

# REFLECTIONS on THE HEART

an illustrated  
**LENT**  
FOR FAMILIES

FOR WHERE YOUR

Treasure



illustrated  
— MINISTRY —



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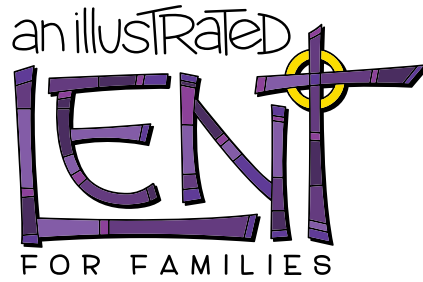
**Contributors:** Amanda Meisenheimer, Corby Ortmann

**Editing:** Rebekah Lowe, Arianne Braithwaite Lehn

**Director of Product Development:** Rebekah Lowe

**Founder:** Adam Walker Cleaveland

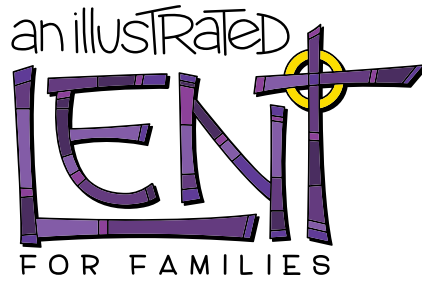
Illustrated Ministry, LLC.  
410 Main St  
Racine, Wisconsin 53403  
[illustratedministry.com](http://illustratedministry.com)  
[info@illustratedministry.com](mailto:info@illustratedministry.com)



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## AN ILLUSTRATED LENT FOR FAMILIES: REFLECTIONS ON THE HEART

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

The theme for this edition of *An Illustrated Lent for Families* is Reflections on the Heart. As we journey through this season of Lent together, families are invited to focus intentionally on the spiritual discipline of evaluating what the heart treasures. Some are physical treasures we can touch, hold, store, and give. Some treasures are invisible, yet still greatly matter and guide our lives. By exploring Gospel passages about treasures and matters of the heart, families will reflect on what kind of treasure matters to us, why we store treasures, and the power these treasures have in our lives. Starting with Ash Wednesday and going through Easter, each weekly session will have a scripture, reflection, discussion questions, activity, coloring page, and prayer.

Our Lent devotions are written for all ages. We believe you'll find appropriate questions and discussion topics in each devotion for your children, no matter the 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 devotions, see what you think will work best for your family's schedule, and find time each week to gather together.

Each devotion consists of the elements below:

**Scripture:** The scriptures are selected Gospel passages concerning treasures and matters of the heart.

**Reflection:** A brief reflection is offered for 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 will resonate best for your family.

**Discussion and Coloring Page:** This is a chance for some family conversation. Since we love coloring here at Illustrated Ministry, we find some of the best conversations often happen while coloring and doing something creative together. We suggest discussing the questions offered (tied to the scripture and activity) while coloring the week's coloring page.

**Family 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 say or invite your children to repeat after you. This simple ritual can end your family's weekly devotional time and can also be used as a prayer throughout the week.

As you use these resources, we would love to hear what was helpful and what suggestions or comments you have. 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:

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We also love to see photos and hear stories about how you are using our products. When you are posting photos or comments online, please use the hashtag #illustratedmin or #anillustratedlent 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 get to see how other families and churches are creatively using our resources.

Blessings on your Lenten journeys!

Illustrated Ministry

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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 do not want the general public to have access to our products free of charge. We discourage posting our files online because they become easily accessible through Google searches. However, 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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LENTEN  
DEVOTIONS

The image features the word 'LENTEN' in a large, stylized font where each letter is constructed from multiple overlapping purple and blue brushstrokes. A yellow circle with a cross inside is positioned behind the letter 'N'. Below 'LENTEN', the word 'DEVOTIONS' is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

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### BACKGROUND

Ash Wednesday is the day in the church year where we mark the beginning of the season of Lent. During this season, we are all invited to reflect on the things in our lives that may be causing us to be distant from God and distant from others. Beginning around the 11th century, the Ash Wednesday service became a way for Christians to physically mark and remember the beginning of the season.

Historically, during the service, ashes are prepared from the palm fronds used during the Palm Sunday of the prior year as a way to point toward the Gospel message of the upcoming Easter. The ashes are mixed with oil and placed with the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the service participants and the words, "From dust you have come and to dust you will return," are shared with each person. This can be a startling statement to hear. However, the purpose is not to alarm but to remind us that we have been created by God and that it is God who holds us in life and in death.



Perhaps it is because of our increasingly virtual world, Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent become powerful opportunities to reconnect with our families, friends, our faith communities, and most importantly our Creator. The scent of the oil, the scratch of the ashes, and the sound of song and Word all provide us with different ways to feel and understand the significance of the season.

## ASH WEDNESDAY ACTIVITY

*Supplies needed: Labyrinth sheet, ashes or black paint, and the scripture reading listed below*

For this activity, we will be using a labyrinth you can find on the page following the prayer. Christians have used labyrinths as a means to have a multi-sensory expression of prayer and contemplation. Labyrinths look like a maze but are different from a maze in the sense that it is not meant to be confusing, but rather to provide space and time to reflect and pray while traveling the path. We will be using our labyrinth as a way for families of all ages to participate in this activity.

Please gather around a table or other flat surface in your home. Place the labyrinth in the middle of the table or surface. Near to the paper, have prepared ashes or black paint available for use.

Designate one or more readers of the scripture passage Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. Invite each person in your group to use their finger to "journey through the labyrinth." If your group has more than 4, invite two participants to journey the labyrinth together. Start by placing one finger at the beginning of the labyrinth and when the reader begins to read the scripture, trace your finger slowly through.

When each participant reaches the center of the labyrinth, the participant will then dip their thumb into the ashes or paint and make the sign of the cross in the middle of the labyrinth. Together all will say the refrain: From dust you came and to dust you will return. Pause between each of the four breaks after the refrains as the participant finishes tracing their finger through the rest of the labyrinth. When you finish your journeys, you may complete the activity with the prayer following the scripture passage.

## SCRIPTURE & LABYRINTH REFRAIN: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

### Concerning Almsgiving

Reader: Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

### Concerning Prayer

Reader: And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

### Concerning Fasting

Reader: And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

### Concerning Treasures

Reader: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### Refrain

Together: From dust you came and to dust you will return.

## PRAYER

Dear God of our whole selves,  
As we journey through this season of Lent,  
teach us how to give,  
so that we can joyfully respond when you call us to serve.  
Teach us how to pray,  
so that we can be closer to you in all that we do throughout the day.  
Teach us how to let go,  
so nothing can stand in the way of our connection with you.  
Teach us how to prepare,  
so we can be ready to receive your love, wisdom, and blessing.  
Help us to remember that in all ways we belong to you,  
**Amen.**

Journey through the  
**LABYRINTH**



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## WEEK ONE: Storing Up Treasures

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### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 6: 19-21

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

### REFLECTION

People gathered around Jesus on a mountainside to hear him teach. Jesus' message about treasures is found in what we call, "The Sermon on the Mount." He saw their hurt and pain and cared for them in many ways. One such way was teaching. Jesus taught how to faithfully live for God. Jesus surprised people with his stories and challenged them to rethink things they had always done. While it might feel easy to get back at someone who hurt you, pile up more than what we need, and worry about our stuff, Jesus shared another way.

Jesus said one of those ways is to not store up piles of treasure for ourselves. All our physical treasures like clothes, technology, jewelry, and toys will eventually be ruined, lost, destroyed, or forgotten. Those things just don't last. On the other hand, invisible treasures—like knowing how to give rather than take and love as God loves—cannot be destroyed. Treasures you store up through love you share last forever.

During the season of Lent, we slow down and figure out what is most important to us. Jesus called these things "treasures." Sometimes, our treasures can be seen and touched. Sometimes they are invisible. Jesus tells us we will find out where our heart is when we name our treasures. Another way of saying this is, "Your treasures reveal what is important to you." This Lent, we will think about our invisible and visible treasures. We will ask ourselves, "What is most important to me and my heart?"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do your treasures and collections say about you?
- How do you know when you have enough of something? What do you do when you have too much?
- What invisible treasures are important to your family? Why are they important?

## ACTIVITY

**Supplies:** Activity pages, one piece of construction or printer paper (to “store” your invisible treasures), scissors, glue or tape, and coloring materials.

Print and gather your materials. To begin, read the story about a family and their two kinds of treasures on the first activity page. Then talk about the two types of treasures you have:

- If you had a heavy wooden chest with a metal lock, what would you store inside it?
- What are your most important objects you can see or touch?
- Sometimes the objects we value most are not valuable to strangers. Can you think of objects that are important in your family because they have special memories?

Invisible treasures are not just feelings. Invisible treasures grow when we make loving choices with loving intentions for each other and ourselves. When we choose to have a good attitude about something hard, take care of ourselves, help out a neighbor, or give something special away, our invisible treasure grows.

- If you had an invisible chest full of your invisible treasures, what would you store inside of it?
- What invisible treasures are unique to your family?
- If your wooden chest sank to the bottom of the ocean, what would you cherish from your invisible chest?

This week, let’s remember how Jesus encouraged us to put our energy and effort into filling our invisible treasure chest. No one can destroy or steal the love and joy we store there. And even if our physical treasures are stolen or destroyed, our invisible treasures survive.

From your second activity page, cut off the top of the page that says, “Our Invisible Treasures,” and glue it to your paper. Then take a look at the “invisible treasures” on the rest of the activity page and think about ways to use them this week. For example, if you find a way to help others, cut out the bubble/heart/symbol/words for “help someone,” write out how you helped, and paste it onto your Invisible Treasures paper. Do the same with the other invisible treasures. What other invisible treasures do you have? Use the blank treasures to write your own. Print out this activity page as

many times as you need or draw tallies/stars/hearts around each treasure you've added. How much invisible treasure can you create? Whose treasure might increase because of it?

## PRAAYER

Generous God,

You never run out of love.

You never get tired of giving.

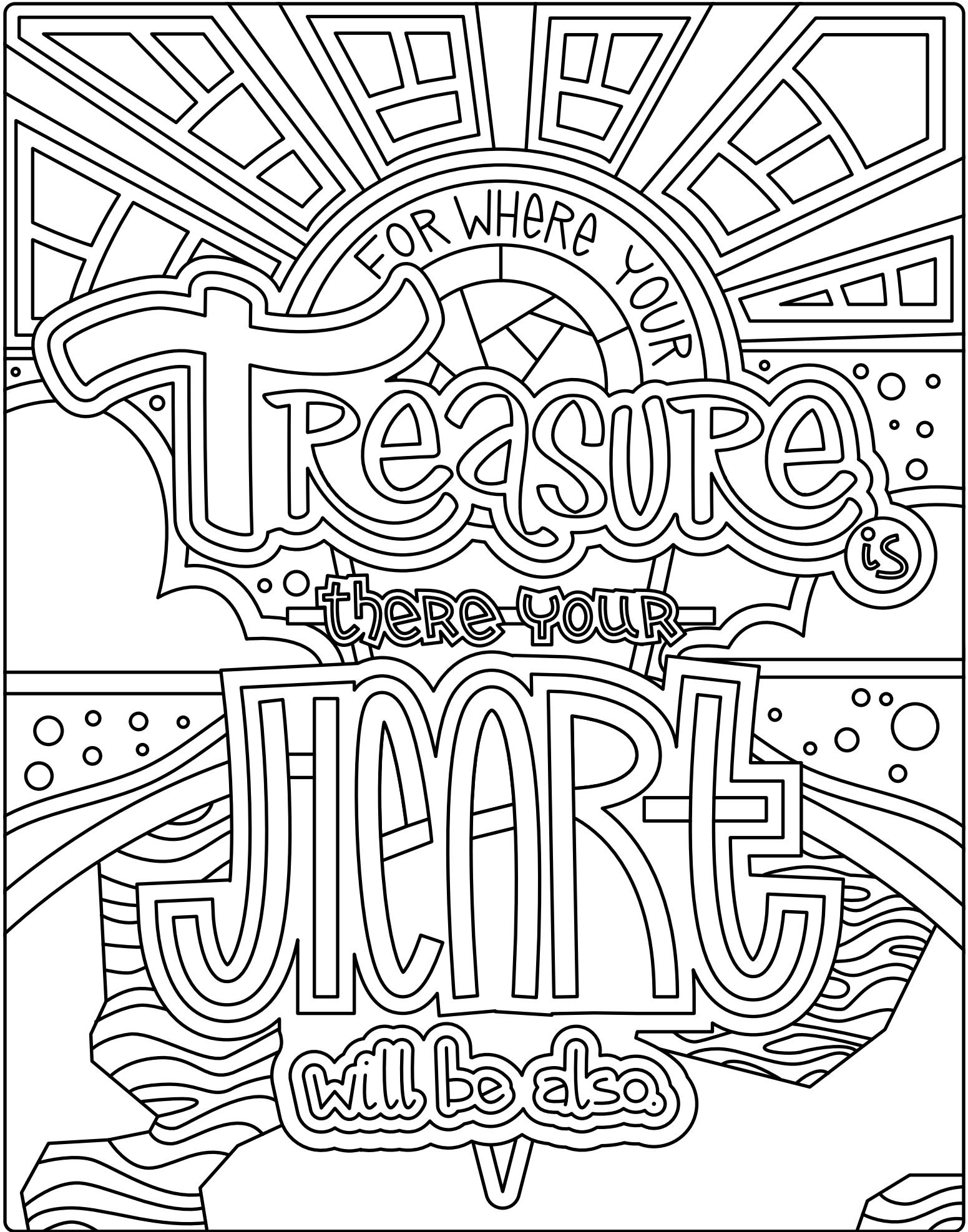
Help us choose your ways of love and justice,

giving instead of hoarding up for ourselves,

and fill our hearts to overflowing.

**Amen.**

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FOR WHERE YOUR

Treasure is

there YOUR

Treasure

will be also.

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## ACTIVITY STORY

Once upon a time, there was a family who lived on a boat. The family owned two treasure chests. One was a wooden chest with a heavy metal lock. In it, they stored all of their money, jewelry, and fancy clothes. This chest was precious to the family.

The other treasure chest was invisible. It could only hold invisible treasures. In the invisible chest, the family stored their love for each other, determination, hope for the future, and generosity. This chest was precious to the family.

The family protected both treasures. Sometimes, the invisible treasures, like generosity, would inspire them to give away some of their visible treasures. The invisible treasure would keep growing, no matter how much they gave away, no matter how empty the wooden treasure chest became.

One day, there was a leak in the boat. Water began rushing in. The family escaped and swam to shore while their boat sank.

They cried, "Everything we owned is gone! Our treasure chest! All of our money! We will never see it again!"

One family member looked over on the beach and saw nothing but her family. Her heart felt warm, even though her skin felt cold.

"Hey, everybody! Our invisible chest is here! It survived the sinking!"

They looked around. Even though they were very sad to have lost their boat and their wooden chest of treasure, they still had their hope, love, determination, and generosity. That day, they picked up their even larger invisible treasure chest and they started again.

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# OUR INVISIBLE TREASURES



A collection of cut-out shapes for a project, each with a dashed border and a specific message:

- A large empty rectangular box.
- A wavy-edged banner with the text "take care of yourself".
- A large empty circle.
- A vertical rectangular box with the text "give something you have to someone who needs it".
- A circle with the text "give to a cause you care about".
- A teardrop shape with the text "spend time together".
- An empty heart shape.
- A heart shape with the text "help someone".
- A parallelogram with the text "care for a pet".
- An empty trapezoidal shape.

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# LENTEN DEVOTIONS

## WEEK TWO: Sharing Our Hearts

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### SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:41-52

*Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.*

### REFLECTION

When Jesus was twelve years old, he was traveling with his parents. They became separated after the Passover festival. Jesus' parents searched for him for several days. They were worried and anxious because they loved their son, Jesus, very much. He was their treasure. When Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus, he was sitting in the temple talking to the teachers and asking them questions. Mary was probably frustrated when she asked, "Why have you treated us like this?" She wanted Jesus to be safe, always.

Jesus treasured his parents, but Jesus also had another treasure. He liked to be in the temple, talking about God. He called God his "Father." Of course, we know Jesus would spend his whole life talking about God and teaching others about God's love. But Mary and Joseph did not understand this at the time. Sometimes parents and children do not understand each other's treasures. That is okay. It happens a lot.

But Jesus and his parents figured it out together. Jesus followed their directions and went home to Nazareth with them. Mary took Jesus' thoughts very seriously, even though they were mysterious. That's what we do for each other when we love each other. We take each other seriously, even if we don't understand or even sometimes agree.

The key to sticking together, even when people do not understand one another, is curiosity. Curiosity helps us remain open to each other, continue learning about each other, and respect each other. But it doesn't work very well unless everyone is curious. Grown-ups have to start because they are older with more experience. They show curiosity about their children's ideas. Children can be curious too. They ask questions and try to learn about their parents' ideas. When everyone is curious, we learn about each other's treasures and understand one another a little bit more.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Have you ever been lost or separated from a family member in a public place? Tell the story of what happened.
- What is something your family member treasures or cares about that you don't totally understand? **Bonus:** Ask a curious question about that!
- Is there something you treasure that you wish your parents, children, grandparents, grown-ups, or peers would be more curious about? If so, share!

## ACTIVITY

When you live with someone, it is easy to assume you know everything about them and how they think. But just as Mary and Joseph learned new things about Jesus, we can learn new things about each other.

Make a "curiosity" seat in your living space. Invite each family member to take turns to sit in the curiosity seat and answer three or more questions about themselves. You can make up your own questions, or you can use these suggestions.

- What is the last thing you were excited about?
- What is your best travel memory?
- Which friend do you trust with your thoughts and ideas?
- If you could choose a family activity we would all do together tomorrow, what would it be?
- When you finish, share what you learned or what surprised you about the experience.

## PRAVER

God,

You know our minds and hearts.

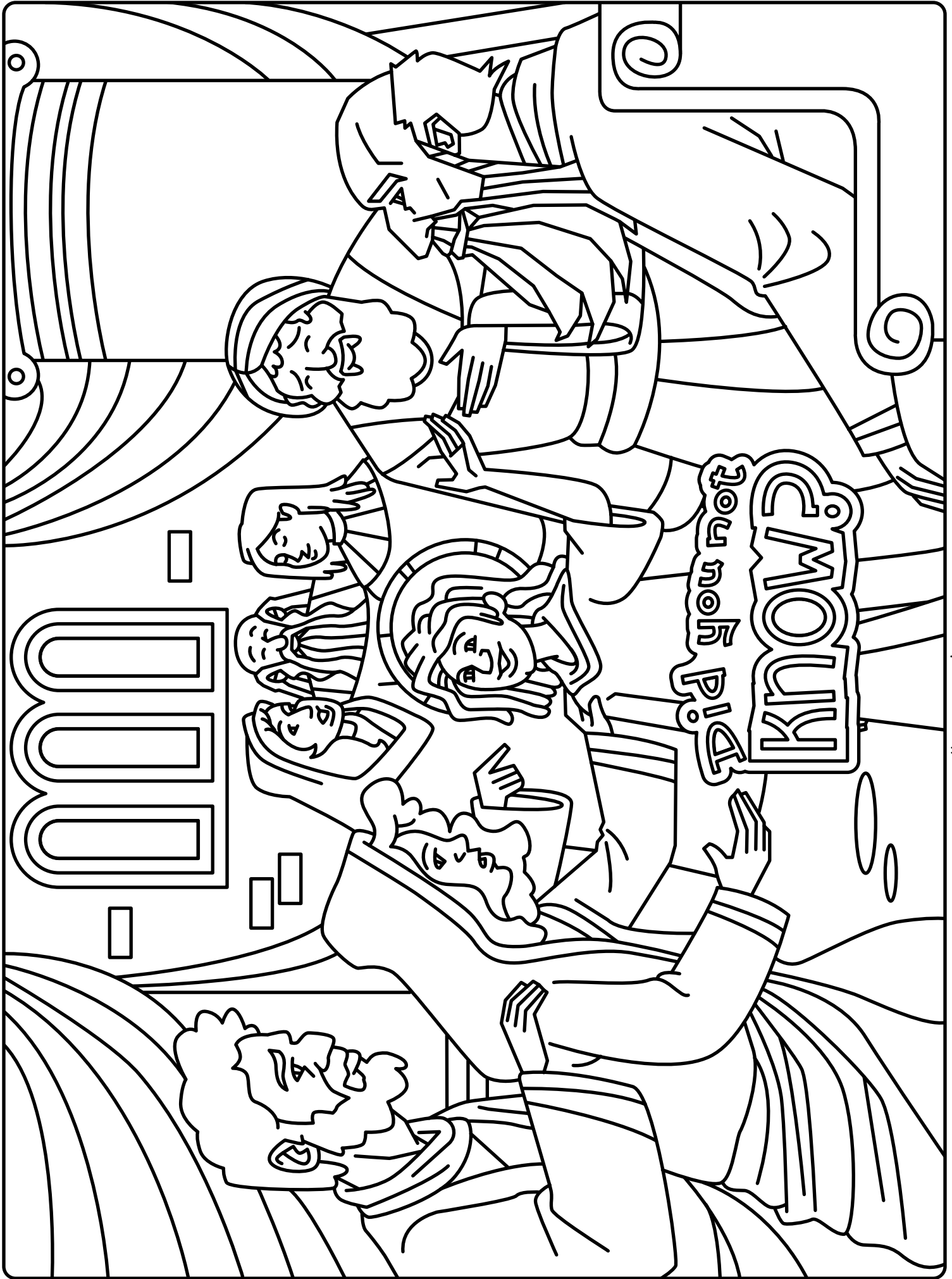
You understand our treasures, even when no one else does.

No matter how silly we feel, you always take us seriously.

Help us love each other and be curious about our differences.

**Amen.**

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## WEEK THREE: Knowing the Good

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### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 19:16-26

*Then someone came to him and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."*

### REFLECTION

There was a man who felt incomplete. Something was missing. Even though he seemed to have it all, he was not sure if his life was whole. He was wealthy, respected, loving, and lived at peace with others. What more could he need?

He was not sure what he needed, so he asked Jesus about it. The young man wanted to know how to have eternal life. He wanted his earthly life to have meaning and wholeness.

Jesus told him the way to meaning and wholeness was to follow the commandments (rules/laws) God gave Israel. Maybe you've heard of the Ten Commandments. These commandments help guide us toward love and justice. This is good advice. The rich young man had tried living this way, but he still didn't feel whole. So, Jesus told him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

Perfect? Can anybody be perfect?

In the time of Jesus, the word “perfect” meant “whole” or “grown-up” or “virtuous” or “complete.” Think of it this way. Jesus saw a young man with a lot of wealth and power at an early age. Maybe today, the young man would be a YouTuber or a top gamer. Jesus told him that if he wanted to grow as a human being, level up his maturity, he would have to let go of his riches and figure out what mattered most to him.

Something amazing happens when we hold our stuff a little looser and give riches away. When we give to our neighbor, when we choose to love our neighbor more than our wealth, we become the people God created us to be. We become whole. Jesus knew this is very difficult for rich young men, but Jesus also said all things are possible with God!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What makes you feel whole and complete as a person? When do you feel the most whole?
- The rich young man was sad when he heard Jesus’ final advice. Why do you think he was sad?
- How can our earthly treasures hold us back from wholeness? How can we hold them a little looser?

## ACTIVITY

The young man in the story today was searching for wisdom. Young people can learn how to be wise with time, experience, and reflection. Older people can help us know what is most important. Many people have learned lessons about what really matters, and they are good at helping us let go of things that do not bring wholeness. Wise people understand treasures.

Choose a couple of older people you consider to be very wise. Tell them the story of the rich young ruler and ask them what it means to them. Here are some questions you can ask to learn more:

- When you were younger, were you a wise person? What good choices did you make? How did you become wise?
- Was there a time in your life you gave up something important to feel complete or mature?
- What are your most important physical and invisible treasures?

## PRAAYER

Dear God,

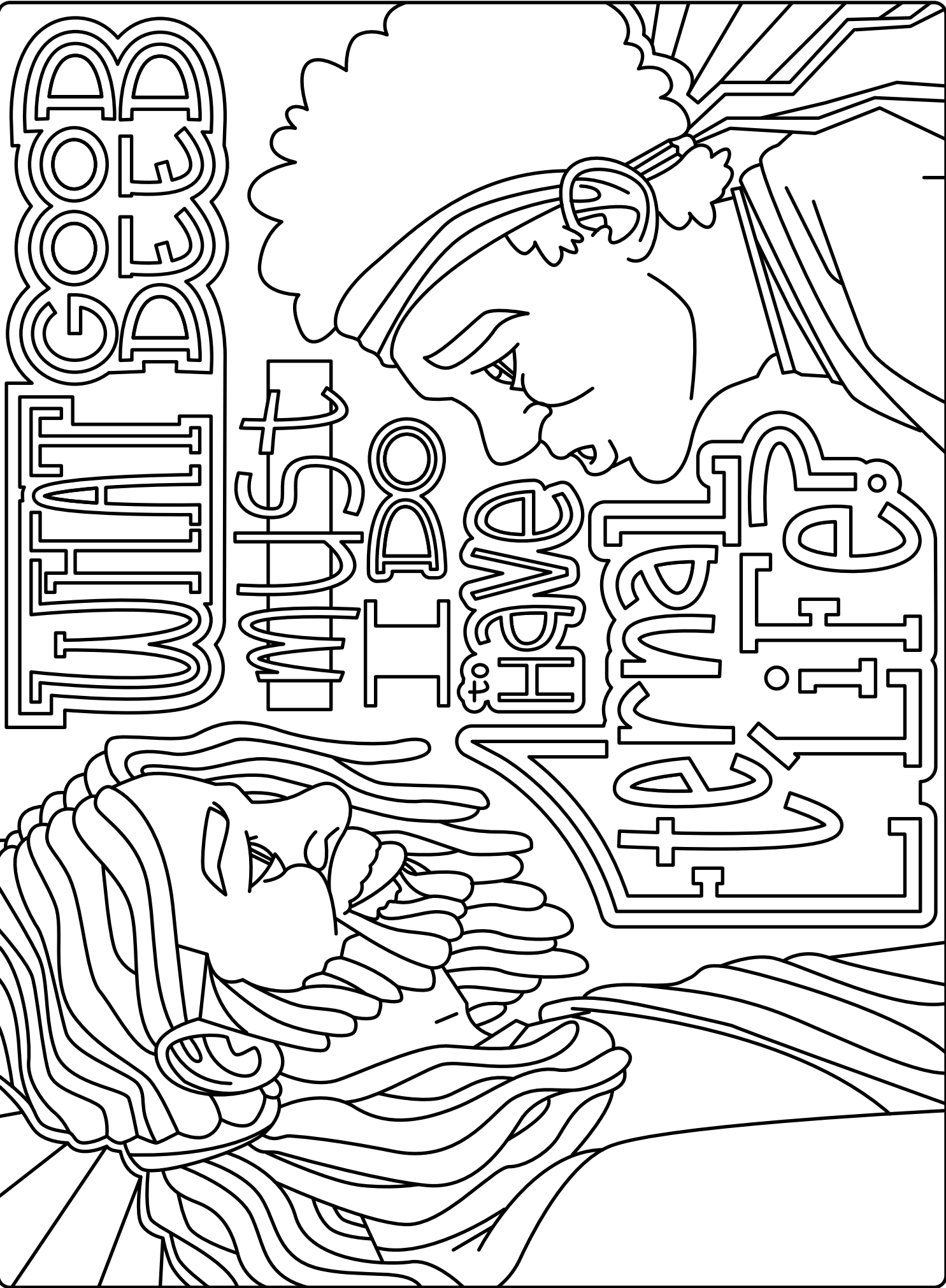
You include us and embrace us  
even when we do not feel perfect or whole.

There is nothing we can do to cancel your love for us.

Inspire us to make wise choices,  
have generous hearts, and seek invisible treasures.

**Amen.**

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THAT GOD

MUST

HIDE

<sup>to</sup> HAVE

Eternal Life

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SCRIPTURE: LUKE 12: 13-34

*Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."*

*He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."*

*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

## REFLECTION

Jesus told a story about a farmer who was very successful. His land was producing more crops than he could even contain! The farmer chose to keep all his crops to himself. He thought if he stored his wealth, he wouldn't have to worry about his future or work for years to come. He tore down his barns to build bigger barns for his hoard of crops. But then the farmer died before he even had a chance to enjoy his enormous savings. He had stored up treasures on earth, but not treasures with God.

Jesus goes on to say there is more to life than food and clothing. Jesus knew people often thought so much about what they would eat and what they would wear. They judged what others had or didn't have and missed out on other treasures. Jesus told the disciples to consider how the birds and flowers live. What could we possibly learn from ravens and lilies?

Ravens and lilies do not worry about storing up vast amounts of food. They live for each day and do not worry about the next day. They are a part of God's creation and do their parts for the ecosystem. Imagine if the ravens stored up all the nuts?! What would the squirrels or chipmunks eat? Imagine if the lilies soaked up all the nutrients from the soil. How would the other plants grow? Instead, a healthy ecosystem is formed when each creature takes what it needs and leaves what it doesn't. This way, the whole system becomes a treasure!

If we spend our energy on treasure that will last and trust God for our needs, does that mean it is wrong to save our resources? No, God wants us to be wise with our money, our privilege, and our property. That's being a "good steward." And when we use our privilege, money, and property for love and justice, there is less worry in the world. We know our community is fed, clothed, sheltered, and loved.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What would have happened if the farmer had kept what he needed and given away the crops he did not need?
- What kinds of invisible treasures would he have stored up if he had been generous? Whose lives would have been changed?
- How do you know when it is time to share your savings? How do you know when you have enough?



## ACTIVITY

What is in our barn?

Many of us have large collections of items we store in our homes. Perhaps you have a vast barn of books, toys, stuffed animals, magazines, board games, or kitchen tools. Each person in your family might have their own stash of something. Take a look at your collections. Are there any collections that look like the farmer's crops? Perhaps you have too much of something or more than you could possibly use? Talk about what to do with the excess. No one should make a choice for someone else's stash, but instead, look at your own things. What could you give away or put to better use for someone else?

## PRAUER

Creator God,  
You made a world with abundant resources,  
enough to feed and clothe everyone.  
Help us to trust you for the future,  
to use our resources well,  
and become generous people  
so everyone will have what they need.

**Amen.**

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## WEEK FIVE: Becoming Someone New

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### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:45-46

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."*

### REFLECTION

When we get really, really excited about something, we will often drop what we are doing in order to focus on it. We will even make sacrifices just so we can be a part of wonderful, good things. Remember how Jesus called his disciples? Many of the disciples were fishermen, but when Jesus called them, they dropped their nets and began a new life.

This still happens today! During the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, a group of people became passionate and angry about the racism in southern states. They dropped what they were doing, left all their plans behind, and rode in buses together to fight for justice. They were called the Freedom Riders. And they weren't the only ones. There have been movements like this all over the world! In South Africa, people struggled for nearly 50 years against a racist system called apartheid. Today in Hong Kong, people organize to fight for their human rights. In Russia, people work against the oppression of the LGBTQ community. Passionate people let go of their plans and head out to be a part of something bigger.

In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a merchant who was looking for fine pearls, ends up finding one beautiful, valuable pearl, and sells everything he has to buy it. Now he has nothing except for one big, beautiful pearl. He isn't even a merchant anymore! He has become the guy with the big pearl. Ha! Now what?

Sometimes, the kingdom of God feels like this kind of adventure. We don't know exactly what we are getting ourselves into, but we know the mysterious adventure is worth trading in our treasures. The disciples and the Freedom Riders did not know how their stories would end. They may have been afraid to try something new, but they took the risk.

It may feel silly or even irresponsible to sell or give up all you have to go on an adventure like this, but it can be exciting and freeing! When we decide to build a life on invisible treasures, we do not have to stress about our old treasures. We may still have precious possessions, but they do not compare with the new way to live that comes with this adventure.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Has your family ever gathered to pay attention to one, very important thing?
- Have you ever given up something in order to try something new or different?
- Who else left behind a life or treasures in order to live a different kind of life? Can you think of anyone else who made a difference by giving up their treasures?
- How do you decide what risks are worth taking?

## ACTIVITY

What does this parable look like for your family? Do you ever change your plans? When families want to build up their invisible family treasure, they can go on adventures together. Time together helps us create memories, build trust, and share love with one another. It is not always easy and can require sacrifice. We may have to stop doing something else in order to create family treasure.

Choose a “pearl” from this list or come up with one on your own which you can do together. Support one another as you may have to change some plans to make it happen!

Go to the farmer’s market.

Take silly photos together.

Bake a treat and share it.

Eat a meal at a table.

Play a board game.

Watch a sunset.

Watch a movie.

Go on a walk.

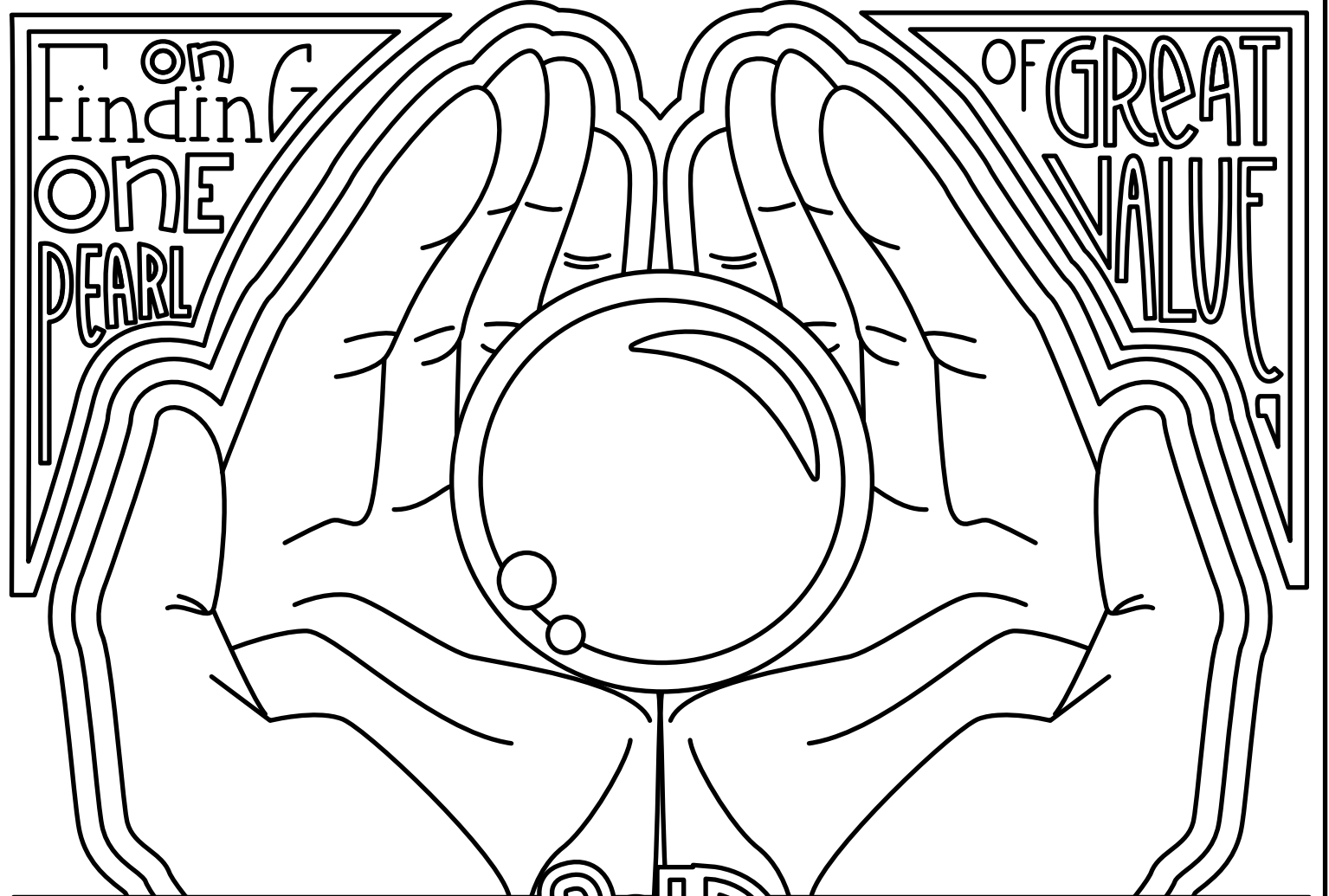
## PRAYER

Dear God,  
You call us to follow you,  
giving up things that distract us.  
Help us find you in the simplest of ways.  
God, we are ready to find you and willing to follow you.  
**Amen.**

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the **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**  
merchants in search of **FINE PEARLS**



he went and **SOLD** all that he had

**AND BOUGHT IT.**

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## WEEK SIX: Shifting Our Gaze

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### SCRIPTURE: MARK 9:30-37

*They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.*

*Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."*

### REFLECTION

Jesus lived when the Roman Empire dominated Israel. The Roman Empire treasured obedience and worship of the emperor. The Roman Empire was not pleased with Jesus because he taught a different way of life and people were attracted to his message. He was disruptive because he treasured people—even those the Roman Empire hated. Roman authorities became more and more frustrated with Jesus, but he did not back down. This is what Jesus was speaking about when he said the Son of Man would be betrayed and killed.

The Roman Empire also did not always treat children very well. According to historians, Romans did not believe children had human rights. And girls were treated unfairly. They were not allowed to go to school, and were made to marry very young. Little girls were not treasured.

As Jesus often did, he rejected this idea and showed us another way.

Jesus believed and taught children were important. So when the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, Jesus took a child in his arms. He told them if they welcomed a child, they would be welcoming Jesus himself. Jesus could have said to the bickering disciples, "You're all wrong. I am the greatest." Instead, Jesus raised up a child, showing them and us the greatness in children.

Jesus loved to empower people who were not appreciated. Imagine this child was a little girl. She was not allowed to go to school, she did not get to inherit her family's land or business. She did not have many choices at all. Then Jesus comes along and tells everyone she represents the Son of God! I wonder if she felt treasured that day.

All children should feel treasured by their families and communities. When we are tempted to argue with each other about who is the best and greatest, who should be in control or make decisions, Jesus shows us people are a true treasure, not being in the number one spot. On days you do not feel like a treasure, share that feeling with a trusted family member or friend so they can remind you how precious you are, just like Jesus did.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What makes you feel most treasured?
- How do you know you are treasured in your family?
- What do you do when you don't feel very loved?

## ACTIVITY

Sometimes grown-ups forget to give children choices or decision-making opportunities. And when a child doesn't get to make any choices, they feel powerless. What does your family do to show children's voices are important?

Choose one of the following adventures to give the children in your family some decision-making power. What happens when the people last in line get to be first to make a choice?

- Children Choose and Make Dinner (with help!)
- Children Choose an Outdoor Family Activity
- Children Choose an Indoor Family Activity
- Children Choose a Furniture Arrangement
- Children Choose...(add your own)

## PRAVER

Father, Mother, Parent of us all,

We are all your precious children -  
some old, some young.

You treasure us in your heart and nothing can change your love for us.

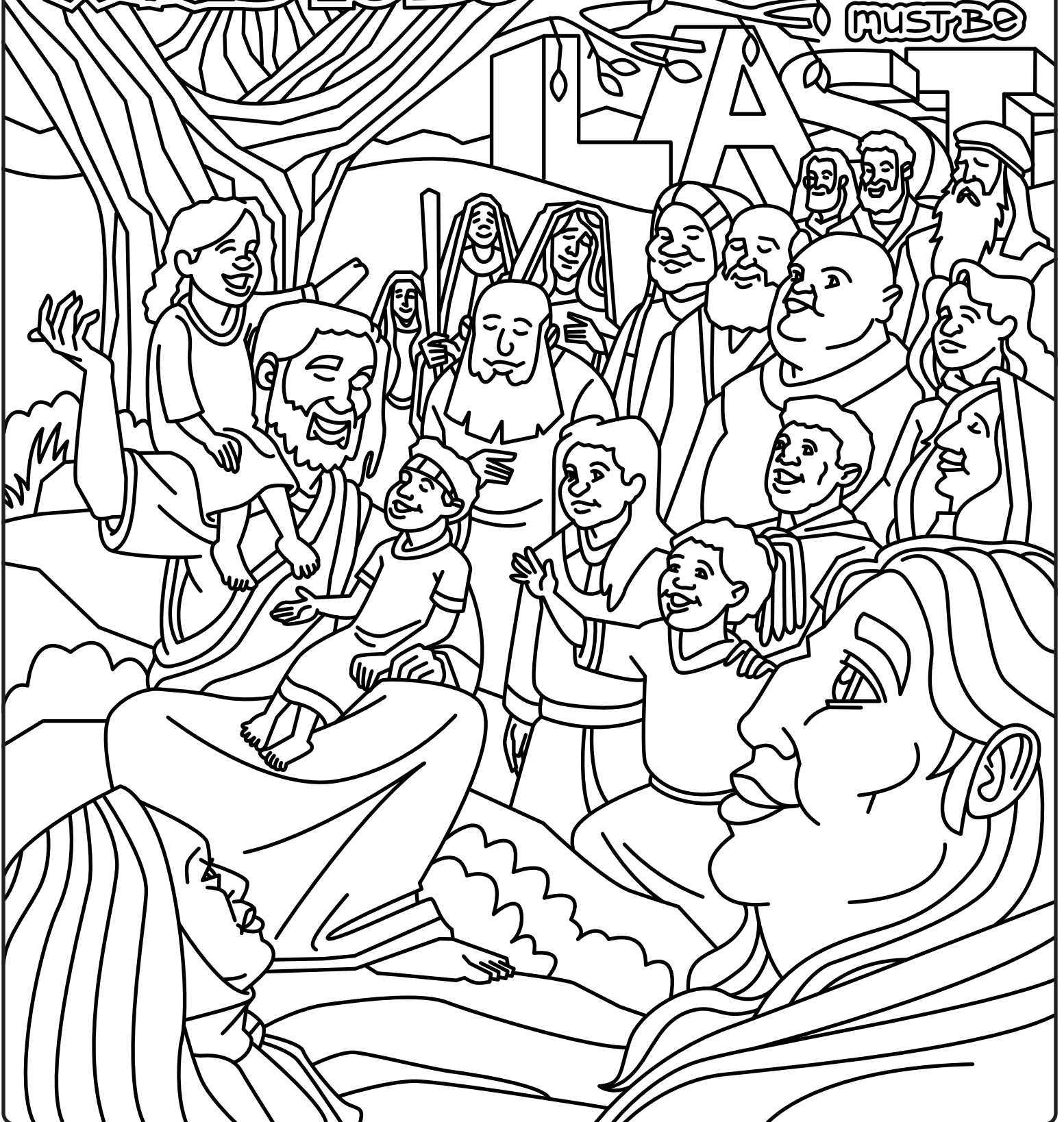
Help us welcome and cherish the children in our lives.

**Amen.**

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# WHOEVER WANTS TO BE FIRST

MUST BE



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### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 27:62-28:10

*The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.*

*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

### REFLECTION

On Easter Sunday, we see two different kinds of treasures. The Roman soldiers treated Jesus' tomb like a treasure. They guarded it because it was very valuable to have Jesus' body in a tomb. If his body was in a tomb, then his message could not continue. He could not disrupt the empire any longer.

But you know that is not the end of the story.

Jesus is the treasure that cannot be contained! Jesus taught good news. Jesus is good news. And that good news is more powerful than Roman soldiers. They were unsuccessful at keeping the good news locked up.

Who would be the first to hear the good news of Jesus' resurrection? Two of his most dedicated followers: Mary Magdalene and Mary. An angel appeared, rolled back the stone, and shared the good news with them.

Good news is an invisible treasure. You cannot see it, but you can feel it. It feels like butterflies in your stomach. It feels like a giant smile across your face. It even feels like happy tears pouring from your eyes.

When Mary Magdalene and Mary learned Jesus was alive, they were filled with these wonderful feelings. They had good news in their hearts and they were excited to share it. While they were on their way to share the treasured good news with the disciples, they found Jesus and worshipped at his feet. But they did not stay for long! Jesus sent them on their way to deliver the message that he was alive.

One of the beautiful parts of following Jesus is sharing good news. We do not keep good news to ourselves. We share the joy and excitement of good news with our friends, family, and even our neighbors. Our good news can be a word of encouragement, a story of hope, a moment of joy, or a trustworthy promise. Your good news to your sibling might be different from your good news to a teacher or grandparent. But when we share good news, we are passing on a treasure to someone else to enjoy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The Bible tells us these disciples who found Jesus were both afraid AND joyful. Have you ever felt those two feelings at once? Share that story.
- What other good news do you see in the story of Jesus?
- What good news do you hear from your parents/grown-ups? From your children? From your church or school?

## ACTIVITY

Create a Good News bulletin board. This can be temporary or a permanent fixture of your home. Use a cork board, whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster board and make space for family members to jot down good news of the day. Here are some ideas:

I passed the test!

I'm grateful for you.

We are having your favorite meal tonight.

I made my bed.

I finished the book I was reading.

What good news do you have to share today?

## PRAAYER

Risen Christ,

You are the best news in the world.

Your love for us is our greatest treasure.

We rejoice in your resurrection story!

Help us find ways to share good news with the people around us  
and to share the treasure far and wide.

**Amen.**

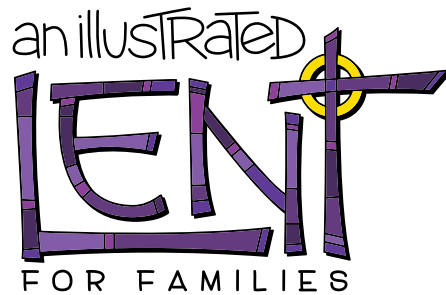
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DO NOT BE AFRAID

HE HAS BEEN PRAISED

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## CONTRIBUTORS

editing **ARIANNE BRAITHWAITE LEHN** is a mother, one half of a clergy couple, writer, and ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church (USA). As a South Dakota native, Arianne originally planned on Law School until God called her to Taiwan where everything changed. She later graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary (Chicago). She and her family live in Wilmette, Illinois. Arianne is the author of *Ash and Starlight: Prayers for the Chaos and Grace of Daily Life*. You can connect with Arianne and her writing at [ariannebraithwaiteleh.com](http://ariannebraithwaiteleh.com).

writing **AMANDA MEISENHEIMER** is the Minister of Children and Families at the Riverside Church in the City of New York. Amanda specializes in intergenerational and therapeutic approaches to ministry and curriculum. Amanda also serves as the Executive Director of the Riverside CDF Freedom School, bringing a program of literacy and social justice to the community's children. She and her two children make their home in Manhattan.

illustration **CORBY ORTMANN** is a digital illustrator and animator, whose work includes caricatures, graphic design, children's books, and animated commercials/music videos. He currently lives in St. Paul, Minnesota with his wife and daughter, who help him to step away from the art table every so often. You can find more of his work at [corbyortmann.com](http://corbyortmann.com).

concept + editing  
**director of product development** **REBEKAH LOWE** develops and cultivates Illustrated Ministry's ever growing library of resources in her role as Director of Product Development. She earned a BA in Biblical Studies from Azusa Pacific University and served as the Director of Children's Ministry at Brentwood Presbyterian Church (USA) in Los Angeles, California. She resides in Austin, Texas with her husband and their two children.

**founder** **ADAM WALKER CLEVELAND** is an artist, pastor, pastor's spouse, and father of four (two living). Adam is an ordained Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and after doing youth ministry for over 15 years, he founded Illustrated Ministry, LLC in 2015. He resides in Racine, Wisconsin with his wife and their two children.