



## Prepare a Road

(based on Isaiah 40:3-11)

A long time ago, the country of Babylon went to war with Israel. During the war, soldiers captured many Jewish people and took them back to Babylon. The people were broken-hearted and wept tears of sorrow. They were held as captives in a land that they didn't know.

All they wanted was to be able to go home. But they were not allowed to go back.

Many years passed, and still the people were not allowed to leave Babylon.

"Will we ever be able to go home?" cried the people in despair. "Will we ever see Jerusalem again?"

As the years passed, the captives gave up hope. They believed they would have to live in Babylon forever. Then God sent a messenger to help the people remember that they had not been forgotten. This messenger was the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah had a special message from God. It was an amazing message of love.

"Listen to what God says," cried Isaiah. "Get ready! Make a road through the wilderness. Make it straight and smooth. Fill in the valleys and clear away the rocks. God is coming to take us home."

The people couldn't believe their ears. Could it be true? How could it happen?

"God will make it happen," proclaimed Isaiah. "Just like a shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms, God will take care of us and lead us home."

"God will take us home!" exclaimed the people. "This is good news! God is coming to save us!"

The people gave thanks for God's message of hope. They looked forward to returning home. Some day the waiting would be over and God's promise would come true. God would make it happen.



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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.
- Advent wreath—Purple candles are a symbol of royalty and the coming birth of Jesus the king. When your family is together for a meal this week, read the Bible story and light the first and second candles of the wreath.
- Nativity scene—In your child-friendly nativity set, put out the stable and animals for the second week of Advent, to remind us that we are waiting for the birth of Jesus. They join the angel(s) from last week. We'll add more figures each week.
- Christmas symbols guessing game: Can you guess which common Christmas decoration material reminds us of everlasting life? Answer: The evergreen.



### Responding to God's Grace

- Work together on a list of acts of kindness your children see in the world around them. Include acts by people close to your family, and by people you don't know at all.
- Have your family bake cinnamon rolls. Take a plate to your newest neighbors, as a symbol that you are all at home in your neighborhood.

### Celebrating in Gratitude

- Watch the YouTube video "Every Valley [John Ness Beck]" ([bit.ly/2Evyd66](http://bit.ly/2Evyd66)). Enjoy the message of hope.
- Offer strips of paper to make a paper chain. Talk about how each link of the chain can stand for a person we are connected to. Display the chain on your Christmas tree or somewhere else in your home.
- Pray this prayer:

*God, we thank you for your message of hope.  
We are glad you are with us. Amen.*

Note: [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) web addresses are case sensitive.