

God's Word is valuable. all the answers. Even thinking about read together. It's okay if you don't have a question or two about the verse you Day! If you have time, you can discuss the marker closer, and closer, to the Big turns reading that day's verse, moving introductory story. Then, each day take

beoble their Rescuer was coming. clues God left in His Word to show His Old Testament. You'll be discovering the scene with a short story from the Each Sunday, plus Ash Wednesday, sets Begin your countdown on that day. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent.

Plan about five minutes for each week's

proclaim His resurrection! on Easter Sunday, flip your banner over to

the week. At the end of your countdown therefore was the most important day of reminder of Jesus' victory over death, and In the early church, every Sunday was a The Sundays are noted by larger numbers. ing with Day 40, we'll count down to Easter. your family anticipate this miracle! Start-The Easter Advent banner helps you and

rection—the biggest. Best. Miracle. EVER! so we are ready to celebrate Jesus' resur-Lent reminds us how much we need Jesus

don't owe that as a payment for sins. stroyed our last enemy; death. Now we When Jesus rose from the dead, He de-

Remember getting ready for a big event? A tri-state gymnastics meet, an end of year piano recital, studying for finals, your first prom, Christmas, a wedding, or your first job interview after college? Important events in our lives take practice and preparation so when the big day arrives we are ready to make the most of it in every way.

Have you ever heard of "lent?" Lent is the time of preparation, getting ourselves ready, for the most stupendous event of all time: Jesus and His resurrection!

The Bible says if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, our faith wouldn't be worth anything. We would still be trapped in our sins. We'd be kept away from God.





But when Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed . . . forever. For the first time, they started accusing God and each other! They hid. They lied. They were afraid.

God, in all His love, knew this couple He created needed to be rescued. He knew they couldn't fix the brokenness in their lives on their own. Their sin had to be paid for. Their relationships with God and each other needed fixing.

This week, we'll look at one verse every day to help us understand how God had a plan to save us through His Rescuer: Jesus.

## Ash Wednesday

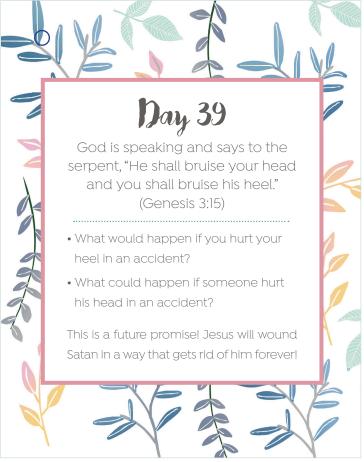
Day 40: Clues in the Garden

If you want to take the time, ask your children to recount the story of Adam and Eve, or read the story directly from the Bible in Genesis 2:7-9, 25, and 3:1-19.

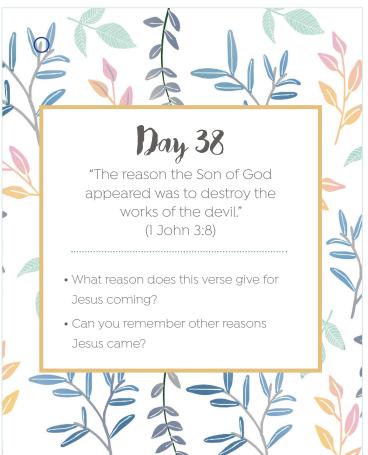
#### Read this short story aloud:

The first clues about Jesus the Messiah are found in the beginning of time, in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve lived in a perfect place. They were perfect people who talked freely with a perfect God. What do you imagine it was like? It was just like God had planned it, full of beauty and trust.





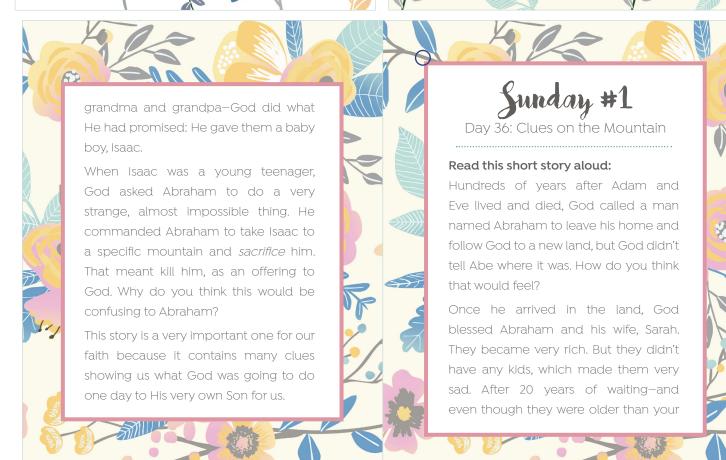




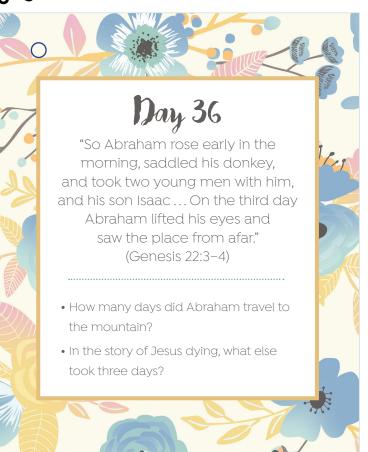
"And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21)

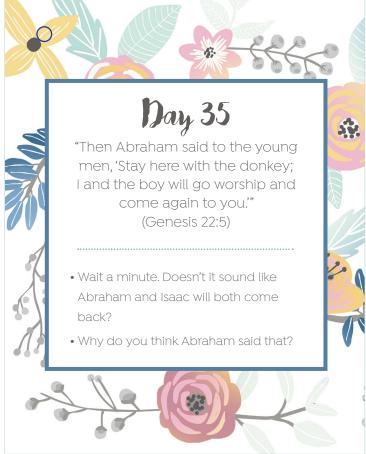
- · Whose fault was it that Adam and Eve needed clothes? (Who sinned?)
- Then why is God the One making clothes for
- What does this tell us about what kind of God we have?
- If God made these clothes out of skin, what did He have to do to the animals?

This is a sign of what Jesus would do. Jesus would die so that we could wear clothes of righteousness. Righteousness means doing everything right. Sin makes us feel naked and ashamed, but Jesus' sacrifice covers up our shame and makes us acceptable to a perfect God.



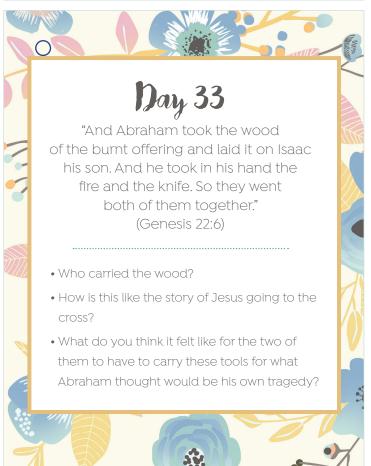






"... And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together." (Genesis 22:7-8)

- Remember, from yesterday's verse, what Abraham said to the young men who came with him to the mountain.
- What does this verse tell us about what Abraham believed God could do if Abraham sacrificed Isaac? This verse tells the answer: "[Abraham] considered that God was able even to raise [Isaac] from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19).
- What did Abraham trust God to do?
- How would your dad feel if he had to do what Abraham was about to do?





"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

- We've been talking about Abraham and Isaac carrying what they needed to sacrifice Isaac. How is that like what Jesus told us to do?
- Remember that Jesus said this before people knew He would die on the Cross. What kind of people would have carried crosses?
- Why did Jesus choose these words? (Only people sentenced to die carried crosses. Jesus asks us, too, to die to ourselves. Check out Galatians 2:20 together.)



"When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (Genesis 22:9-12)

- Did God know Abraham would obey?
- Why did He make Abraham take all these steps. even to raising the knife, if He knew Abraham would obev?

Parents, you may need to help your kids think about this, and come back to it throughout the next few days. Share your own answers too because all of us tend to look to comfort, security, approval, and/or power instead of God and your children will be helped knowing you struggle too.



#### Day 30

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1-2)

- We read yesterday that Abraham tied up Isaac's hands and feet to lay him on the altar as a sacrifice. How do you think Isaac felt?
- What does God mean in this verse—that we are offering ourselves as *living sacrifices*?
- What are three things you really want, or really want to do, or really love right now?
- Are you willing to choose what God wants, even





about what you can remember about the story of Moses.

In Moses' time, God's people were living in Egypt. They had been slaves under Pharaoh for almost 400 years. Near the end of those long, hard years, God raised up Moses to lead His people to freedom.

God also used ten plagues to demonstrate to His people that He was all-powerful and could rescue them. He also wanted to show the Egyptian people that He was the real God, not their pretend gods made of wood and stone. How many of the plagues can you remember? You can read about them in Exodus 7:14-11:10

"And Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh... and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land." (Exodus 11:10)



Day 29: Clues in the Desert

#### Read this short story aloud:

You've probably noticed by now that God doesn't just tell His people what He will do—He shows them. These next clues to help His people and us recognize Jesus were learned through another experience they would never forget!

This week's story can be found in the famous Exodus story, where God seems to shout: I want to restore our broken relationship. My Son will be the Way, He will look like this! Don't miss Him!

So let's start by gathering a little background information. If you have time, talk

# "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of

night I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die ... all the firstborn of the cattle as well."

(Exodus 11:4-5)

- Why did God choose the firstborn for this plague? Was there something special about firstborns?
- Like the previous nine plagues, this last one was never intended to harm God's people, Israel, but it was to demonstrate to both Egyptians and Israelites that "I AM" alone is God.

### Day 28

"The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats..." (Exodus 12: 3,5)

- Who was in charge of getting the lamb?
- What kind of lamb was it to be?









"... and vou shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight." (Exodus 12:6)

- How long did each family keep their
- Would you enjoy having a soft, cuddly little lamb live with your family for four days? Would you name it and play with it and want to keep it?
- · How do you think the children felt about God's command to kill the lamb they loved?

#### Day 26

"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses ..." (Exodus 12:7)

God is telling Moses about the last plague He will send. But He tells all the people of Israel they can be kept safe-if they follow the directions God gives them.

- A fun activity: You can paint around the doorframe of your front door with red Crayola finger paint to share the Israelites' experience (it washes off). Or hang a red ribbon or sash over your door.
- What do you think this painting of blood signifies?



#### Day 25

"God said, 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD." (Exodus 12:12)

- · Why is God going to kill the firstborn of Egypt?
- Do you think this is fair?

#### Day 24

"The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:13)

This night and its ceremony is called the Passover because death passed over them. The blood of the lamb on the doorways of each Hebrew house was meant to be a vivid memory that a life had to be sacrificed to save the people.

- What is the blood called?
- What saved the firstborn children of Israel when all the firstborn children in Egypt died?
- What saves us today?

Thank God in your heart that the sacrifice of a Lamb-of Jesus' blood-makes it possible for death to pass over us.





"Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery, for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place." (Exodus 13:3)

- How is Moses himself a clue?
- Like Moses, Jesus would deliver His people from slavery—the slavery of sin. And just like when Moses was a baby, an evil king would try to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem so Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Egypt, so Jesus would even come up out of Egypt like Moses!

God wanted them to build this big tent tabernacle to have a place where they could all gather in His presence and celebrate everything He did for them. It was also the place where they made sacrifices for their sins. The tabernacle was where God's holy presence could live near them. And in this huge tent, God put more clues to what the Messiah would be like.

There were two rooms in God's house. (Parents, this might be fun for kids to draw, on paper or with chalk on your driveway, as you describe it.) First, a big room called the "Holy." Second was a smaller room called the "Most Holy." Starting with the large room, there were three pieces of furniture there: an oil-lamp stand on the left with seven branches, a table on the right with twelve loaves of special bread, and straight ahead, an altar for burning incense.

## Sunday #3

Day 22: Clues in the House

#### Read this short story aloud:

Have you ever seen the old movie called *The* Ten Commandments? (If you haven't, Lent is a great time to watch it and make it a family tradition.) After the children of Israel left Egypt, they began the long walk to the Promised Land.

On the way, God spoke with Moses, giving the Ten Commandments. And soon, God gave him something else: very detailed instructions on how to build a tabernacle. It was kind of like a church-only it was a huge tent! It had to be portable so the Israelites could carry it with them when they moved, a hike that lasted 40 years. Can you imagine camping for 40 years, and even camping when you went to church?!



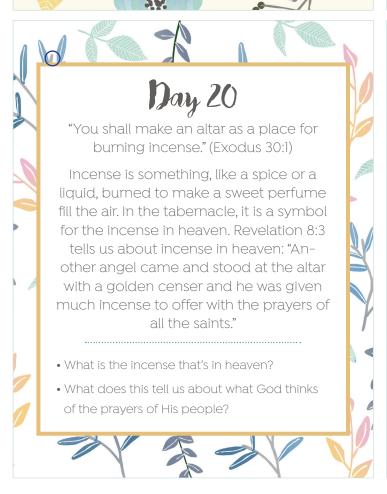
"And you shall make a table of acacia wood ... and you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times." (Exodus 25:23, 30)

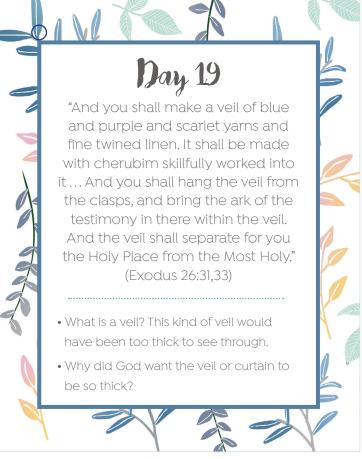
- · Why do you think there was bread in the Israelites' tabernacle?
- What do you think the Jews thought when they heard Jesus say, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).
- Older children: If Jesus is bread for our souls, what do you think our souls are hungry for?
- How is Jesus different than the bread we eat?



"You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand and its base and its shaft are to be of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be of one piece with it." (Exodus 25:31)

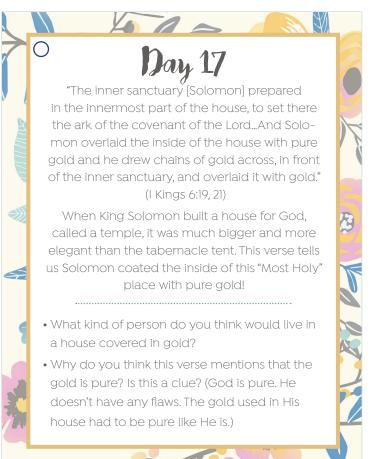
- What does a lamp do?
- What does light do for us?
- What is it like in the dark without a light?
- How is Jesus like a lamp?

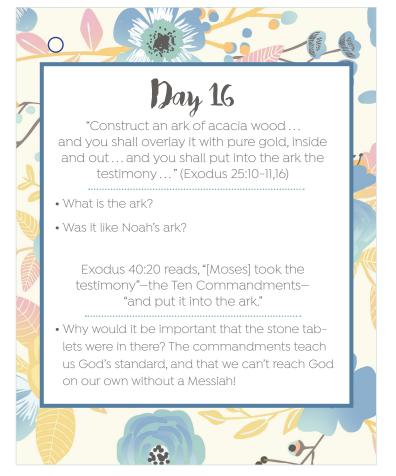




cut along edges for individual cards (no folding) Ohole punch on the blue circle









Excited with their strange discovery, they both took the scrolls back to show their family. His tribe, who were Bedouins, kept the scrolls hanging on a tent pole while they figured out what to do with them. Eleven more caves nearby hid precious scrolls.

What Muhammed found that day were many copies of Old Testament books written on scrolls. This included the book penned by the prophet Isaiah. That means that we can prove that prophets predicted these clues about who the Son of God would be almost 700 years before Jesus was born. Let's read some of the verses found in the old scrolls.

## Sunday #4

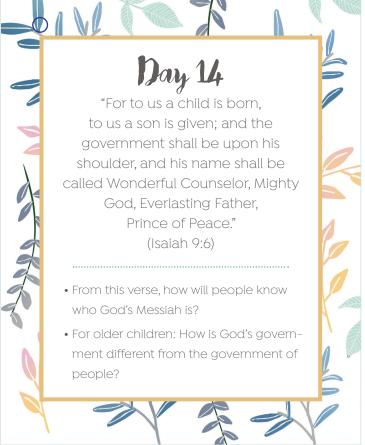
Day 15: Clues in the Scrolls

#### Read this short story aloud:

It was winter in Palestine, shortly after the Second World War. A fifteen-year-old boy named Muhammed and his cousin, Jum'a, were herding livestock in the desert. While taking care of their animals, Jum'a noticed some holes in the rocky hillside.

He threw in a rock to see how big they were—then called Muhammed over to see. When Muhammed bent over to look he fell in! *Whoa.* Inside the hole was a pot that looked old. And inside the pot were ancient scrolls!









"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him ..." (Isaiah 11:1-2)

- Who was Jesse? (Hint: His son killed a giant!)
- What is the "shoot" of a plant?
- What part is the root?
- How could a human like Jesse have a shoot? God's saying something here. Could this be a clue?



Yesterday, the clue from Isaiah said the Messiah would come from Jesse, David's dad. Read what God had promised to King David hundreds of years earlier, "When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." (1 Chronicles 17:11-13)

- · What does it mean that God will "establish [David's] throne forever"?
- How could a man that came from David's line be a king forever?
- Who could it be?

#### Day 11

"But he was pierced for our transgressions: he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed ... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth... And they made his grave... with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." (Isaiah 53:5,7,9)

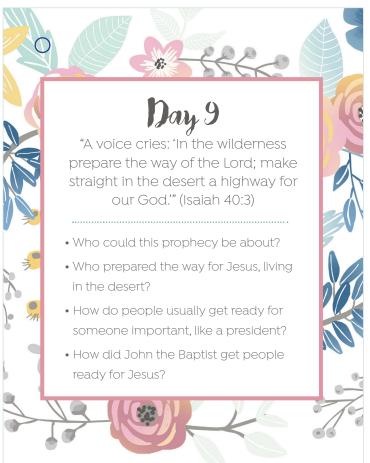
- What do these verses tell us about what the Messiah will do? There are a lot of clues here!
- What can you remember about Jesus' death that made these prophecies come true-that solved the mystery?

#### Day 10

"The scroll of the prophet Isaiah

was given to [Jesus]. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:17-21)

- Now, what are the clues in this reading from
- What work would God's Messiah do?



Messiah. The culmination of Holy Week includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Those days correspond to the Jewish holidays Jesus kept during His last week of life.

Like our winter holidays that span eight days (Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day), the Jewish springtime feasts also span eight daysand have done so since God established them in the book of Leviticus. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread always occur on the 14th and 15th of the same month, kind of like Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are always on the 24th and 25th of December. But the third feast, First Fruits, has always been celebrated on a Sunday (like American Thanksgiving always happens on a Thursday, but doesn't have a date that stays the same). First Fruits is the Sunday after Unleavened Bread.

In the year Jesus died, God displayed His perfect timing, set in motion before time began: All three feasts were consecutive: Friday, Passover, Saturday, Unleavened Bread, and Sunday, First Fruits ... exactly on the days when Jesus died, was buried, and rose

#### Sunday #5, Palm Sunday

Day 8: Clues from Jesus

#### Read this short story aloud:

Detectives use the words *hot* and *cold* to describe their cases. When the clues and tips seem to stop, they say their case has gone cold.

Exactly the same thing happened in the Bible. For thousands of years the clues about the Messiah continued to be given, like bread crumbs sprinkled along the path. Then suddenly the clues stopped. For four hundred years there was not a single word from God.

Then, on the darkest of days, an angel broke the canopy of space and announced, "This shall be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloth, and lying in a manger." Another clue was given. Then when Jesus turned thirty, He began giving lots of clues. He was connecting the dots between all the clues God had given in the Old Testament to Himself.

Today is Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week. Each day we will read the I AM verses from the book of John where Jesus plainly told His disciples He was the





"The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He." (John 4:25-26)

Very plainly Jesus said, "I am Messiah."

- Do you know the story of this woman? What was her background?
- If Jesus was offering this woman eternal life, what does that mean for you?

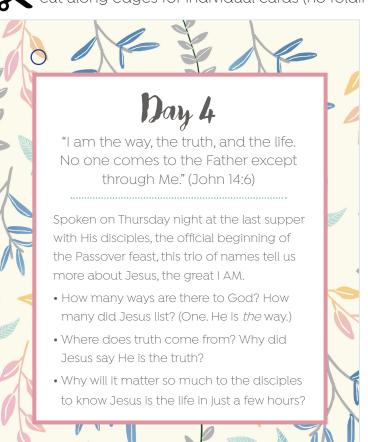
In the year Jesus died, Palm Sunday was on the 10th of Nisan, which was the day each family was to take a perfect, spotless lamb into their homes. As Jesus rode into the city on the donkey, the sacrificial lambs were being led into the city to be purchased by each family in preparation for Passover.

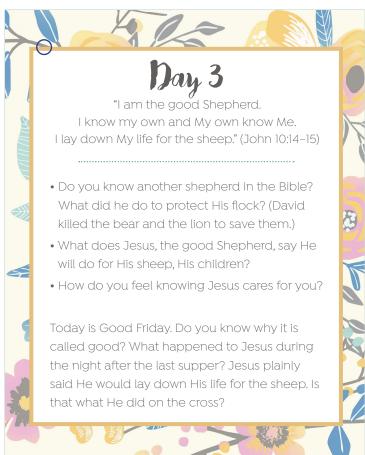


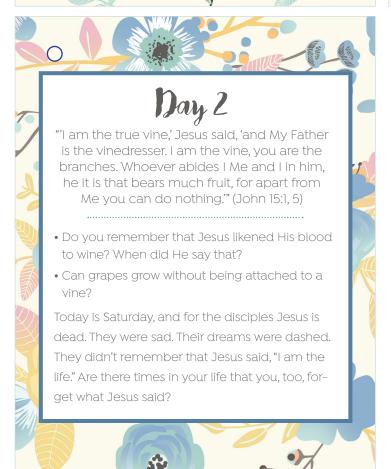
#### Day 6 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) • These words were spoken in the temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish rules understood He was identifying Himself with God, the creator of light. Why is it important that Jesus is the light? • Was there something in the tent tabernacle that was used for light? • Why is light so important to humans and every living thing?

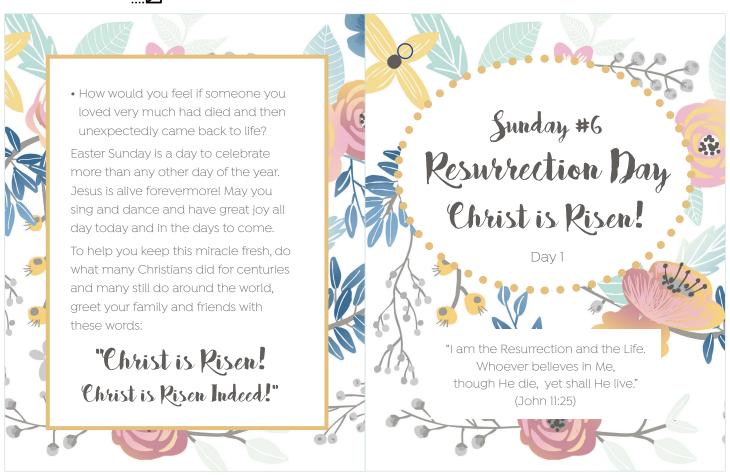














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