



# 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](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 3, 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

## Responding

### Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1

### Celebrating

bag or box with  
assorted items collected  
from your room

### Extra

copies of GN 2

## 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.

### 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. Today’s Scripture reading is lengthy and has a lot of names to pronounce. Decide if you would like children to read from the Bible or the adapted story on **SCM 3**. Ask for several volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage or **SCM 3**.

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



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 have the children turn to Matthew 1 so they may see the long list of Jesus' ancestors. 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

LD LG

Invite a child to find Matthew 1 in the Bible. Have volunteers read Matthew 1:1–17 or **SCM 3**. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Hand out the leaves made in "Welcoming and Preparing." Invite the children to look at the story of Jesus' ancestors from the Bible or listen to the story from **SCM 3** or the story audio. Tell the children to write down on their leaf a name that they hear. Have the children 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.

### Celebrating God's Grace



Tell the children that laughing and sharing stories is a good family activity that creates warm memories of time spent together. Explain that they are going to play a silly storytelling game, imagining how Jesus' family might have used some objects. Begin by inviting the child sitting to your left to choose an item from the bag or box you have prepared. They should tell two or three sentences of a story about Jesus' family and the item. When you say, “Pass,” the storyteller passes the object to the person on their left and continues the story with two or three more sentences. The play continues with the same object, or a child may choose to pick a different object from the bag or box and start a new story of Jesus' family.

Comment that the stories may be silly, creative, and even outrageous! The point is to tell stories. Follow up with these questions:

- ▼ What can be fun about telling stories?
- ▼ Why is it a good idea to tell stories?
- ▼ Why may it have been important to Jesus to hear the story of his ancestors?
- ▼ What would you like to know about your family story?



- 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 timekeeper.*

### Praying God's Grace

TD

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.”

### Extra Activity

LD

Explain to the children that their family is larger than just Mom, Dad, and relatives—it also includes all the people in their faith family. Hand out copies of **GN 2** 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: pastors, teachers, and even friends. Allow time for them to fill in names on or around the people on the tree.



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

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

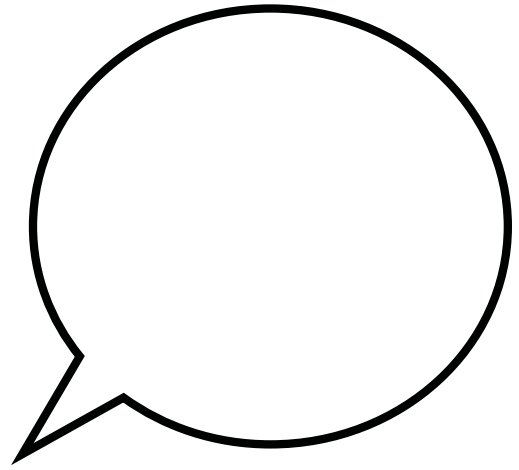
Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

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.

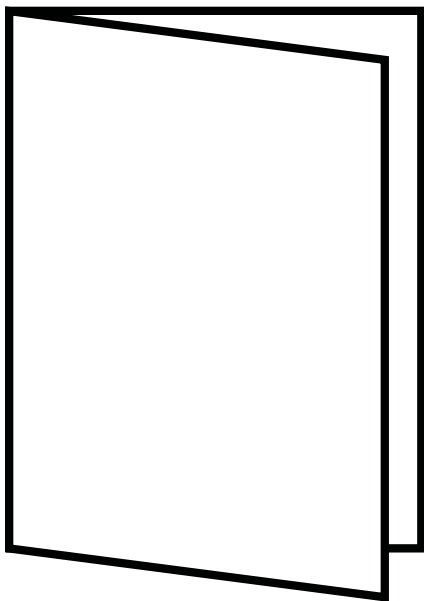


**Page 1**—Draw a picture of yourself. Write one word that describes you below the picture. Draw a speech bubble. Inside the bubble, write “My story is full of . . .” and finish the sentence.



**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.





# My Faith Family

