

BIBLE BLOCKS

Advent

Parent's Guide

11 STORY BLOCKS + 1 ACTIVITY BLOCK



A Nativity to set out. A story to return to.

A family introduction, four story-section introductions, and eleven parent guides with matching illustrated read-alouds.

Find your place

Select a title or page number to open that page.

Begin with the family introduction

Read the Quick Start, explore the activities, and choose an Advent rhythm for your family.

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Quick Start

Read. Retell. Explore.

Before you begin

Choose a Story Block and the Activity Block. Find the matching story. Read the parent background for yourself before you begin, or return to it when a question comes up. You do not need to teach every detail.

Keep a Bible, paper, and drawing supplies nearby. Follow your child's attention; a short visit is enough.



Faces 1-3 across the top; faces 4-6 below.

1. Read

Read from the Bible or the illustrated read-aloud. Turn the Story Block to the matching pictures as you go. Scripture is the source; the pictures help your child remember.

2. Show how to retell

Briefly retell the story in your own words, using all six pictures as memory prompts.

3. Let your child retell

Pass over the block. Your child can tell a sentence for each picture, point, make a sound, or finish your sentence. Ask, "What happened first?" "What happened next?" or "What did God do?"

4. Choose one additional activity

Begin every time with Retell. Then intentionally choose one activity based on your family's time, energy, and interest. One is enough; the Activity Block is chosen, not rolled.

5. Close simply

Pray a short prayer or share one thing to remember. Return to the same story with a different activity another time.

Simple Start or Go Deeper

Use Simple Start for shorter responses, movement, drawing, or extra help. Use Go Deeper for more independent retelling, writing, discussion, or detail. Either can work at any age. Follow your child's interest, energy, and familiarity with the story.

Meet the Activity Block



- 1 Retell** Tell the story using its six pictures.
- 2 Reflect** Draw, color, or write a response.
- 3 Character** Attend to a person in the passage.
- 4 Act Out** Make a pose or act out a moment.
- 5 Connect** Connect this passage with another Bible story.
- 6 Four choices** Choose Music, Wonder, Prayer, or Find.

Retell every night. Then intentionally choose one additional activity. Return to the same story with a different activity another time.

Retell

Tell the Story Using the Pictures



Retelling is the heart of Bible Blocks. Return to it every time you explore a story.

Simple Start: Tell What You See

Give your child the Story Block and invite them to turn it from picture to picture. Ask them to say one thing they see on each side. Use prompts such as:

- “What do you see?”
- “Who is in this picture?”
- “What is happening?”
- “What happened next?”

If all six sides feel like too much, choose three pictures and tell the beginning, middle, and end together. You can also begin each sentence and let your child finish it.

Go Deeper: Retell in Your Own Words

Invite your child to use all six pictures to retell the complete story. Encourage them to include:

- what happened first
- what God said or did
- how the other people responded

The goal is not a perfect performance. The Bible is the source of the story. The block is a memory tool that helps your child begin to make the story their own.

Reflect

Respond Through Drawing or Writing



Reflect gives children space to slow down, notice something meaningful, and respond to the story.

Simple Start: Draw One Moment

Ask your child to choose one picture from the Story Block. They can draw:

- the whole scene
- one object
- their favorite moment
- one person
- a facial expression

When they finish, ask:

- “Tell me about your picture.”

Stick figures and simple drawings are enough. The purpose is not artistic skill. The drawing helps your child think about the story.

Go Deeper: Respond to the Story

Invite your child to choose the moment, phrase, action, or person that stood out most. They can draw or write about:

- something they noticed
- something that surprised them
- something they want to remember
- something the story teaches them about God
- something that connects with their own life

Try one prompt:

- “This part stands out to me because...”
- “One thing I learned about God is...”
- “This story makes me think about...”
- “One thing I want to remember is...”

Children can respond with a picture, several sentences, or a journal entry.

Character

Experience the Story Through Someone's Eyes



Character helps children pay closer attention to one person's experience within the story.

Simple Start: How Did They Feel?

Choose one character from the story. Ask:

- "How do you think this person felt?"

Your child can name the feeling, show it with their face, or draw the character's expression. Then ask:

- "Did their feelings change?"

Compare how the person may have felt at the beginning and at the end. Possible feelings include:

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| • happy | • sad | • afraid | • angry |
| • confused | • surprised | • hopeful | • peaceful |

Encourage your child to point to the pictures that helped them choose those feelings.

Go Deeper: Tell the Story as the Character

Invite your child to retell part or all of the story from one character's perspective. Begin with:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| • "I am ____." | • "At the beginning, I..." |
| • "When God ____, I..." | • "I felt..." |
| • "By the end..." | |

Afterward, ask:

- "What did this person see God do?"
- "What might this person have believed about God?"
- "How did the experience change this person?"
- "What does this character help us notice about the story?"

Your child may answer aloud, write a first-person journal entry, or tell the story while holding the block.



Connect

Connect This Story to Another Story

Connect helps children recognize repeated ideas, actions, and themes throughout Scripture.

Simple Start: Find One Similarity

Place this Story Block beside another Story Block your family has already explored that has a clear connection. Ask:

- “What is one thing these stories have in common?”

Your child might notice:

- God helped someone
- someone was afraid
- someone asked God for help
- God welcomed someone others rejected
- someone chose to follow God
- something changed after meeting God

Handle and turn the blocks together. The pictures can help jog your child’s memory. There may be more than one good connection.

Go Deeper: Choose Your Own Connection

Place all the previous Story Blocks where your child can see and handle them. Ask your child to choose another story that connects with the current one. Then ask:

- “What connects these stories?”
- “How are the people similar?”
- “How are they different?”
- “What did God do in both stories?”
- “How did the people respond differently?”
- “What theme appears in both stories?”

Your child can also connect the story to another part of Scripture that is not represented by a block. The goal is not to guess the connection the parent has in mind. The goal is to notice a meaningful connection and explain it.

Act Out

Bring the Story to Life



Act Out helps children experience the movement, emotion, and action of the story with their whole bodies. No costumes, props, or scripts are required.

Simple Start: Create a Freeze Frame

Choose one picture from the Story Block. Ask:

- “Can you make your body look like this part of the story?”

Your child might pose as someone:

- climbing
- listening
- welcoming someone
- following someone
- calling out
- kneeling
- walking away

Say, “Freeze!” Then ask:

- “Which part of the story are you showing?”

Repeat with another picture if your child wants to continue.

Go Deeper: Act Out All Six Scenes

Choose a narrator. The narrator turns the Story Block one side at a time and describes what is happening. Everyone else acts out each scene using their bodies, facial expressions, movement, and voices. Children can take turns playing different people or retell the entire story from one character’s perspective. Try adding:

- simple dialogue
- sound effects
- different emotions
- a narrator who connects the scenes

Afterward, ask:

- “Which scene felt most important?”
- “What did acting it out help you notice?”



Prayer

Talk to God About the Story

The Four Choices

One side of the Activity Block contains four options: Prayer, Find, Music, and Wonder. Choose the option that best fits your family today. Prayer helps children respond to God using the ideas, emotions, and needs they discovered in the story.

Simple Start: Echo Prayer

Pray one short line at a time and invite your child to repeat it. For example:

- “Jesus, thank you for this story.”
- “Thank you for seeing people.”
- “Thank you for helping people.”
- “Help us listen to you.”
- “Help us follow you.”
- “Amen.”

Adjust the prayer to fit the story you explored. Short and simple prayers are enough.

Go Deeper: Three-Part Prayer

Invite each person to say or write three short prayers:

- “Jesus, thank you for...”
- “Jesus, help me...”
- “Jesus, please help...”

Encourage your child to connect each prayer to something in the story. You can also ask:

- “What would you like to say to Jesus after hearing this story?”
- “What part of this story do you need help living out?”
- “Who does this story make you want to pray for?”

Children can pray aloud, silently, or in writing.



Find

Find the Story in the Bible

Find helps children connect the pictures on the block with the words of Scripture.

Simple Start: Find the Book and Chapter

Give your child a Bible and help them locate the story. Show them how to find:

- the name of the book
- the large chapter number
- the smaller verse numbers

Let your child hold the Bible, turn the pages, and point to where the passage begins. For younger children, you can find the book while they look for the chapter number. The goal is to help children understand that the story on the block comes from the Bible.

Go Deeper: Become the Passage Finder

Give your child the Scripture reference and invite them to locate it independently. Once they find it, ask them to:

- read one or more verses aloud
- find a sentence spoken in the passage
- locate the verse that matches one side of the block
- identify details that are not shown in the pictures
- compare the passage with their retelling

Ask:

- “What did you notice in the Bible that you did not notice on the block?”
- “How did the pictures help you follow the passage?”

The Story Block supports the story. Scripture remains the source.



Wonder

Make Space for Questions

Wonder helps children become curious, notice details, and recognize that Scripture is worth exploring. Not every question needs an immediate answer.

Simple Start: Share One Wonder

Look at one picture from the Story Block. Begin with:

- “I wonder...”

For example:

- “I wonder how this person felt.”
- “I wonder what God said next.”
- “I wonder why the crowd responded that way.”
- “I wonder what happened afterward.”

Then invite your child to share one wonder of their own. You can simply receive the question without trying to solve it.

Go Deeper: Explore a Question

Invite your child to choose one question they would like to explore. Return to the Bible passage and look for clues. Ask:

- “What does the passage tell us?”
- “What does it not tell us?”
- “Which picture made you ask that question?”
- “Is there another part of the Bible that might help us?”
- “What do you still wonder?”

Your child can discuss the question, draw it, or write it in a journal. It is okay to say:

- “I do not know. Let’s keep wondering and learning together.”

Wonder is not about producing the correct question. It is about paying attention and becoming curious about God’s Word.



Music

Remember the Story Through Sound

Every family is different in music abilities and skills. Please don't hesitate to rely on any family musical talent, Spotify or YouTube playlists. You might even ask kids for song requests.

Remember

Begin with Retell. Then intentionally choose one additional activity. Use Simple Start when your child needs more support or a concrete way to respond. Use Go Deeper when your child is ready for more independence, reflection, discussion, or detail. You can choose either option at any age. Follow your child's curiosity. Keep it simple. Come back to the story again.

Choose Your Family's Advent Rhythm

Retell each time you gather, then choose an activity. Decide how long your family would like to stay with each story this Advent.

Linger with four stories

Four stories / about four gatherings a week / four weeks

Choose four favorite Story Blocks and spend roughly a week with each. Choose four activities across the week, always beginning with Retell. Returning to the pictures gives children time to know the passage and explore it in different ways. That makes about sixteen gatherings over four weeks. Choose different stories next year, or return to family favorites.

Explore all eleven stories

Eleven stories / one or two gatherings per story

Follow the reading sequence through the whole set, choosing activities that fit each passage and your family. This gives you eleven to twenty-two gatherings across Advent. For a four-gatherings-a-week rhythm, visit every story once and return to five favorites: sixteen gatherings in all. Or spend two gatherings with every block if that suits your December.

A flexible middle path

Explore the whole story and linger where you wish. Plan to visit all eleven blocks, then give extra time to the stories that especially interest your children. One may receive a single gathering; another may receive three or four. Let your family's questions help shape the pace.

Make it your own

Choose from eight activities. After Retell, select Reflect, Character, Connect, Act Out, Music, Wonder, Prayer, or Find. Four activities per story is a suggested rhythm; explore more or move on sooner.

Keep the story pairs in mind. Consider choosing Angel with Shepherds, and Magi & Herod Part 1 with Part 2. Each pair forms one continuous narrative.

Enjoy the whole Nativity display. Set out all eleven blocks even when you focus on four stories. You can also let the display grow as you read. A shelf, table, or house-shaped box can become a familiar place to gather each December.

Missed evenings simply leave the next story or activity waiting for your next gathering. Move faster or slower as your family needs.

The Promises Begin

Promises to Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph

Its place in the larger story

Advent begins within Israel's long relationship with God. The Creator's good purposes have met human rebellion, yet the promises to Abraham and David keep opening a future. Luke begins with worship in Jerusalem; Matthew begins with a genealogy that passes through Abraham, David, and exile. The coming of Jesus is not detached from this history. These households stand within the people to whom God has made promises.

How this section moves

Elizabeth and Zechariah receive the promise of John. Gabriel then comes to Mary in Nazareth, and Joseph receives an announcement in a dream. These three Story Blocks introduce the households and the promised children. John's birth and Zechariah's restored speech remain part of the family's reading through Luke 1:57-66, supplied alongside the first block. The Gospels do not date Joseph's dream in relation to John's birth; this sequence groups the prenatal announcements together.

What to help children notice

Keep John and Jesus distinct. John prepares people for the Lord; Jesus is named as the promised king and the one who saves. Let questions, surprise, trust, silence, and praise emerge from the individual passages. An unexpected birth is not a promise that every childless household will receive a baby. God's care is not measured by whether a family looks like these households.

Read it with your family

Set the three blocks in reading order. After exploring Elizabeth and Zechariah's promise, read Luke 1:57-66 to hear its fulfillment; explain that this happens later. For a continuous reading through Luke, place Mary's visit and song in Luke 1:39-56 before John's birth. These accompanying readings connect the selected scenes without adding another cube. Ask what Gabriel said would happen and what the family later experienced.

In words a child can carry

God's promises are reaching these households: John will prepare the way, and Jesus will be the promised king.

Read alongside

Genesis 12:1-3 | 2 Samuel 7:12-16 | Luke 1 | Matthew 1

Elizabeth & Zechariah

Luke 1:5-25 | Before you share the story



Christmas begins here with two people who have been waiting a long time. Elizabeth and Zechariah have grown old without the child they hoped for. Luke tells us that they love God and have lived faithfully. That matters: their disappointment doesn't mean they've done something wrong or that God has forgotten them. We meet them as people with a real ache in their lives.

Zechariah is a priest, and on this day he has been chosen to burn incense in the temple. Outside, the people are praying. It's in this setting of worship that Gabriel appears and says Zechariah's prayer has been heard. The promise of a son brings joy to this household, but it will also mean something for all the people waiting for God's help.

Their son, John, will prepare people to welcome the Lord. Think of him as someone helping others get ready for a very important arrival. When Gabriel compares him with Elijah, he's recalling a prophet who urged God's people to turn back to God. John's work will involve changed hearts and mended relationships. His story belongs beside Jesus' story because he will help people recognize the one who is coming.

Zechariah struggles to believe the news. His months of silence give this promise time to become something he can see. Later, in Luke 1:57-79, John is born, Zechariah's speech returns, and he praises God. That reading completes the story begun on this block. As you share it with your children, keep the two sons' roles clear: John will prepare the way, and Jesus is the one he will point people toward.

A Son Is Promised

Luke 1:5-25



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and had no children.
- 2** One day, Zechariah was serving in the temple when an angel appeared beside the altar.
- 3** He was afraid. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard." Elizabeth would have a son named John.
- 4** John would prepare people for the Lord. Zechariah asked how he could be sure, because he and Elizabeth were old.
- 5** Because he did not believe the angel's words, Zechariah could not speak.
- 6** Afterward, Elizabeth became pregnant, just as the angel had promised.

Mary

Luke 1:26-38 | Before you share the story



Mary is going about life in Nazareth when Gabriel brings news that will change her future. She's promised in marriage to Joseph, and now she's being told she will have a son. Luke gives us room to notice her surprise. She listens, wonders what the greeting means, and asks how this can happen. Her willingness to trust God comes with an honest question.

Gabriel says her child will receive the throne of David. For Mary and her people, David's name carried a long-held hope. Centuries earlier, God had promised that David's royal family would have a future. Since then, Israel had suffered defeat and life under foreign rulers. Gabriel is telling Mary that God hasn't forgotten his promise. Her son will be the king whose reign will never end.

Mary's question is practical: how can she have a child when she is a virgin? Gabriel tells her that this will be the work of the Holy Spirit. He also gives her something close to home to help her take in the news: her relative Elizabeth is expecting a baby too. God is already at work in a family she knows.

Mary agrees to receive what God has promised, even though she can't yet see what it will mean for her life. Later, when she visits Elizabeth, her gratitude becomes a song about God's care for the lowly and hungry. That helps us understand the kind of king her son will be. As you read with your children, let Mary's question and her trust sit together. She can say yes to God while still having much to discover.

Let It Be

Luke 1:26-38



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Mary lived in Nazareth and was promised in marriage to Joseph.
- 2** God sent Gabriel to her. He said she had found favor with God and would have a son named Jesus.
- 3** He would be called the Son of the Most High, and his kingdom would never end.
- 4** Mary asked how this could happen.
- 5** Gabriel said the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Her child would be called the Son of God. Elizabeth was expecting too.
- 6** Mary answered, "Behold, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."

Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25 | Before you share the story



Joseph's story begins with a painful misunderstanding. Mary is pregnant, and he doesn't yet know what the reader has been told: her child is from the Holy Spirit. Matthew describes Joseph as a righteous man who doesn't want to expose her to public disgrace. Even before the dream, his concern for Mary is part of the story.

It helps to know that being promised in marriage meant more than an engagement usually does today. Mary and Joseph had made a binding commitment, although they weren't living together yet. Ending it required a divorce. That's why Joseph's decision is so serious, and why the angel tells him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.

The angel also tells Joseph to name the baby Jesus, explaining that he will save his people from their sins. By welcoming Mary and naming her child, Joseph gives Jesus a place in his household and in David's family. His role in God's promise takes the everyday form of making a home and caring for the people entrusted to him.

Matthew gives us another name to hold alongside Jesus: Immanuel, which means God with us. It's a promise that runs through the whole Gospel. At the end, the risen Jesus will assure his followers that he is with them always. Here, that great promise arrives as a baby who needs a family.

Joseph says nothing in this passage, but we learn about him through what he does when he wakes. He listens to God and welcomes Mary. Children can follow that simple movement from worry to trust to action. It gives them a concrete picture of faith in someone who has to take the next step without knowing the whole future.

Joseph Receives the Message

Matthew 1:18-25



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 Joseph was promised in marriage to Mary.
- 2 Before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.
- 3 Joseph planned to separate from her quietly.
- 4 An angel appeared in a dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife."
- 5 Her child was from the Holy Spirit. "You shall name him Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins."
- 6 Joseph woke and did what the angel commanded. He took Mary as his wife.

Good News in Bethlehem

Jesus is born; the news is heard and shared

Its place in the larger story

The child promised in the first section is born in David's city. Israel's hope is given a concrete center: a baby wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger. The announcement names him Savior, Christ, and Lord. The story brings imperial orders and ordinary family life into the same frame, but its center is the child and what God makes known about him.

How this section moves

Use the Jesus block for the birth. Then keep the Angel and Shepherds blocks together as a continuous pair. The Angel block ends with the company praising God; the Shepherds block begins after the angels have gone. There is one announcement, one decision to go, one discovery of the sign, and a return marked by praise. The manger face on the Angel block recalls the sign being described, not a second birth.

What to help children notice

Ask children to listen for a change: the shepherds are afraid, receive reassurance, go to see, tell others, and praise. Mary remembers and considers. These responses belong together. The angels announce news, not instructions for a holiday performance. The pictures help us remember that news without needing to settle the appearance of angels, the building's architecture, or the number of sheep.

Read it with your family

Place the Jesus block near your display's center. After the announcement, let children move the Shepherds block toward it as they retell. Do not require a polished performance. A child who points to the manger at the right moment has already joined the telling. Finish by saying the praise from Luke 2:14 together.

In words a child can carry

Jesus is born. The shepherds hear the good news, find him, and return praising God.

Read alongside

Luke 2:1-20 | Isaiah 9:2-7

Jesus

Luke 2:1-7 | Before you share the story



Luke tells Jesus' birth with just a few quiet details. An emperor's order takes Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, and while they are there, the baby is born. Bethlehem is David's town. Remembering Gabriel's promise that Jesus will receive David's throne helps us see why this small place matters: the promised king is arriving in the town connected with his family's story.

Then Luke brings us close to Mary as she wraps her son in cloths and lays him in a manger. A manger is a feeding trough. It's an unusual bed for a baby, but it is the space available to them. The child we've heard such remarkable things about needs warmth, rest, and someone to care for him. God is coming into human life in all its smallness and dependence.

The familiar picture of a lonely stable is one way people have imagined the setting. The word often translated 'inn' can also mean a guest room, so a crowded family home with space for animals is another possibility. Luke doesn't describe the building. You can enjoy the picture on the block while keeping the story's focus on what he does tell us: Mary gives birth, cares for Jesus, and lays him in the manger.

That manger will help you connect the next two blocks. The angel tells the shepherds to look for a baby lying in one, and that is exactly what they find. A detail that first shows us a mother's care becomes a sign leading others to Jesus. When sharing this story, begin with something children already understand: babies need looking after. Then help them remember who this baby is, the king God promised and the child Mary holds.

Jesus Is Born

Luke 2:1-7



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 This is the story of Jesus' birth.
- 2 Caesar Augustus ordered that people throughout the empire be registered.
- 3 Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem, David's city, because he belonged to David's family. Mary, who was expecting a baby, went with him.
- 4 There was no room for them in the guest room.
- 5 While they were in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth.
- 6 She laid him in a manger.

Angel

Luke 2:8-14 | Before you share the story



The shepherds are working through an ordinary night when suddenly God's glory shines around them. No wonder they're frightened. The angel's first words give them a way to take in what is happening: they don't need to be afraid, because he has brought good news. The scene moves from fear toward joy as they hear about the child born in Bethlehem.

The angel calls Jesus Savior, Christ, and Lord. Those words tell us who the baby is. Savior speaks of the rescue he brings. Christ means Messiah, the anointed king God's people have been waiting for. Lord speaks of his authority. When you read with children, you can gather those titles into a simple explanation: God's promised king has come to help and save his people.

Notice that the news is addressed directly to the shepherds: this child has been born to them. They are included in the joy while they're out caring for sheep. The angel gives them a sign they can actually look for, a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. All the greatness of the announcement leads them toward a child they can visit.

Then a heavenly company joins in praising God and announcing peace. In the Bible, peace includes life being put right: people reconciled to God and learning to live well with one another. Jesus' arrival begins that hope in a world that still knows fear and trouble.

This block gives the announcement; the Shepherds block follows the people who respond to it. As you share the pictures, let the surprise have room to grow. The shepherds begin the night watching their flock and end up invited into the story of God's promised rescue.

Good News of Great Joy

Luke 2:8-14



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** An angel of the Lord appeared
- 2** to shepherds who were watching their sheep at night.
- 3** God's glory shone around them, and they were terrified!
- 4** The angel said, "Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy." A Savior was born in Bethlehem: Christ the Lord.
- 5** They would find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.
- 6** Suddenly, a great company of angels joined the angel, praising God: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

Shepherds

Luke 2:15-20 | Before you share the story



This story picks up as the angels leave. The shepherds have heard that Jesus has been born, and now they want to see him. They hurry to Bethlehem and find the baby just as the angel described him, lying in a manger. What they heard in the field has brought them to a real family and a real child.

The shepherds bring something valuable to that family: the message they have received about Jesus. Anyone looking at the manger could see a newborn. These visitors can explain why his birth is such good news. They tell what the angel said, and the people who hear them are amazed. Ordinary working people have become some of the first to share the news of Jesus' arrival.

Their place in the story also fits the setting. Bethlehem is David's town, and David himself cared for sheep before he became king. The Bible often uses a shepherd's care to describe how a good ruler should treat people. Now shepherds are coming to meet the child who has been announced as the promised king.

Luke makes room for more than one response. The shepherds tell their news and return praising God. Mary treasures what has happened and keeps thinking about it. She has already heard Gabriel's promise, and now she has these visitors' words to hold alongside it. Her understanding has time to grow.

That can be reassuring when you share the story with your children. Some will want to talk straight away; others may carry a picture or question with them and return to it later. The shepherds' joy and Mary's quiet reflection both belong here. A child doesn't need to explain everything in one sitting for the story to begin taking root.

Let's Go to Bethlehem

Luke 2:15-20



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** After the angels went away, the shepherds said, "Let's go to Bethlehem now and see what the Lord has made known to us."
- 2** They hurried there
- 3** and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.
- 4** They told what the angel had said about the child. Everyone who heard them wondered.
- 5** But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.
- 6** The shepherds returned to their fields, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

Waiting Meets the Child

Simeon and Anna at the temple

Its place in the larger story

The story moves from Bethlehem to Jerusalem's temple. Simeon waits for Israel's comfort; Anna speaks to people waiting for Jerusalem's redemption. Their language carries the weight of Israel's hope. They do not abandon that hope when they meet Jesus: they recognize its fulfillment taking shape in him. Simeon's words also reach outward to the nations.

How this section moves

Luke places the temple visit after the birth and the eighth-day naming of Jesus, in connection with the law's purification requirements. Simeon receives the child, praises God, and blesses the family. Anna approaches at that very hour, gives thanks, and speaks to others. Keep the two blocks adjacent so children understand they belong to one visit, not to two unrelated trips.

What to help children notice

Waiting is active here: prayer, worship, attention, thanksgiving, and speech. These older people contribute to the story now, not only as memories of the past. Simeon's warning also prevents a sentimental ending in which no sorrow lies ahead. His words join light and hope with the reality that Jesus will be opposed. Children can hear that gentle truth without needing graphic details.

Read it with your family

Read Luke 2:21-24 as a brief bridge into these blocks. Ask what each person has been waiting for and what each does when Jesus arrives. Pray for older people your family knows, or invite one to share the retelling. Anna's long practice of fasting is part of her story, not a requirement for the child's activity.

In words a child can carry

Simeon and Anna meet Jesus, thank God, and speak about the hope he brings.

Read alongside

Luke 2:21-38 | Isaiah 40:1-5 | Isaiah 49:6

Simeon

Luke 2:25-35 | Before you share the story



Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple as part of their family's worship. They are following the practices given in Israel's law after the birth of a child. Their offering is a pair of birds, the provision made for families who couldn't afford a lamb. This small detail helps us picture them: a family of modest means bringing their baby before God.

At the temple they meet Simeon, who has been waiting for God to bring comfort and help to Israel. Luke calls this the 'consolation of Israel.' It reaches back to promises in Isaiah that God would come to the aid of his hurting people. Simeon has also received a personal promise that he will see the Messiah before he dies. The Holy Spirit leads him to the temple, where he takes Jesus in his arms.

Imagine how much that moment means to him. Jesus hasn't begun teaching or healing, yet Simeon can already thank God for keeping his promise. The salvation he has waited for is beginning with this child. He calls Jesus a light for the nations as well as the glory of Israel. God's faithfulness to one people will bring blessing to people far beyond them.

Simeon's words also make room for sorrow. He tells Mary that Jesus will face opposition and that she will know deep pain. The joy of his arrival won't make every part of the family's life easy. That is enough background to help you understand the change in tone without needing to explain every future event to a young child.

When you share the story, begin with Simeon's delight. Someone who has waited and prayed can finally hold the child God promised. That meeting gives children a warm, concrete way into the larger hope: God has remembered his people, and his love reaches beyond them to the world.

My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation

Luke 2:25-35



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 Simeon lived in Jerusalem.
- 2 He was waiting for God to comfort Israel.
- 3 The Holy Spirit had promised that he would see the Lord's Christ before he died.
- 4 When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the temple,
- 5 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God: "My eyes have seen your salvation," a light for the nations and Israel's glory.
- 6 Mary and Joseph marveled. Simeon blessed them and told Mary that people would oppose Jesus and sorrow would pierce her soul.

Anna

Luke 2:36-38 | Before you share the story



Anna's story is only a few verses long, but Luke gives us a glimpse of a whole life. She is an elderly widow who has spent years worshiping God through prayer and fasting. She has known loss, and she has kept turning toward God. When she comes near Jesus and his family, all those years of hope meet a reason for fresh thanksgiving.

Luke calls Anna a prophet. That tells us to pay attention to her voice. Women such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah had spoken and led among God's people long before this moment. Anna belongs within that history. Here at the beginning of Jesus' life, she has a part in helping others recognize what God is doing.

She arrives during Simeon's encounter with the family. The two stories belong together: Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and praises God; Anna gives thanks and begins telling others about the child. Luke allows both of them to help us see who Jesus is. Their recognition grows out of lives spent looking to God with hope.

The people Anna speaks to are waiting for the 'redemption of Jerusalem.' Redemption means rescue or being set free. They are longing for God to help his people and restore their life with him. Anna directs that hope toward Jesus. The baby in the temple is the one they should hear about.

Children may connect with Anna through someone older who loves them, prays for them, or tells them stories about God. Her place in the Nativity reminds us that older people have something valuable to share. You can let the simple movement of her story guide your reading: she comes near, gives thanks, and tells others. A brief appearance becomes a moment when hope is passed along.

Anna Gives Thanks

Luke 2:36-38



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Anna was a prophetess from the tribe of Asher. She was very old and had been a widow for many years.
- 2** She stayed near the temple, worshiping with fastings and petitions
- 3** night and day.
- 4** At the very hour when Simeon was speaking about Jesus, Anna came near.
- 5** She gave thanks to God.
- 6** Then she spoke about the child to everyone who was waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Worship and Refuge

The Magi and Herod pair, followed by the flight into Egypt

Its place in the larger story

Matthew introduces visitors from the east who seek the newborn king of the Jews. Abraham's promised blessing for the nations and David's royal line remain important horizons for reading the account. Herod's troubled response stands beside the visitors' desire to worship. The family's flight then connects Jesus' childhood with Egypt and Israel's story. Welcome, opposition, and refuge all belong to Matthew's account of the king's coming.

How this section moves

Part 1 covers Matthew 2:1-8: arrival in Jerusalem, Herod's questions, the scriptural answer, and departure toward Bethlehem. Part 2 covers verses 9-12: the star, the house, worship, gifts, a warning, and another way home. The Flight into Egypt continues with verses 13-15: Joseph's warning, departure by night, and the family's stay in Egypt. Each block takes up the account where the previous one stops. The visitors go home; the family leaves for refuge.

A careful chronological placement

The guide places this pair after the temple visit as a plausible reading sequence. Matthew and Luke do not explicitly date the Magi's visit in relation to Simeon and Anna. Matthew says Jesus has been born and describes a house, but supplies no exact age. This order should not be taught as a fully dated timetable or as proof that the visitors arrived a fixed number of days or years later.

Read it with your family

Begin with the visitors at a distance from the central family display and move them as the story proceeds. Keep their return route away from Herod visible. Then take up the Flight into Egypt block and follow the family's departure. Explain the danger simply, using the short retelling as your starting point. The final scene shows the family staying in Egypt. Matthew 2:19-23 supplies an accompanying reading about their later return and settlement in Nazareth.

In words a child can carry

The visitors worship Jesus and go home another way. Joseph hears a warning and takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

Read alongside

Genesis 12:1-3 | Micah 5:2 | Matthew 2:1-23 | Hosea 11:1

Magi & Herod - Part 1

Matthew 2:1-8 | Before you share the story



The visitors arrive in Jerusalem with a question that seems joyful to them and alarming to Herod: where is the child born king of the Jews? They want to honor him. Herod already has the throne, and another king sounds like a threat. That difference is the heart of these two blocks, which follow the visitors from their questions in Jerusalem to their meeting with Jesus.

The visitors are called Magi, a word used for learned people from the East who studied things such as stars and dreams. They have understood a star as a sign of a royal birth and traveled to find the child. Their arrival is an early sign that Jesus matters to people beyond Israel. God is drawing people from far away into the story.

Herod asks the chief priests and teachers of Scripture where the Messiah is to be born. They point him toward Bethlehem using the prophet Micah. The promise describes a ruler who will shepherd God's people. It's a helpful picture for children: a good king cares for people as a shepherd cares for a flock. That gives us a way to begin understanding the kind of king Jesus will be.

Herod says he wants to worship the child too, and he asks the visitors to report back when they find him. As the story continues, we discover that his words hide a dangerous purpose. For now, the Magi leave with directions to Bethlehem, still eager to meet the king they came to honor.

As you read, keep the different intentions easy to follow. The visitors are looking for someone to welcome; Herod is worried about losing his power. The next block will show the visitors finding Jesus and receiving the warning that changes their journey home.

The Magi Meet Herod

Matthew 2:1-8



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. "Where is he who is born King of the Jews?" They had come to worship him.
- 2 Herod was troubled.
- 3 He asked the chief priests and scribes where the Christ would be born.
- 4 They answered, "In Bethlehem," as the prophet had written.
- 5 Herod secretly asked the wise men when the star had appeared.
- 6 He sent them to Bethlehem: "Search for the child. When you find him, tell me, so I may worship him too."

Magi & Herod - Part 2

Matthew 2:9-12 | Before you share the story



After the uneasy meeting with Herod, the visitors reach the moment they've been hoping for. Matthew tells us they are filled with joy when they see the star. They enter the house, find Jesus with Mary, and bow before him. The journey that began with a question has brought them to a child they can finally honor.

Their gifts make that honor visible. Gold is precious wealth, and frankincense and myrrh are valuable tree resins used for things such as incense and perfume. The visitors have brought treasures fit for a king. Christians have often reflected on what each gift might suggest about Jesus, but Matthew's main picture is simple: they gladly offer valuable things to him.

Their visit also sounds like hopes expressed earlier in the Bible. Isaiah pictures nations coming toward God's light with gifts, including gold and frankincense. Here, people from outside Israel have come to worship Israel's promised king. The blessing God is bringing through Jesus is already reaching people from other places. Later, Matthew's Gospel will end with Jesus sending his followers to all nations.

Before the Magi leave, God warns them in a dream not to return to Herod. They listen and take another road home, keeping him from using their report to find the child. Their care for Jesus includes changing their plans. This ending leads directly into the next story, when Joseph also receives a warning and takes his family to safety.

When sharing the pictures, let the visitors' happiness be part of the story. Their worship includes delight, generosity, and a willingness to listen. Children can understand the pleasure of finding someone they've been looking forward to seeing and offering a gift that matters to them. That gives them a place to begin noticing the Magi's response to Jesus.

The Magi Worship Jesus

Matthew 2:9-12



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** After hearing Herod, the wise men went on their way. The star went before them
- 2** until it stopped over the place where the child was. They rejoiced greatly.
- 3** Entering the house, they saw Jesus with Mary his mother. They fell down and worshiped him.
- 4** They opened their treasures and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- 5** Then they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod.
- 6** They went home to their own country another way.

Flight into Egypt

Matthew 2:13-15 | Before you share the story



This part of the Christmas story begins with an urgent warning. After the Magi leave, an angel tells Joseph in a dream that Herod wants to harm Jesus. Joseph gets up, takes Mary and the child, and leaves that night for Egypt. His trust in God takes the form of practical care: listening, moving quickly, and helping his family reach safety.

Egypt may sound like a surprising destination if you remember Moses and the escape from slavery. Earlier still, Jacob's family had gone there to survive a famine. Egypt had been both a place of refuge and a place from which God's people needed rescue. Now it becomes a refuge for Jesus and his parents, who stay there until Herod dies.

Matthew connects their journey with the words 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' Those words come from Hosea, where God is remembering how he brought Israel out of Egypt. Matthew sees Jesus sharing in his people's story: the Son will come out of Egypt too. The God who brought Israel through danger is continuing his work through this child.

The surrounding verses also tell of families who suffer because of Herod's violence. Matthew gives room to their grief. Jesus' escape doesn't mean that every family who trusts God will be kept from harm. With young children, you can explain simply that Herod was dangerous and the family needed a safe place to stay, then answer the questions they actually ask.

There is a tender truth here for a family to notice: Jesus knows a human life that includes needing shelter and other people's care. His story can help children think kindly about people who have to leave home. Keep the immediate picture close as you read: a parent listens, a family travels together, and they find a place of refuge.

The Family Flees to Egypt

Matthew 2:13-15



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** After the wise men left,
- 2** an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt.
- 3** Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the child to hurt him."
- 4** Joseph got up and took the child and his mother away that night.
- 5** They went to Egypt and stayed there until Herod died.
- 6** This fulfilled the Lord's words through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Reading carefully, using confidently

Chronology without invented dates

The reading sequence follows the birth announcements, Jesus' birth, the shepherds' visit, the temple encounter, the Magi/Herod pair, and the flight into Egypt. John's birth is an accompanying reading for Elizabeth and Zechariah. The Magi's position after Simeon and Anna is a plausible ordering, not an explicit synchronism supplied by Matthew and Luke. Matthew directly places the warning to Joseph after the visitors depart.

Block labels and the replacement story

Reading numbers 01-11 are navigation labels for this guide. Block 05 now holds the Flight into Egypt, replacing the separate John the Baptist birth block. Blocks 08 and 09 carry the two continuous Magi/Herod parts. The set remains eleven Story Blocks plus one Activity Block. Page 3 supplies the full crosswalk.

The words children hear

The short scripts are original retellings, lightly edited for this guide's six-picture cues. Each is 100 words or fewer, with no reading section longer than 25 words. A section may continue a sentence from the previous face. Parent commentary and titles are outside the word count.

Angels and other artistic choices

The angels share one geometric style, with wingless figures and straight cream robes. Their faces, hairstyles, and beards vary. Gabriel retains the same appearance in his visits to Zechariah and Mary, where Luke names him. Unnamed messengers receive individual designs, and the heavenly company has distinct faces. These features, gold light, star motifs, and implied settings are artistic choices; they do not establish appearances or identities the passages leave unstated.

Read beyond the selected scenes

The set is a selection from Luke 1-2 and Matthew 1-2, not their complete contents. John's birth and Zechariah's restored speech remain in the accompanying reading. Mary's visit and song, the naming of Jesus, Herod's violence, and the return to Nazareth are also outside the separate block narratives. Prepare before extending a child's reading into distressing material; do not imply those events never happened.

Edition and production scope

This is a family-use development PDF, following the Story of God parent-guide structure. The added illustrated read-aloud pages make it self-contained. It is not a printer-imposed booklet or manufacturing dieline; final 40 mm face exports, cube orientation, color proofs, and vendor bleed require their own production review.

Keep the passage close

The primary source

Read the complete biblical passage before using the background notes. The four chapters below contain the stories in this set. The links open the full chapters; the references above each narrative identify the story's passage.

[Luke 1: promises, Mary, and John's birth](#)

[Luke 2: birth, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna](#)

[Matthew 1: Joseph and the promised child](#)

[Matthew 2: the Magi, Herod, and what follows](#)

Translation and adaptation

The child narratives are Bible Blocks retellings, with some speech closely adapted for length and clarity. They retain familiar wording such as "manger," "guest room," and "Zechariah" where the public-domain World English Bible Classic uses "feeding trough," "inn," and "Zacharias." The Angel retelling preserves the WEB Classic wording of Luke 2:14.

[World English Bible public-domain statement](#)

Reading the backgrounds

The parent pages attend to ancient settings, the details each Gospel emphasizes, and connections with Israel's Scriptures. Follow a connection by reading both passages. Cultural reconstructions, such as the household setting of the manger, are offered as possibilities where the text leaves details open.

Background readings consulted

These readings explore the settings and Bible connections behind the stories. Select a link to read further whenever you would like more background.

[1] [Marriage customs in Matthew 1:18-25](#)

[2] [The manger and the guest room](#)

[3] [Temple customs in Luke 2:22-40](#)

[4] [Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:21-38](#)

[5] [The Magi in Matthew 2:1-12](#)

[6] [Hosea, Matthew, and Israel's story \(pp. 27-28\)](#)

You do not need to teach every background detail. Choose one that helps your family notice the passage more clearly, then return to the story together.