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Gift Exchange

Key References: Jeremiah 29:11-14; *Steps to Christ*, chaps. 7; 8, pp. 57-75; *Early Writings*, pp. 149-153; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 189-191; Our Beliefs, nos. 17, 10, 9.















power**text**

" 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart' " (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NIV).

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 102.

power**point**

We accept God's gift of salvation as we seek to spend time with Jesus daily.

Mr. James perched on the corner of his desk. "Can anyone guess what we are going to talk about today besides what you got for Christmas?" he asked.

"Well, I think we have finished the Christmas story," Trevor offered.

"Yes and no." Mr. James grinned and picked up his lesson plan book.

"I know that you have heard about the birth of Jesus quite a few times this month," he continued, "but I want to talk to you today about how Jesus' birth was linked to His death on the cross.

"Here's one example of what I'm talking about," he went on. "When Jesus was born, Bethlehem was overflowing with people. They had come to Bethlehem to be taxed. Thirty-three years later, when Jesus died, Jerusalem was overflowing with people. They had come to celebrate the Passover."

Mr. James looked around the room. "Jesus was born and had His first meal in a borrowed room, a stable. And 33 years later, just before He died, He and His disciples were in a borrowed room, the upper room, having His last supper.

"Jesus was placed in a manger when He was born. What is a manger?" Mr. James asked.

"A place where animals eat," Marci answered.

"That's right," Mr. James said. "Jesus was placed in a feed trough in Bethlehem. Did you know that the name 'Bethlehem' means 'House of Bread'? And 33 years later Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. At His last supper He broke bread and passed it around to His disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My body given for you.' "

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Sunday

READ Read John 3:16, 17 and this week's story, "Gift Exchange."

LEARN Begin to learn the power text.

PRAY Pray each morning this week: *Dear Lord, today take me as totally Yours. I give You all my plans. Use me to serve others. Stay with me and show me how to do everything in Your power. Amen.*

Monday

READ Read Jeremiah 29:11.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write what this verse says about God's plans for you.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the prayer listed in Sunday's activity box.

Tuesday

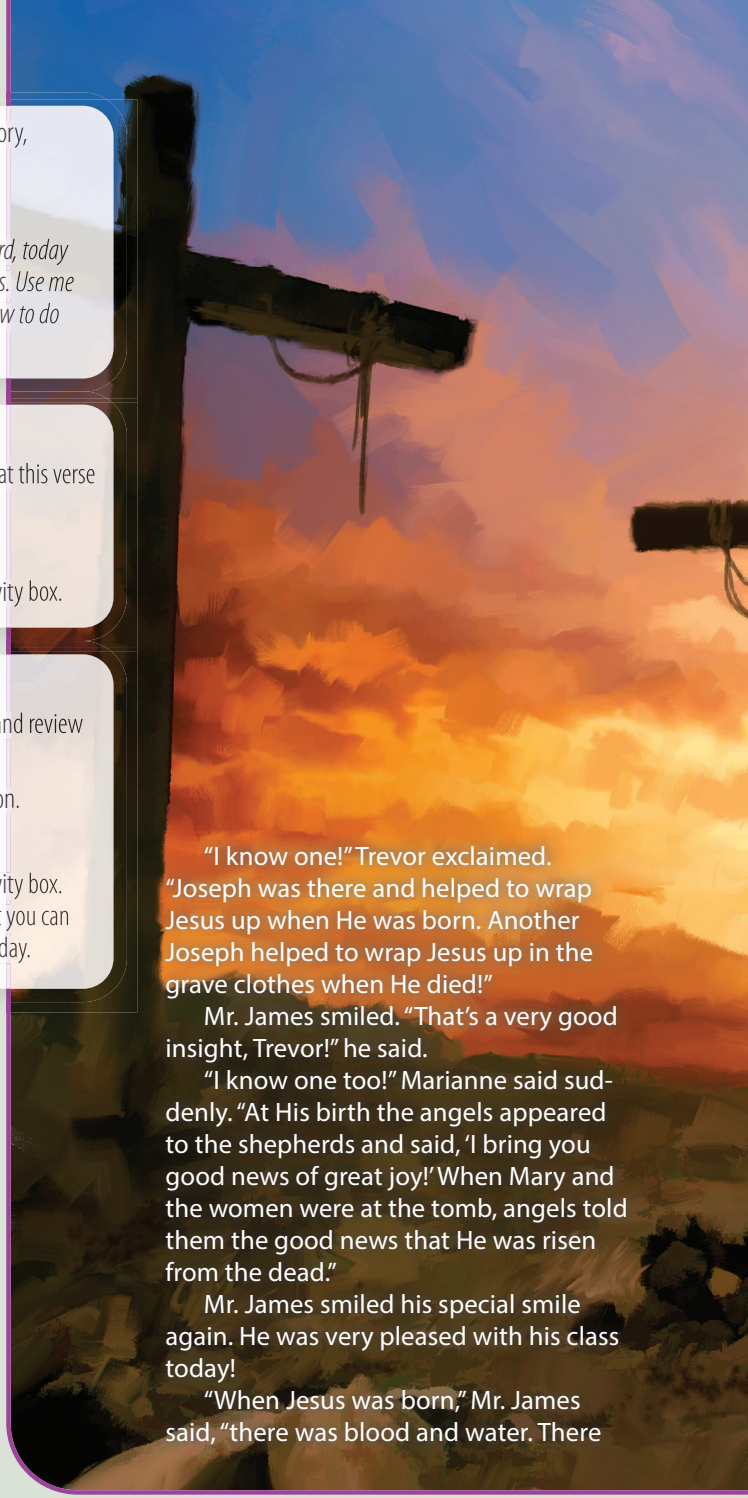
READ Read Jeremiah 29:12.

LOOK Look through your Bible study guide and review the lessons. Which is your favorite? Why?

SHARE Tell an adult about your favorite lesson.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the prayer listed in Sunday's activity box. Plan to have it memorized by Sabbath so that you can use it anytime to give your life to God day by day.



"I know one!" Trevor exclaimed. "Joseph was there and helped to wrap Jesus up when He was born. Another Joseph helped to wrap Jesus up in the grave clothes when He died!"

Mr. James smiled. "That's a very good insight, Trevor!" he said.

"I know one too!" Marianne said suddenly. "At His birth the angels appeared to the shepherds and said, 'I bring you good news of great joy!' When Mary and the women were at the tomb, angels told them the good news that He was risen from the dead."

Mr. James smiled his special smile again. He was very pleased with his class today!

"When Jesus was born," Mr. James said, "there was blood and water. There

is always blood and water when babies are born. When Jesus died on the cross, a soldier thrust a spear into His side, and blood and water ran out. Something was being born. Do you have any idea what it was?"

The class was quiet.

"Do you remember that when God created Adam, He opened Adam's side and removed a rib and created a wife for him? When Jesus' side was opened on the cross, He was making a way for us to be born again and to become part of His church, which the Bible calls the bride of Christ."



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Wednesday

READ Read Jeremiah 29:13.

DO Draw an illustration or write about what it means to you to seek God with all your heart.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the prayer listed in Sunday's activity box.

Thursday

READ Read Jeremiah 29:14.

THINK What is God's promise in this verse?

LIST In your Bible study journal, list (1) the things God plans for us, (2) the things we will do, and (3) the promises God makes.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray the prayer listed in Sunday's activity box.

Friday

READ Read Psalm 63:1.

DISCUSS At family worship, talk about what it is like when your soul thirsts for God.

RECITE Say your power text to your family at worship.

ASK Ask an adult to read God's promise in Jeremiah 29:14 aloud.

EXPLAIN Tell your family about the prayer you learned to help you seek the Lord each day.

SING Sing together "Father, I Adore You."

PRAY Pray together the prayer you have learned this week.



Mr. James was quiet. The only sound to be heard was someone clumping along in the hallway outside the door.

"You know," Mr. James finally said, "the more I understand the Bible stories, the more I appreciate what God has done for us and the more I want to praise the Lord for the great gift of our Savior!"

"I just wish I had something to give Him in return," Marci commented quietly.

"All He wants is you—for you to give Him your whole life," Mr. James responded.

"That sounds simple enough," Trevor said, twirling the pencil on his desk. "But it isn't that easy to figure out how to do it."

"Well, I have an idea for you." Mr. James moved around his desk and reached in a drawer for a pile of index cards. "Anyone who would like to give themselves to Him every day, just as He gave Himself for us, might want to try this." He passed a small pile of cards down each row.

"You could use this prayer to remind you to dedicate yourself to God for each new day."

Trevor read the prayer on the card aloud. "Dear Lord, today take me as totally Yours. I give You all my plans. Use me to serve others. Stay with me and show me how to do everything in Your power. Amen."

"Finally I feel like I'm ready to start the new year," Marianne said quietly.



PUZZLE
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A NEW HEART

Each letter in the Bible verse below is substituted for another letter. Use letter patterns, letter frequencies, and other clues to help you decipher this verse. When you're finished, you'll discover what God gives us when we become born again.

Clue: **V**=**E**

"Z nzcc xzmv pfl r evn yvrik reu glk r evn jgzizk ze pfl; z nzcc ivdfmv wifd pfl pfli yvrik fw jkfev reu xzmv pfl r yvrik fw wcvjy" (Vqvbzvc 36:26, EZM).

If you have difficulty solving the puzzle above, find the same verse in the following way. For each letter below, write down the letter that comes after it (A comes after Z).

"H vhkk fhud xnt z mdv gdzqs zmc ots z mdv rohqhs hm xnt; H vhkk qdlnud eqnl xnt xntq gdzqs ne rsnmd zmc fhud xnt z gdzqs ne ekdrg" (Dydjhdk 36:26, MHU).