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Family Life Resources

We understand the challenges of busy schedules at home, which is why we offer resources that support you and your family which are easy to use, relevant and most importantly honor God. We pray these resources for your home along with the classes and services at First Church make an eternal difference in the lives of families like yours.

Blessings, First Church Open Bible

Colossians 2:6,7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

THE GIFTS of CHRISTMAS

Introduction

"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11

The wonder of Christmas is presented here as the Magi, who traveled from afar, found the Christ child and bowed down to worship Him presenting Him with gifts.

The star, the angel, Bethlehem, the gifts, the manger, the prophecies - all of these come together to point us to Jesus. He is the greatest gift of all, and God our Father gives us many good gifts.

Let's look together at The Gifts of Christmas.

THE GIFTS of CHRISTMAS

References

The Gift of Hope - Romans 15:12-13

The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gift of Peace - Luke 2:13-14

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

The Gift of Joy - Luke 2:8-11

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

The Gift of Love - Romans 5:6-8

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Our True Gift - Jesus - John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

THE GIFT of HOPE

Prophecies from Isaiah:

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (which means God with us) Vs. 7:14

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Vs. 9:2

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." Vs. 11:1

The chosen nation of God was living in darkness. They were under the oppressive Roman rule, yet there remained a glimmer of hope. The prophets had foretold of a coming Messiah, One coming to save his people.

When the angels came bringing amazing messages, hope began to grow. (Luke 1:30-33)

"The Lord will give him the throne of his father David" Luke 1:32b.

Paul's letter to the Romans put it this way:

"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." Romans 15:4

Paul goes on to say that this hope is not for the Israelites alone, but for all peoples:

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him."

Psalm 117:1, Romans 15:11

Paul shows clearly that this hope comes through the lineage of David:

Isaiah says - "The Root of Jesse will spring up One who will arise to rule over the nations; in Him the Gentiles will hope." Romans 15:12, Isaiah 11:10

The book of Matthew is careful to record the genealogy of Jesus. We may be tempted to skip over it as irrelevant to the Christmas story, but Paul reminds us that this story has been planned out by God, our Father, for generations. Matthew 1:5-6 shows Jessie as the father of King David:

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

There are many promises to the kingdom of David, including the family tree of Jesus.

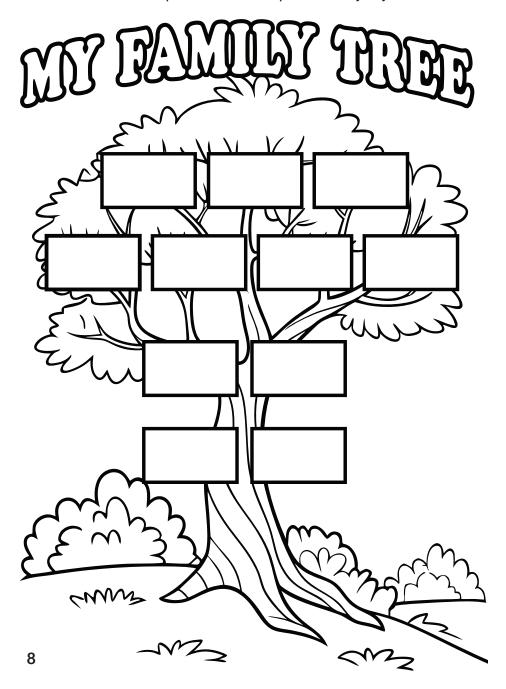
To the Israelites and the Gentiles, and to all who choose to worship Jesus, Paul leaves us with these encouraging words:

"May the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace as you trust in him. Overflowing with Hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans, 15:13.

Family Tree/Coloring Page

Color the picture and list your family in the boxes, one name per box. The bottom boxes are for Grandma and Grandpa, next ones

up are Mom and Dad, then your Brothers and Sisters at the top. You can use nicknames like "Pops" or "Granny" if you want!



THE GIFT of PEACE

Angelic prophecies:

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.

Luke 1:28

... Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God."

Luke 1:30

Mary and Joseph had both been visited by angels. They were both told: "Do not be Afraid."

They were given an enormous task - to parent the son of God! Mary's response to the angel was this:

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered.
"May your word to me be fulfilled."

Luke 1:38

Mary was learning to receive the gift of peace from the Lord.

Joseph's response was found in Matthew 1:18-25. Like Mary, Joseph received a word from the angel.

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. Matthew 1:24.

Mary and Joseph demonstrated peace in the difficult circumstances they faced. Joseph did this by obeying the angel's message and protecting Mary.

Mary proclaimed her peace in song, recorded in Luke 1:46-55. Here is a portion:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-holy is his name." Luke 1:46-48

We too can receive the gift of peace. Luke chapter 2 describes the heavenly celebration of the birth of the Son of God in this way:

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:13-14

Our heavenly father offers freely the gift of peace to all who receive his son. This Christmas, let's reflect on this gift of peace.

Zachariah, a priest and a member of Mary's family, expressed it this way:

"... to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Luke 1:77-79

THE GIFT of JOY

"... and she (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in strips of cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."

Luke 2:7

Mary and Joseph each received promises from angels. Mary and her relatives even sang Spirit inspired songs in response to God's work. (See Luke 1)

Now Mary and Joseph were far from home without a place to stay. Mary was giving birth to her first born child, attended by her husband in a place where the animals were fed.

They had recently received startling news. They had traveled a long distance on foot. They were in an overcrowded town, holding a very special infant and carrying the most extraordinary news. Yet it was still dark and they were exhausted.

However, they were not alone. Nearby, there was a group of men and boys, tending sheep. All was quiet as the world waited.

"And (suddenly) an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "do not be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people."

Luke 2:9-10

This angel gave them specific instructions to go and see for themselves the infant who would be the Savior of the world. The angel told them exactly where to go and how to recognize him.

Heaven could not contain the joy of this wonderful announcement. Suddenly a great company of Heavenly Hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying:

> "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:13-14

Joy was in the air as the sheep herders hurried into town to see these things the angels had announced They found Mary and Joseph and the newborn babe just as the angels proclaimed it. In their excitement, they spread this joyous news to all who would listen to their amazing story.

"Good News" and "Great Joy"!

This is how the angel of the Lord describes the birth of Jesus.

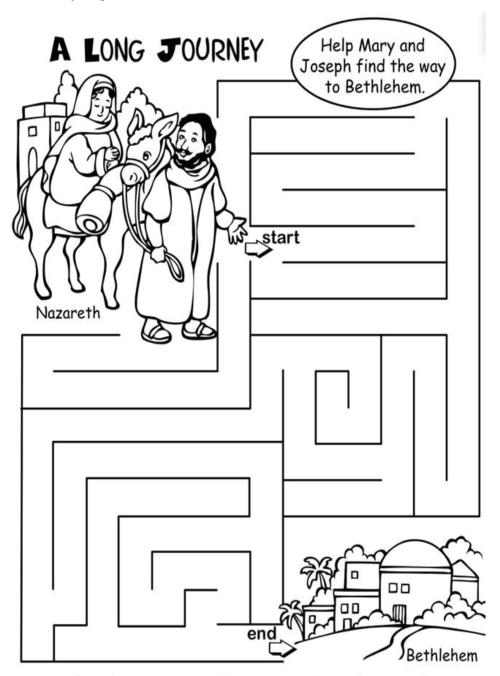
"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my savior."

Luke 1:46-47

This is how Mary responded to the news about Jesus.

Let's join them in rejoicing! Let's sing for joy! Let's tell everyone we see! Let's share this wonderful story over and over until the whole world knows that God sent His Son as a baby named Jesus.

(This story is found in the gospel of Luke chapter 2)



Joseph and Mary went on a long journey from the town of Nazareth to the town of Bethlehem.

(Luke 2:1-5)

LESSON 4

THE GIFT of LOVE

Take a moment and think about someone you love. Why do you love that person? Is it because they're nice to you? Do they make you feel good about yourself? Do they make you feel safe? Usually, we love someone because of how they make us feel or because we really value what they do for us.

But what about how God loves you? Should God love you because of how you make Him feel? Are you always nice to Him? If you're being honest with yourself, you can't answer yes to these questions. No matter what you do or how you behave toward God, you cannot change how He feels about you.

This is GOOD NEWS! God loves you! You don't have to do a thing in order for God to love you. In fact, God loved you long before you loved Him. And even if you don't love Him yet, He still loves you!

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." Titus 3:5

Let's pause for a moment and think about what a gift God's love truly is. No matter what - no matter how you behave, what you say, what you do, where you go, what you think, or why you think it - the God of the universe, the One who created everything, loves you just as you are.

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10

So if you're feeling angry at God because you think He judges you, remember this: He loves you - just as you are! And right now, this writer is praying that you will reach out to Him and ask Him to take over your life and remove that anger you have inside.

And for those of you who already love Him, you may ask, "How can I love Him better?" Well, He tells us! This is what God wants for Christmas (He wants this all year, but Christmas is a great place to begin!):

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:43-44

You might wonder, What does God mean when He tells me to love my enemies? People love in all sorts of ways, but how does God define His love?

In 1 Corinthians 13, God tells us that love is patient, kind. It protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. It also tells us what love is not - it does not envy, boast, dishonor others, or keep records of wrongs. It is not proud, self-seeking, or easily angered.

The love God calls us to show - even to our enemies - is HARD! Use this Christmas season to practice. How can you love like God does?

Find something good about a person that always annoys you and tell them something you appreciate about them. Be kind. There are so many opportunities out there to love others!

FAMILY ACTION

Take time this Christmas to be a family. Talk together about how you can practice the love of God to those around you.

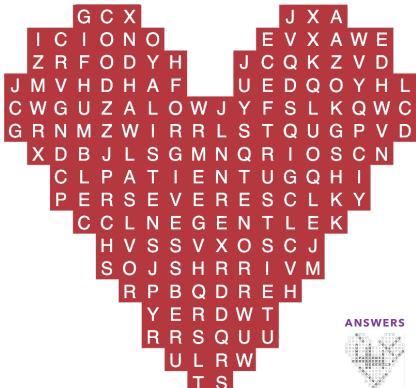
Write out ideas about showing the love of God this Christmas. Put them on a wall or tape them to the refrigerator as a reminder to be a reflection of the love of God.

WORD SEARCH ACTIVITY

Here's a fun Word Search based on the description of what true love is from 1 Corinthians 13.

See if you can find these words:

LOVE; PATIENT; KIND; TRUSTS; PERSEVERES; HOPES; TRUTH; LISTENS; HUMBLE; JESUS; GOD; FORGIVES; GENTLE.



LESSON 5

JESUS Our TRUE GIFT

If you've ever owned a cat or have been around a toddler, then you know how funny they are around presents! When the wrapping paper is finally removed, behold! The box! It's just an ordinary box, but for whatever reason, cats and yes, toddlers, too, focus on the box. The box steals their focus to the point of silliness - even going so far as to wear it on their head!

The gift is forgotten and replaced by an empty box. Does your belief look like that? Are you focused on an empty box or on the gift this Christmas?

John 3:16 tells us - "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

If you have heard any Bible verse in your life, you have probably heard this one! We sometimes take the words in John 3:16 for granted - even those who claim to love Jesus. We get excited about being given money, receiving gold and jewelry, maybe getting a toy or electronic we've been wanting or waiting for all year. Do you see it now? That empty box on your head? These things are not horrible - God wants to give us good things!

"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:11 I challenge you, though, to set your box (whatever it is) aside for a little while this Christmas. Take a few moments of courage and pull it off of your head. Look and see what a wondrous gift God has given us!

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3

I know it can be hard to appreciate God's gift sometimes. This season can seem to be filled with fun and happiness for everyone but you. But I'm here to tell you that even when you're sad or it feels like you're going through a time of little hope, God sees you and He loves you.

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39

What can be hard to understand - especially here in the United States where having so much is a normal thing for most people - is that even though God loves us, we do live in a world where sin exists. And because of that, bad things do happen to good people. But those bad things, if Jesus is your Lord and savior, they are only temporary!

I encourage you in this Christmas season to take a deeper look at Jesus as your true gift. To understand that Jesus died on the cross and rose again because

there was no other way that we could be in relationship with Him. Even if times are tough, His gift has not changed. I encourage you to reach out to a friend, join a Bible believing church like First Church of the Open Bible, and most of all, call out to God.

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for loving me. The Bible teaches me that You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. So even though I don't always feel it, I can trust that You are who You say You are. Jesus, please lift that box off of my head so that I can really see You, my true gift. Give me a love for you and a desire to know You better this Christmas. Amen.





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