



"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 43: God's Kid**

We are suggesting daily scripture passages for this week. A deep dive into Holy Week makes Easter Sunday so much more meaningful! There are prompts for each story - but fewer than there usually would be for a weekly story. There is also an activity prompt each day, in case you want to put these stories on their feet. Remember, though - it's enough to just read the stories! And if it isn't Holy Week on the calendar when you arrive at this week, we are an Easter people, so celebrate it whenever you find yourself.

**Intro Video:** Video Coming Soon!

**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, welcomed children, told stories, and showed us what was most important.

It was the week of Passover. Jesus and his followers came to Jerusalem for the festival. Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king, riding a donkey and proclaimed as the Messiah by the crowds. It was a time of joy! And then he started making people mad. Jesus turned over tables in the temple, angry because poor people were being exploited. He pointed out what people didn't want to see, that they all

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were guilty of missing the mark. When people competed to be important, he told them to watch a humble widow who gave all she had.

On Thursday, Jesus ate a special meal with his disciples. But first, he washed their feet and told them that they, too, must serve each other. He began to prepare them for his death. After the meal, he asked them to pray with him. One disciple betrayed Jesus to the authorities, and he was arrested, tried, and convicted of blasphemy. He was hung on a cross, and he died. When Jesus died, the earth shook, the temple curtain was torn in two, and the sky turned dark.

Women who were disciples and a follower named Joseph took care of Jesus' body. They placed him in a tomb. The people in charge were worried about the power of Jesus, even in death, and they placed a large stone and a guard outside the tomb.

## Sunday Scripture:

Luke 19:28-40 (Jesus enters Jerusalem)

- **Tell the story:** Jesus had entered Jerusalem before, but this time was very different. He came in like a king, riding a donkey while people proclaimed him as Messiah.
  - Read Luke 19:28-40
  - Read page 249 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - Many of us wave palm branches (or sustainable versions of them) on Palm Sunday. But this story doesn't mention them! All four of the gospels tell this story, and Matthew and Mark mention "leafy branches" and "branches from the trees." Only John specifically talks about palm branches. Basically, the people took whatever branches were available and used them to welcome their messiah. Read John 12:12-19, Matthew 21:1-11 and Mark 11:1-11 and see what other differences you notice.
  - **Background information:**
    - A common misconception is that Jesus riding in on a donkey instead of a fine horse was a symbol of him as a servant king. But that is reading the passage with a modern lens. Riding on a mule or donkey (which are of course different animals, but their names are used interchangeably in the Bible) was a kingly thing to do. Read 1 Kings 1:33-40 for an example. Waving branches and spreading cloaks on the ground were known as ways to greet a king.
    - Verse 38 is a combination of Psalm 118:26, Zechariah 9:9, and what was called the Hallel prayer. Read those to get a glimpse of what all was in the minds of the people greeting Jesus.
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - Read Luke 40. This verse is one example of creation worshiping God. What are some other examples of this that we have encountered so far? Do you think it means the stones would actually make noise?
- **Activity prompt:** Hosanna parade
  - Go outside and find a branch or leaf from nature close to your house. Being careful not to hurt the plant it comes from, claim it as your "leafy branch."
  - Do your own palm processional around your home. Maybe you even want to take it outside and give the neighbors something to talk about.

**Monday Scripture:**

Matthew 21:12-13 (Jesus in the temple) and John 7:53-8:11 (Jesus and the stone throwers).

- **Tell the stories:** Jesus went into the temple and became angry at what he saw. Crowds brought forward a woman they thought should be punished by having stones thrown at her. Jesus told them that whoever had never missed the mark should throw the first stone. They walked away.
  - Read Matthew 21:12-13 and John 7:53-8:11
  - Read pages 250 and 252 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - The “temple incident” is also found in Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48 and John 2:13-22. Read these versions and notice similarities and differences.
  - **Background information:**
    - Why is Jesus so angry in the temple? There’s economic inequity going on here. If a person can only worship by making a sacrifice, and a sacrifice costs money, and a currency exchange is needed for that because the temple will only accept one currency...well, you can see the way it becomes harder for a poor person to worship God. This temple is the one they rebuilt upon their return from the exile, meant for worship, and instead it’s a place to make money.
    - Roman law forbid execution for adultery. The “law” referred to here is Leviticus 20:10. Maybe they were testing Jesus to see which law he was loyal to?
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - The story of the stones holds our common refrain from this year - the people miss the mark, but God sticks with the people. Read the story with the big story in mind and see what you notice.
- **Activity prompt:**
  - Create art out of stones or rocks. Turn what could be a tool of violence into a thing of beauty.

**Tuesday Scripture:**

Mark 12:41-44

- **Tell the story:** Jesus and his disciples watched wealthy people giving a lot of money to the temple treasury. Then they saw a poor widow come and give just two small coins. He told the disciples her offering was more than anyone else had given.
  - Read Mark 12:41-44
  - Read pages 257 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - This story is also found in Matthew 23:6 and Luke 20:47-47; 21:1-4. Read and compare!
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - Read what comes before this story. People are wrestling with a desire to feel important, and Jesus keeps redirecting them toward life inside the blessing. Talk about these sometimes competing urges.
- **Activity prompt:**
  - Give something away.

## **Wednesday Scripture:**

Matthew 25:31-46 (the sheep and the goats)

- **Tell the story:** Jesus taught on the Mount of Olives. He told a story to help the people understand what's important to God - how to live inside the blessing. He tells them that whatever they do for other human beings, it's like they're doing it for him.
  - Read Matthew 25:31-46
  - Read pages 258 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - Jesus gives some concrete examples of what it means to live inside the blessing here. List them out.
  - **Background information:**
    - The people listening to Jesus would have heard all kinds of scripture references as he told this story! Look at Isaiah 66:18, Ezekiel 34:17 and Micah 4:3 to get an idea of what would have popped into their heads.
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - There's a lot of imagery in this story! See what sort of pictures it brings to mind.
- **Activity prompt:**
  - Open your eyes to Jesus around you. Feed, clothe, visit, or welcome someone.

## **Thursday Scripture:**

John 13:3-20 (Jesus washes the disciples' feet), Matthew 26:17-30 (Jesus shares a meal with the disciples)

- **Tell the story:** Jesus and the disciples were in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. They gathered to share the passover meal together, but before they ate, Jesus washed their feet. As they ate, Jesus began to prepare them for what was to come.
  - Read John 13:3-20 and Matthew 26:17-30
  - Read pages 260 and 264 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - Read Matthew 26:26-28. Where have you heard those words before? When we celebrate communion, this is the story we are enacting.
    - Read Matthew 30. What is Jesus foreshadowing?
  - **Background information:**
    - This meal was the Passover meal, but it would have been different from the meal Jews share in our time. That ritualistic meal was developed by rabbis later. This one was a simpler paschal lamb meal.
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - You know the story they're remembering with this meal! Re-sing and re-tell the story of "Ten Strange Signs" and "By the Sea God Saves Them." What connections can you make with that story of deliverance and the story of deliverance we're in the middle of now?
    - John 13 has some poetic language about the love Jesus had for the disciples. Read this story imagining Jesus' thoughts and feelings as he did this act of service for the people he loved before he died.
- **Activity prompt:**
  - Wash each others' feet, then eat a special meal together as you read this scripture.

## **Friday Scripture:**

Matthew 26:36-27:55

- **Tell the story:** Jesus prayed for strength with his disciples in a garden. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus and a disciple tried to defend him with violence, Jesus rebuked him. Jesus was taken to the high priest and was condemned. He was taken before the governor, who didn't want to put Jesus to death but who followed the demands of the people. Jesus was taken to Golgatha and crucified between two bandits. In the afternoon, Jesus died. The whole earth shook at the moment of his death.
  - Read Matthew 26:36-27:55
  - Read pages 267 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - Map out the story with places and times as you tell it.
    - Track Jesus' words and actions through the story. He often chooses to be silent, so notice his silence and the words he chooses to say. Find his verbs.
  - **Background information:**
    - The historicity of the Sanhedrin trial described in 26:57-68 is questionable. Hearings were forbidden on festivals, and it's strange for a court to convene in a priest's chamber, among other discrepancies. (Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 61.) Why do you think the writer of Matthew chose to tell the story this way?
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - Notice the times that Peter enters the story. Do you think you would have done and said the same things as Peter?
    - Pilate offers the release of one prisoner - Jesus who is called the Messiah or Jesus Barabbas. Barabbas - or "Bar Abba" means "son of the father." Talk about this interesting play on words.
    - Look at all that's described in 27:45-54 as happening at the time of Jesus' death. What in the world?!
- **Activity prompt:**
  - At noon, turn off all the lights in your house. Keep them turned off until Sunday morning.

## **Saturday Scripture:**

Matthew 27:55-66

- **Tell the story:** A follower of Jesus gave his own tomb for Jesus to be buried in. He and the women who were disciples cared for Jesus' body and watched over it. Nervous about what might happen, Pilate sent a guard to seal the tomb and keep watch.
  - Read Matthew 27:55-66
  - Read pages 269 in the *Shine On* story Bible.
- **Prime the pump:**
  - **Things to notice:**
    - Notice the difference of the apostles' actions in yesterday's story and the women disciples' actions in this one.
  - **Background information:**
    - Read 27:57. They had to wait until it was evening, because burials were not permitted on the Sabbath.
  - **Conversation starters:**
    - Imagine and discuss the emotions that must have been felt by all who were close to Jesus. This was a tense and dangerous time.
- **Activity prompt:** Keep your lights off.

**Microsong:** "God's Kid" (Listen: [https://youtu.be/8\\_WLuaffnQ4](https://youtu.be/8_WLuaffnQ4))

Save now, David's son riding on a donkey. Knocks over tables, drives out the money changers. He will judge nations, separate the sheep from goats because of how they treated hungry, sick, imprisoned people.

In the garden Jesus prays, "Yes, father, if there's no other way." "Are you messiah?" "It's as you say." "Death for blasphemy!"

Jesus cries, "Why, God?" Jesus dies. The veil rips. The earth shakes. Rocks split. Tombs open. The dead live. "Surely this was God's kid"

**Sing the big song:** (Listen: <https://youtu.be/XPETRVA5Ji0>)

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 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." This is life inside the blessing. 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."

Save now, David's son rides on a donkey. He will judge nations, separate the sheep from goats. In the garden Jesus prays "Yes, father, if there's no other way." Jesus dies. The veil rips. . . "Surely this was God's kid"

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

### **Go do your household project!**