

# God is Still With Us

an illustrated  
**LENT**  
FOR FAMILIES



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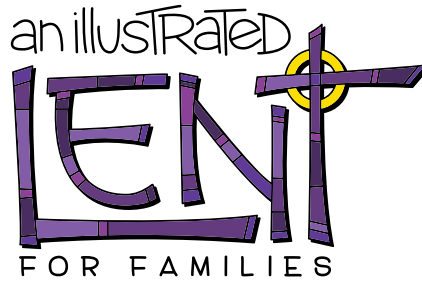
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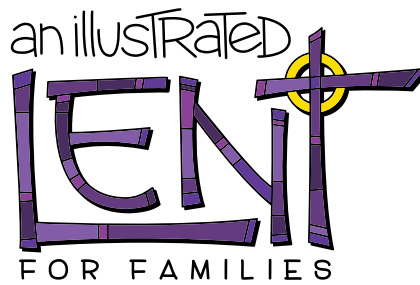
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## GOD IS STILL WITH US

We are thrilled to provide families with a resource for engaging their children in faith formation at home during Lent. Thousands of families around the world have used our *Illustrated Lent for Families* and *Illustrated Advent for Families*, and we're excited to share this edition with you.

The theme for this edition of *An Illustrated Lent for Families* is *God is Still With Us*. As we journey through this season of Lent together, families are invited to remember that from the foundations of the world, the Holy Spirit hovered over creation. The Spirit hovers, even now. When God's people seemed abandoned in Egypt, God guided them into the Promised Land. God guides us, even now. In the birth of Jesus—Immanuel—God was with us. And God is still with us, even now.

The life of Jesus shows us that God joins us in our human struggles. God does not avoid our messy lives or withdraw from our hard stories. As we live in different times, in different places, we know that we are not alone. Even in this very moment, God is as close as the breath we breathe.

This Lent, we will explore Gospel passages that remind us that God is still with us. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus experienced the fullness of humanity—comfort and pain, celebration and heartache, and joy and suffering. And when he had the choice to escape ridicule or rejection, Jesus stuck with the outsiders, the oppressed, and the hurting. The life of Jesus demonstrates that God knows what it is to be human and to be with us in all our experiences, especially in our suffering. Starting with the First Sunday in Lent and going through Easter, each weekly session will have a scripture, reflection, discussion questions, activity, coloring page, and prayer.

Our Lent devotionals are written for all ages. We believe you'll find appropriate questions and discussion topics in each devotional for your children, no matter their age. At the same time, feel free to tweak content and questions to work for your family. You don't need to do all the activities for it to be a meaningful experience. Take a look at the devotionals, see what you think will work best for your family's schedule, and find time each week to gather together.

- **Scripture:** The scriptures are selected Gospel passages about the presence of God through the life of Jesus.
- **Reflection:** We offer a brief reflection on each of the scripture texts. It might make sense for you to read this section to your family, or you may want to read it for yourself and see what questions or themes resonate.
- **Discussion and Coloring Page:** This is a chance for some family discussion. We love coloring here at Illustrated Ministry, and we find some of the best conversations happen while coloring and doing something creative together as a family. We suggest discussing the questions offered while coloring the week's coloring page.

- **Activity:** The weekly activity invites your family to experience prayer together. As with all our suggestions for spiritual formation, please adjust or customize the activity for your family. We hope you find something that works in your context and opens you toward spiritual growth.
- **Prayer:** Finally, each week's devotion ends with a short prayer. You can read the prayer or invite your children to repeat after you. This prayer is a simple ritual for ending your family's weekly devotion time, which you can also use throughout the week.

**Media Kit:** We have also provided a media kit that includes variations of the "God is Still With Us" logo, as well as some promotional images you can use in newsletters, social media, and your website. You can download the media kit here: [illustrdm.in/MediaKit-GodStillWithUs](https://illustrdm.in/MediaKit-GodStillWithUs)

As you use these resources, we would love to hear what was helpful and what suggestions or comments you have for improvement. We desire to create quality resources for your family's faith formation, and we appreciate your feedback. You can always reach us at [info@illustratedministry.com](mailto:info@illustratedministry.com) or find us on the following social networks:

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/illustratedmin](https://facebook.com/illustratedmin)

Facebook Group: [facebook.com/groups/illustratedmin](https://facebook.com/groups/illustratedmin)

Pinterest: [pinterest.com/illustratedmin](https://pinterest.com/illustratedmin)

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Instagram: [instagram.com/illustratedmin](https://instagram.com/illustratedmin)

We also love to see photos and hear stories about how you are using our products. When you post photos or comments online, please use the hashtag #illustratedmin or tag us in the photos so we can see them. That allows us to be part of the conversation and you to be part of our online community. Additionally, checking the hashtag on various social networks is a great way to see how other families and churches are creatively using our resources.

Peace be upon you,

Illustrated Ministry

# Best Practices for Sharing Illustrated Ministry's Resources

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If you purchased this product by selecting Ministry Use (Church Size: ### members), we've found that there are three good ways to share our files with your community.

- **Email:** Depending on the size of your congregation, we encourage you to email files to those who want to use the resource. Another option is to put an announcement in your bulletin, asking those interested in receiving the files to email the person with access to the resource.

*Note: Please do not include attachments or links to download our files in any emails/newsletters that are posted publicly online with services like Mailchimp, Constant Contact, etc. Links of this nature are searchable by Google, and the files become accessible to the general public.*

- **Posting Online:** We generally discourage posting our files online because they become accessible through Google searches. We do not want the general public to have access to our products free of charge. One option is to put the files on a password-protected page of your website, or use a private Facebook Group. Please remember to take the files down after you've finished using them.

*Note: Please do not post the password in a bulletin or newsletter that is posted publicly online.*

- **Print:** Most congregations who purchase our digital files choose to print out the materials. Printing the materials is probably the easiest way to share the resources with your community.

Thanks for understanding, and we appreciate your support!

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# Devotions

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## • • • • • WEEK ONE • • • • •

### Jesus in the Wilderness

Scripture: Luke 4:1–14

#### Reflection

- Can you make bread from a rock?
- Can you make pizza from a mailbox?
- Can you turn a flip-flop into a sandwich?

Of course not! Maybe we can prepare bread, pizza, and sandwiches, but we do not have special powers to transform rocks into bread. It would be nice to whip up a fancy cake from a doorknob or some hot soup from a fishbowl, but we are limited to using certain real-life ingredients and skills.

In this story, Jesus had some choices to make. He had a human body with human limits like you and me. He felt the same hunger as the people around him during his time on earth. Making food or buying food was hard work, especially for someone who had not eaten for 40 days. But the “devil” or “tempter” tempted Jesus to forget about his humanness and limitations.

The tempter encouraged Jesus to leave those limits behind and escape the suffering! But Jesus had committed to live a fully human life, which meant doing things the hard way.

The tempter wanted Jesus to abandon human life in exchange for an oppressive kind of power. The tempter offered Jesus rulership and property, but Jesus rejected the tempter’s offers. Jesus quoted Hebrew scriptures to the tempter, believing that God had already shown him the best way to live a human life.

And even when Jesus was feeling weak from hunger and probably weak in power, the Holy Spirit filled him. This moment of hard choices made Jesus stronger.

When Jesus left the wilderness, he was filled with the Spirit and ready to share the good news of love and justice. He knew that even though he may have hard times as a human being, the Spirit would be with him in every hard moment.

#### For Discussion

- What gave Jesus the strength to make good choices?
- Who gives you the strength to make good choices?
- What is a healthy choice that is hard to make?
- What do you do when you do not want to make a healthy or helpful choice?
- When do your good choices make you feel lonely? When do your good choices make you feel peaceful?

## Activity: Hey Body, What Do You Need?

- Our bodies are amazing, and they help us do so many things! When our bodies aren't getting what they need (food, water, sleep, etc.), they speak up for themselves and get our attention. It can be a small yawn or a never-ending rumbling stomach.

What does your body do when you need...?

Food  
Water

Sleep  
Warmth

Fun  
Quiet

Imagine how loud Jesus' body was after not eating food for forty days! He was probably very aware of what his body needed, and even though he could have met those needs whenever he wanted, he chose to stay within the boundaries of his human body.

In this activity, you'll practice listening to your body and making a plan to meet your needs.

To begin, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and say, "Hey body, what do you need?" Listen to how your body responds.

- What body parts are trying to get your attention?
- Does your stomach feel hungry?
- Do your eyes feel sleepy?
- Do your arms or legs feel wiggly?

Now roll out and cut a piece of butcher or wrapping paper (blank side up) to the length of each member of your family and take turns tracing the outline of each others' bodies.

**Note:** You may also choose to draw a body outline or stick-figure on smaller paper.

Next, use stickers/sticky notes to identify the parts of your body trying to get your attention, then write or draw beside it what each body part needs. Share with each other what your bodies need, then make a plan to take care of your bodies. What needs can your family help with? What needs can you meet on your own?



## Materials

- Butcher paper or wrapping paper
- Coloring utensils
- Stickers or sticky notes

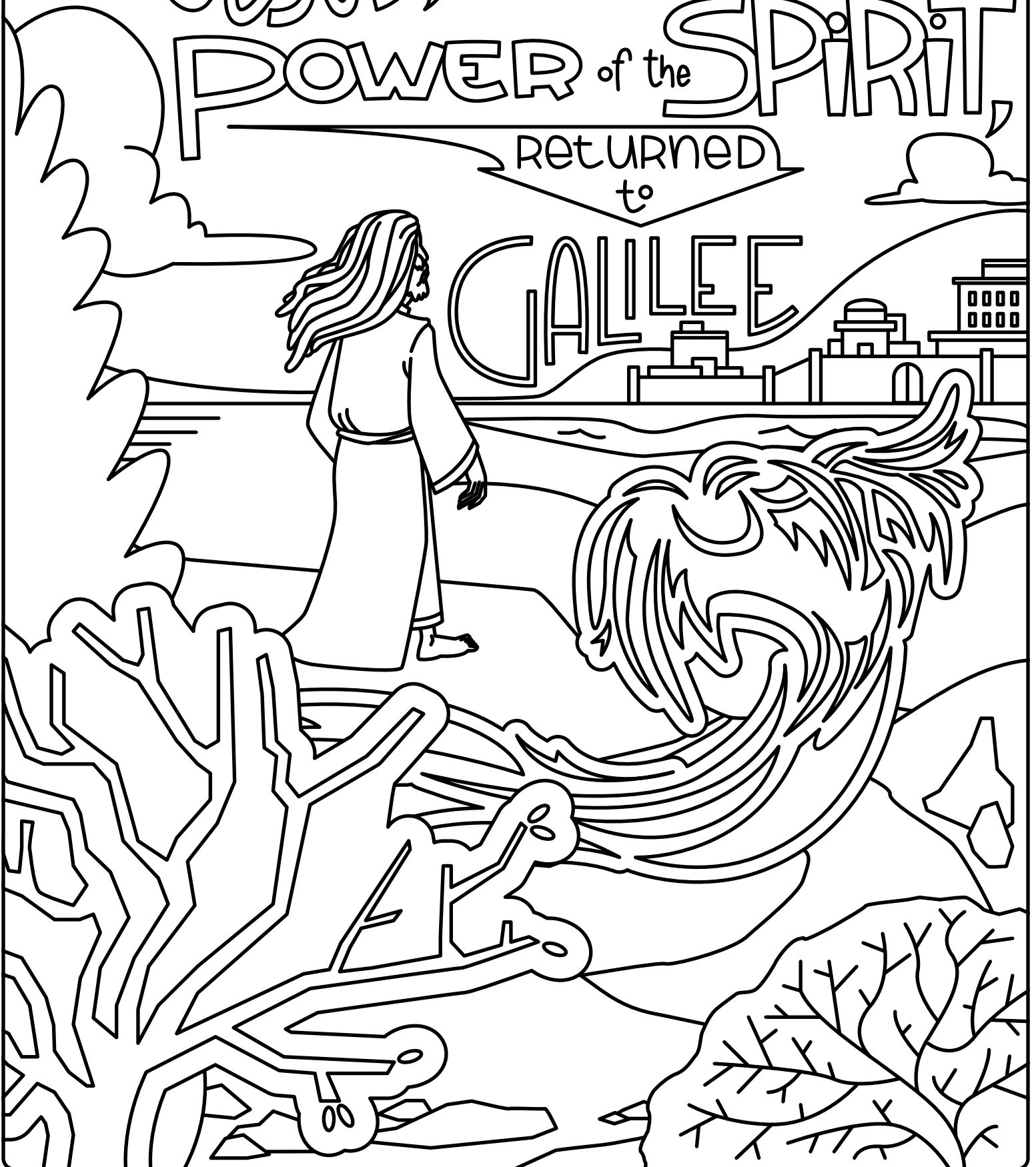
## Prayer

- God who created the universe, thank you for our bodies. They are beautifully and wonderfully made. Even in our sickness, aches, and pain, help us remember you are with us, and you know just what it feels like. Amen.

then JESUS, filled with the  
POWER of the SPIRIT,

RETURNED  
to

GALILEE



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## • • • • • WEEK TWO • • • • •

### A Blind Man is Healed

Scripture: Luke 18:35–43

#### Reflection

- Babies love to feel the skin of their parents. When a baby is born, the doctor or midwife will often put the new baby on the parent's skin right away! The baby will lie on their parent's belly or chest because it feels warm, familiar, and cozy. The closeness allows the baby to hear the parent's voice and heartbeat, feel the rhythm of their breathing, taste the healthy milk, and smell the familiar smell of their family.

Closeness helps a baby to be healthy. Even when a newborn baby is sick and it is not safe to hold the baby, parents will sit beside their baby's crib to be as close as possible.

Jesus knew that it was important to be close to the people who needed him. When others tried to get in the way, Jesus commanded that the weakest people be brought close.

In this story, Jesus heard the voice of someone who needed him, and he insisted that the man be brought near. The man was blind, but perhaps, like the newborn baby, the man was close enough to smell Jesus, to hear Jesus, and to feel Jesus.

God's Spirit is close to us. Maybe we do not sense God with five senses, but we know God is close because God promises to be close.

When we long to know that God is close, we can sense God in the warmth of a loving parent, in the taste of a healthy meal, in the smell of the unpolluted earth, in the sound of a singing bird, or in the sight of a growing tree.

We can trust God does not leave us or abandon us. God does not let people or problems come between God's Spirit and us.

#### For Discussion

- Name the five senses. Which senses help you feel close to God?
- When do you sense the love of God?
- In what ways do you feel close to your family? With hugs? When doing something fun together? Sitting close together?
- What do you do when you do not feel close to family or friends? What do you do when you do not feel close to God?
- What can you do to feel closer to God and family and friends?

## Activity: Things Around the House Scavenger Hunt

- Take a look around the room. What do you see?
- We live in a world full of things we can touch, see, smell, hear, and taste. Everything around us can be used to experience closeness with God, ourselves, and others—it can also be used to divide, distinguish, and create distance.

This activity will spark curiosity around the meaning of all our “things” and encourage critical thinking regarding how we use them. Before embarking on the scavenger hunt, read through the activity page as a family and brainstorm some ideas of what might count for each item on the list. Grown-ups can be a helpful guide for kids, but they should try not to tell them specific items to find. This is a great opportunity to grow in self-reflection and self-expression!

Once all your items are collected, take turns sharing what you chose and why. Did you learn anything new about someone? Did you learn anything new about yourself?

Now it's time to make a plan. Invite everyone to choose one item they can use this week to experience closeness with others. Maybe it's an extra shirt you can donate or a toy you can share with a friend. This step might take some creativity.

Then, as a family or individually, draw a picture of your plans in action. Can you draw a map to the donation collection or a picture of your friend playing with your toy?

Hang these plans where you can see them every day, not only so you don't forget to put your plan into action but also to be a reminder of how everything around you can be used to experience closeness with God, yourself, and others.



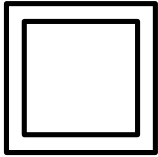
## Materials

- Activity page
- Coloring utensils
- Blank paper

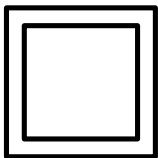
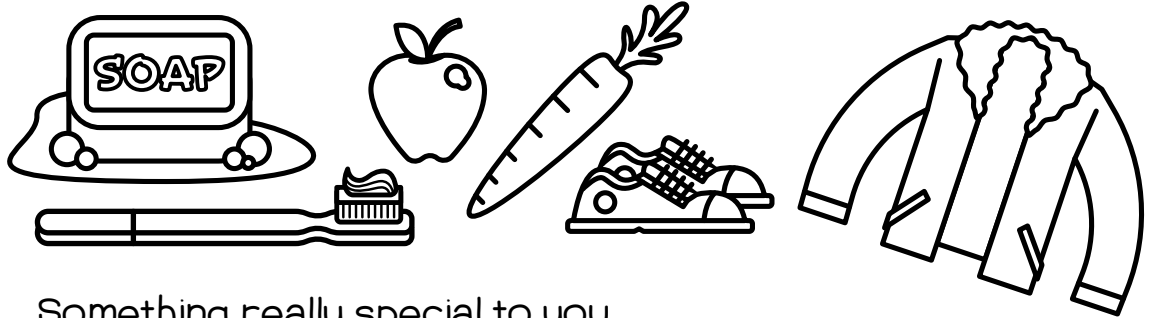
## Prayer

- God of all things, though we cannot see you, we know you are near.
- May the love and comfort we experience in our closeness with you
- empower us to use what we have to be close with those around us.
- Amen.

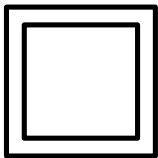
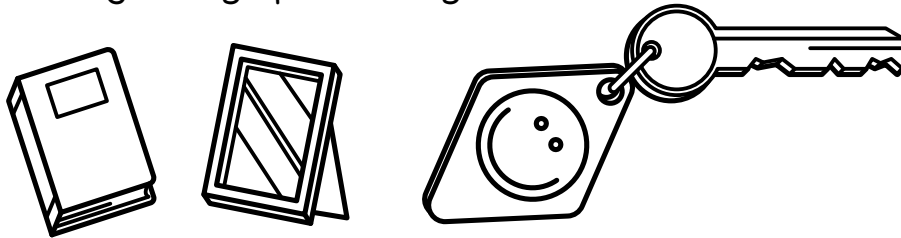
# SCAVENGER HUNT



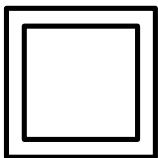
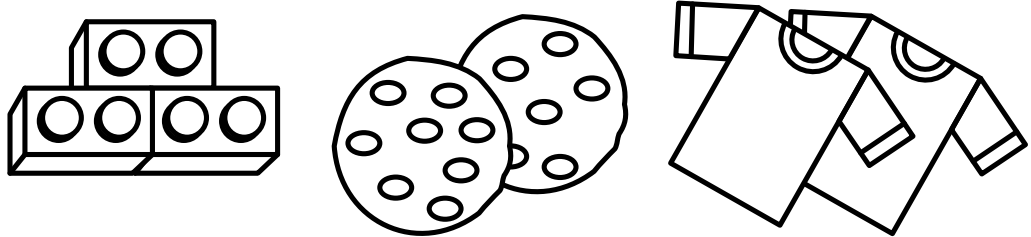
Something you used to take care of your body today.



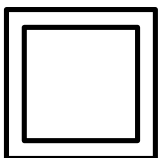
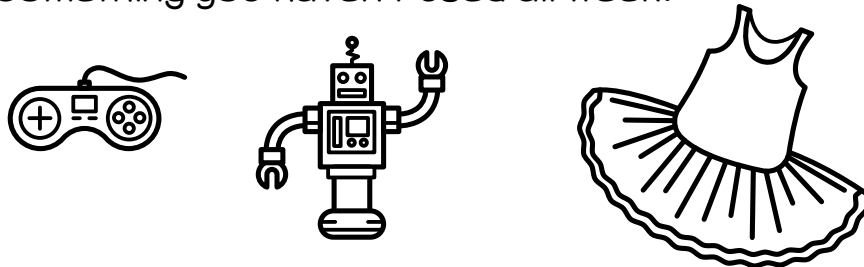
Something really special to you.



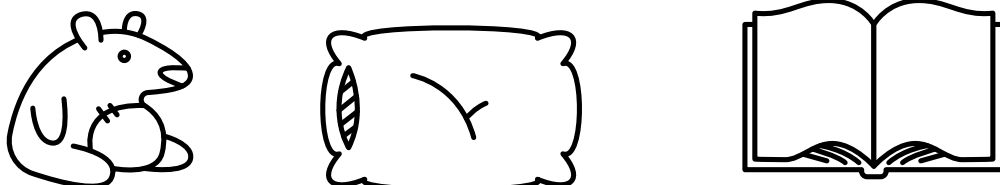
Something you have extra, or more than one of.



Something you haven't used all week.



Something you hold close to help you feel calm.



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JESUS STOOD STILL

& ORDERED THE MAN TO BE BROUGHT TO HIM

WHEN HE SAW THE GAME

JESUS ASKED HIM,

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ASK ME?"

"ME TO DO FOR YOU?"



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## • • • • • WEEK THREE • • • • •

### Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

Scripture: John 11:3–6, 17–44

#### Reflection

- Martha had some big feelings to share with Jesus when he finally arrived at their home. She was sad that her brother Lazarus died, and she wished Jesus had been there to prevent his death. She said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” That sounds like she might have been frustrated or disappointed in Jesus.

It hurts when someone is not there when you need them. People feel disappointed when their loved ones are absent during important moments. Families and friends do not always show up when they should. And sometimes, they simply cannot be there. It is okay to feel disappointed or angry in those situations, even when we understand why the person is missing.

Mary also let Jesus know how she was feeling. He could see her sadness and disappointment. She cried. And the Gospel of John says that Jesus saw her crying and felt “deeply moved.”

Jesus understood her big feelings, allowing her to share them freely. He didn’t argue with her or tell her to stop crying. Jesus didn’t try to explain to her why he had arrived so late.

He cried, too.

Being a good friend doesn’t always mean making them feel better. Jesus shows us how to be with someone in their suffering: we welcome their feelings, listen to their words, and do what we can to show compassion. And then, if we do have the power to make a difference, we act.

When we are the ones feeling alone at an important event like a birthday party, a wedding, or a band concert, we can remember two things from Jesus: it is okay to be upset about it, and God is still with us at all times.

#### For Discussion

- Many people in this story felt sad. How did they communicate they were sad?
- Who do you cry with when you need to share some tears?
- Who do you laugh with?
- What do you need your family and friends to do when you feel sad? Do you need to talk? Sit quietly? Do something fun?
- Have you ever wanted to help someone who felt sad, but you didn’t know what to do? How can you show your love?

## Activity: Family Feelings Chart

● This story is full of feelings! Read through the story again and act out the feelings you notice along the way.

● Everyone has feelings, and it's good to share those feelings with the people we trust and love. Sometimes we can use words to share our feelings. Other times we can use our bodies and faces to share our feelings. Can you think of any other ways to communicate what you're feeling with those around you?

Look at the nine feeling squares on the activity page. As a family, name and act out each feeling (happy, sad, angry, scared, lonely, curious, silly, sleepy, loved), then take turns sharing which feeling(s) you notice in yourself today.

Beginning with the youngest person, take turns choosing one or two feeling squares to color until all nine are colored. Then, hang up your family's feeling chart in a shared space where everyone can see and brainstorm ways to incorporate it into your family rhythms.

A few ideas to get you started:

- Have a "family feelings check-in" before bed or during a meal.
- Choose a feeling, then take turns sharing stories of when you felt that feeling during the week.
- Play a game! Act out a feeling from the chart for others to guess.



## Materials

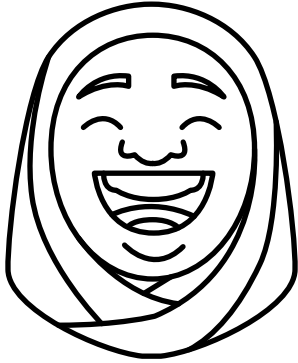
- Activity page
- Coloring utensils

## Prayer

God who smiles, cries, and laughs, thank you for the gift of feelings.

- You know what it's like to be sad, scared, lonely, happy, silly, angry,
- curious, sleepy, and loved. May we remember you're with us in all our
- big feelings. Amen.

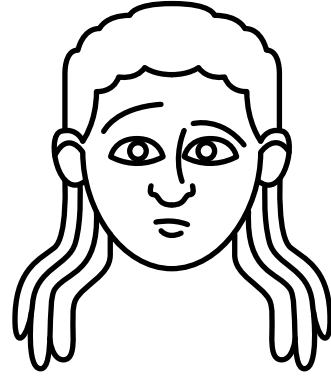
HAPPY



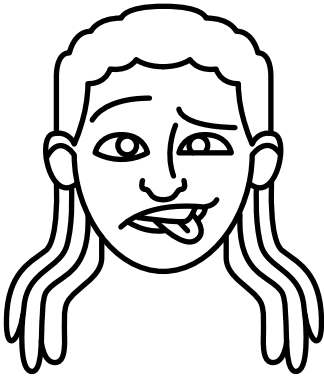
ANGRY



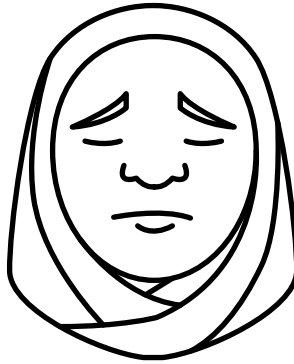
CURIOUS



SILLY



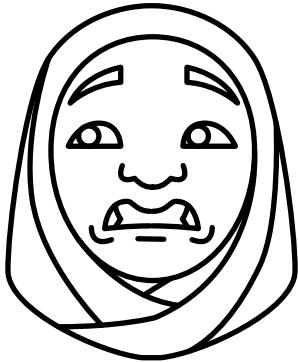
LOVELY



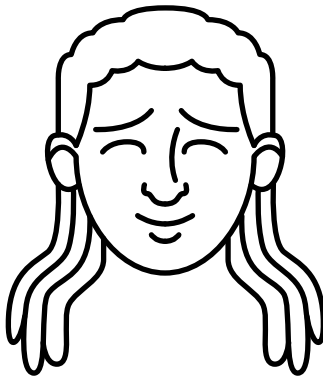
SAD



SCARED



LOVED



SLEEPY



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When MARTHA heard  
JESUS was COMING,  
SHE went &  
met HIM &  
said,

"I TOLD  
IF YOU HAD  
BEEN HERE,  
MY BROTHER  
WOULD NOT HAVE  
DIED."

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## • • • • • WEEK FOUR • • • • •

### Calming the Storm

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

#### Reflection

- Rainstorms, snowstorms, ice storms, dust storms, windstorms, tornados, hurricanes, and floods.
- There are so many ways we see the power of weather! The weather is constantly changing. It is affected by the way the earth spins, the position of the moon, and how people care for the earth and our atmosphere.

We can predict the weather, but we never know for certain what will happen. Will it snow? Will it rain? Will there be an ice storm? We have a good guess, but we will have to wait and see what happens.

One thing is certain—there will always be storms. In our story, Jesus told one storm to be still, and the storm cleared. Jesus did not stop all storms everywhere forever, and that is good!

Storms are essential for life on earth. They replenish the soil with water, they wash away decay, and some plants and animals depend on heavy storms for survival.

When Jesus silenced this storm, he showed care and love for the disciples. He showed them that he heard their concerns and was willing to do what he could to show them love. Sometimes the kindest thing we can do is listen carefully to a friend's feelings. And when we show compassion for a friend's feelings, it is like we are in their boat with them! We can relate to what they are going through, whatever storm they face. When we do not have the power to stop the storm, we can sit beside them and share the boat.

So when your family is facing a storm, you are in the boat together, with God. The storm may not be silenced, but you never have to be in the boat alone.



#### For Discussion

- What storms have you been through together as a family?
- How did you encourage each other?
- If you had the power to stop storms, how would you use that power? How would you decide what storms to stop?
- How do you feel when facing a storm or a big problem?
- What can you do to get help in a storm?

## Activity: Cloud in a Jar

- Jesus knew God's Spirit was always with him, even in the middle of a scary storm. Trusting this promise helped Jesus respond to the disciples with peace and curiosity, instead of worry and fear.
- Storms can be scary, but have you ever wondered what happens inside a cloud during a storm? In this experiment, practice embracing the curiosity of Christ as you explore the science behind how clouds form.

Remove the lid from the jar and fill the jar one-third full with warm water. (*Do not use boiling water, it creates too much condensation to see inside the jar.*) For added fun, stir in your choice of food coloring.

Place the jar in front of a dark background (this will make it easier to see the cloud). To create a simple dark background, lean a sheet of black construction paper against a wall.

Flip the jar's lid upside-down on a flat surface and place a few ice cubes on top. Now, have a grown-up light a match and hold it at the mouth of the jar for a few seconds. Drop the match into the water and immediately place the lid (still upside-down with ice on the lid) on top of the jar. **Important:** *leave the lid upside-down, do not drop the ice into the jar.*

Leave the icy lid on the jar for about two minutes and observe what happens inside. The warm water will start to evaporate, and then condense as it cools down from the freezing lid. Can you see water vapor swirling inside the jar? After two minutes, slowly remove the lid and watch the cloud float into the air.

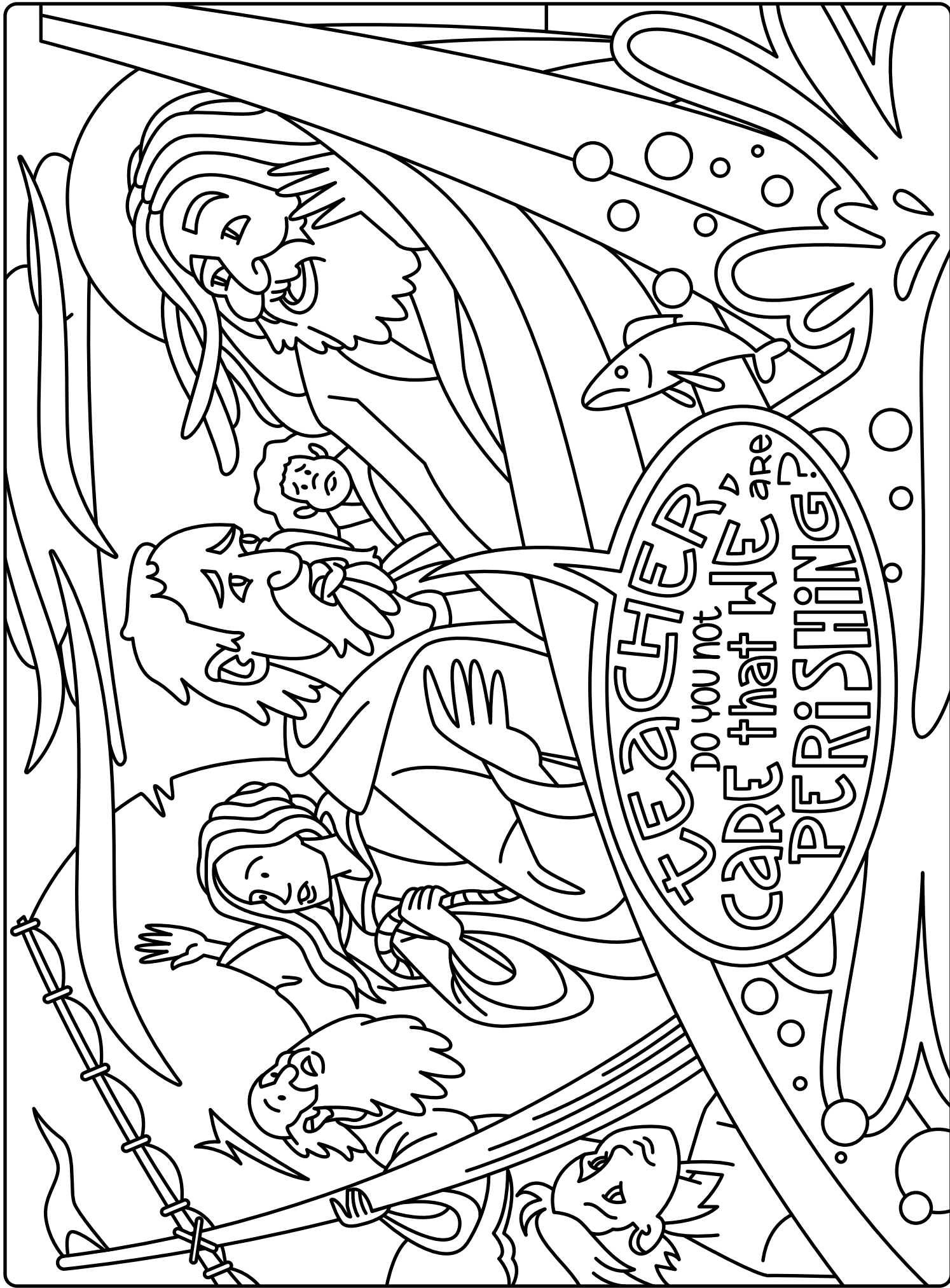
How does it feel knowing the storm clouds in the sky are made of the same water droplets that formed in the jar?

## Materials

- Large glass jar with lid
- Warm water
- Matches
- Ice cubes
- Black construction paper (optional)
- Food coloring (optional)

## Prayer

- God of the earth, you bring peace to chaos and calm to storms. How incredible! Thanks for always being with us in the sunshine, wind, or
- rain. Fill us up with peace and curiosity as we sit with those we love.
- Amen.



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## • • • • • WEEK FIVE • • • • •

### Jesus Shares His Last Passover

Scripture: Luke 22:14–23

#### Reflection

- A cheering crowd is one of the most important parts of a race. When you have a friend or family member running in a race, you will often meet at the beginning of the race to boost their confidence. You might eat some breakfast together and share a laugh.

Then you will find a place along the route to stand with signs and whistles, cheering them on as they pass. When they see you cheering, they are tired, but your cheers help them keep going strong. And finally, you will skip to the finish line to congratulate your runner for making it all the way. Sometimes you will even take them out for a big meal afterward!

The last week of Jesus' life was like a race. It was not easy to go through the suffering Jesus endured, but he kept moving forward toward the finish line.

And this was not a fun, happy race. It was a sad, painful race because Jesus knew the authorities and rulers wanted to destroy his message and his life. But Jesus found comfort with his friends and disciples. They ate together, they prayed together, and when Jesus died, his friends were there to receive his body.

The book of Hebrews tells us to run our race like Jesus. That means to live our lives as Jesus lived. Our races are not the same as the race Jesus ran. Our lives are different. But as we run our races, we need to gather with people along the way, cheer people on, and celebrate the beginnings and endings with food and drink.

When we take communion together, we remember that when suffering and death seem close, Jesus is with us, and he has experienced it all before.



#### For Discussion

- Have you ever participated in a race as a runner or supporter? What was that like for you?
- Why is it important to have a team of supporters when you run a race?
- Who are your supporters? What do you do together?
- Why is it important to have supporters in everyday life?

## Activity: Signs of Encouragement

- Encouragement can be a powerful tool. When a runner is on their last lap, a cheerful sign filled with encouraging words can be just the burst of energy they need to get to the finish line. In this activity, everyone in your family will create a sign of encouragement for someone else in your family, designed to encourage and empower them in their race.

Before you begin, embrace the running metaphor and take turns sharing what kind of finish line you're running toward. Is it a school test or work deadline? A significant anniversary or an upcoming vacation? An art project or savings goal? These "finish lines" can be ordinary or extraordinary.

Now, write the names of each family member on slips of paper, fold them in half, and put them in a bowl. One at a time, draw a name from the bowl (make sure no one draws their own name). Then, using poster board (or paper) and craft supplies, create a sign of encouragement for the person whose name you drew, just like you would if they were running a race.

A few ideas:

- Draw a picture of this person crossing their finish line
- Draw or write down everything you love about them
- Turn their name into an acrostic poem
- Write their name in giant bubble letters and fill them in with encouraging words and phrases

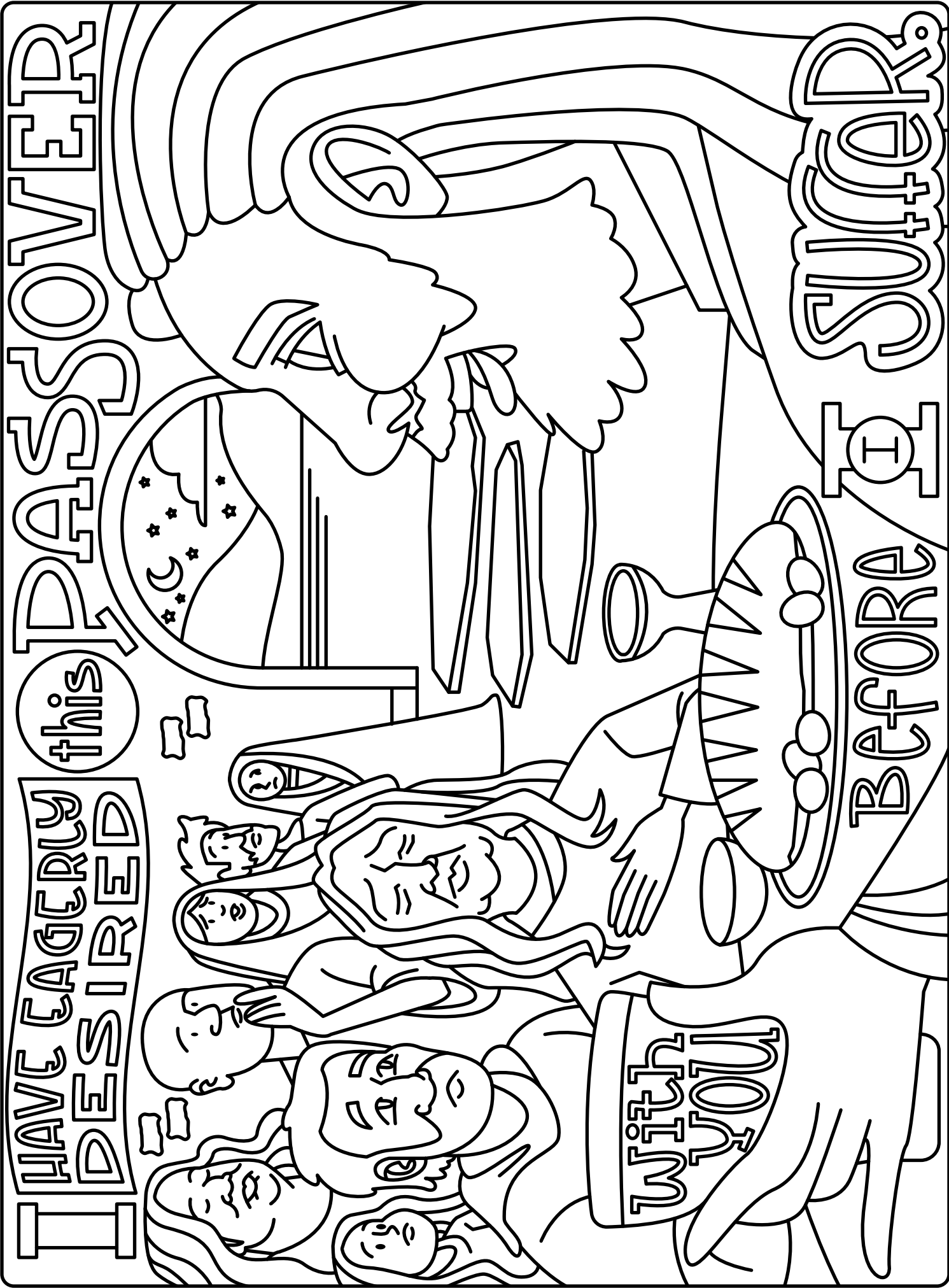
Once everyone has finished, take turns sharing your signs and cheering each other on. Hang your signs somewhere special to receive encouragement towards your finish line every day.

## Materials

- Poster board
- Paper
- Bowl
- Coloring utensils
- Miscellaneous craft materials (optional)

## Prayer

- God of love, you made us out of love, to love, and to be loved in community. Day by day, help us walk with love in our hearts for you, ourselves, our neighbors, and all of creation. Amen.



I HAVE EAGERLY  
DESIRED

this

PASSOVER

with  
YOU

BEFORE I

SUFFER

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## • • • • • WEEK SIX • • • • •

### Jesus in the Garden

Scripture: Mark 14:32–41, 15:34

#### Reflection

- Our feelings are often the most colorful, the loudest, the most dramatic at night. It was nighttime, and
- Jesus was having strong feelings about the suffering
- he was about to endure. There is something about the stillness of nighttime that causes our feelings to get our attention.

Jesus took his feelings to God and prayed for relief.

As Jesus prayed, he said, “remove this cup from me.” Imagine a cup that is full of your pain and suffering. Imagine asking God to take it away. That is what Jesus is asking God to do. Jesus knows that unless something changes, he is going to suffer. And Jesus does suffer the next day. Is God with him that day?

It seems like Jesus wondered that himself. As he was suffering, he said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” That is like asking God, “why have you abandoned me?”

Jesus felt alone as he suffered that pain. And Jesus was not the first person to feel this way. He is quoting an ancient prayer poem found in Psalm 22. Generation after generation, people have prayed this prayer.

Jesus felt abandoned. Maybe he felt lonely, angry, scared, or sad. And just like he did the night before in the garden, Jesus shared his feelings with God. Many people have studied and studied to understand why Jesus felt abandoned that day. They wonder, *did God really leave him? Did Jesus feel that God had let him down?* Those answers are not easy. But what we do see is that when Jesus was feeling abandoned by God, he still talked to God!

So, when it is nighttime or when we are in pain, and the feelings are so big and so colorful, Jesus shows us that we can pray or shout or cry those feelings to God, and God will hear us.

#### For Discussion

- Why would someone want to share their big feelings with God? Is that a prayer?
- What do you do when you have big thoughts and feelings at night?
- Is it okay to be angry at God and pray angry prayers? Why or why not?
- What are some good strategies for having a peaceful mind for sleeping?

## Activity: Flashlight Luminary Prayers

- There are many different ways to talk with God: you can be loud or quiet, move your body or be still, you can even pray with or without using words. Coloring and drawing are fun ways to talk to God without using words.

In this activity, you'll transform colorful prayers into flashlight luminaries and experience how God's light shines through our prayers, bringing light to the darkness.

To begin, each person needs a flashlight and a piece of paper. Trim the width of the paper to match the circumference of the end of the flashlight (with about one inch of overlap). To measure the circumference, wrap the paper around the end of the flashlight and mark where to cut with a marker. Or tie a string around the flashlight, cut it to size, and place it on your paper to mark the length.

When your paper is cut to size, use markers to draw your prayers. You can use colors, shapes, or pictures—anything meaningful to you and helps share your thoughts and feelings with God.

Here are some questions you can talk about or reflect on together:

- What are some things you are afraid of?
- What helps you feel calm and brave when you're scared?
- Is there anything you want to say to God?

Now it's time to attach your prayer to your flashlight. Wrap the paper around the end of your flashlight, so it creates a tube extending outwards. Tape the bottom edge of the paper to your flashlight, and tape the paper at the seam. The paper should stay wrapped around and in place.

Test out your flashlight prayers by turning off the lights and turning on the flashlights. The prayers will illuminate and shine bright in the dark.



## Materials

- Flashlights
- Paper
- Coloring utensils
- Scissors
- Tape
- String (optional)

## Prayer

- O God who created day and night, help us remember you are always
- with us. In the bright lights of day or the darkness of night, we don't
- have to be afraid because we know you hear our prayers. Amen.

JESUS "ABBA, ABBA,"  
PRAYED "FOR YOU,  
FATHER, ALL THINGS ARE  
POSSIBLE;"



REMOVE  
this GUP  
from me;  
I AT NOT WANT  
IT IS WANT,  
BUT WHAT YOU  
WANT.

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## • • • • • WEEK SEVEN • • • • •

### Easter Story

Scripture: John 20:1–22

#### Reflection

- In the Christmas story, the angels call newborn Jesus “Immanuel,” which means “God is with us.”
- Jesus lived his life among us to show us God is not distant. God is close, especially to those who feel excluded or oppressed.

When Jesus died, his loved ones probably did not feel like God was very close at all. They grieved and cried and prepared his body for burial. Then the unexpected happened—Jesus was alive again! He showed them his face, hands, and body so they could see he had been raised from the dead.

For the next few weeks, Jesus popped in and out of their lives, fishing with them, cooking for them, and eating with them. Finally, it was time for Jesus to go. His work on earth was complete. He was gone again!

Does that mean God was not with the people any longer? Did God abandon everyone? What does life on earth without Jesus mean?

Think back to the beginning.

- God had a plan to breathe life into people in creation.
- God had a plan to send Jesus.
- God had a plan to send the Holy Spirit.

#### **God never wanted us to be alone.**

Before Jesus left his friends, he promised them God would be present with them in the form of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew even if he was not present in his body with us, the Holy Spirit would be with us always. Jesus took a deep breath and breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples. This spirit-breath represents the living God, present with us since creation, when God breathed life into the world.

The Holy Spirit is invisible and present with us everywhere. Whether we are rejoicing or suffering, we are not alone.

**The Holy Spirit is with us.**

#### For Discussion

- How do you think it felt to spend time with Jesus doing normal things like eating and talking?
- If you were hanging out with Jesus, what would you do?
- Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be with the loved ones he was leaving behind. What do you think that means for us?
- How can we connect with the Spirit of Jesus today?

## Activity: Family Band



### Breathe in.

*The spirit-breath of God fills our body like oxygen fills our lungs.*



### Breathe out.

*Empowering us to share lovingkindness with the world.*



Many traditions celebrate the resurrection of Jesus through singing and dancing—two activities that require a lot of breath. As you create a family band, pay attention to your breath. May it remind you of the nearness of the Holy Spirit and God’s promise that we are never alone.

Gather an assortment of recyclable items and imagine how you might repurpose them into musical instruments. Create your own design, or use one of the examples below. Then, make noise together! Dance, sing, and celebrate the good news of Jesus.

**Toilet Paper Roll Shaker:** Decorate an empty toilet paper roll. Staple one end shut and fill it halfway with rice, seeds, or another small noise-making item. Staple the top end shut, so the edges come together perpendicular to the bottom, creating a slight twist in the body of the roll.

**Straw Trombone:** Flatten the top half-inch of a plastic straw and snip the corners to create an “upside-down V” shape. Then slide the bottom end of the straw into another straw. Tighten your lips and blow through the top end of the straw; slide the outer straw up and down to change the pitch.

**Balloon Drum:** Cut off the inflating end of a balloon and stretch the balloon’s body over the open end of a plastic cup. Secure it with a rubber band. You can pluck the balloon drum or create a mallet from recyclable materials.

**Rubber Band Guitar:** Stretch rubber bands around the opening of any container. Then pluck or strum your guitar. Experiment with rubber bands of different sizes to create different pitches.



## Materials

- Recyclable materials
- Scissors
- Coloring utensils

### Optional materials:

- Stapler
- Balloons
- Plastic straws
- Rubber bands
- Rice, seeds, paperclips, etc.

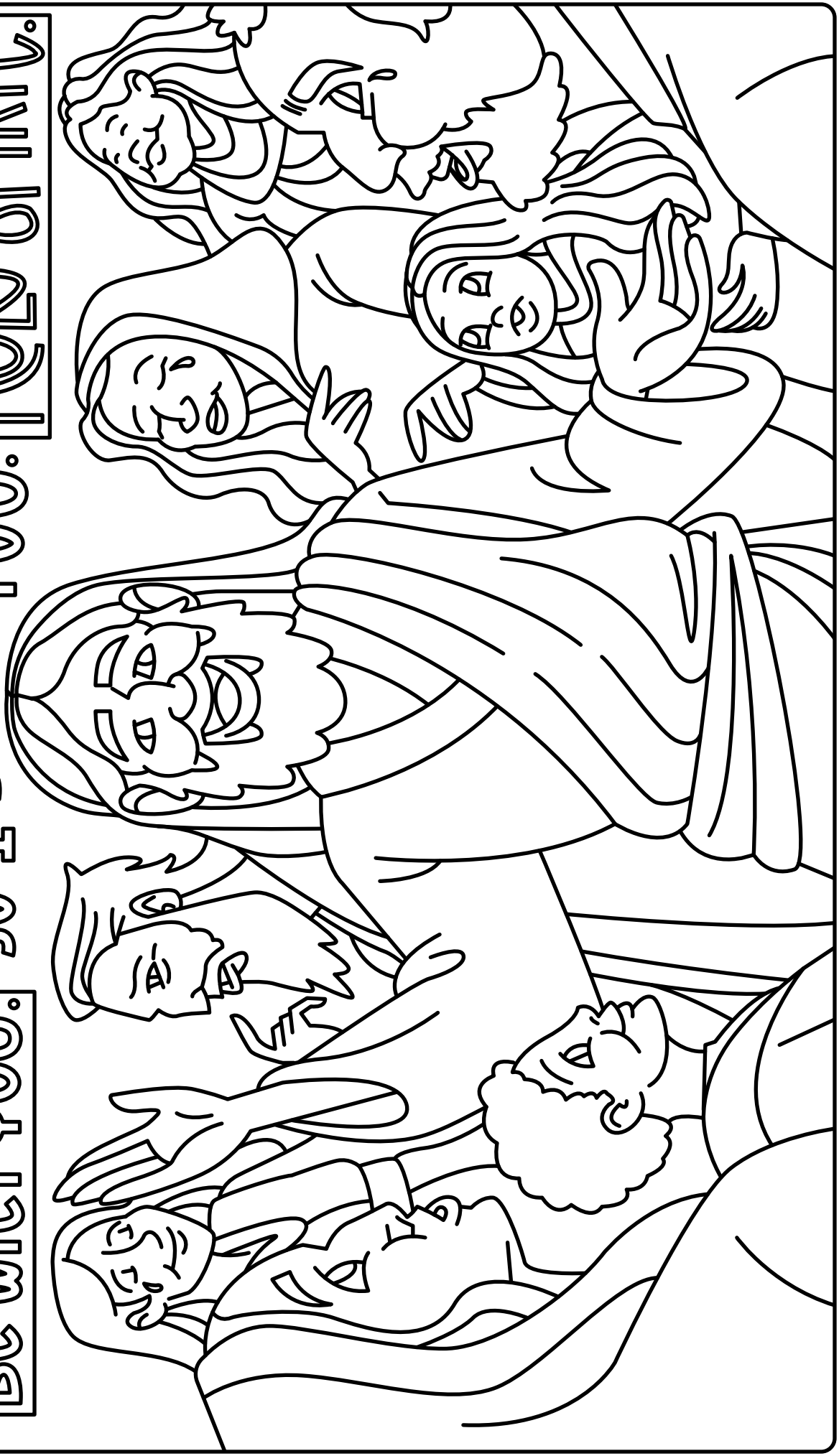
## Prayer

- God of new life, nothing can stop you from breathing your love and peace through us and around us. Thank you for this gift of breath.
- May it empower us to share your love and peace wherever we go.
- Amen.

JESUS SAID,  
AS GOD HAS SENT ME,  
SO I SEND YOU.

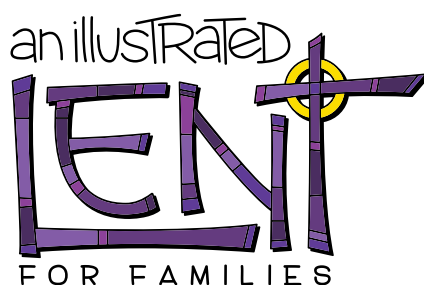
PEACE  
BE WITH YOU.

RECEIVE THE  
"HOLY SPIRIT".



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