



“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 33: Escape

Matthew 2:13-23

Intro Video: [https://youtu.be/ bx2S_e16gY](https://youtu.be/bx2S_e16gY)

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.

- **Key verse:** Matthew 2:14

Tell the story: Herod, tipped off by the visit with the Magi, was on the hunt for Jesus. God appeared to Joseph in a dream to warn him, so Joseph and Mary fled with Jesus to Egypt. They stayed there until Joseph learned in another dream that Herod had died and it was safe to return. They settled in a tiny town called Nazareth.

- Read Matthew 2:13-23
- Read page 173 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Read Matthew 2:13-14. What other story does this remind you of? The original hearers would have connected this and seen Jesus as the “new Moses.”
 - Verses 16-18 are devastating. The story evokes Exodus 1:16. Again, the story is a cycle.
- **Background information:**
 - Because the story of the Exodus looms so large for us, we often think of Egypt as a place to escape from. But it’s actually a place of refuge in much of scripture.
 - Curious about which prophecies are being fulfilled? 2:15 refers to Hoseah 11:1, 2:18 quotes Jeremiah 31:15, and 2:23 doesn’t directly quote any prophecy. But scholars hypothesize that it may refer to Isaiah 11:1, because *netzer*, which means “branch,” is closely related to “Nazorean.” (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 14.)
 - Map it! Hint: Ramah is about 6 miles north of Jerusalem (home of the tomb of Rachel). You’ll be able to find the other places on a Bible map.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - The Jeremiah passage quoted is Jeremiah 31:15, which comes from a chapter of Jeremiah often quoted by the early followers of Jesus. Read Jeremiah 31 and see if you can discover why.
 - As you can see from all of these prompts, this whole passage is in conversation with the Old Testament. Why do you think the writer of Matthew was so concerned with this?
 - This passage sets baby Jesus up as a refugee. We live in a world that does not make life easy for those who flee like Mary and Joseph did. How can this scripture be “good news” in our world?

Microsong: “Escape” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/lkIvURKiYL0>)

Once again an angel comes to Joseph saying “Get up, take this child and his mother, flee to Egypt. . .” so they make good their escape from the rage of Herod, mad about the magi’s recent trick. Now determined to destroy any threat, even a kid.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/0211EcS33HA>)

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

Go do your household project!



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Week 34: Jesus Growing Up

Luke 2:41-52

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/M2tu0Z9ahfU>

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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- **Key verse:** Luke 2:47

Tell the story: Beyond the birth narrative, this is the only story we have of Jesus as a child. When Jesus was 12, he and his parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. His parents headed home and traveled for a day before realizing Jesus was not in the group of travelers. They searched all over for him, and after three days found him in the temple, talking about scripture with the teachers.

- Read Luke 2:41-52
- Read page 174 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Mark out the days of this story. This spans a longer time than we realize when we quickly read it.
 - Read verses 48-49. Notice the way “father” is used. What are Mary and Jesus saying? What’s going on here?
 - Notice verse 51 - where have we heard that before?

- **Background information:**
 - Mary and Joseph probably traveled with a large group of pilgrims for this “pilgrimage festival.” That’s why they wouldn’t have known he was missing at first.
 - We don’t know much about Jesus’s conversation with the teachers, other than that it was certainly a two-way conversation. Jewish culture highly valued children, and it wasn’t unusual for a child to talk with the teachers. What’s unusual here seems to be the depth of his insights and questions.
 - Verse 52 echoes Proverbs 3:4, recognizable by the original hearers.

- **Conversation starters:**
 - Read the story through the eyes of Mary and Joseph. Imagine how you would have felt at each point in the story. Maybe it wasn’t so easy to parent Jesus.
 - Read this story through the eyes of Jesus. He knew he was perfectly safe and at home. Wonder: Did he stumble upon this group of teachers or did he seek them out?
 - Read this story through the eyes of the teachers. Are you excited by this young prodigy? Intimidated? In awe?

Microsong: “Jesus Growing Up” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Ue8U8f4GXzM>)

Jesus in the temple, Jesus, age 12. Talking with the teachers, astonishing the crowd. Jesus’ parents searching everywhere for him. Jesus asking why they didn’t know where he’d have been. Jesus going back to Nazareth, an obedient son. Jesus growing up.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/ue20TOF0yS4>)

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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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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.
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Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...
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Week 35: The Skies are Opened

Matthew 3

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/2cLQ178DF5Y>

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- **Key verses:** Matthew 3:3; Matthew 3:17

Tell the story: John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus, was a prophet admired by many who came before Jesus. He told people to change their ways, to stop missing the mark. He told them the kingdom of God was near. He baptized many people. And when Jesus began his ministry, John recognized him and baptized him. As Jesus was baptized, God’s Spirit came upon him and a voice from heaven proclaimed who he was.

- Read Matthew 3
- Read page 177-178 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Verse 3 refers to Isaiah 40:3, which we read in Week 26!
 - “Cross over Jordan, stones and stones...” - we are back at the Jordan! Reflect back on that story as you read this one.
 - What imagery do you recognize in verses 16-17? Water, heavens opening, a dove...
- **Background information:**
 - Most of us understand baptism as a Christian sacrament/ritual. But it has much deeper roots, and was a common practice of a Jewish sect called the Essenes. Since other parts of John the Baptist's description fit this group, many scholars think he may have been part of this group.
 - Immersion for purification has deep roots in Jewish practice. Look up *mikvah* to learn about practices that continue today. The River Jordan was known as a place of purification.
 - Original hearers would have recognized the words of the voice from heaven as a well-known passage from Genesis 22:2 (God's instructions to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac). Let that soak in.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - John and Jesus's stories parallel each other. Both have miraculous birth stories proclaimed by angels. Both are foretold by prophets, proclaim and draw followers, defy social norms, and end up being killed by the political powers. How did they relate to each other? We don't really know! Search for some articles like [this one](#) to give you food for thought.
 - Read and imagine the conversation between John and Jesus. What is going on here?
 - Imagine being an observer at Jesus' baptism. What would you see? What would you tell your friends later about it?
 - Why did Jesus get baptized? Western Christianity has often defined baptism as necessary for personal salvation. Does this story make you rethink that?

Microsong: “The Skies are Opened” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/wfP7Xg48ELk>)

Down by the Jordan the prophet John shouts about change and a God-led life. Jesus asks to be baptized. John protests but Jesus says it's right. Then 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.”

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/A5cYeCPFjwE>)

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Week 36: Come Follow and Come See

Luke 5:1-11; 5:27-28; 6:12-16

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/GAhL7pbjO88>

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.

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- **Key verses:** Luke 5:10b-11; Luke 6:13-16

Tell the story: Jesus called a community of people to walk with him in his ministry. He called them from many occupations and walks of life. When Jesus invited them, they left everything and followed him.

- Read Luke 5:1-11; 5:27-28; 6:12-16
- Read page 184 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**

- If you're familiar with this story, it may sound a little strange. We often combine this story as told in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Read the other versions of the story (Mark 1:16-45; John 1:35-51; and Matthew 4:18-22) and notice similarities and differences.
- Notice what Simon calls Jesus in verse 5. This seems to be Luke's version of "Teacher," which is more commonly used in the other gospels.
- 12 apostles...hmm, what does this number remind you of?
- Elsewhere in the gospels, we hear about other disciples, some of whom were women. These twelve play a unique role; they are an inner circle, but there were others as well.

- **Background information:**

- Mappers! The lake referred to in 5:1 is the Sea of Galilee. It's referred to in Numbers 34:11 as one of the eastern boundaries of the promised land (in the Old Testament, it's called the Sea of Chinnereth).
- Levi (also known as Matthew) is a tax collector. This was a complicated job with a lot of stigma. They were seen as collaborators with Romans by their fellow Jews, and they basically made their living by cheating their people.
- Apostle is a Greek word that means "agent or emissary." The Hebrew equivalent would mean someone who so fully represented the sender that it was as if they were the person themselves. (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 125.)
- What does "Iscaiot" mean? Scholars aren't sure. It may mean he's from a certain Judean village (making him the only Judean in the bunch). Or it might derive a word that means "false one." Neither of these options is really a perfect match! (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 125.)

- **Conversation starters:**

- "Word of God" in 5:1 means Torah as interpreted by Jesus. We often only use that term to describe scripture. What do you think of this?
- Why does Simon Peter react to the miracle by confessing his sins?
- What do you think it meant to "leave everything"?

Microsong: "Come Follow and Come See" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/pelZNA4S5Q0>)

Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing, invites them to come follow and come see. Healing, teaching, seeing who they are, he tells them they also will see what Jacob saw; this ladder, the heavens open up. Then, now and always. God is one, only God.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Sopx3cxiglo>)

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