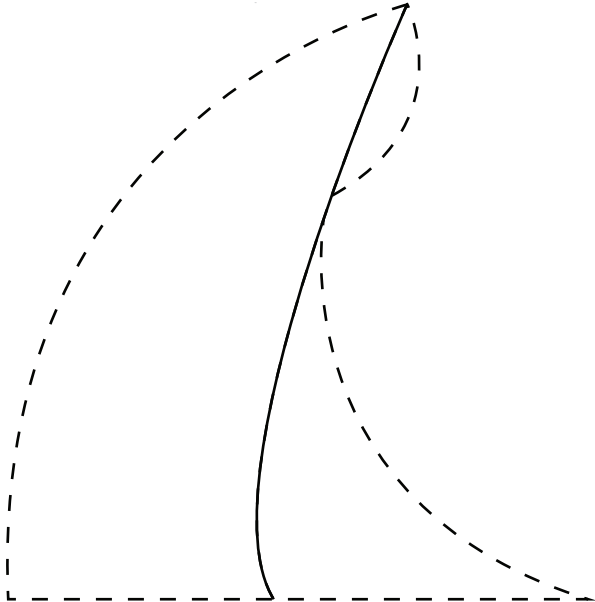
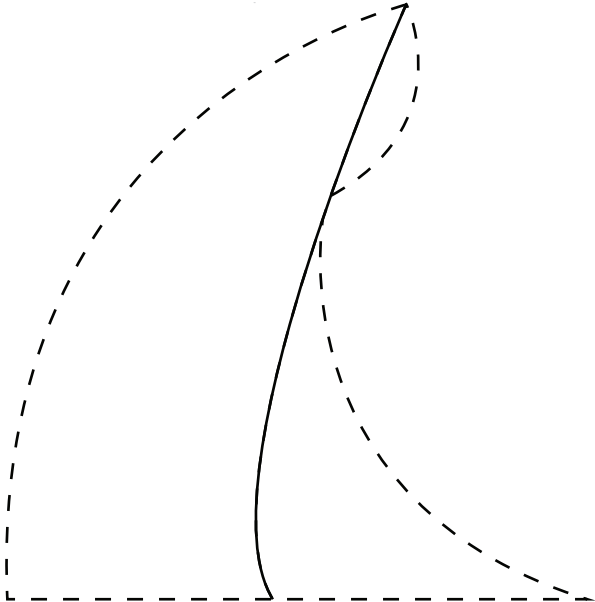
Print on dark blue card stock



Week four card

Mary

Print on olive green card stock





# Bible Literacy Resources for Your Family



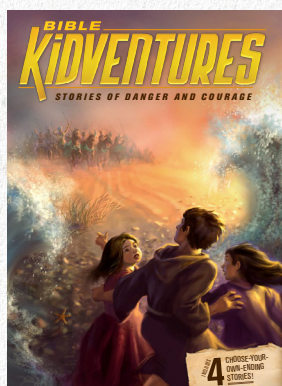
## NIV® Adventures in Odyssey Bible

Kids can enjoy reading God's Word with the characters from Adventures in Odyssey® audio dramas.



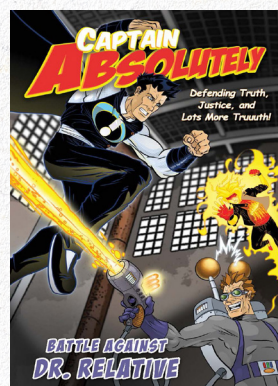
## The Imagination Station®

Explore history from a biblical perspective with Patrick and Beth, two characters from Odyssey. For ages 5 to 10.



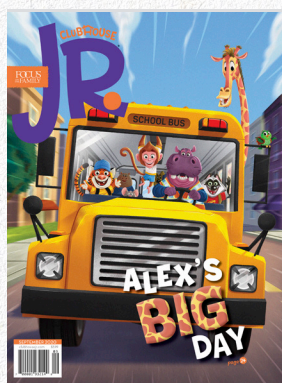
## Bible KidVentures

Get stories that build on a child's knowledge of the Bible with fun and entertaining short stories. For ages 7 to 12.



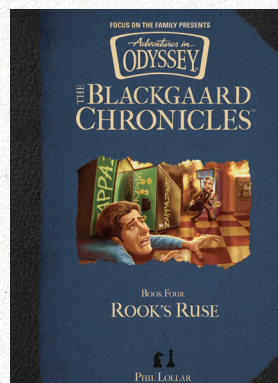
## Captain Absolutely: Defending Truth, Justice, and Lots More Truuuth!

Josiah King battles villains and defends God's truth.



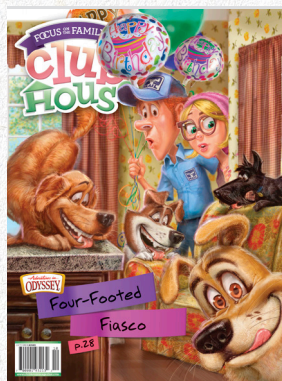
## Focus on the Family Clubhouse Jr.®

is an award-winning, biblically based magazine for 3- to 7-year-olds.



## Adventures in Odyssey: The Blackgaard Chronicles™

A book series that introduces stories based on the Adventures in Odyssey audio program.



## Focus on the Family Clubhouse®

magazine is an award-winning, biblically based publication for 8- to 12-year-olds.



## Adventures in Odyssey Club™

Each month you'll get access to a brand-new, exclusive Adventures in Odyssey episode and activities, in addition to access to the entire Adventures in Odyssey series. [AIOclub.org](http://AIOclub.org)

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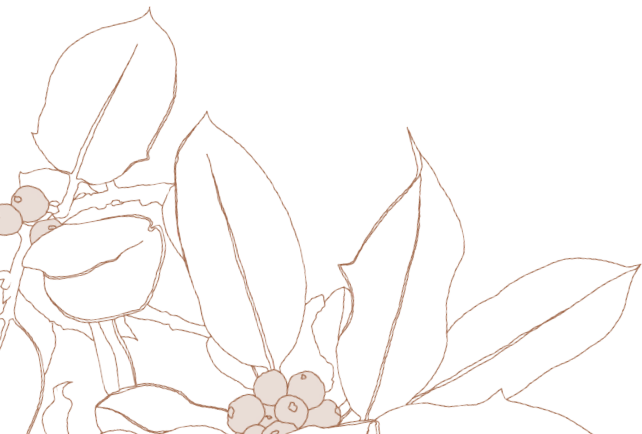
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