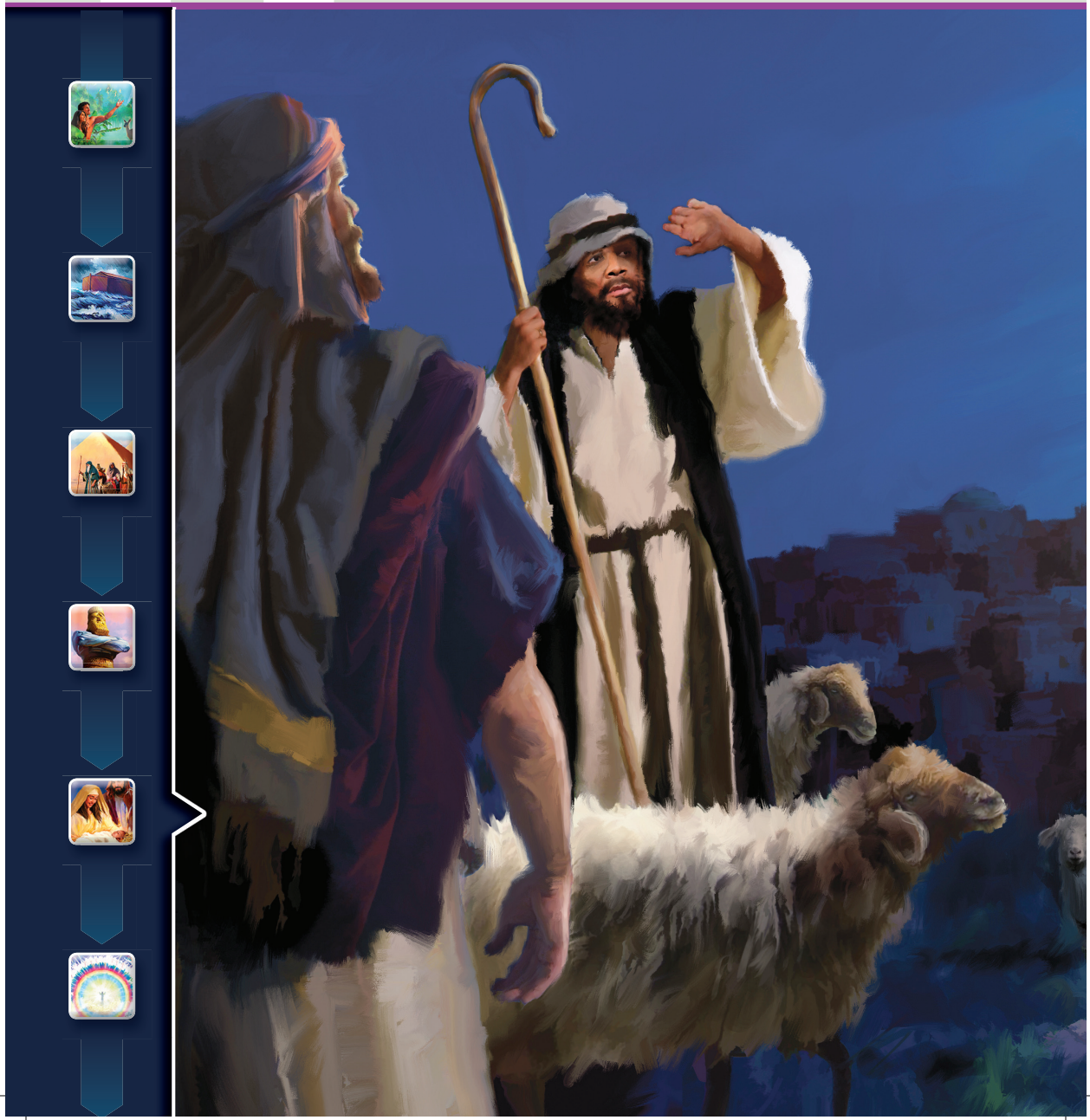
11

God, in Our Neighborhood

Key References: Luke 2:1-40; *The Desire of Ages,* chaps. 4 and 5, pp. 43-58; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 7, pp. 35-46; Our Beliefs, nos. 4, 9, 3



Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 88.

LEARN Begin learning the power text.

power**text**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

power**point**

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

What was something you studied in school that was particularly difficult to understand? And then, one day, a friend or a special teacher explained it so clearly that you could never forget it? That is what happened when God the Son became a human baby and came to live among us to help us better understand the love of God.

It was nighttime. All was quiet. A gentle breeze blew across the fields where sheep were grazing. Stars shone brightly in the sky. Only the voices of a few shepherds could be heard as they talked of their hope in the coming Messiah.

With deep interest they recalled the words of the prophets about the promised King who would sit on the throne of David. It seemed that the time was near, according to the prophecies found in the Holy Scriptures. The shepherds continued talking with intense anticipation about the important event that was about to happen soon. They were sure that it wouldn't be long before God would send the Messiah to free them from the Roman oppression. They were hoping that the Messiah would take charge and save them from their enemies. Once again they earnestly raised their hearts to God in prayer for the promised Messiah.

But suddenly their talk was interrupted as the night sky began to glow around them—a glow so bright that the entire field seemed to come alive with a strange and beautiful light. They were terrified as an angel suddenly appeared before them and spoke: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the

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Sunday

READ Read Luke 2:1-5 and this week's story, "God, in Our Neighborhood."

LEARN Begin to learn the power text, Luke 2:11.

FIND From a Bible map, calculate the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem and from there to Jerusalem. Think of the young couple's journey to both places.

PRAY Thank God for coming to us in human form.

Monday

READ Read Luke 2:6-20.

WRITE Write a diary entry as if you were Mary, treasuring up and pondering in her heart the things that had happened (Luke 2:19).

FIND What is the "census" in your town?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for Jesus' first coming, which gives us hope in His second coming.

Tuesday

READ Read Luke 2:21-40.

CLIP From old magazines and newspapers, clip pictures of babies and make a collage that expresses for you what it meant for Jesus to come to this earth as an infant. Place the collage somewhere in your room to remind you of the true meaning of the Christmas season.

THINK Why was Jesus circumcised and why was He presented to God at the Temple? See Leviticus 12:1-8; Exodus 13:2, 12, 13; and Numbers 18:15, 16.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that we are all His special sons and daughters.

people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

As soon as the angel had spoken, another sound filled the air. It was the most beautiful music they had ever heard. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests," the voices sang (verse 14). A throng of angels had come to share in telling the good news of Jesus' birth.

Suddenly the light disappeared as quickly as it had come. Once again, all was quiet and dark. The shepherds, at first stunned, began to speak all at once. Could it be? What could that mean? The city of David? That was Bethlehem! With one accord they decided to go to Bethlehem to see the Child that the angel had told them about. Quickly they made their way to find the special Baby.

When the shepherds arrived at Bethlehem, they soon found Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, just as the angel had told them. What a sight! There in an animal shelter, in a feeding trough stuffed with hay, lay the most precious Baby ever to be born. When they saw Jesus, they could hardly contain their joy.

The next morning they spread the word throughout the town. The shepherds' announcement, brought with great enthusiasm, drew the attention and interest of the people. Everyone who heard the report of the shepherds was moved and pondered in amazement the significance of the marvelous news.

Eight days later, when Mary and Joseph took Jesus for the special

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Wednesday

READ Read Matthew 1:21.

THINK Think of three ways you can personally help others this week to focus on the true meaning of the Christmas holidays.

SING Sing your favorite sacred Christmas song.

REVIEW Review the power text, Luke 2:11.

PRAY Ask Jesus to help you remember and focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Thursday

READ Read Luke 2.

TALK Talk about what it was like for Jesus to come from heaven and become a human being like one of us.

LIST List the event described in each of the following sections of Luke 2 and at least one lesson from that event that you can apply to your own life: (1) verses 1-7; (2) verses 8-20; (3) verse 21; (4) verses 22-24; (5) verses 25-35; (6) verses 36-38; (7) verses 39, 40; (8) verses 41-50; (9) verses 51, 52.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Praise God for being willing to come to us in the form of a helpless human baby.

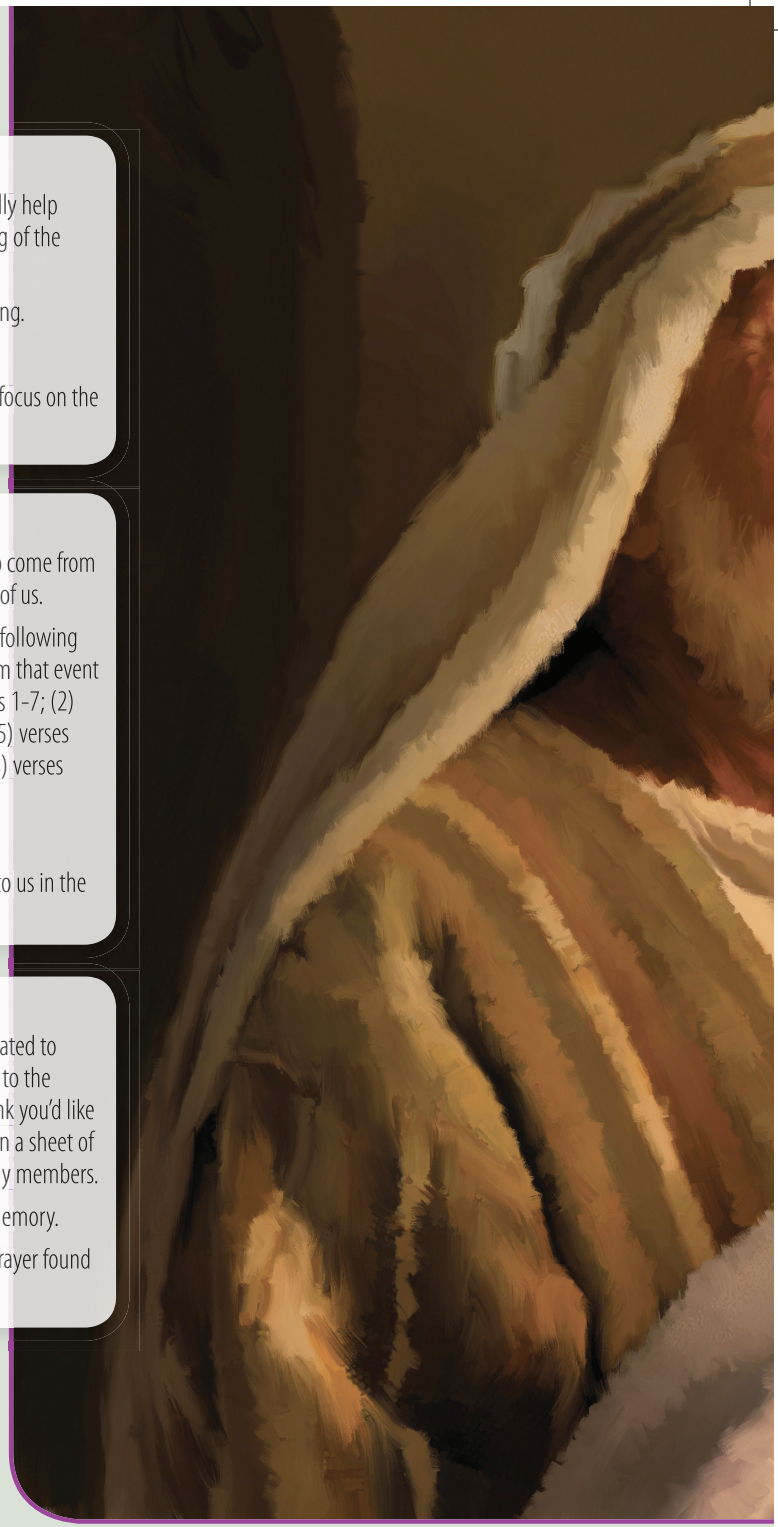
Friday

READ Read Luke 1:46-55.

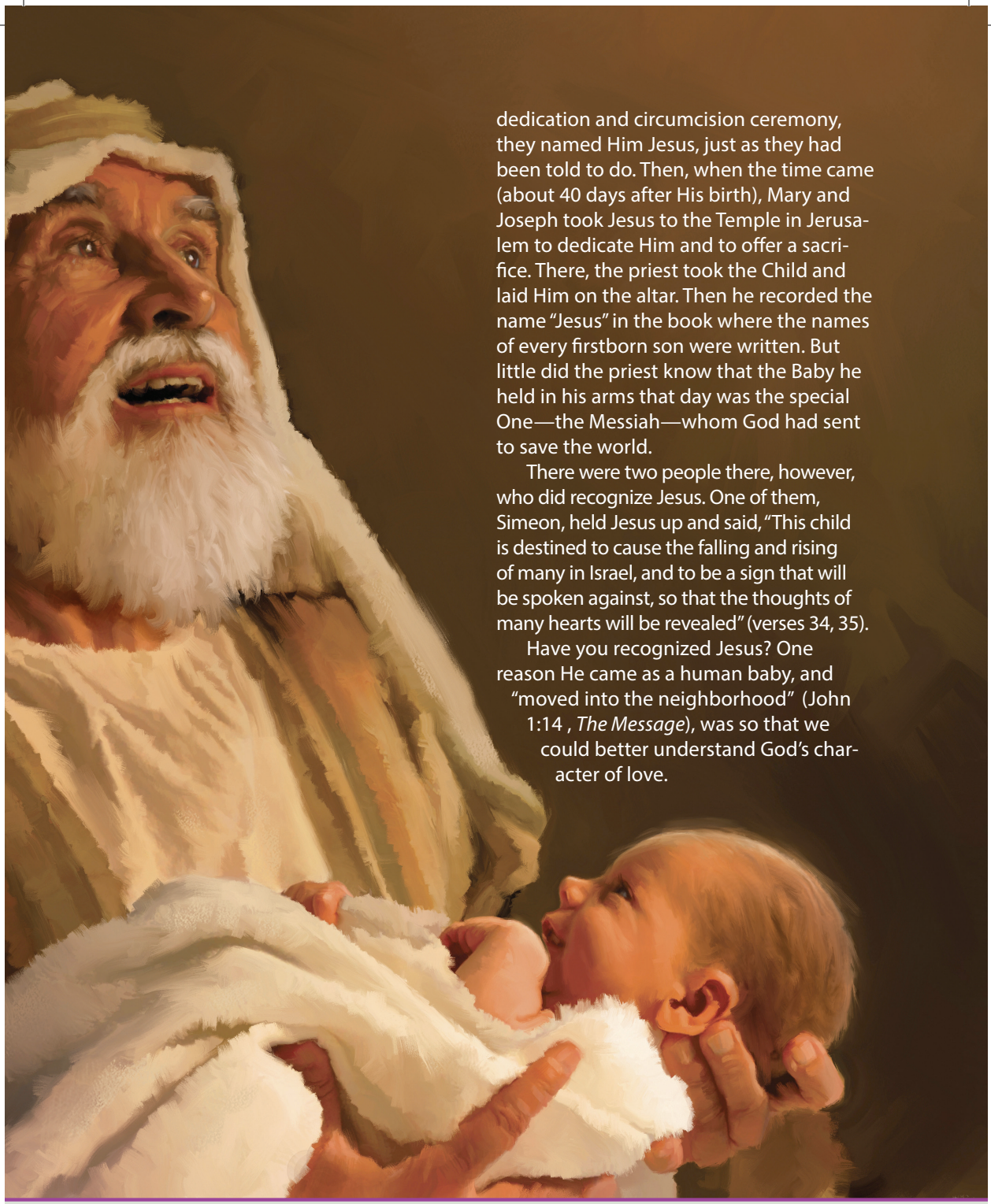
WRITE Imagine the role of the angel designated to write the song announcing the birth of Jesus to the human race. What kinds of things do you think you'd like to include in the song? Write the words out on a sheet of paper. Share your praise song with your family members.

SAY Repeat the power text, Luke 2:11, by memory.

PRAY With your family, pray aloud Mary's prayer found in Luke 1:46-55.



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dedication and circumcision ceremony, they named Him Jesus, just as they had been told to do. Then, when the time came (about 40 days after His birth), Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him and to offer a sacrifice. There, the priest took the Child and laid Him on the altar. Then he recorded the name "Jesus" in the book where the names of every firstborn son were written. But little did the priest know that the Baby he held in his arms that day was the special One—the Messiah—whom God had sent to save the world.

There were two people there, however, who did recognize Jesus. One of them, Simeon, held Jesus up and said, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" (verses 34, 35).

Have you recognized Jesus? One reason He came as a human baby, and "moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14 , *The Message*), was so that we could better understand God's character of love.

PPBSG_B4_2021 text.indd 87 12/10/20 6:13 PM

PUZZLE
11

GOD'S GIFT TO US

Instructions: Find each individual word in the Bible verse in the puzzle below. The words twist and turn (either forward, backward, upward, downward, or diagonally), and most do not follow a straight line. The words are not connected. If the word appears more than once in the verse, then you need to find them more than once in the puzzle.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23, NIV).

L H X R O X D H T T H L N R E
A H F O R F E T O E N K A E T
A E I L O G T V M S I L B V L
B W G D S U G Q I S L S V Q F
H W U C B E A W T X K E R I T
O J B I F T R S W E K J T E F
W T E S G G I R F W L I S O J
T H J U S B D H O F S Y I S X
A D N X I Y C O D L R L N G W
E L I G F O R U S O D V I B K

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