



God Protects Jesus' Family

(based on Matthew 2:7-15, 19-23)

Joseph was dreaming. Something was wrong. Jesus was in danger. God sent an angel to warn Joseph. The angel came to him in a dream.

“Get up, Joseph! Get up now!” the angel shouted. “King Herod is angry. He is going to look for Jesus. It is not safe for you to stay here. Take Mary and Jesus and go to Egypt. Go now and wait until I tell you to come back.”

Joseph woke up with a start. His heart was pounding. He woke Mary.

“We have to leave right now!” Joseph explained. “God has sent a message. It is not safe for us to stay here. We must leave immediately.”

Mary and Joseph quickly gathered up the things they would need. It was time to make another long journey with their son, Jesus.

It took weeks and weeks for them to travel to Egypt. They knew that God was with them, so they felt safe as they walked.

Finally, they arrived in Egypt and found a place to live. It was hard learning to live in a new land. Everything was different and strange at first. Still, at least they were safe.

Mary and Joseph remembered the stories from long ago when the Hebrew people had been slaves in Egypt. They told Jesus the story of how God had sent Moses to lead the people to the Promised Land. The family waited for God to tell them that it was safe for them to leave Egypt and return home.

One night the angel returned to speak to Joseph in a dream.

“King Herod has died,” the angel explained. “Now it is safe for you to go home.”

Mary and Joseph packed up their things and made the long journey back. They were so excited to see their family and friends again.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus returned home to Nazareth, where they could live in peace and where Jesus could grow up safe and happy.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- The story shows God's concern for a young child, which can be quite comforting to children. Emphasize that aspect of the story.
- Draw happy, sad, mad, and worried faces on craft sticks. Place the prepared puppets in front of you, with the faces showing. As you read the story, have your child listen for the emotions expressed in the story. Have him or her pick up and show the faces that show that emotion. Talk about why the people in the story felt the way they did.
- Share stories about trips you have enjoyed. Ask: "Where did we go? What did we do? How do we feel God with us when we are taking a trip?"



Responding to God's Grace

- Identify someone with whom you will be involved in an act of hospitality. Seek to make these acts relational. If you are serving food in a shelter or soup kitchen for people who are homeless, for example, speak to and really listen to those who are receiving the food. Open yourself to experiencing each person as a human being, not as a recipient of your charity.
- Frame your everyday actions during this season in the context of hospitality. Challenge your children to look around in your congregation for those who may need a small act of hospitality: a lonely older adult, a frazzled single mother, an alienated young person. Pause as you interact with harried salespersons to really notice them as people.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Brainstorm some simple ways you could welcome someone. Choose two or three that you could act out. Suggestions: "Give a hug" (hug yourself); "Say hello" (shout hello and wave). Then sing the song to "If You're Happy and You Know It" with actions:
If you want to welcome others, give a hug (*hug*).
If you want to welcome others, give a hug (*hug*).
If you want to welcome others,
So they're your sisters and your brothers,
If you want to welcome others, give a hug (*hug*).

- Have family worship:

Light a white candle and read John 8:12.

Invite each family member to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus.

Sing together "This Little Light of Mine":

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.