

January
The life of Christ - God's dangerous rescue plan

Props needed:

New pieces for January: wise men, camel, treasure box and gems to decorate, star, dove, fish, fishnet, round pictures of miracles, banquet table, and two round pictures of banquet food. (Children can choose any 3 small items in your home to represent gold, frankincense, and myrrh and place in the treasure box)

Previous story pieces: snake (Oct), scroll, crown, sword, shepherd's crook, black felt, felt river. (Nov), Mary, Joseph, angel, (December), small peg doll for Jesus, extra peg dolls from past stories,

To begin:

- Have a Bible open to Matthew 2.
- Have a family member light the battery-operated candle and explain that this light represents God's presence as you tell His story.
- Pass the first 5 blocks around the table and place them in the center.
- Have a family begin with prayer before you tell the story.

Story script (you may use this script or tell the story in your own words):

Visiting a King: Matthew 2

Use the wise men in your bag, star, scroll, Nativity scene with Mary and Joseph, a small peg doll for Jesus, and the treasure box.

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, several wise men from the east saw a new star in the sky and traveled to Jerusalem looking for the child who was King of the Jews." (***hold the star up in front of the wise men***) "King Herod was very upset about this. His priest searched the scripture and found the prophecy saying the child was to be born in Bethlehem. So Herod sent the wise men to find him, saying he wanted to worship the child too."

"They followed the same star to Bethlehem and it stopped right over the house of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus" (***move the wise men to the home of Mary and Joseph***), who welcomed the strangers into their home. They bowed down to worship Jesus, opened their treasure chest, and gave him gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense.

"When the wise men left to travel back home, they made sure to go a different way and not visit Herod, since God warned them in a dream about Herod's plans to kill Jesus."

Put away the Nativity scene.

An escape to Egypt and back home to Nazareth: Matthew 2

You may use one of your backdrops to represent Egypt, Mary, Joseph, and a small peg doll for Jesus as a child.

"After the wise men left for home, God warned Joseph in a dream to escape to Egypt." (***move the family to Egypt***) "They stayed far away from Herod until it was safe. After

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Herod died, an angel told Joseph in a dream that they could return home. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus went to Nazareth (**move the family back home**) and that's where Jesus grew up (**change the small Jesus peg doll to a larger one**). As he grew, he gained wisdom and an understanding of who he was and what he was called to do. This pleased God and all the people around him."

Put away Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

John the Baptizer

Use a peg doll for John, and the felt Jordan River.

"Around thirty years after Jesus was born, his cousin, John began preaching. He was the prophet who would prepare the way for the true 'King of the world' to come and bring God's kingdom with him." (***Bring Out John the Baptizer***). "He told people to repent of their sins and turn back to God because his kingdom was coming soon! He baptized people in the Jordan River. God's people crossed that same river 1400 years ago as they entered the promised land. Just as that crossing symbolized a new beginning, baptism is a new beginning and the new believer is washed clean from sin. John told the people to get ready and get clean - God's kingdom is coming and they have a job to do."

Jesus is baptized: Matthew 3

Jesus, John, felt river, dove

"One day Jesus came to the river to be baptized too. He didn't need to get clean and he knew what he was called to do, but he came to fulfill all the prophets had told. The rescue plan had begun! Jesus went under the water and when he came back up the heavens opened." (***use the Jordan River felt and place Jesus under the blue felt and up again***).

"God's spirit came down like a dove" (***place a dove next to Jesus***) "and settled on him."

Then a voice from heaven said, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.'"

Put away John and the felt river.

Temptation: Matthew 4, and Luke 4

The desert backdrop, Jesus, the dove to represent the Holy Spirit, and the snake to represent the evil one, Satan.

"This same Spirit who came from God at the baptism led Jesus into the wilderness (***move him into the wilderness***). The evil one, Satan, met him there and planned to trick Jesus like he did Adam and Eve in the garden. His plan was different from God's Kingdom story." (***put the snake out and move it around Jesus' feet***.) "Jesus didn't eat for 40 days and nights and was very hungry. The evil one suggested to Jesus, to turn stones into bread since he had the power to do so. But Jesus said no, and used God's word to tell him why not. (***Move the snake back away***)

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“Then, the evil one (*moving the snake around his feet again*) tried to get Jesus to jump from the top of the Temple. He said, “Why don’t you jump and then ask the angels to keep you safe?” But Jesus said no, and used God’s word to tell him why not. (*Move the snake back away*)

(move the snake around Jesus' feet again.)

“Then he promised to give Jesus all the kingdoms in the world and told him all you have to do is worship me. But Jesus said no, and used God’s word to tell him why not.” (*Move the snake back away*)

“Jesus understood the evil one was tempting him to take a shortcut to God’s plan. He chose a different path, the one he and his Father laid out long ago. He came to suffer ... and sacrifice... and save his people.” (*pick up the dove again in your hands*), “His power came from the Holy Spirit and prayer, not from the evil one.

“And then the evil presence left defeated!” (*put the snake away*) “And the angels” (*bring out an angel*) “came to take care of Jesus. This was not the last time Jesus would have trouble. This was a dangerous rescue plan!”

Put the snake away.

Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God: Luke 4

Jesus, a scroll, crown, black felt

“After his time in the wilderness, Jesus went to the synagogue in his hometown to preach. He opened the scroll from the prophets and read... (*lay down the scroll on the black felt.*)

“The Spirit of the Lord is in me.

This is because God chose me to tell the Good News to the poor.

God sent me to tell the prisoners of sin that they are free,

and to tell the blind that they can see again. Isaiah 61:1

God sent me to free those who have been treated unfairly, Isaiah 58:6

and to announce the time when the Lord will show kindness to his people.” Isaiah 61:2

He looked at the people and said, “While you heard these words just now, they were coming true!”

“After he finished reading the scripture, Jesus announced the good news that God’s kingdom had come. (*lay down the crown on the black felt*). “The people in his hometown were angry with his words and tried to kill him. But God showed him how to escape.”

Jesus calls the disciples: Matthew 4

Jesus and 4 disciples - blue side of the river, small fish, and black fishnet. Place the fishermen at the edge of the water with the net and the fish.

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"Not long after that day in the synagogue, Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee and he called to two fishermen, Peter and Andrew, and said, "Come follow me, I can teach you how to fish for people!" Then he called two more brothers, James and John, and invited them to follow. They jumped out of their boat and followed Jesus. This was the beginning of a brand new community that would grow. Soon he would call more people. They were His people. They were His story keepers so someday the whole world would know his story was God's story."

Jesus fulfills prophecy:

Use the shepherd's crook and sword next to the crown and scroll

"Jesus knew God's people were burdened by their priests and all the rules that made it so hard to come close to God." (***lay down the shepherd's crook***). "So Jesus told his new followers to come away with him and he would show them how to rest. He said, "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I live." Another time he said, "I am a good shepherd and I'll take care of my sheep."

"God's people had been waiting for a Messiah, someone to deliver them, but they thought this Messiah would be a powerful king with an army that would defeat their enemies" (***lay down the sword***). "Instead, Jesus introduced them to a new kingdom, one where he had the power to deliver people from sickness, evil spirits, and death. He came to deliver them from their greatest enemy - the evil one, Satan, who only wants death and destruction for God's people. Jesus came not to be an earthly king but a heavenly one, who would destroy evil forever."

How Jesus changed the rules:

Use the four round discs with pictures of miracles as you tell the story. Use several peg dolls to represent the religious leaders.

"Jesus showed he was Lord of creation by calming a storm, walking on water, multiplying bread and fish, and turning water into wine. The creator himself had come to renew all of creation and this was only the beginning. Many people repented, believed, and followed him, but not everyone... The religious leaders were angry. They didn't like his followers, his miracles, his words, or his actions. In fact, they hated him. He taught people how to pray, love their enemies, and welcome sinners. He also taught them how important children were to God. He was changing all their rules and they thought he was dangerous so they planned to stop him."

Put the religious leaders, the black felt and the symbols away.

Transfiguration: Luke 9:28–36

Use four peg dolls for Jesus and three disciples.

"For three years Jesus taught and healed and showed people what it meant to be part of God's Kingdom. When he knew the rescue plan was almost complete, he told his disciples he must go to Jerusalem where he would be killed and then raised from death to life. His disciples were confused. He also said they would suffer too. This was more confusing. Something had changed. What did he mean?"

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"Before he traveled to Jerusalem, he took three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John to a mountain to be alone." (*walk them up a mountain*) "When they got to the top, they watched as Jesus was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light." (*bring out two more peg dolls*) "Suddenly, Moses and Elijah, two great prophets from long ago appeared and began talking with Jesus."

"A cloud came and covered all of them" (*put a hand over them*), "and a voice said, 'This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.'" Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. He told his friends, "Don't tell anyone about this until I rise from the dead. 'Of course,' they agreed, but they had no idea what he meant by 'rise from the dead.'"

Parable of the banquet - The Kingdom of God: Luke 14

Use two peg dolls for the religious leaders, one for Jesus, and multiple peg dolls to represent all the people who came to the banquet, a wooden table, and two plates of food.

"Many times Jesus told stories about the Kingdom of God. Once he was at a religious leader's home for dinner and he told a story about a man who gave a great banquet." (*put down a table and plates of food*)

"This is the story he told them: When the food was ready, The man invited all his guests to come and eat. But many refused his invitation and gave excuses why they couldn't come. So he sent his servant to invite people who wouldn't normally be invited... people who were poor, disabled, lonely, and unpopular. Everyone was welcome to come. Even after many showed up, there was still room, so the man sent his servants to look everywhere for more people to come. He wanted his house to be full. But for those who refused to attend the banquet, they would never get to taste his good food.

The religious leaders were those who refused the invitation to the Kingdom of God and they continued their plan to kill Jesus.

I wonder which part of this story you liked best.

I wonder why so many people were angry with Jesus.

I wonder if there are more stories of Jesus you would like to tell with the story pieces.

I wonder what happens next."