

December 21: The Promise Salvation in the Garden

Genesis 3:1-15

When Adam and Eve sinned, God would have been just to strike Adam, Eve, and the serpent dead right on the spot when they sinned. When we consider what they *deserved*, we can see God's response as the absolute miracle of mercy that it is. Instead of striking them dead, God came in grace, seeking Adam and Eve and covering their shame (v. 8-9). Then, in another act of love and mercy, God goes to war on behalf of Adam and Eve when he pronounces a curse on the Serpent who caused them so much harm.

God pronounced his curse, but He includes a promise. Can you spot it? The promise is that "He will crush your head." In this curse, God makes Adam and Eve his allies, and sets a battle in motion against their common enemy. This is the moment that God initiates their salvation, with a promise imbedded in a curse.

It is easy to see Genesis 3 as the lowest point of the Bible's story—and it certainly is. But God is so abundantly merciful that in humanity's lowest moment, he offers hope—the promise that "He" will crush the head of the serpent. God takes the initiative to go to battle against the Enemy. This is the same initiative that we all need God to take in our lives. Without God's initiation, we would always be at war. Even at the beginning, in the hopelessness of sin, God initiated our salvation in this original promise to save the lowly.

Family Devotion

Parents ask: Ask if anyone has had a bad day before because you did something wrong and disobeyed your parents? Maybe you made wrong choices; maybe you were mean; maybe you got angry. How did you feel? Would it make your day better after you were disobedient to your parents, if they surprised you by deciding to give you an undeserved surprise?

Idea: Go get ice cream or an unexpected treat and discuss.

Read as a family: Genesis 3:14-15.

Discuss: What promise did God make in these verses? Who is God talking about sending? Why do we need God to send someone at all?

Talk about the definition of sin. It is anything we say, think, do or don't do that breaks God's laws. And even though sin entered the world, God promised a Savior to rescue us... And we really need him! But Adam and Eve didn't get to see this promise fulfilled. In fact, we have to wait for many, many generations before we see God fulfill this promise.

Main Point: Even at the beginning, in the hopelessness of sin, God initiated our salvation in this original promise to save the lowly.

December 22: Promise of Salvation in Egypt

Exodus 6:1-13

God initiated our salvation in the garden, but it would be many generations before the promised conqueror would come. In that waiting throughout the Old Testament, God stirs up his people to hang on the hope of his promise by showing his people glimpses of the complete salvation that awaited them. This scene in Exodus is just one example. After generations of living with the devastating effects of sin, the Israelites, God's chosen people, became slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. The Israelites endured excruciating suffering at the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt. But God, in His loving grace and mercy, takes unmerited action to save them. God says,

"...I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God'" (6:5-7a).

Here, we see God, move toward a sinful people in compassion and love offering them a salvation that would point toward a greater salvation to come. In the coming years, Israel would turn away from God again and again. Despite Israel's persistent sin, God never forgot, the promise He made to bring his beloved people an eternally secure redemption. **Even in the hopelessness of sin, God reminded his people of his covenant, his promise to bring salvation to the lowly.**

Family Devotion

Parents ask: Have you ever felt forgotten about? Maybe you thought your parents forgot to pick you up from school or a practice? Parents share personal experiences.

Read as a family: Exodus 6:5-7a

Discuss: Who is speaking in these verses? Did the Israelites feel forgotten? Did God forget His promise?

Main Point: Even in the hopelessness of our sin, God continues to initiate our salvation in his renewed promise to save the lowly.

December 23: Promise of Salvation to David

2 Samuel 7:8-29

The first time we meet David, he is just a lowly shepherd boy, helpless in battle against the giant Goliath. He recognized his helplessness against his enemy, but he also knew, and had faith in, the mighty God of salvation. We see this attitude of humble submission and faith come to mark King David's rule. He led Israel in humble submission to the God of salvation.

After God gives David rest from his military enemies, God renews his promise to David that one day he would give Israel rest from her ultimate enemy--sin. God promises David that his kingdom will be established forever and that he will bring a permanent salvation to the people of God. In response to the promise, David responds to God in a dramatic act of humble worship (2 Samuel 7:21-26).

David was Israel's mightiest king, but he knew that he was powerless to save Israel from their greatest enemy. David knew that only God could offer Israel the kind of rest and rescue that they needed. When God makes this renewed promise to David that he will bring a Deliverer from his line, David prays this beautiful prayer, calling himself a servant. David, although a mighty conqueror, recognized his lowly estate before God and praised him accordingly. Even after generations have passed, we see in this scene that God is still committed to his promise to bring salvation to the lowly.

Family Devotion

Parents: Show your kids an ultrasound picture you have of them. Describe how you didn't know what color eyes or hair they would have because you couldn't predict it! Use this to lead into a discussion about how God told David things about who would be born into his family and what he would do.

Read as a family: (2 Samuel 7:21-26) In these verses, God renews his promise to David that he will raise up David's offspring who will finally save them and that his kingdom will be established forever. David believes God's promises and hopes in what God has said. David's immediate response is to praise God for the certainty of his promises!

Main Point: David calls himself a servant, in his response to the beauty of God's promise. David knew he was powerless to save Israel from their greatest enemy-- their own sin. David knew that only God could offer Israel the kind of rest and rescue they needed. God promises David that He will keep his promise to send a rescuer.

Activity: Since David calls himself a servant. How can you serve other in these last few days before Christmas? *Ideas: make cards and cookies for neighbors. Collect toys clothes you don't need and donate them. Go buy groceries and take them to the Gwinnett Co-op.*

December 24: Promise of Salvation in the Prophets

Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 25:8; Micah 7:7; Zechariah 9:9

As the Old Testament progresses, the hope of God's salvation seemed lost as foreign kingdoms conquered and ruled over God's people. Yet, even in the midst of wars, captivity, and uncertainty, God had not forgotten His people. During this seemingly hopeless time, God sent messengers, the prophets, to remind His people that salvation was coming--that his promises still stand!

While in captivity in Babylon, Isaiah is able to look forward to a future day when God would fulfill his promise of a permanent salvation when God's people will say, "we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:8) The prophet Isaiah was pointing God's people to the hope they had in God's promises. As Assyria was closing in to crush Jerusalem, Micah implored God's people to wait in hope for the day God would save them from their suffering forever. He said: "But as for me, I will look to the Lord: I will wait for the God of my *salvation*; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:7). These passages speak to the patience required of God's people to wait for his perfect timing, as well as the fact that God's promises are the only hope to be had in this tumultuous world. **Even when Israel's situation seemed hopeless, God was working out his promise to save the lowly.**

Family Devotion

Parents ask: What is your biggest hope for Christmas? Is it seeing grandparents, cousins, and family? Is it a gift you may get? Is it doing fun stuff because school is out? What if you thought that none of those things would happen? Would this cause you to lose hope in Christmas?

Read as a family: Isaiah 25:8, Zechariah 9:9. God had not forgotten His people. During this seemingly hopeless time, God sent messengers, the prophets, to remind His people that salvation was coming--that he would continue to keep his promise.

Main Point: God's people the Israelites were completely hopeless because of their sin. Still, even when God's chosen people were lost in their sin and in captivity, God was working out his promise to save the lowly.

Activity: As you go about your family traditions on Christmas Eve, include one of these promises of God with each of our activities to help your kids anticipate Christmas day.

December 25: Revealed Salvation in Mary

Luke 1:26-55

Out of the darkness, an angel came to Mary and told her that God's promise was about to be fulfilled; that she would give birth to the one who will crush the head of the serpent, the one who would ultimately deliver his people, the one whose kingdom would be established forever, and the Savior the prophets foretold. Mary believed that what was spoken to her would be fulfilled (1:45). She knew this baby was the one she had placed her hope in, the one who would Redeem the world from sin!

Reread 1:46-55. Have you ever considered how incredible Mary's response is? Her humble perspective forms the basis of her gratitude. Mary's exemplary character has grown out of her understanding of God's character revealed over time through the promise communicated through kings and prophets. Up until this moment, Mary had placed her hope in the promises of God. This is why her song reflects her profound faith and exuberant joy. She recognizes her deep, personal need for this Savior! She knows that God owes her nothing, but that she owes him everything. This is why she sings! You also have every reason to sing this Christmas: Because God became low for the lowly, sin for the sinner, embraced death for the dead, and He is life for those who want to live.

So, this Christmas, respond like Mary, humble yourself before the mighty and faithful God who keeps his promises. Recognize your lowliness and your need. Acknowledge Christ as your Savior and join in with the song of Mary: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Family Devotion

Parents ask: Describe a happy moment in your life! Did you shout, jump up and down, cheer?

Read as a family: Luke 1:46-55 Describe Mary's reaction to hearing news about Jesus coming. Did she believe the angel?

Out of the darkness, an angel came to Mary and told her that God's promise was about to be fulfilled; that she would give birth to the one who will crush the head of the serpent, the one who would ultimately deliver his people, the one whose kingdom would be established forever, and the Savior the prophets foretold. Mary believed what was spoken to her would be fulfilled. She believed that the Messiah had come and responded in humble worship.

Main Point: Just like God's people, we're born with sin. Even though we deserve punishment for our sin, God kept his promise. How should we respond to this good news?

Activity: Mary responded with worship. As a family, respond in worship by playing and singing along to Joy to the World.