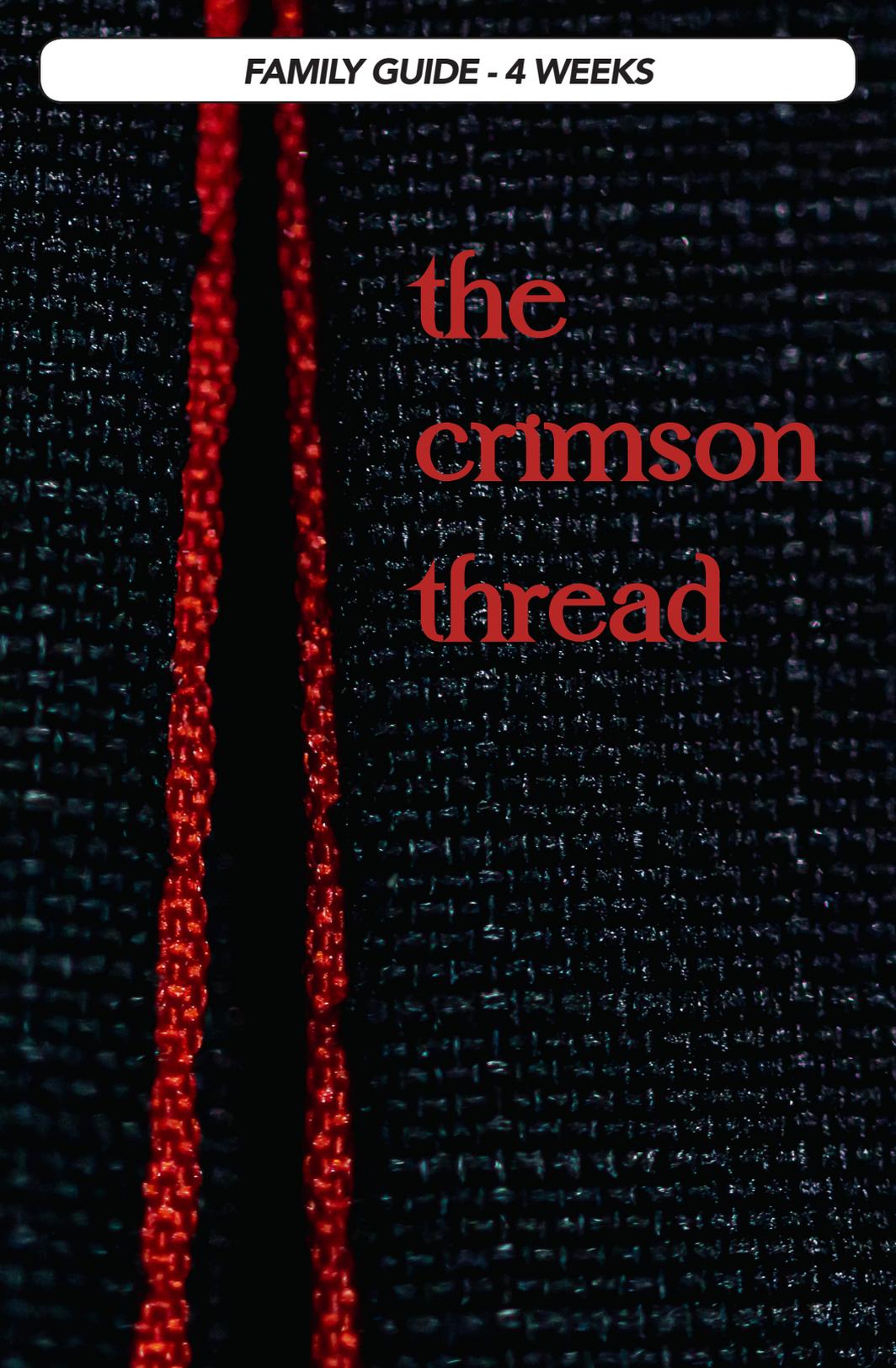


FAMILY GUIDE - 4 WEEKS

The background is a dark blue, textured fabric. Two vertical strands of red thread run down the left side of the page. The text 'the crimson thread' is centered on the right side.

**the
crimson
thread**



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As we walk through the next four weeks on our way to celebrating Easter, we will be tracing a line known as The Crimson Thread. This thread weaves through Biblical stories that symbolize the continuous plan of God's love, His sacrifice, His forgiveness of sin, and His promise that someday there is a place for everyone who believes in Him in heaven. Each week, we've included a fluid retelling of the scriptural stories to help make sense of these sometimes long and nuanced verses. As we tell these Old Testament stories, they all point us to our one and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

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Abraham Sacrifices Isaac

week 1

Start Talking:

Who do you trust the most?

Big Idea:

God uses Abraham and this story to tell about the coming of Jesus and his death on the cross.

Key Verses:

Genesis 22:1-19

Psalm 40:4a *"Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD..."*

THE STORY

Many years ago, God chose Abraham to begin a great nation, one that would honor and serve God. God told Abraham that counting his descendants would be like trying to count stars. So many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, and great-great-great-grandchildren that no one could even count them! Abraham believed in God, but as the years went by, he and his wife, Sarah, still had no children together.

But, of course, God did keep His promise! Finally, when Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90 years old, they had a baby. They named their son Isaac. Abraham and Sarah

loved God and loved Isaac very much and looked forward to the future. However, a day came when Abraham was tested. God asked Abraham to do a very difficult thing.

When Abraham was living, they had what was known as a "sacrifice" system. People showed their love for God and asked forgiveness from God by placing food or sometimes an animal they had killed on an altar and burning it up. This was called a "sacrifice" or "offering". Abraham knew about this kind of sacrifice, but he had never heard about the kind of sacrifice that God asked of him on the day he was tested.

God said, "Take your only son, Isaac, the son you love. Go to the land of Moriah. There kill him and offer him as a whole burnt offering."

Most people would have just said, "NO WAY!" It was so confusing to Abraham! He loved Isaac. Isaac was his only son. God had promised him that Isaac would grow up and have children, and his children would grow up and have children, so that one day, God's people would be so many that no one could count them. If Isaac had died, this could never happen!

But, Abraham realized something. God's plan is always the right plan. So, Abraham trusted God and obeyed. When Abraham and his son got to the top of the mountain, they stacked stones on top of stones to build an altar. Isaac asked his father what animal they would put on the altar. Abraham only replied, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

The time came for Abraham to do what God said and kill his son. However, at the last minute, God provided another answer. An angel called out in a loud voice and told Abraham to stop! Abraham's faith, and God's grace, won. God provided a ram instead to fulfill the sacrificial offering and the angel spoke to Abraham one more time. "I make a vow by my own name—the LORD is speaking—that I will richly bless you. Because you did this and did not keep back your only son from me, I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the

seashore. Your descendants will conquer their enemies. All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed your descendants—all because you obeyed my command.” (Genesis 22:16-18)

Both Abraham and Isaac returned home together.

What a relief! God would never want a person to be killed and burned on an altar. That day, Abraham learned more about God’s love, his faith in God, and how to trust God. Isaac continued to grow up and follow God. And guess what? As years passed, God’s blessing was fulfilled. The number of Abraham’s descendants became so many that they were as difficult to count as the number of stars in the sky.



Story Review:

God loved Abraham and Isaac. God didn’t want Abraham to really kill his son, but he wanted Abraham to trust him, to believe that his promises would be fulfilled no matter what, and that his instructions could be followed even if they sounded very strange or even impossible or painful or sacrificial or foolish. And Abraham knew that he could trust God. But this story isn’t so much about Abraham or about Isaac and what they did and their great faith. It’s about God. It’s about God and what he did.

1. What promise had God made to Abraham about his descendants? *(He would have as many descendants as the number of stars or grains of sand)*
2. If Abraham’s son, Isaac, died, would Abraham be able to have descendants?
(No, unless God gave Abraham and Sarah another son)
3. What did God tell Abraham to do with his son, Isaac?
(Take him to Mount Moriah, kill him, and offer him as a burnt offering sacrifice)
4. What happened when Abraham was just about to kill Isaac?
(An angel stopped him and provided a ram for sacrifice instead)

5. God did not really want Abraham to kill his son. Why did he ask Abraham to do it? (*It was a test of his faith in God*)
6. What does this story teach us about people?
7. What does the story teach us about God?

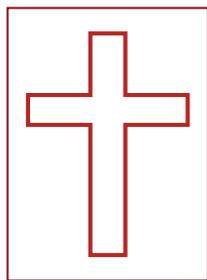
Start Doing:

As difficult as it is to comprehend the events in this story, they are only a foreshadowing of another time, later in history, when another Father allowed his Son to be sacrificed on a cross.

God loved us so much that he puts us first and was willing to become a man and die in our place. He loves us so much that he died for our sins so we can love him in return. We can be thankful and we can put him first, loving him first. That means that sometimes we might have to be willing to give something up or sacrifice something we love, but it means that we love God even more. We can trust him! When we put Him first and pray, read our Bibles, go to church, and treat others as we want to be treated, God will bless that. Even when things get confusing!

Time to draw!

- Take a piece of paper and draw a great big cross on it.
- Inside the cross, write the names of the people that you trust the most.
- Outside the cross, write Psalm 40:4a "Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD"
- Hang up your drawing to remember to trust God above all things!



Start Praying:

Dear God, thank you for teaching us about trusting you. Thank you for loving us. Help us to love you and to put you first in our lives. Thank you for bringing people we can trust into our lives. Thank you so much for your son Jesus, in his name, amen.

Rahab and the Spies

week 2

Start Talking:

Have you ever hidden anything before? What was it?

Big Idea:

God has a plan and God rescues those who trust in Him!

Key Verses:

Joshua 1-2

Joshua 2:17-21 ... *So, she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

THE STORY

In the Old Testament, a leader named Moses led the Israelites out of captivity and through the wilderness for 40 years, waiting to enter the Promised Land (Jericho). Moses died before they reached the land, and God chose Joshua to take his place as leader of the Israelites.

In the book of Joshua, God told Joshua that the time had finally come for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land! It was exciting, but also a little scary because there were other people living in that land already. God had told the Israelites that it was their job to make the people leave – but how were they going to do that? God encouraged Joshua by saying,

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua answered, “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.”

Joshua told two spies to go into the land to see the city of Jericho. When the men arrived in Jericho they came to the house of a woman named Rahab and she allowed them to come in to her house. But, the king of Jericho found out that the two spies were there staying with Rahab! The king sent messengers to Rahab telling her to bring out the spies. Instead of bringing them out, Rahab took the spies to her roof and told them to hide under some big grassy bundles (stalks of flax). Just then, the king’s messengers knocked on her door.

“Where are those Israelite spies?” they demanded.

Rahab tricked them and said, “The men were here, but they have left the city and I don’t know which way they went. If you hurry, you will be able to catch up with them!”

Why did she trick them? Rahab wasn’t a godly person before she learned who God really was, but once she learned, she knew that she had to trust God all the way. It tells us in Joshua 2:9-11. She told the spies that she knew what they were doing! She had heard of the things that had happened to the Israelites (the Lord parting the Red Sea and other things). She said, “the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.” She totally trusted God, but the people around her didn’t, so she knew she had to help when she could.

Rahab knew that the spies and the Hebrew army were going to come back and make all of the other people leave and some might be killed. She begged the spies not to kill her and her family since she had shown them kindness by hiding them. The spies promised that her family would be kept safe as long as they stayed inside her home when Israel came to attack the city. Then they told her to tie a scarlet rope in her window that would be the

sign to Israel to save Rahab and her family. Rahab let them escape through her window and immediately tied a scarlet rope there!

The spies returned to Joshua and told him all that they had experienced. It was time to invade the land and let God do the work to give it to them. As the kids' song goes, "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down."

Skipping forward in the Bible to Joshua 6, it tells us the conclusion to Rahab's story in chapter 6, verse 25 "But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho."

The Lord was with Joshua and Rahab because they trusted that His plan was the right one.



Story Review:

1. Why did Joshua send spies into Jericho?
(To gather information about the city)
2. Who helped the spies? *(Rahab)*
3. Why did Rahab help them? *(She believed that God was the one true God and knew the plan)*
4. What made Rahab believe that God was the one true God?
(She had heard about the things God had done for the Hebrews/Israelites)
5. What was Rahab supposed to do after the spies went out her window? *(Tie a scarlet rope there)*
6. What happened when the Israelites saw the scarlet rope?
(They saved Rahab's whole family)
7. Did God give the Israelites the promised land to live in?
(Yes! God keeps his promises!)

Start Doing:

Ask your child to look around the room they are in right now. What do they see? Get them to tell you about the colors, shapes, and sizes of the things they see.



Now, set up a “spy mission”. Tell them to go into a different room of the house and discover things. Tell them to be sneaky and quiet.

Have them report back to you about all the things they saw!

If you want to keep going, create more missions with specific things, colors, or smells to discover!

Start Praying:

Dear God thank you for speaking to us through the story of Rahab today. We praise you because only you are worthy of our worship. We are so thankful that you rescue those who trust in you. In Jesus’ name, amen.

“Be strong and courageous.
Do not be terrified; do not be
discouraged, for the LORD
your God will be with you
wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

The Scapegoat

week 3

Start Talking:

Make your best goat sound.

Big Idea:

Jesus has taken away our sin.

Key Verses:

Leviticus 16:2-15

We are going to read about something called a scapegoat, so, we need to learn what it means. Before we begin the story, let's start with three questions.

1. What is a Biblical scapegoat (we'll learn more in our story)?
 - Dictionary Definition 1 - Literal Old Testament Biblical meaning: a goat let loose in the wilderness after the high priest symbolically laid the sins of the people on its head. Leviticus 16:8,10,26.
2. How do we mostly use the term scapegoat today?
 - Dictionary Definition 2 - a person or group made to bear the blame for others or to suffer in their place.
3. Have you ever blamed someone for something you did? A scapegoat is like that.



This story is a little bit confusing, so, here is the breakdown.

THE STORY

There was a day called “the Day of Atonement” in the Old Testament. Jews today still celebrate this as a holiday called Yom Kippur.

The High Priest had to perform a ritual in order for people to be freed from their sin (they didn’t have Jesus yet!). The ritual began with the High Priest (in our story, this was Aaron). He had to do all sorts of preparations before he could begin like bathing and changing into a special set of clothes. He then chose three animals as sacrifices—two young goats and one bull. The goats each had a purpose—one as a sacrificial offering and the other as a scapegoat (there is the word scapegoat!). Aaron cast lots (which is like rolling dice) to select one goat as the offering and the other as scapegoat. They did it this way so that the high priest could not choose a goat. Instead, God Himself would make the decision through the randomness of the dice.

The bull and the goat selected as an offering were killed. Their blood was brought into the center, most holy place, of the Temple. That blood sacrifice atoned for (cleansed, purified) the High Priest, the people, and the sanctuary.

What followed next was very dramatic. They moved on to the next goat, the scapegoat. The High Priest placed both hands upon the head of the goat and confessed aloud the sins of the nation. When he did this, he transferred the sins onto the goat.

The scapegoat was then brought deep into the wilderness by a trusted man and released in a barren place. Ancient Jewish tradition records that the goat would be led to a rocky place, or a place of jagged rocks to ensure the death of the goat in the wilderness so that the goat (and their sins) would not be able to find a way back to them. The scapegoat then represents the forgiveness of those sins because he took the sins away from the people.

Story Review:

1. Who sins? (*people, everyone*)
2. Who needs help with forgiveness of our sins? (*people, everyone*)
3. What did they use in Old Testament times to transfer their sins to? (*a goat*)
4. What did they call that goat? (*a scapegoat*)
5. What did they do with the goat (and their sin)? (*lead him to the wilderness, away from them*)

Today, God wants us to have the same assurance that our sins are forgiven so that we can enter into close relationship with Him. God decided that we didn't need to continue to provide our own scapegoats every year. About 40 years before the Temple was destroyed in the Bible, God provided a once-and-for-all scapegoat who suffered and died a horrific death on a wooden cross. The prophet Isaiah said, "All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved." (Isaiah 53:6)

- Who is Isaiah talking about?

Who is our scapegoat?

Jesus!

He has already taken the blame for all of our sins. So, now, we must believe in Him as God's last scapegoat. He forgives our sins completely.

Start Doing:

God wants us to be clean from our sin, but we keep sinning every single day and keep getting ourselves dirty! Sin is not something that God permits in His presence, so he sent his Son, Jesus, for us. God says, whoever believes in Jesus will be cleaned from their sin and will live forever with Him! (John 3:16)

Snack time!

- Decide on a snack for the family.
- Before you get the food, ask everyone to wash their hands (preparation).
- After they wash, have them dry their hands on a towel (transfer).
- As they help prepare the food, talk about the idea that after we have become clean by washing and drying, we are allowed to help prepare the food and then enjoy it together. When we prepare our hearts by believing in Jesus and asking for forgiveness, we are allowed to follow him and enjoy a life together with Him.

Start Praying:

Dear God, thank you for helping us understand the things we do wrong and the need for our scapegoat, Jesus. Help us to turn away from sin and trust more in you. In Jesus' name, amen.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

The Passover

week 4

Start Talking:

Think of more compound words like “passover”. e.g. touchdown, backpack, ladybug, sandbox, etc.

Big Idea:

God’s love and plan are bigger than anything.

Key Verses:

Exodus 12

The story of the Passover is very long with a lot of characters.

THE STORY

The story begins with a guy named Joseph. Joseph did incredible things for the Egyptians — like saving them from an epic famine — and afterward, his family came and settled in Egypt. After a lot of time passed, a pharaoh (a king of Egypt) rose to power who didn’t know Joseph and who didn’t think that any of the stuff he had done for the Egyptians was important. The Hebrews (Israelites) became the slaves of the Egyptians.

What does it mean to be a slave? It means you work hard all the time, but you don’t get paid, can’t rest when you want, and can’t do what you want. Instead, Pharaoh was in charge of deciding what happened to the Hebrews. And Pharaoh was terrible. One

day, he heard someone predict that a baby boy would be born who would free the Hebrews from slavery, he freaked out and ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be killed!

So, one Hebrew mother tried to save her baby from death. She made a basket and put her little boy in it and sent it floating on the river. Pharaoh's daughter found the basket and said she would make the baby hers and that she would call the boy Moses, which means, "taken out of the river."

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's family, not knowing he was a Hebrew. One day, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave. Moses thought it was wrong and tried to stop it, but he ended up killing the Egyptian. He knew he would be in big trouble, so he ran away from home, into the desert.

While Moses was in the desert, he became a shepherd, got married, and started a new life. But one day, he saw a weird bush that was on fire but didn't burn up. He went closer and God started talking to him out of that burning bush! God told him that he needed to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to stop holding the Hebrews as

slaves and "let my people go."

So, Moses went back to Egypt. He joined up with his brother Aaron, and together they told Pharaoh to free the Hebrew slaves. But Pharaoh said, "No way." Moses warned Pharaoh that God would make terrible plagues — huge problems — that would hurt the Egyptians if Pharaoh didn't let the Hebrews go. Pharaoh didn't listen, and bad things happened to the Egyptians: the water in Egypt turned into blood; the land was covered with frogs, and then gnats/lice. All the cows got sick and died. People got boils — weird bumps — all over their bodies. Hail fell from the sky. Bugs were everywhere. There was darkness; it seemed like night never ended.

And then came the worst and last plague: one specific night, God was going to kill off the firstborns of Egypt, just like Pharaoh had tried to do earlier (when Moses was born). But with this last plague, God said that he was going to set apart the Hebrews from the

Egyptians. In Exodus 12, He said that the Hebrews were His chosen people and gave them directions so that no one in their families would die on that night. He told them to take blood from a lamb and spread it on their doorposts and above their doors. The Lord said, "The blood on the doorposts will be a sign to mark the houses in which you live. When I see the blood, I will pass over you and will not harm you when I punish the Egyptians." So, the Hebrews trusted the Lord and did what He said. They spread the blood of the lambs on their doors, the angel of the Lord passed over them, and no Hebrew child died that night.

After the last plague, Pharaoh couldn't take it anymore. Finally, he said, "Yes, the Hebrews can go."

Moses and the Hebrews knew that Pharaoh might change his mind, so they fled their homes, packing as much as they could as quickly as they could. There were about 600,000 men, not counting women and children.

The Hebrews endured many more things before they were finally safe and free. But, they trusted God in all things and we all celebrate the Passover to this day.



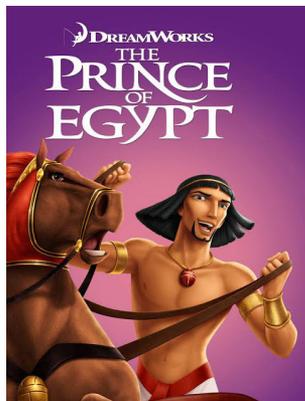
Story Review:

1. Who were the people in power in this story?
And who was their King? (*the Egyptians, Pharaoh*)
2. Who were the slaves? (*the Hebrews/Israelites*)
3. Which baby was left in the river and went to live with the princess? (*Moses*)
4. Who did God use to help set the Hebrews free? (*Moses*)
5. Why did God send the plagues to the Egyptian people?
(*Pharaoh wouldn't let the Hebrews leave*)
6. Which plague was the last and worst?
(*killing of all the firstborn*)

7. God saved the Hebrew firstborns because the Hebrews did what? (*put blood on their doorposts and above their doors*)
8. We remember that God saved them and call it what? (*The Passover*)

Start Doing:

Watch a movie! The *Prince of Egypt* has great clips that show how God told Moses to free the slaves in Egypt, how the plagues came when Pharaoh said no, and how the red doorposts helped the people to stay safe.



Start Praying:

Dear God, thank you for teaching us so much about your love. Help us to remember all the things that you have done for our ancestors and for us. Thank you for sending Jesus to love us and save us from our sins. In Jesus' name, amen.

“Who is like you
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?”
Exodus 15:11



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