

Our Sabbath Scripture Stories



F A M I L I E S R E C L A I M I N G S U N D A Y

Read aloud: Numbers 6:22-27

Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 2:16-21

The Christmas tree was still standing bright and beautiful in the Pauline family's living room. The nativity set that Mrs. Pauline had as a child was underneath the tree. It basked in the glow of all the twinkling lights. There stood Joseph, so strong and able. Shepherds were positioned in a trail toward the manger. The three Wise Men had dismounted their camels and were paying homage to the newborn King. An angel hovered over the stable, suspended by a long wire off a lower branch of the tree. Jesus was calmly snuggled into the hay, perfectly at peace. And there was Mary, right next to Him. The figurine showed Mary with a pose of tender trust for all she had experienced and all she would come to understand.

The Pauline family gathered in the living room to hear Dad read the account of the arrival of the shepherds to Bethlehem. They came, glorifying and praising the One whom the angels had made known to them.



Mr. Pauline began speaking with his voice still filled with awe. "Can you imagine what a tremendous moment that must have been for the shepherds?" he asked his family. "First, the angel of the Lord appears to them, and the glory of the Lord fills the night sky. Then, the angel speaks, telling them not to be afraid because their long awaited Savior has been born! The angel tells the shepherds where to find Jesus; and before you know it, multitudes of angels are appearing all over the place! Wow!"

"Daddy?" 8-year-old Lucy asked her dad. "What does that word, 'multitudes' mean?"

Dad could only laugh. "Oh, you must mean 'multitudes!' " he exclaimed. "When I was talking about the multitudes of angels that appeared to the shepherds, I was referring to many, many angels!"

There could have been hundreds!"

Just then, something caught the eye of the Paulines. There was 4-year-old Hillary crawling under the Christmas tree, rearranging the nativity scene figures. She seemed very intent. What was she up to?

Slowly, the family watched as Hillary took Joseph and Mary and laid their figures down securely next to the manger with Jesus. They all lay there together, gleaming under the lights.

"Hillary," her mom asked her daughter. "What are you doing with Mary and Joseph?"

Hillary could only look up with a sense of accomplishment and answer, "I'm doing what Daddy read about in the Gospel!" she answered with satisfaction.

"But Honey, how is laying Joseph and Mary down with Jesus what Daddy read about?" her mom had to ask.

She looked at her mom, and then looked at her dad. "Daddy, read that part over for Mom." Then she whispered to him, "She might not have heard!"

So, Mr. Pauline obediently turned back to Luke, Chapter 2, and began reading the passage over. He knew Hillary would stop him when he got to the part she was interested in.

He began, " *So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger ...* " (Luke 2:16)

"STOP!" Hillary commanded. "That part!"

Dad's eyes scanned over the Bible passage, and first he started to smile, and then he started to laugh out loud with delight.

Dad swooped little Hillary up in his arms and kissed her on the forehead. "Hillary, what it seems you heard me read was that the shepherds found Mary and Joseph and Jesus lying in the manger, and you thought that they were all in the manger together!"

Now, the entire family was laughing, even Hillary. She knew she did something funny.

Mom continued, "Yes, Honey! When you hear that Bible passage read, it DOES sound like they were all in the manger together! But, in reality, the reading should have a long pause so it better says, they *'found Mary and Joseph, (pause) and the infant lying in the manger'* That's what really happened!"

Hillary was still giggling when she went back under the tree to put Mary and Joseph upright again.

Then Mary Clare spoke up. "Mom, I really like the way this nativity set shows Mary. Her face looks so loving and peaceful."

"That's one of the reasons I asked your Grandma if I could have this set when I got married," Mrs. Pauline answered. "As a child, I would think the same thing!"

"Yes, Mary knew that she was looking down on a life that would change the world," Mr. Pauline added. "She knew that this new life of Jesus would be lived totally for God and His glory. How completely in awe she must have felt to be part of this miraculous birth!"

"Mary shows us true grace," Mrs. Pauline added. "She knows that Jesus is the Messiah, and yet, she silently and serenely holds all these truths inside of her."

"Knowing me, I'd be jumping around telling everyone!" Vincent couldn't help but add.

“Yes, knowing you, you would be!” his mother laughed. “But, we see here the peacefulness and prayer of Mary. Luke tells us that ‘*Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*’ ” (Luke 2:19)

“So, today on the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, let us all try to show gentleness toward everyone, and be thinking on what a precious gift the birth of Jesus was to Mary and to all of the world,” Dad concluded.

“And how Mary only stayed *next* to the manger!” giggled Hillary, still looking happily at the nativity scene.

“Amen!” Dad delightfully smiled, knowing in his own heart how precious the eyes of a child can be.