



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 37: Life Inside the Blessing

Matthew 5-7

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/-W5C1oaoYP8>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the shema, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. There they continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

God raised up prophets, but the people demanded a king. Kings continued to miss the mark, and the kingdom divided into the north and south. God stuck with the people through leaders and prophets, and continued to call the people back to God, even as first the northern, and then the southern kingdom fell to invading powers. Some of the people were sent into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the kingdom. Through prophets and everyday people, God continued to stick with the scattered people and to reveal that God is so much bigger than they imagined. The people were finally able to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

As we begin the story of the New Testament, Rome is the power in charge and the people of God are waiting for a Messiah. This Messiah is announced, first with a surprising genealogy, then through an angel to Mary. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, and there, Jesus was born, proclaimed by angels, visited by shepherds, blessed by Simeon and Anna, and sought by magi. When Jesus’s life was in danger, his parents fled with him to Egypt, where they remained as refugees until it was safe for them to return and settle in Nazareth. As a child in Nazareth, Jesus grew up in the wisdom of God. His cousin John went before him, preparing the way, and when Jesus was ready to begin his ministry, he came to John to be baptized and was proclaimed by God. Jesus called a community of people to follow him.

Key verse: Matthew 5:14; 5:43-45; 7:12

Tell the story: Jesus went up on a mountain and began to teach. In what we often call the “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus described the fulfillment of God’s way of love. He told the people how God wanted them to live their lives, sometimes in ways that were very different from the world around them.

- Read Matthew 5-7 (the whole “sermon”). Or excerpts: Matthew 5:1-19; 5:38-48; 6:9-14; 6:19-21; 7:12; 7:15-20; 7:24-29.
- Read page 194-203 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Jesus goes up on a mountain to give wisdom. Who else do you remember going up on the mountain?
 - As you read this, what sounds familiar? Does what Jesus says in his sermon match up with what you've learned about God's way earlier in the story?
 - Jesus quotes and references so much scripture in these two chapters! We won't list all of them here, but if you have a study Bible, start digging in.
 - Jesus calls us the "light of the world." You may have heard Jesus called the light of the world, too. He's called that in Philippians 2:15 and John 8:12.
 - Notice Jesus' instructions in 5:39-40. Think ahead to what will eventually happen to Jesus. Does he live what he preaches?
 - 6:9-13 may be familiar to you! But wait - isn't there a part missing at the end? The last few words of the Lord's prayer, the doxology, weren't added until the time of King Henry VIII.
 - Is 7:12 familiar to you? We often call it the "golden rule." It's a way of interpreting the law and the prophets.
- **Background information:**
 - The phrase "blessed are..." is common in Jewish writings. Sometimes it's translated as "happy are..." Remember back to our story of God calling a family as you think about what blessing means here!
 - "Meek" (5:5) in Hebrew thought refers to people who "don't take advantage of their position." (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 19.)
 - The word for "merciful" (5:7) is the Greek version *hesed* - that word from the Ruth and Naomi story! Steadfast love, one of the two primary aspects of God (the other is "justice").
 - In verse 29, Jesus refers to "hell." The Greek here is *Gehenna*, an actual, physical place, a "valley south of Jerusalem associated with child sacrifice." By Jesus' time, *Gehenna* was often used figuratively to describe torture after death for the wicked. (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 21.)
 - "Go the second mile" (5:42) - Roman soldiers would often conscript people to carry their gear for one mile, so this had very real connotations.
 - *Teleios*, the Greek word we interpret as "perfect," implies wisdom and maturity more than our definition of perfection.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Matthew puts the beatitudes and the sayings of Jesus into one long sermon. Luke spreads it out a little more and focuses more on the here and now. The parallel texts are mostly in Luke 6, but keep popping up through Luke 14. Take a look at the parallels - how are they different and how are they similar? Why do you think the writers did things differently?
 - Christians are often tempted to say that Jesus contradicts the Old Testament. But we can see here that this sermon is one long interpretation of what's already there in scripture. Why do you think we've dismissed the Old Testament so often in our history? Play that out - how has this disregard impacted the world?
 - The word interpreted as "wealth" in 6:24 is the Greek *mamonas*, sometimes said in English as "mammon." It means so much more than wealth - it means placing trust in something other than God. In a sense, this idea of where our trust is pervades this whole sermon. What does it mean in life to place our trust in God?

Microsong: "Life Inside the Blessing" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/4exrjUZ5jSc>)

Jesus teaches the disciples, "This is the life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/txDXoemiDaE>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.

The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"

Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"

Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.

God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.

Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.

Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.

God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...

A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.

Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.

God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...

Is there any hope left, is there any hope left, is there any hope left for you, Jerusalem?

Any hope? Any hope left? Is there any hope left for you?

By the streams of Babylon, how can we sing when you are gone, Jerusalem...

I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.

Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.

Finally God's family rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem. God plunges them into a sea of joy and celebration of Only God. God is One, Only God.

Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.

Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus

The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at me, now I'm the luckiest person around.

Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.

She has her baby, shepherds see angels declaring God's glory and peace among people.

The Spirit sends shepherds and elders and prophets to tell those who wait their Messiah has come.

Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...

Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, oooh.

Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.

Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."

Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhh ooohh.

Jesus teaches the disciples "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."

God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



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Week 38: The Wind Dies Down

Matthew 14:22-33

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/PcahiEfs3xQ>

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Then Jesus began to teach and heal and show people God’s way of love. He preached what we call the “sermon on the mount,” a fulfillment of the scriptures.

- **Key verse:** Matthew 14:27

Tell the story: Jesus needed a little time alone, so he sent his disciples ahead of him on a boat. A storm came up, and the boat was being battered about. Jesus walked to the boat full of disciples. They were terrified, then impressed, and Peter wanted to give it a try. Peter walked on water, too - then noticed the wind, got scared, began to sink, and cried out to Jesus. Jesus helped him back into the boat. And the disciples recognized Jesus as the Son of God.

- Read Matthew 14:22-33
- Read page 212 in the *Shine On* story Bible (a similar story)

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Jesus walks on the water. He has power over the water! What does this remind you of? Think back to our Old Testament stories...
 - When else in the story have people been terrified when God does something? When else have you heard, “Don’t be afraid” from an angel or from God?
 - Read what came before in this scripture. Jesus got the news that his cousin John was beheaded. He tried to be alone to process it, but the crowds followed it. He fed the multitude. This passage begins with him, at last, getting to retreat from the crowds. Imagine this day for Jesus.
- **Background information:**
 - Verse 27 is such a comforting one. It carries echoes of some familiar Old Testament stories, most notably of Exodus 3:14. “It is I” echoes “I am who I am.”
 - “You of little faith” is a frequent phrase Jesus says to the disciples. It’s not a condemnation, rather an encouragement to grow in faith.
 - “Son of God” in verse 33 has a divine connotation. We’ve seen Jesus called that other times, too. We’ll continue to see it when people recognize Jesus.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Read this scene and imagine it in different ways. Try it with a very calm Jesus, a playful Jesus, a parental Jesus. Try Peter as a toddler, as an intense adult...you get the picture. This scene can play out in many different ways, and we can find ourselves in it.
 - Peter overthought it. He was fine until he noticed the obstacles, then he froze. Does this sound familiar to you? When has Jesus needed to reach out his hand to catch you?
 - There are numerous stories of Peter missing the mark. Yet Jesus nicknames him “rock.” Let that give you hope.

Microsong: “The Wind Dies Down” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/P9QdCPCLKi4>)

Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies down.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/rvblWcsZ-Cc>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh
A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.
God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.
The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.
Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"
Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"
Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.
God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.
Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.
Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.
God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...
A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.
Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.
God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...
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I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.
Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.
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Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.
Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus
The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at me, now I'm the luckiest person around."
Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.
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Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...
Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, oohh.
Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.
Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."
Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhh oohhh.
Jesus teaches the disciples "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."
Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies down.
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Week 39: And No One Left Out

Mark 6:30-44; Mark 8:1-9

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/JBdZZJrIoDU>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. There they continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

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Then Jesus began to teach and heal and show people God’s way of love. He preached what we call the “sermon on the mount,” fulfillment of the scriptures. Jesus walked on water and the disciples recognized him as the Son of God.

- **Key verses:** Mark 6:41-42

Tell the story: Here we have two stories of Jesus miraculously feeding crowds of people, and these stories actually come right before and right after last week’s story of Jesus walking on water. These stories seem very similar, but look closer and you’ll see some key differences!

- Read Mark 6:30-44 and Mark 8:1-9
- Read page 210 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - When else have people been hungry, and then God miraculously provides food? “Daily food...” “...widow’s gift...” What might this story have to do with those stories?
 - Notice the words of Jesus blessing and breaking the bread (6:41). Is this familiar? When will we see this again?
 - Jesus cares about our physical needs. That’s important.
- **Background information:**
 - “Sheep without a shepherd” (6:34) - one of many times Jesus (or more generally, God) is referred to as a shepherd.
 - Numerology time! Like we have said before, numbers mean something in the Bible. Here’s the number breakdown for these passages:
 - 5 (loaves, 5,000 men in Mark 6): The book of the law of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy - otherwise known as the Pentateuch).
 - 12 (baskets leftover in Mark 6): The twelve tribes of Israel.
 - 7 (loaves, baskets left over in Mark 8): Number of completion (think about the 7 “days” of creation).
 - 4 (4,000 people in Mark 8): The four corners of the earth, the whole earth.
 - Bonus: Read 7:24-30. The woman was Syrophenician, a widow, with a child who needed healing. Think back to one of our other stories of Elijah...
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Read these stories and make side-by-side notes of them so you can compare them. Notice what is the same and what is different. Here are a few things in particular to watch for:
 - Look at the map - one of these stories is in Jewish territory, and one is on the margins, in heavily Gentile territory.
 - Who is the most concerned with the people’s hunger in each story?
 - What are the numerology differences in each story?
 - The disciples and Jesus went by boat. The people noticed where they were headed, recruited people, and got there on foot before Jesus arrived. What?!

Microsong: “And No One Left Out” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/egDAbRCDIE>)

Jesus sees the crowds with compassion. So he teaches them for days and days. The people are hungry, the disciples say, “Send them away.” Jesus says, “Feed them, bring me what you have.” He takes it and breaks it and give it back. After everyone’s eaten there’s baskets left over... and no one left out.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Tultuf5ELCg>)

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Week 40: Like a Little Child Would

Matthew 19: 13-15, Mark 10:13-16

Intro Video: https://youtu.be/FMn-l7jHn_0

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- **Key verses:** Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:15

Tell the story: People brought their children to Jesus, and Jesus welcomed them. Jesus said that the kingdom of God belongs to children.

- Read Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16
- Read page 238 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice who the grumblers are in this story. Why do you think they're so grouchy about people bringing children to Jesus?
 - Picture this scene. Notice the tenderness of the language about Jesus' actions with the children.
- **Background information:**
 - The Jews of the Second Temple Period deeply valued children. This passage is an illustration of that. People brought children to be blessed by Jesus.
 - Every time the people of God try to restrict the definition of who belongs, God says, "Nope!" This is one more example in a long line of stories of this broadening of the understanding of the people of God.
 - The children were there. Of course the children were there. Where the parents went the children went. Babysitters weren't a thing. This little story brings up something that was there all along. Through this whole big story, the children are present. As you picture each part of the story, chances are children are there. Children belong in each part of the story.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Read what comes before and after this story (it's similar in each of these gospel accounts). Why do you think the blessing of the children is right here in the middle of conversations about divorce and a rich man being told he must give up everything to inherit eternal life?
 - The Victorians idealized childhood, and that still permeates our reading of this text. But Jesus isn't holding up children as an ideal here - rather, they are an example of how one enters the kingdom of God. They aren't ideal and perfect; but the disciples can certainly learn from the way they come to Jesus. How might you learn from the way children come to Jesus?

Microsong: "Like a Little Child Would" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/49pibOyjINc>)

The people bring their children to Jesus. The disciples shoo them away. When Jesus sees this, he is indignant and says, "Don't stop the children from coming, they're near to the center of it all. And beyond that, if you can't accept God's good government like a little child would, you don't get it at all!" (God's good government)

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/auG5fPUy60I>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh
A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.
God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.
The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.
Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"
Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"
Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.
God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.
Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.
Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.
God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...
A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.
Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.
God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...
Is there any hope left, is there any hope left, is there any hope left for you, Jerusalem?
Any hope? Any hope left? Is there any hope left for you?
By the streams of Babylon, how can we sing when you are gone, Jerusalem...
I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.
Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.
Finally God's family rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem. God plunges them into a sea of joy and celebration of Only God. God is One, Only God.
Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.
Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus
The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at me, now I'm the luckiest person around.
Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.
She has her baby, shepherds see angels declaring God's glory and peace among people.
The Spirit sends shepherds and elders and prophets to tell those who wait their Messiah has come.
Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...
Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, oohh.
Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.
Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."
Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhh oohhh.
Jesus teaches the disciples, "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."
Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies down.
Jesus sees the crowds with compassion. So he teaches them for days and days. The people are hungry. There's baskets left over and no one left out.
People bring their children to Jesus. Jesus blesses them and says, "You must accept God's good government like a little child would or you won't get in at all." Ohhhh ohhh
God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 41: What's Most Important

Luke 10:25-37; Mathew 22:36-40

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/oPyfS4E1Pts>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God's provision, living out God's commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. There they continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

God raised up prophets, but the people demanded a king. Kings continued to miss the mark, and the kingdom divided into the north and south. God stuck with the people through leaders and prophets, and continued to call the people back to God, even as first the northern, and then the southern kingdom fell to invading powers. Some of the people were sent into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the kingdom. Through prophets and everyday people, God continued to stick with the scattered people and to reveal that God is so much bigger than they imagined. The people were finally able to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

As we begin the story of the New Testament, Rome is the power in charge and the people of God are waiting for a Messiah. This Messiah is announced, first with a surprising genealogy, then through an angel to Mary. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, and there, Jesus was born, proclaimed by angels, visited by shepherds, blessed by Simeon and Anna, and sought by magi. When Jesus's life was in danger, his parents fled with him to Egypt, where they remained as refugees until it was safe for them to return and settle in Nazareth. As a child in Nazareth, Jesus grew up in the wisdom of God. His cousin John went before him, preparing the way, and when Jesus was ready to begin his ministry, he came to John to be baptized and was proclaimed by God. Jesus called a community of people to follow him.

Then Jesus began to teach and heal and show people God's way of love. He preached fulfillment of the scriptures, walked on water, fed people, and welcomed children.

- **Key verses:** Luke 10:27; Luke 10:36-37

Tell the story: Jesus said the most important thing is to love God and love your neighbor. When asked who the neighbor is, Jesus answered with a story about a man who got hurt and was helped by a surprising person.

- Read Luke 10:24-37; Matthew 22:36-40
- Read page 223 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**

- Do these words about loving God ring a bell? They should! Think back to the Shema. Jesus is also quoting Leviticus 19:18.
- Notice the characters in the story. What roles might they have had in society? Would they have been expected to behave as they did?
- Notice the lawyer's response to Jesus' question in 10:37. He can't even bring himself to say "Samaritan."

- **Background information:**

- In Matthew 22:40, Jesus seems to be saying that all scripture can be interpreted through the lens of love for God and neighbor, not that all other laws should be disregarded.
- Jesus often responded and taught in parables. A parable is, quite simply, a story that teaches us about something else. It's kind of like boiling a complex concept down to its essence and describing it with a story. Jesus uses a lot of stock characters from Hebrew midrash in his parables, so the listeners would have quickly recognized them.
- Jesus seems to interpret the word "neighbor" in the standard Jewish way of the times. (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 645-650.) A neighbor is someone we are in some kind of relationship/encounter with. He's not saying anything radical here; it's more of a reminder of what the listeners *should* already know.
- Samaritans were people of a specific geographical area, and were kind of a subgroup of Jews. They had their own systems and even scripture. They were on the margins of the group Jesus was speaking to in this story, looked down on and avoided.
- Levites were the tribe that was in charge of the temple equipment (see Numbers 1:50).
- Two denarii would have been about enough money for two months' lodging at an inn.

- **Conversation starters:**

- The question the lawyer asked was, "Who is my neighbor?" But is that really the question Jesus answered with his story? In his article "The Concept of Neighbor in Jewish and Christian Ethics," Michael Fagenblat proposes that rather than answering the question, Jesus illustrates *how to love*. (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 649.) Read the passage again. Do you agree?

Microsong: "What's Most Important"

(Listen: <https://youtu.be/yKH0NZM3dRk>)

What's most important? Which way to endless life? Love God with all your heart, and with all your mind. Your strength and your being, and love your neighbor as you love yourself. But who is my neighbor? You are a neighbor when you treat other humans with compassion and mercy whoever they are, whoever they are.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/glwynqMJBJU>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh
A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.
God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.
The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.
Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"
Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"
Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.
God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.
Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.
Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.
God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...
A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.
Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.
God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...
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By the streams of Babylon, how can we sing when you are gone, Jerusalem...
I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.
Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.
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Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.
Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus
The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at me, now I'm the luckiest person around.
Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.
She has her baby, shepherds see angels declaring God's glory and peace among people.
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Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...
Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, oooh.
Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.
Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."
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Jesus teaches the disciples, "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."
Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies down.
Jesus sees the crowds with compassion. So he teaches them for days and days. The people are hungry. There's baskets left over and no one left out.
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What's most important? Love God with everything and love your neighbor, whoever that may be.
God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 42: What Mary’s Choosing

Luke 10:38-42

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/VnYlJTJ3nTo>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. There they continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

God raised up prophets, but the people demanded a king. Kings continued to miss the mark, and the kingdom divided into the north and south. God stuck with the people through leaders and prophets, and continued to call the people back to God, even as first the northern, and then the southern kingdom fell to invading powers. Some of the people were sent into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the kingdom. Through prophets and everyday people, God continued to stick with the scattered people and to reveal that God is so much bigger than they imagined. The people were finally able to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

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Then Jesus began to teach and heal and show people God’s way of love. He preached fulfillment of the scriptures, walked on water, fed people, welcomed children, and told stories.

- **Key verses:** Luke 10:41-42

Tell the story: Jesus visited his friends, Mary and Martha. Martha was distracted by work, and Jesus encouraged her to pause and talk with them.

- Read Luke 10:38-42
- Read page 224 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**

- Notice that the writer of Luke calls the place, “a certain village.” According to the writer of John, Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, which was just east of Jerusalem.
- What comes right before this story in your Bible?
- How do you feel when you read this? Do you identify with a certain character? How does Jesus’ response to Martha make you feel?

- **Background information:**

- According to John’s gospel, Mary and Martha were sisters of Lazarus, who died and was brought back to life by Jesus.
- The NRSV interprets 10:40 as “many tasks.” The Greek *pollen diakonian* literally means “much serving” or “much ministry.”

- **Conversation starters:**

- Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened, the posture of a disciple. As you can see from the matter-of-fact way this is written, this was not unusual. Women learned and taught in synagogues and homes. Yet in our history, women have been excluded from the very thing Mary is doing here. What’s going on with that?
- Imagine the rest of the scene. Did Martha put her “much serving” aside and have a seat? If she did, did the “many tasks” get done? If they didn’t, was that okay? Did Mary (or Jesus) get up and take a turn doing them?
- We included miracle stories in this series, but not a miraculous healing - mostly because we wanted to make space for stories like this one. Consider, is there any healing that might be part of this story?

Microsong: “What Mary’s Choosing” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/ZHjNNAt6no4>)

Martha and Mary welcome Jesus to Bethany. Martha is serving while Mary’s just listening. Martha says, “Jesus, don’t you care? Tell my sister to do her part.” Jesus says, “Martha, you’re upset about many things, but one thing’s essential and it’s what Mary’s choosing here. This better thing will never be taken away”

Sing the big song: (Listen: https://youtu.be/uA_As2s-wJl)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,

(*continued on next page)

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.

The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"

Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"

Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.

God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.

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God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...

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Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.

God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...

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Any hope? Any hope left? Is there any hope left for you?

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Finally God's family rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem. God plunges them into a sea of joy and celebration of Only God. God is One, Only God.

Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.

Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus

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Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.

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Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.

Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."

Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhhh oohhhh.

Jesus teaches the disciples, "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."

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People bring their children to Jesus. Jesus blesses them and says, "You must accept God's good government like a little child would or you won't get in at all." Ohhhh ohhh

What's most important? Love God with everything and love your neighbor, whoever that may be. Jesus tells Martha, "You're upset about many things; Just one thing's essential; it's what Mary's choosing here."

God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe. God love every one of us, it's true... and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!