



Jesus' Family Tree

Goal: To learn about Jesus' family as well as our own.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 1:1-17

Jesus Christ is the son of Abraham and the son of David. Thus the genealogy sets Jesus squarely in the history of the people and promises of Israel. That is the primary purpose of Matthew 1:1-17; however, students of Scripture have detected other emphases. The mention of four women is out of character for an ancient genealogy. Each of them clearly have a story of courage and risk-taking that defied their roles, advancing God's purposes and preserving Jesus' lineage. Tamar and Ruth are left childless, which meant abandonment in the ancient world, yet both act with honor and loyalty to have a child. Rahab, relegated to being known only as a prostitute, chooses Yahweh and the Israelites, thus preserving her family. The wife of Uriah, Bathsheba, often labeled "seductress," is named by the prophet Nathan as a "lamb" exposing King David's abuse of power. Some suggest that these women are a legacy for Mary, another courageous risk-taker.

Another feature of the genealogy is the number of generations. Matthew names three generations of fourteen persons, or six sevens. The number seven marked perfection, while six symbolized imperfection or incompleteness. Therefore, it is surmised, the coming of Jesus initiates the seventh, hence complete and perfect, generation of generations. Jesus' Advent marks the end of waiting for God's long-promised Messiah and the beginning of God's kingdom on earth.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

As children grow and gain a sense of belonging in their families, they can express curiosity about their ancestors: What was it like for Mom and Dad when they were children? What were Grandma and Grandpa like in the old days? Where do I come from? Whom do I belong to? Knowing that Jesus was born and was part of a multi-generational family suggests that comparable questions could have been asked in Mary's and Joseph's household. What did it mean for Jesus to claim his earthly family? How can your children be encouraged to give thanks for all members of their family, even the ones unknown and unnamed?

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Help the children see the different relationships within a family tree. *Descendants* is a big word, so maybe talk about fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and so on. Emphasize that our families are gifts from God to each of us. For older children, mention that the genealogy includes people who made mistakes and were unfaithful to God and to each other. Or talk about the missteps of the "heroes" in Jesus' family, such as Jacob, who stole his brother's birthright, and David, who committed adultery and had Bathsheba's husband killed. What does it mean that such people are in Jesus' family?

*Gracious and loving God, may we celebrate
all the ways we find ourselves in family.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 3, 3a, 15, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

Advent wreath with
four battery-operated
candles

mural paper, brown
and green construction
paper

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Offering

GN 2, copies of GN 3,
large sheets of light-
colored construction
paper, brown and green
construction paper

Extra

copies of GN 4

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

Greet the children by name and with the words, “The grace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words. Invite children to help set the scene. This is the Third Sunday of Advent. Provide a Bible, a purple cloth, and an Advent wreath with four battery-operated candles.

Provide mural paper, along with brown and green construction paper. Encourage the children to create a tree trunk and branches with the brown construction paper and leaf shapes from the green construction paper. Have them glue the trunk and branches onto the mural paper and write the title, “Jesus’ Family Tree,” at the base of the trunk. Do not attach the leaf shapes yet. Display the tree in the worship space.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

As children prepare the space, share a family memory of yours, perhaps a story that is told at family gatherings. After sharing your story, invite the children to share stories that their families often tell.

Singing and Praying

C **L** **B**

Invite the children to gather around the Advent wreath. Consider darkening the room for the prayer and turning on the lights afterward.

Sing the first three verses of “God, We Sing”—**SCM 15**. On the Advent wreath, turn on three candles.

Tell the children that, as you pray, you will invite them to say the names of people in their family. Explain that they may say names aloud and speak at the same time as someone else. Invite the children to pose as a tree while you pray:

Dear God, I pray for the family who lives in my house (*name those you live with*).

I pray for family that I don’t get to see often (*name family members you don’t see often*).

I pray for the oldest in my family and the youngest (*name the oldest person in your family and the youngest*).

Sometimes being a family is hard, but these people shape us into who we are. God, for the grace of family we give you thanks. Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story LD

Hand out Bibles and help the children find Matthew 1 so they may see the long list of Jesus' ancestors named there. Comment that this is called a *genealogy* or a *family tree*. Wonder if any of the children's families have researched their ancestors and what they may have learned. Invite the children to listen for what Mary, Joseph, and Jesus have to say about some of the people in Jesus' family tree.



Hearing the Story LB

Place the open Bible turned to Matthew 1 on the worship table. Read **SCM 3** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Display **SCM 3a** and read aloud the names of the people in the pictures. Tell the children that these are some of the people they heard about in Jesus' family. Cut the pictures apart and place them where the children can see them. Hand out the leaves made in "Welcoming and Preparing." As you read the story again, invite the children to listen for the names of these people. When they hear a name, have them take turns finding the person and taping or gluing the picture to one of the leaves. After you have finished the story, have them tape or glue their leaves to the "Jesus' Family Tree" mural. Place Abraham, and those following down toward the base of the tree, with David in the middle, and Jesus toward an outer branch or the top of the tree. Marvel together at how far back Jesus can trace his family.

- B** *When more than one child speaks at the same time, it may escalate into a volume competition. Remind children to respect others and be polite.*

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Engage the children in conversation about the story, using the following questions:

- ▼ What did Joseph say about their ancestors? *(They all tried to walk faithfully with God. Some made bad choices, but they are still part of the family.)*
- ▼ What did Mary have to say about their ancestors? *(The women's stories often don't get told. Tell their stories too!)*
- ▼ What surprised Jesus about his ancestors? *(He was a descendant of King David. He was from the tribe of Judah. Women were mentioned in the story of his ancestors. Joseph said he was Mary's husband but didn't say he was Jesus' father.)*
- ▼ What did the story make you wonder about?
- ▼ What does this story tell us about Jesus?



Singing

Listen to “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—**SCM 23**. Sway to the music, and invite the children to join in singing as they learn the words. Turn off the candles.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Comment that Jesus' family history is pretty extraordinary! Suggest that our families help shape us. Sometimes we learn from them what to do and sometimes what not to do. Jesus learned that, even though David was a king, David made mistakes. Jesus learned that women played important roles in his family history. Tell the children that they are going to reflect on stories of their families.

Provide each child with a sheet of white paper and instruct them to fold the page in half to make a booklet. Show **GN 1** and read the steps to make the booklet. When the children have finished, invite anyone who wishes to share a page of their booklet to do so. Give thanks to God for family members, and especially the children in your midst who are learning their faith stories as part of God's family.

- C** *Some children may be uncomfortable speaking in front of a group. Allow these children to be a part of the activity by participating in another way: holding or collecting props, or being a time-keeper.*

Praying God's Grace



Give children pipe cleaners. Explain that this will be a quiet time of prayer, but that they may use the pipe cleaners as they pray. Encourage them to pray for members of their family and to bend the pipe cleaners as they pray. They may choose to shape it into a person as they pray for a specific family member, or form a heart or another shape that reminds them of the family member they are praying for. Comment that there is no wrong shape or way to pray. After a few minutes, prompt the children to pray for another family member. After a few more minutes, prompt the children to pray for a church family member. Close the prayer time by saying, “God of grace, hear our prayers. Amen.”



Offering God's Grace

LG VI

Before the session, cut a tree trunk from brown construction paper for each child, using the template on GN 2.

Invite the children to create a family tree as an opportunity for conversation with their families about where they are from, just like Jesus did with his parents.

Provide each child a large sheet of light-colored construction paper, a tree trunk, and several pieces of brown and green construction paper. Use the following directions to create a family tree:

- ▼ Glue the trunk to the background.
- ▼ Cut branch shapes from brown construction paper and add to the tree.
- ▼ Cut leaf shapes (*half circles*) along folded green paper and glue to the branches.
- ▼ Hand out instructions cut from copies of GN 3.

Send the trees and “Dear Family” directions home with the children. Encourage them to invite their family to create a family tree. Maybe they will discover things and stories they did not know before, which will be a gift to their families.

Extra Activity

LD

Explain to the children that their family is larger than just Mom, Dad, and relatives—it also includes all the people who are in their faith family.

Hand out copies of GN 4 and crayons or colored pencils. Allow time for the children to color the people in the faith family tree. Suggest that they think of the people who have taught them: pastor, teachers, and even friends. Allow time for them to fill in names on or around the people on the tree. Help with spelling or writing as needed.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

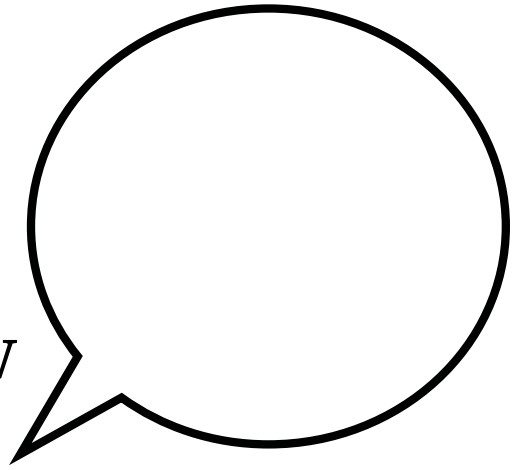
LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Ask the children how they might be a blessing to their families this week. Encourage them to ask about their ancestors and stories of their families.

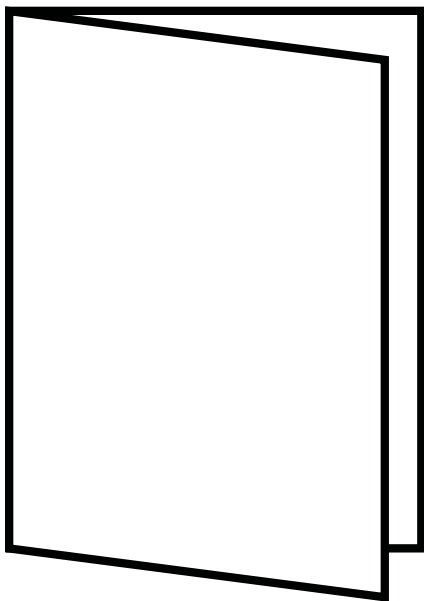
End the session with each child becoming a messenger of good news. Have the children point their hands and fingers in different directions and say, “Joy be with you and you and you!” As they say this, encourage them to point in many different directions to include the whole group in their departing message of joy.

Page 1—Draw a picture of yourself. Below the picture, write one word that describes you. Draw a speech bubble. Inside the bubble, write, “My story is full of . . .” and finish the sentence.

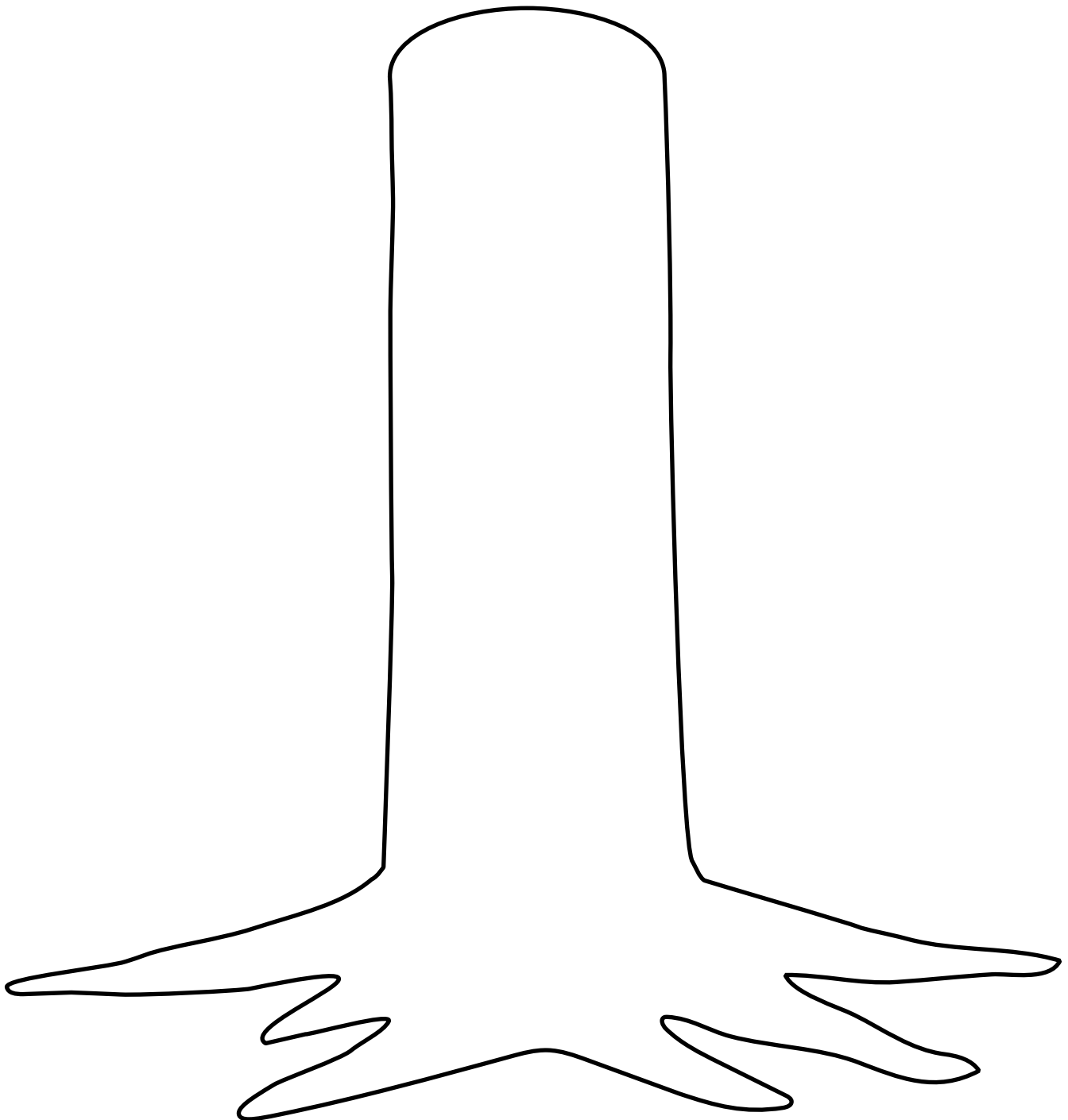


Page 2—Write “From _____, I have learned . . .” Write or draw a picture.

Page 3—Write “I imagine God could use me to . . .” Write or draw a picture.



Page 4—Write or draw a picture of a person who has taught you about God’s love.





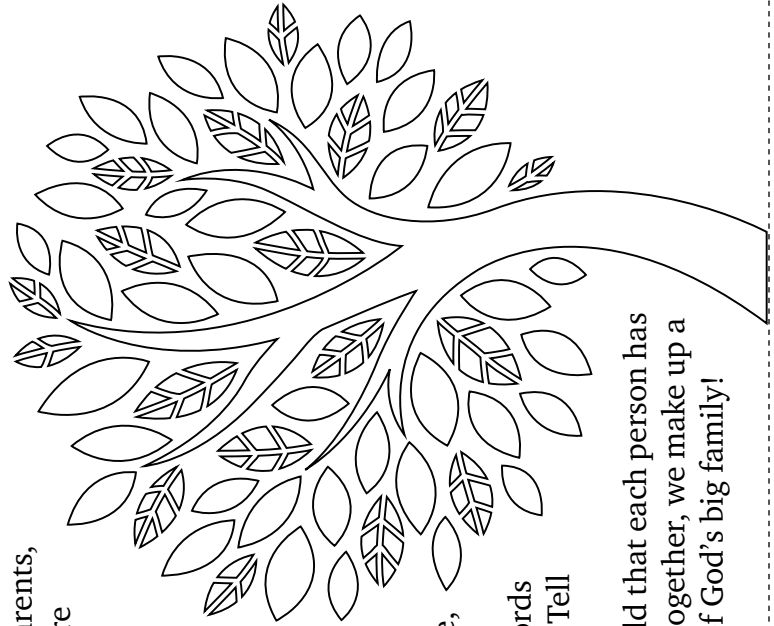
Dear Family,

Today we learned about Jesus' family tree. Wow! Did he have a lot of ancestors! According to Matthew 1, there were forty generations—fourteen from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian captivity, and twelve from the captivity to Jesus—in Jesus' family tree. Some folks are familiar, like Abraham, Ruth, and King David; while others are strange names we probably don't recognize, just like our families. And, just like our families, some had grand stories, some made bad choices, and some experienced exciting adventures.

Your child made a tree with a trunk and branches. They glued leaves to the branches. This won't follow a traditional family tree from child to

parents to grandparents, and so on. It is more a representation of relatives and ancestors in your child's life. We encourage you to write the names of these people on the leaves of your child's family tree. Glue a picture, if you have one, and write a few words about that person. Tell their stories.

Remind your child that each person has a family tree, and together, we make up a ginormous forest of God's big family!



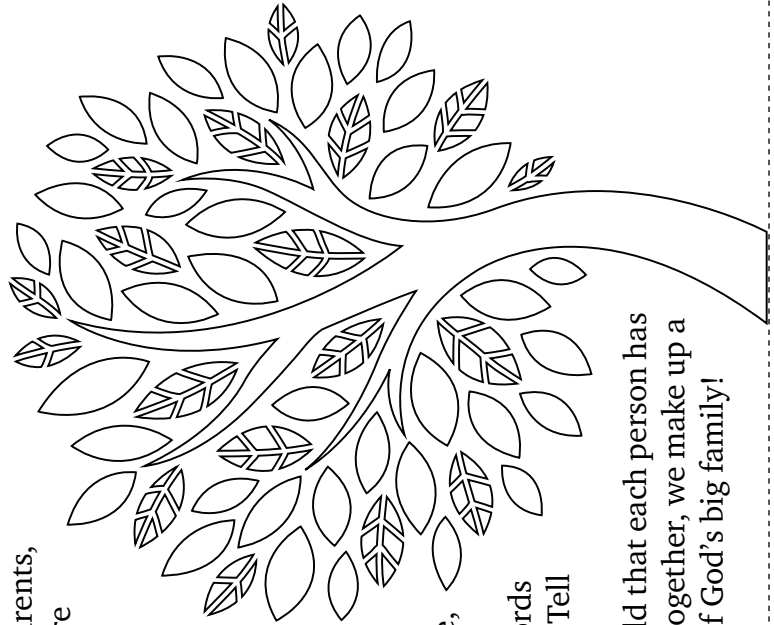
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My Faith Family

