

FAMILY TALK

FOR FAMILIES WITH
ELEMENTARY-AGE CHILDREN



INTRODUCTION

*“Remember what happened in the past.
Think about what took place long ago.
I am God. There is no other God.
I am God. There is no one like me.
Before something even happens, I announce how it will end.
In fact, from times long ago I announced what was still to come.”
(Isaiah 46:9-10a NIV)¹²*

Did you know that mystery writers write their books backwards? From the very start, they know
the crime,
who did it,
where it happened,
how it happened, and
why it happened!

Then, the writers plot out a story board—a map to show how the action builds and where they should drop the clues. After all, the fun of reading a mystery is to figure it out before the end of the book!

You might say mystery writers know “the end from the beginning.” This is definitely true of God! He knew how sin and death would be dealt with, and how He would save His people. Throughout the Old Testament God spoke to the prophets and gave them clues about these things. The prophets had just enough information about Jesus, to give God’s people hope and to turn their hearts back to Him.

As you read through these Family Talk devotions, think of them as a great mystery being revealed! Look for the Old Testament clues, and see how they come true in the New Testament. Ask yourself: What do all these clues tell me about Jesus?

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WEEK 1

CLUES ABOUT JESUS' BIRTH

*"The Lord himself will give you a sign.
The virgin is going to have a baby.
She will give birth to a son.
And he will be called Immanuel."
(Isaiah 7:14)*

Christmas was just a couple of months ago, but how much do you remember about the story of Jesus' birth? Do you remember what city Jesus was born in? Do you remember who his mother was? How about the name of his cousin—the one who grew up to live in the wilderness, eat grasshoppers, and baptize people?

Clues about all of these things were given by the prophets hundreds of years before Jesus was born! So, when Jesus came to earth, people matched these clues with what they knew about Him. Then, they could be sure—this Jesus of Nazareth really is the Savior that God promised all along!

For us today, these clues show us that God always keeps His promises. And, you will see the great love God has for His people, in sending a Rescuer who would make a way for us to live with Him forever!

FAMILY TALK:

- Who were the people that had special messages from God to tell others?
- Why is it important to know that Jesus' birth was foretold long before it happened?
- What is a promise from God that you can remember this week? How can you remember it?



WEEK 2

CLUES ABOUT JESUS' MISSION

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

If you were on your way to the zoo, I might tell you to look for a "mystery animal" with these clues:

1. it normally lives in Australia
2. it hops on its powerful legs
3. it carries its young in a pouch

You would find . . . a **kangaroo**! You would know the "mystery animal" by the things the kangaroo does.

The Old Testament prophets gave clues about Jesus' mission, the things that He stood for, and the things He did. They gave clues like:

1. He believes that doing what is right is more important than looking holy (Amos 5:23-24)
2. He is full of compassion for people who are spiritually lost (Jonah 11, Micah 7:18)
3. He loves people of all nations and wants them to become part of His kingdom (Hosea 1:11, Micah 5:4-5a)

When Jesus came to earth and taught these things, some people began to understand who He was. After He died and rose again, His followers understood even more. They knew that Jesus' mission of dying for our sins was the way that He could bring peace between God and ourselves, peace in our hearts, and peace with others.

FAMILY TALK:

- What was Jesus' mission in becoming "Immanuel", God With Us?
- Why did Jesus' followers understand more about His mission after his death and resurrection?
- What are some parts of Jesus' mission that we can carry on?

CLUES ABOUT JESUS' WORK

"This stone is very valuable to you who believe. But to people who do not believe, 'The stone the builders did not accept has become the most important stone of all.' (Psalm 118:22) And, 'It is a stone that causes people to trip. It is a rock that makes them fall. (Isaiah 8:14) They trip and fall because they do not obey the message. That is also what God planned for them.' (1 Peter 2:7-8)

What if your parents told you, "Get in the car! We're going on vacation!" You might think that you were headed to the airport to stay at a fancy hotel on a warm, sunny beach. Instead, you arrive at a state park up north, where you put up a tent to sleep in! Camping up north can be just as much fun as a hotel on the beach, but it's waaaaay different!

This is what it was like for God's people, the Israelites. They **expected** that God's promised Savior would come like a mighty warrior who would overthrow the Roman rulers, and instead, put **them** in charge! But, that's not what happened. Jesus' work on earth was to show people who His Father was. He did this by showing compassion, forgiving sins, healing illness and disease. Jesus was beginning to build a kingdom that was more important than just one nation. Instead, Jesus' forever-kingdom is made up of people from every nation who believe in Him and put their trust in Him.

Some people don't understand this about Jesus, and they "stumble" over Him; other people do understand, and they make Jesus the "capstone"—the most important part of their lives.

FAMILY TALK:

- Describe a time when something turned out differently from what you expected.
- What did God's people expect their promised Savior to do?
- How do you think the Israelites felt when Jesus was different from what they expected?
- What do you want Jesus to be in your life: a "stumbling stone" or a "capstone"?

CLUES ABOUT JESUS' FOREVER KINGDOM

"After this I looked, and there in front of me was a huge crowd of people. They stood in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb. There were so many that no one could count them. They came from every nation, tribe and people. That's true no matter what language they spoke.

They were wearing white robes. In their hands they were holding palm branches. They cried out in a loud voice,

*"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne.*

Salvation also belongs to the Lamb.' "

(Revelation 7:9-10)

This summer, the Olympic games will be held in Tokyo, Japan. Athletes from all over the world will come to compete in their sports. During the Opening Ceremony, each nation will enter the arena behind their flag, dressed in national colors or a traditional costume. This is called the Parade of Nations. Two weeks later, at the Closing Ceremony, the athletes will all walk in together, showing their friendship and unity. Olympic ceremonies are exciting celebrations, and watching them gives us a glimpse of what it will be like when Jesus reigns in Heaven. There will be people from every nation, tribe, and language worshiping around the throne—together! ***And it will be so much bigger than one arena can hold!***

God has created all people in His image, and He loves them all, no matter where they are from or what language they speak. Jesus showed this when He lived on earth. His kingdom may have started with the Jews, but His plan was to open His kingdom wide, to welcome people from all nations who put their faith in Him!

FAMILY TALK:

- Who is welcome in Jesus' kingdom?
- What do you think will be the most exciting part of heaven?
- Jesus wants everyone to be part of His kingdom. How can we love others who are different from us?



CLUES ABOUT JESUS' NEW KINGDOM

"When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here! All this is from God. He brought us back to himself through Christ's death on the cross. And he has given us the task of bringing others back to him through Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

There's an old saying that goes, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." This means that the month of March is all about change. It can start out with snow and cold wind, but end with rain puddles and warm temps!

Change isn't always pretty. Before spring comes, snow turns to gray slush, and the grass is more brown than green! This is how it is for us, as we wait for Jesus' return. Because of His death and resurrection, we know that Jesus has won over sin and death. We know that He will make old things new again, and make sad things happy again, but for now, there are still a lot of hard things in our world. We are living "in March"—not quite winter, but not the full beauty of spring. We look for signs of spring—signs that show God is at work, changing people's lives with His love and peace. We dream about the day when He will bring spring here to stay!

FAMILY TALK:

- How is life like "March as we wait for Jesus?"
- Why is it hard to wait for Jesus and for everything to be made new?
- How have you felt close to God recently? How is being close to Jesus like "springtime"?



CLUES ABOUT JESUS AS JUDGE

“The Lord is good. When people are in trouble, they can go to him for safety. He takes good care of those who trust in him. But he will destroy Nineveh with a powerful flood. He will chase his enemies into the place of darkness.” (Nahum 1:7-8)

In just another month or so, many of us will be planting gardens—vegetables, flowers, or both! Good gardeners tend to their young plants everyday—they work the soil with fertilizer, water the plants, and wait for the blooms!

But then—the weeds! Along with the beautiful beans, broccoli, or zinnias, the bindweed comes! It wraps itself around other plants and sucks away the water and the nutrients that *should* be going into the plants! Gardeners have to battle bindweed all summer, cutting it back, pulling it up by its roots, making sure that it doesn’t take over the entire garden!

What do you think would happen to the plants if the gardener just left the bindweed grow instead of cutting it away?

God is the best gardener ever! His “garden” is made up of His people, who He carefully nurtures and tends. But, because God is a good gardener, He must also cut off the evil. He has set a day to judge and to punish evildoers. He is a good and holy God, so He *must* punish wickedness. But, for those of us who call out to Him, Jesus will be our strong protector, our loving Gardener.

FAMILY TALK:

- Would a garden grow without anyone taking care of it?
- Why must God punish wickedness?
- What are some “weedy” things in our lives that keep us from loving God? (Think about things like bad attitudes, or bad habits.)

CLUES ABOUT JESUS' SUFFERING

"These things happened in order that Scripture would come true. It says, 'Not one of his bones will be broken.' Scripture also says, 'They will look to the one they have pierced.'" (John 19:36-37)

There are certain images so strong, that even just hearing them reminds us of what they are all about. If you hear, "manger" or "shepherds" or "wise men" you immediately think of Christmas—the story of Jesus' birth.

It's the same with the story of Jesus' death. These images—these **clues**—were written about, by the prophets, hundreds of years before they happened:

- ... Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey
- ... he would be hated by some people (think of Jesus' trials before the Jewish leaders)
- ... he would be mocked (think of the soldiers who put a crown of thorns on His head)
- ... he would be pierced (think of how His side was pierced as He hung on the cross)

The prophets wrote these clues, so that when these things really happened, people would understand that Jesus was the promised Rescuer. These terrible things didn't just happen to Jesus; He came to earth knowing all about His death on the Cross—it was His special rescue plan!. His death allows us to be declared "not guilty." It is His free gift to all who believe!

"Jesus gave his life for our sins. He set us free from this evil world. That was what our God and Father wanted. Give glory to God for ever and ever. Amen." (Galatians 1:4-5)

FAMILY TALK:

- What were some of the clues given about Jesus's death?
- Why did Jesus come, knowing that He was going to die?
- How can we be rescued by Jesus?