

FROM RED LETTER LIVING

THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

25-Day Christmas Countdown
with the Red Letter Kids



ALLISON ZEHNDER



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

25-Day Christmas Countdown with the Red Letter Kids

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The Great Advent-ure
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Red Letter Living LLC

www.redletterchallenge.com

hello@redletterchallenge.com

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THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

25-Day Christmas Countdown with the Red Letter Kids

If there is one word that can describe the holiday season, it's busy! So when the three Perez children get locked in an attic until they complete a Names of God challenge, they are forced to slow down and work together to discover the true meaning of Christmas.

Don't forget you can download a larger version of the free Advent calendar countdown to play along with the Perez Kids. It's free with your PDF purchase.

THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

25-Day Christmas Countdown with the Red Letter Kids

Help! The Perez kids are stuck in the attic with a challenge they have to finish before the time runs out.

Use the Advent calendar countdown below to play along with the Perez kids. In each square, write the name of God (odd days) or its meaning (even days) for that day.

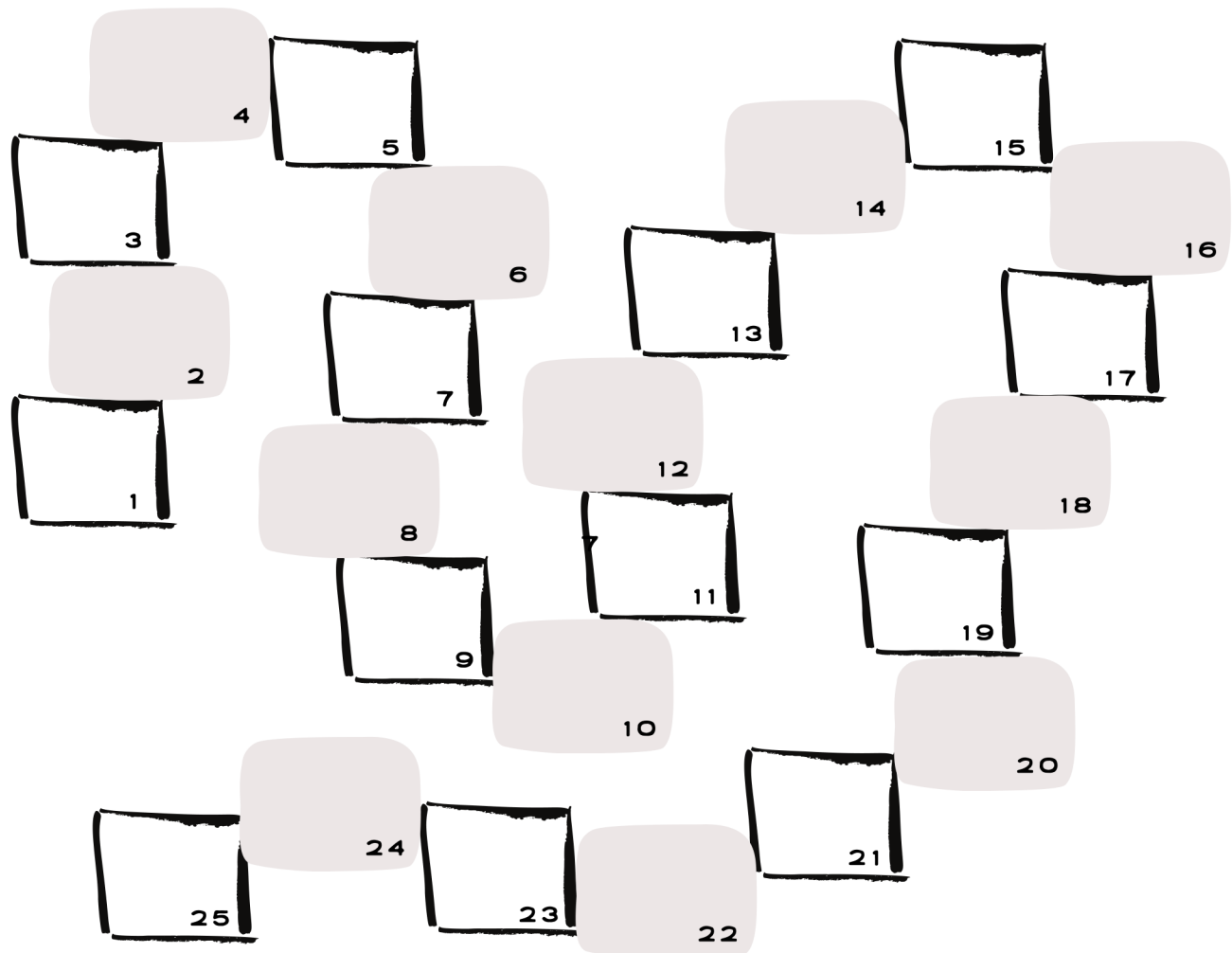


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THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

INTRODUCTION

GATHERING IN

Dear Guardians,

One of the biggest obstacles to families today is space. There's too much of it. The National Association of Homebuilders reported that the average size of homes now is over 2500 sqft. Not only is our physical space widening, but so is our mental space. Each person has a tablet, device, or screen. Every child has their sport or activity. Undistracted family time feels like an impossibility. For many kids, their closest community is their friends.

Sadly, the same is true of many parents. What happened to family togetherness?

Christmas is a time to reclaim that togetherness.

Before we can emotionally get close, we need to get close physically. Snuggle in. Get comfortable with being uncomfortably close. The desire for this study is that you gather close to your family. This may look like turning off all the lights and lighting a candle at the dining room table. It might be piling into mom and dad's bed or turning on the fireplace and wrapping up with blankets. Perhaps that togetherness happens in the carline when, seatbelted in, everyone is closer in that space than they will be the rest of the day.

The Perez kids learn about togetherness when locked in a room and forced to get honest about their reasons for the season. They must stick together as a family and learn to work together to solve a challenge.

Getting close is not always easy. The closer you get, the better you can see your cracks and those in others. But this study isn't only to find the hidden cracks in your family. It is to heal them.

No one was more serious about togetherness than Jesus. He came down into the womb of Mary, which is as close as we can get to another human. He grew up with an imperfect family and spent time with them for 30 of His 33 years. He invited twelve disciples to live life with Him. Even when everyone abandoned Him on the cross, the first thing He did after rising again was to find His hiding disciples. He stopped at nothing to be together with them.

That same Jesus longs for togetherness with you and your family. He brings peace, love, and kindness. He'll stop at nothing to see your family gather together with Jesus as the center. I pray blessings over your Christmas season and your time of gathering in.

-ALLISON ZEHNDER





THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 1

ADONAI

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Isaiah 40:3-5 NIV

“Hey! Someone spelled my name wrong!” Aiden shouted from the attic. He was holding a dusty bronze box with the letters ADONAI on them.

“That’s not your name, smarty,” Aiden’s older sister Isabella said over his shoulder. She was in the attic searching through old dresses for something to wear to Dad’s office Christmas party that night. Aiden glanced back at the box.

If this was a little cleaner, maybe I could still put it in my room he thought. But a couple of rubs with his t-shirt did more than shine up the box. Suddenly it split open, and a game board appeared. A token sat on the square with the number 1 on it. There were twenty-five total squares on the board with a keypad and screen. A strange word appeared on all the odd squares. The first one was ADONAI.

Emily, the youngest of the Perez children, popped around the corner, tangled in Christmas lights. Dad was too busy this year to decorate outside the house, so she was determined to do it.

“Cool! Mom must have hidden our presents up here! Let me see Aiden!”

“I found it first,” Aiden shouted back, giving her a little shove. Mom was running errands and wouldn’t be back for awhile. The push was all Emily needed to topple over in a tangled heap of lights and wire.

“Guys, can you grow up?!” Isabella said, taking selfies of herself with a dress held up in front of her. “Board game are for babies anyway.”

Suddenly a voice caused all three Perez children to freeze.

“You have spoken the name of Adonai and have activated the countdown. To complete the games, you must discover the meaning of each name of God. You will be given a clue. The clue is a verse that contains the meaning of the name of God. Once you enter in the correct meaning into the next square, you can move forward. God’s names are many, these are only twelve of them. The first one will be given to you: Adonai means the glory of the Lord. Isaiah 40:3-5. Enter that into square two to move forward.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Advent means waiting. Each of the Perez kids is waiting for something: Isabella is waiting for a party. Aiden is waiting for his presents. Emily is waiting to decorate the house for Christmas. What are you waiting for this Christmas?
2. There are many Bible stories of people waiting on God. Why does God make us wait?

PRAYER:

Dear God, Thank you for the Christmas season. We want to remember that our waiting is about Jesus. He came and He is coming again. While we wait, we praise! Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 2

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

*A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And **the glory of the Lord** will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Isaiah 40:3-5 NIV*

“Um, guys, shut the box,” Isabella demanded.

“It doesn’t close!” Aiden said in a panic. “Let’s get out of here.”

The children ran to the attic door, but it was locked. After banging and screaming through the door for ten minutes, Aiden collapsed on the ground.

“Well, we are not getting out until we just play the game,” Isabella said, glancing at her phone. “The party is tonight and this game is creeping me out. A voice, power to lock a door, what else can it do? Let’s get it over with. The first answer was the Great God, right?”

“Lord. It was Lord.” Aiden shot back, running to type it in.

“STRIKE ONE,” A deep voice said.

Aiden groaned. “Wait, guys, give me one more chance. I typed too fast and must have hit the wrong letter. I know it’s Great Lord.”

“STRIKE TWO,” The baritone voice said. Aiden’s face turned white.

“You know what strike three means,” said Isabella.

“Wait, I know what it is!” Emily said her face brightening. “The glory of the Lord.”

“Are you sure?” Aiden asked.

“Positive,” Emily said, determined. “Let me put it in.”

Aiden bit his lip, and Isabella shrugged.

“Ok, go for it, Em,” Aiden said, sliding the gameboard towards her. She slowly typed each letter in, ensuring she didn’t make a mistake. As she typed, her words appeared in the second square.

T-H-E G-L-O-R-Y O-F T-H-E L-O-R-D

The game piece slid to square three. The game had officially begun.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. For most people, when you meet someone new the first thing you ask is their name. Why do we introduce ourselves by our name first?
2. Adonai means The Glory of the Lord. What does glory mean? Look up the definition of glory. Do you see God’s glory?

PRAYER:

Adonai, You are the Master of the world and what you say goes. We are waiting for you and preparing for Christmas. Come, Lord Jesus. Please help us to see that following you is a great adventure. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 3

EL

The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. Exodus 15:2 NIV

"Why would Mom buy this game?" Aiden asked. "Maybe she's trying to get us to learn more about the Bible or something."

"Mom wouldn't buy this game," Emily insisted. "Not if she knew what it did."

"You mean because it can shut doors and command us to do things? Yeah, I wouldn't put it past either of our parents," Isabella retorted. "They would do anything to lock us down."

"So, is this game evil or good?" Emily asked. No one knew the answer.

"I bet there are more gifts around!" Aiden said, his eyes lighting up. "I'm going to find them! And if there is not a VR set, I will be so mad." Aiden had been working on his Christmas list since Halloween. Getting what he wanted was what Christmas was all about. Ad after ad on YouTube showed all the cool gadgets and toys out there, but the top of his list was a virtual reality headset. He wanted this more than anything. Tyler from school had one and always bragged about it. Aiden knew if he got the VR set, he'd never want anything again.

“Man! I can’t wait to get my VR set! I’ll finally have something to do around here.” He began imagining what it would be like to play in virtual reality.

Meanwhile, Emily sat crisscrossed in front of the game and leaned over to read the next name that appeared in square three.

“The third name is EL. Here’s the clue: The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father’s God, and exalt Him. Exodus 15:2.

“Come on, guys! What does EL mean?” But as she looked at her siblings, Emily realized no one had heard her. Isabella was staring at her phone. Aiden was in his imaginary VR world. Emily shook her head. All her siblings could think about was their electronics. How were they ever going to get through the entire game?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think about Christmas presents a lot? What did you get for Christmas last year? What about the year before or three years ago? It may be easy to think of everything you want to put on your list, but after everything is done, we don’t even remember what we got.
2. Jesus is your greatest gift. He is your friend and Savior. How does Christmas remind you of Jesus?

PRAYER:

Dear God, it is so easy to get distracted by Christmas presents! There are toys and fun things everywhere! It is easy to forget that Christmas is about Jesus. Thank you for coming down to live as one of us and then dying on the cross and rising again. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 4

MY STRENGTH

The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.
He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and exalt Him.
Exodus 15:2 NIV

Aiden popped out of a closet, covered in dust.

“What do you mean ‘L’? Could that stand for something like Lord?” Aiden asked.

“No, It’s El. E-L,” Emily answered.

Isabella put away her phone and joined her. “It looks like there are three options in the verse: my strength, my defense, or my salvation. It could be any one of those.”

“My defense. I like that. L for linebacker! Speaking of football, Dad better get me that football jersey I asked for,” Aiden said.

“Aiden, it starts with an E. Get off the L words,” Isabella said. “I would say let’s start with the first one. At least we have three chances. I’ll put it in. We can’t afford any typos. And get off the gift talk. There’s more to life than gifts,” she said, glaring at Aiden.

There was a reason Aiden was so into gifts this year. To make up for not being around, Dad had started buying them many things. They got all the popular toys, the latest

tablets, and the coolest gadgets for their rooms.

Not only that, but the Perez children noticed they went out to eat more, got a better allowance, and went on two vacations a year. The problem was that they didn't need more stuff; they needed their dad's time. Unfortunately, that was one thing he didn't have to give. Isabella started typing,

M-Y S-T-R-E-N-G-T-H.

The token slid to the next square. My strength was right!

"Bingo," Emily said. "We got it on the first try! So EL means my strength. God is strong."

"If God is so strong, why doesn't he break down this door and rescue us?" Isabella wondered. This whole thing seemed like a practical joke. She had better things to think about; one of those things was Martin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. EL means My Strength. God is strong. He is stronger than any bad guy out there. So what should we do about the bad things in the world?
2. Aiden has a long and expensive Christmas list. What is on your Christmas list? If Jesus had a list, what do you think would be on it?

PRAYER:

Dear Strong One, It is easy to get wrapped up in all the presents at Christmas. There are many ads, commercials, and mailers of everything we could have. Please help us to remember that you are the best gift we could ever get. Show us that giving is way better than getting. In Jesus' Name, Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 5

EL ELOHE ISRAEL

For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel. Genesis 33: 19-20 NIV

Aiden might be obsessed with gifts, but Isabella couldn't stop thinking about Martin, her dad's boss's son. Isabella met Martin while watching her dad play for his company's softball league. All summer she looked forward to those games when they would joke, laugh, eat snacks from the concession stand, and cheer on the team together. Martin went to the school across town, and when the summer league ended, so did their fun hangouts.

Even though they had exchanged numbers, Isabella was too shy to text him. But when she heard that there would be a Christmas party and families were invited, she knew Martin would come. Isabella decided to text and find out. She sent him a message that morning:

Hey! R u going to xmas party? Would be fun to catch up.

She had been checking her phone obsessively, hoping for a reply. No one else understood how she was feeling. Aiden teased her. Emily wanted her attention. Mom had refused to buy her a new dress so close to Christmas. "If you want to put it on your Christmas list, you can do that," she said. But what good was that!

The party was tonight, and she didn't need the dress after Christmas.

"I'm not going to care about what Mom and Dad think anymore," Isabella told herself, and it seemed to be working. She didn't care when she broke their rules or pushed the boundaries more and more. The less Isabella cared, the less their disappointment stung. She looked over at Emily, leaning far over the board, studying the next clue. Emily cared so much and always tried to make Mom and Dad happy. Isabella used to be like that, but that got her nowhere. Her parents still seemed to get angry, even when she was trying!

"What is the next name, Emily?" she asked.

"EL ELOHE ISRAEL. Genesis 33: 19-20. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel."

This was going to be challenging. The kids weren't sure how they would figure out this name.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 33:19-20. What do you think El Elohe Yisrael means? Write your guess below.
2. Jesus did His best for you. His best was his life. First, he gave up all His glory to come down to earth and be a baby. Then He gave up His life to die on the cross. But death did not defeat Jesus. He rose again to give us the best we can ever hope to have. Who are you trying to please when you do your best?

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, We are sorry when we don't care what you think or don't care what others think. Please forgive us for the times when we have messed up. We thank you for giving us forgiveness and peace. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 6

THE GOD OF ISRAEL

*For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it **El Elohe Israel**. Genesis 33: 19-20 NIV*

Isabella couldn't point out exactly when things started to change at school. But she knew 8th grade was much more complicated than in previous years. But it wasn't that the schoolwork was hard. It was the kids. Everyone used to be friends with each other. The class was all nice to each other. But things had changed. Some kids started watching shows she was not allowed to watch. And parties started including only a few select people and leaving many others out. The class no longer seemed to have each other's backs. The cool kids seemed more interested in teasing people than being kind. Isabella felt stuck in the middle. Does she stay with her friends and try to help them be kind to others? Or does she choose to be left out?

Dad used to be the one Isabella would go to when she had problems. He didn't overreact or talk too much like Mom often did. But Dad hadn't been around. He had been so busy that it would be too hard for Isabella to catch him up on all the trouble, even if they found time. She shook Dad from her mind. Her focus needed to be on getting to the party.

"I learned about Israel from Sunday school," Aiden said. "It's a country, but it's also the name of God's people. You know, those guys that crossed the Red Sea, the Battle of Jericho, and all that stuff?"

“OK, so what do I put in?” Emily asked.

“Well, you could say...” Aiden began.

“Keep it simple.” Isabella interrupted. “Put the God of Israel.”

T-H-E G-O-D O-F I-S-R-A-E-L

Aiden folded his arms and scowled at Isabella. She was so bossy, but Emily began to feel hopeful as the token slid onto the seventh square. She didn’t want to spend the entire afternoon in the attic. This was her chance to get Dad’s attention, and she had a plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you do when you think you have disappointed your teacher, friends, parents, or coach? _____ I hide from them. _____ I talk to them. _____ I try to be super good to win them back.
2. Have you ever felt like God is disappointed in you?

PRAYER:

EL ELOHE ISRAEL, Thank you for saving the people of Israel even when they messed up and showing us that you still love us in our mistakes. You see us in the best light because Jesus took our sins. Thank you for dying on the cross. In Jesus’s Name, Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 7

EL ELYON

Then Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Genesis 14: 18-20 NIV

Ever since their Dad had taken a new job, Emily noticed that he smiled less and less. He came home from work exhausted, and traveling for work meant less time on the weekends to spend time together.

Decorating the outside of the house for Christmas was a special night every year. Living in Florida had its advantages; one was perfect weather for Christmas lights. Emily loved it when Dad would ask her opinion on what colors they should use or where the lights should be placed. Best of all, she got to go up on the roof, which was a BIG no-no the other 364 days of the year. Sitting on the rooftop, hearing holiday music float from the open garage, and watching the sunset was pure magic. It was one of her favorite traditions.

But this year had been different. Dad had back-to-back trips and had not mentioned the lights once. So Emily wracked her brain to figure out what she could do to help. That’s when she hatched her idea. If she could get out the lights and get most of the decorating done, Dad would be so happy he would make time so they could finish together and have

their special night.

“The name of square seven is EL ELYON,” Emily said, trying to rush her siblings. The quicker they got this over with, the sooner she could get back to the lights.

“EL ELYON.” Aiden said, flexing his muscles. “Sounds like a Marvel Superhero villain.”

Emily kept reading,

“...Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” Genesis 14: 18-20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The Perez family liked to string lights around their house. Christmas lights remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. How have you decorated for Christmas around your house?
2. Reread Genesis 14:18-20. What do you think EL ELYON means based on this clue? Write your guess below.

PRAYER:

Dear God, Sometimes we all get so busy we forget to slow down. There are times to work and be busy. There are also times to rest and be still. Help us to find time to relax and spend time with you. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 8

GOD MOST HIGH

*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of **God Most High**, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by **God Most High**, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to **God Most High**, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

Genesis 14: 18-20 NIV

“I wonder who this Mel, Melch, Melch...”

“Melchizedek,” said Isabella over her shoulder.

“Bella, can you just let me do this myself?” Emily retorted, annoyed at her sister’s interference.

“I am only trying to help,” Isabella responded, shrugging.

“Sure you are,” Emily thought with an eye roll. Bella didn’t seem to care that Dad wasn’t putting up lights this year. Her boredom with family activities hurt Emily’s feelings. Maybe Isabella’s lousy attitude was why Dad didn’t want to put up lights this year.

“Easy. God Most High.” Aiden said, studying the verse. “I could have gotten this in my sleep.”

“Yeah, I think you are right, Aiden,” Emily said. I see it three times in the verse. El Elyon means God Most High.”

“Well, it’s not bread and wine,” Isabella said sarcastically, staring at her phone screen.

Emily grit her teeth. She knew Isabella was struggling, but did she have to take it out on them? You never got anywhere arguing with her. She had seen Mom try to get through to her. The more questions Mom asked, the more upset Isabella became. And the more upset Isabella became, the more questions Mom asked. It was a vicious cycle!

Emily decided to ignore Isabella’s smart-alecky comment and type in the clue.

G-O-D M-O-S-T H-I-G-H

The name lit up on square eight. They were on to space nine! Emily smiled. Before long, she would hang lights and make the house the best it’s ever been. It wasn’t too late to save Christmas. Isabella’s phone interrupted Emily’s Christmas daydreams.

“Guys, mom texted. Dad’s coming home.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When you want someone to like you do you
 - a. Buy them stuff
 - b. Give them compliments
 - c. Spent time with them
 - d. Do favors for them.
 - e. Give them high fives and hugs
 - f. Something else?
2. Emily wanted to show her dad love by decorating for him. Which of the options above would that be? How does God show love?

PRAYER:

Dear God, you gave up your Son to die for us before we were born. Thank you for having a plan that includes us as your children. Please keep us patient and kind when others do wrong things. We love you, Jesus. Amen.



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 9

ELOHIM

For the Lord, your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. Deuteronomy 10:17 NIV

“What do you mean Dad is coming home?” Aiden asked.

“Just what I said,” Isabella said in a panic. “He was supposed to meet us at the work Christmas party tonight! He better not mess this up.” Her fingers flew over the screen as she frantically texted her mom for more information.

“ELOHIM,” read Aiden. But he squinted at the screen. “There is no clue or verse. I don’t see any clue.”

“Yeah, you are right, Aiden. It is all fuzzy, like binoculars that need focusing,” said Emily. Aiden began pushing keys, hoping to bring the clue into focus.

“STRIKE ONE!”

“Aiden!” Emily said. “You wasted a chance. STOP!” They looked over at Isabella, who was still glued to her phone.

“Isabella. Come on!” Aiden shouted. We’ve got to figure this clue out, and we can’t see it.”

“You guys are doing fine without me. Why do I have to play this game anyways?” Isabella answered.

“There is one token. We are all on the same team. We aren’t competing against each other,” Aiden responded.

“Yeah,” Emily said. “We can’t do this without you, Isabella. Help us fix this.” Isabella sighed and slipped her phone into her back pocket. She walked over to where the game was resting on the floor. As she moved closer, the words came into view.

“For the Lord, your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. Deuteronomy 10:17”

Isabella stretched and yawned.

“See, you got it,” Isabella said, standing up. “Now, the words are not fuzzy anymore.”

As she walked away again, immediately the verse started to disappear.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What happened when Isabella moved closer to the game? In families, it is easy to disagree and get on each other’s nerves. God made families work together and be on the same team.
2. Read Deuteronomy 10:17. What is your guess for what ELOHIM means? Write your guess below.

PRAYER:

Dear God, Things can get fuzzy when we are not working together. It’s hard to see what is right when we argue. We want to learn how to love and support each other so we can see your truth in the world. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 10

GOD OF GODS

*For the Lord, your God is **God of gods** and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. Deuteronomy 10:17 NIV*

When Isabella stayed near the game, the words were all crystal clear. But when she tried to return to her beanbag chair, the words became fuzzy.

“Bella, we need you to stay here. If you leave, the game won’t focus. All three of us need to be here and PAYING ATTENTION.” Aiden said. Isabelle signed and sat down. Sure enough, as soon as she sat down, the screen turned clear again.

“See?! We all need to be in this together,” said Emily.

“Call us the Three Musketeers!” said Aiden, drawing an imaginary sword and slashing it around. Musketeers?! All Isabella wanted was a Three Musketeers candy bar and some peace. She was starving, and the party was soon. She still had to get ready, and time was quickly running out.

“This one is tough, and thanks to someone....” Emily glared at Aiden, “we only have two chances.”

“You two always gang up on me,” Aiden retorted.

The girls ignored him and studied the clue. “There seemed to be so many options in the verse: God of gods, Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome.” Isabella read them off. “Which could it be?” Emily asked.

“Start at the top of the list and work our way down.” Aiden finally said.

“Go ahead,” Isabella said. Aiden typed in:

G-O-D O-F G-O-D-S.

To their excitement, the token slid across to square eleven. But their celebrating was cut short when Isabella’s phone pinged again.

“Uh-oh. Dad’s calling a family meeting when he gets home. He’s got an announcement to make,” Isabella read aloud.

The three Perez children’s faces fell. This could not be good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Would you be excited or worried if your parents called a family meeting?
2. Jesus is always on your side. How does that help you when you feel alone?

PRAYER:

Dear God of Gods, Thank you for being our Father. We love you so much. No matter what, you stick with us to the end. Help us remember that no matter the trouble, you will never leave us. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 11

EL OLAM

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90:1-2 NIV

The last time the Perez's had a family meeting, Dad had gotten his new job. There, he sat everyone down and explained that things would be different around the house.

"I know you are used to having me home after school to toss the ball around, help with homework, or play games," Dad said. "But things are different now. My new job has me traveling three weekends a month. But this is a great company, and I have to pay my dues. It won't be forever."

It didn't take the Perez children long to notice the change. Dad began working late and coming home after dinner had been cleaned up. With Dad gone, Isabella saw they were arguing more than usual.

"I'm scared," Emily said in a small voice. "I don't want to go to the family meeting."

"Yeah," Aiden said. "What's Dad going to announce this time? That we are all moving to Timbuctoo?"

"I refuse to move anywhere," Isabella announced flatly. "I'm not leaving my friends."

Emily gulped.

“Do you think we might move?” she asked. “I’ll go wherever Mom and Dad are.”

Isabella looked down at her little sister. Why did she care so much about keeping mom and dad happy? Didn’t she know that was a lost cause? Isabella didn’t want to admit that she used to feel the same way.

“Let’s get the game done,” she said, reading the next square.

“EL OLAM. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. Psalm 90:1-2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Reread Psalm 90:1-2. What do you think is the meaning of EL OLAM? Write your guess below.
2. The Bible verse says God is our dwelling place. That means that home is where God is. No matter where we are or our country, we can feel safe and comfortable because of Jesus. What places do you go to during the week? What can you do to remember that God goes with you to all those places?

PRAYER:

Dear God, we learn about you at church and in devotions. We feel close to you when we pray. But when we are busy, we forget you are with us. Thank you for coming down to us as a baby. Thank you for never leaving us. We love you. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 12

EVERLASTING

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from **everlasting to everlasting**, you are God. Psalm 90:1-2 NIV*

Isabella read that verse again slowly to herself. She had tried to be like Emily when she was younger. Isabella had always tried to please her parents. But now it felt like a lost cause, and she gave up. Dad only cared about work now, and Mom was busy running everyone around and keeping things going while Dad was gone. Isabella had given up trying to make them happy. The only person she cared about now was Martin. As long as he noticed her, she was good.

“Let’s try dwelling place,” Emily said. “That seems to make sense.”

STRIKE ONE!

“Ok, I want to try now,” Isabella said. “Formed the earth. I’ll type God is our Creator. You know, since He made the whole world!”

STRIKE TWO!

The Perez kids groaned.

“One last chance!” Emily said. “If we mess this up, Mom and Dad will be so mad.”

“The less you worry about Mom and Dad, the better off you are,” Isabella said. “It’s easy not to care what they think.”

“Bella, they are our parents. They love us. We DO care what they think!” Aiden responded. “Ok, you each had a try. I guess it’s my turn. Good thing we saved the best for last!” He began to make theatrical gestures with his arms and silly faces.

“What are you doing?” The girls asked.

“I am warming up,” Aiden responded, stretching.

E-V-E-R-L-A-S-T-I-N-G

The kids held their breath, and amazingly, the token slid across the square to the next number.

“God is everlasting! Like my fun! You guys don’t know how to have a good time!” Aiden said, turning a cartwheel and bashing into a neatly stacked pile of quilts and blankets.

“Fun that turns into chaos,” Isabella said. That was the problem with Aiden. He didn’t know when to stop. The scattered blankets distracted the children from noticing tiny cracks in the walls that were not there before.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Aiden loves to have fun. But sometimes, his fun gets out of control. Do you remember when a lot of fun got out of control?
2. God loves the fun parts of life! He loves happiness and joy! He doesn’t want you to walk around all serious or never crack jokes. How can you make joy and happiness a part of God’s plan?

PRAYER:

Our Everlasting God, we are so glad you last forever! We get tired or out of control, but you never do. We can see signs of your endless ways in nature: the sun's rising, setting the ocean's tides, and the seasons. No matter what, you are faithful. Thank you for being our everlasting Son! Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 13

EL ROI

The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”
Genesis 16:11-14 NIV

“EL ROI. Is, like, every single name going to have EL in it?” Aiden asked.

“El means strong God, remember from the second square?” Emily said. “So I guess every time we see EL it means the best God of all.”

“I guess. Ok, read the clue,” Aiden said. He was getting antsy and began trying to do dances in the small attic space. Aiden was the class clown and everyone’s friend. What people didn’t know was he always felt pressure to be the fun one. If he could get Mom and Dad laughing, then everything was alright. The more Aiden laughed, the more he could ignore all the sad stuff. Emily shook her head and began reading.

“The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord, has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” She gave this name to the Lord who spoke

to her: *'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'* Genesis 16:11-14."

"Woah, so the angel told Mary to name Jesus Ishmael? Crazy! I never heard that!" Aiden said, turning cartwheels.

"Aiden, be careful. You are going to knock something over! No, this verse is from a different story," Isabella said, studying the clue. "Look, Genesis. That was in the beginning of the Bible. Speaking of, is there a Bible up here in all this junk?" she asked, looking around.

"Grandma's Bible is up here!" Emily said brightly. "I remember I used to pretend it was a magic book when I would play up here." The Perez kids scattered as each looked for the heavy, engraved Bible that had been in the family for generations.

"Found it!" Aiden shouted. "But I can barely lift it!" He came out in dust and cobwebs, carrying the heavy book in his arms. But he tripped, and the Bible slid across the floor as he fell with a bang. Isabella took it and brushed the layer of dust off to reveal HOLY BIBLE in gold letters.

"I want to read it! Wait for me!" Aiden said, trying to get untangled from the Christmas lights that tripped him. Instead, he landed in a mountain of quilts.

"Aiden! That's enough!" Isabella yelled.

Arguing distracted the children from noticing more trouble. The tiny cracks in the attic's walls were growing further apart with each argument.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who do you know is always funny or loves to have fun? What do they do?
2. Read Genesis 16:11-14. Make your guess as to what the clue is:

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for the laughter and fun. We don't want to forget that you are the one who invented them in the first place! Show us when our fun begins to hurt others. Thank you for being a faithful God. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 14

THE GOD WHO SEES ME

*The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are **the God who sees me**,” for she said, “I have now seen **the One who sees me**.”*
Genesis 16:11-14 NIV

“Emily, look at me! I’m a ghost!” Aiden said, draping a sheet over himself.

Emily stifled a giggle. She knew Isabella didn’t like Aiden’s jokes. But she couldn’t help laughing at him.

“OK, it looks like the woman who had the baby was Hagar, not Mary,” Isabella said after studying the chapter. “And the father was Abram, the guy who would eventually be called Abraham. She was in the desert and had given up all hope. God came to her and said he would take care of her and her baby. I wonder if the clue is God hears?”

STRIKE ONE!

“I guess that’s not it,” Aiden said after typing in the clue.

“Let’s make sure we are all in agreement before you type it in,” Isabella said. “That was a

waste of a strike.”

“Yes, captain!” Aiden said, throwing his sheet into the air. The sheet drifted down over Isabella and Emily’s heads.

“Aiden! Don’t unfold all mom’s stuff!” Emily said. If she was going to make Mom and Dad happy, she had to be perfect. That’s wouldn’t be too hard for one afternoon, right? Not with Hurricane Aiden on the loose!

“Geez, I already have a mom. I don’t need two more!” Aiden said, whipping the sheet over their heads.

“We are trying to keep out of trouble,” Emily persisted. “Remember, God is watching! Even the verse says, ‘the God who sees me!’”

“But that sounds like God is spying on me all the time, ready to punish me if I step over the line,” Aiden said. “That’s no fun.”

“What a second, guys!” Isabella said. “That’s it! That’s our clue! The God who sees me!”

“I’ll put it in!” Aiden jumped up, eager to make up for his mistake.

T-H-E G-O-D W-H-O S-E-E-S M-E

BINGO! It worked. Aiden did a fist pound! They were over halfway done now, but could they survive to the end?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. God is always with you, but it isn’t to spy on you. He is with you to help, comfort, and guide you. Jesus already died for your sins. He doesn’t want to be a judge, and he wants to be your Savior. Do you ever feel like God is spying on you? Why?
2. What does God see when He sees you?

PRAYER:

Dear El Roi, sometimes we don’t want to face sad or hard things. Please give us the courage to know what to do when trouble comes because you see all things. Remind us of Jesus’s courage on the cross when he died for our sins. We thank you for the happiness we have that comes when we know we are children of God. We don’t have to hide or cover up anything. In Jesus’ Name, Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 15

EL SHADDAI

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless." Genesis 17:1 NKJV

More than anything, Emily hated disappointing people. She did everything she could to make others happy. She was extra polite in school, always let her mom pick out her outfits, and never tried to push her way when her brother and sister fought. Emily walked over to refold the stack of blankets Aiden had knocked over. Mom would not like the mess they were leaving up here.

"Now look what you did!" Isabella said triumphantly. But her smile faded when she snatched the phone from his hand.

"My phone is locked for 15 minutes! And the lamp is broken. What are you going to do about it?"

"No, no, no...you go ahead Em!" Aiden said, seeing that he could get out of cleaning. Then, to distract Isabella, he grabbed ahold of her phone and started guessing codes to get into the phone.

"Stop," Isabella shouted, reaching for her phone. But Aiden ducked, weaved out of her grasp, and kept trying to guess her code.

“Aiden, give me back my phone!” Isabella shouted. Emily tried to help.

“Ooooo, are you going to the party tonight, Martin?!!” Aiden pretended to text. “I can’t wait to see you!”

“Guys! Stop fighting,” Emily said, but it was no use. No one was even listening to her anymore.

“GIVE IT BACK!” Isabella was upset. She grabbed Aiden’s shirt and jerked him backward, causing him to crash into an old lamp that fell to the floor.

“Now, look what you did!” Isabella said triumphantly as she snatched the phone from his hand.

“The lamp is broken, and my phone is locked for 15 minutes.”

“Me?!?! You pushed me,” Aiden responded.

“Maybe we can glue or fix it,” Emily said, picking up the pieces. She picked up a large piece of glass, but it slipped, cutting her hand. The cracks in the walls spread even further apart. A leaf fluttered in through one of the biggest holes, but still, the children didn’t notice.

“Em! Stop trying to fix everything. Look, now you are hurt,” Isabella said, coming up to her. She used an old t-shirt to wrap the hand and tied it on as a bandage. After the Perez kids reassembled back around the board, Aiden and Isabella glared at each other. To distract from another fight, Emily jumped at the chance to read the next clue.

“EL SHADDAI. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’ Genesis 17:1”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Hurts can come on the outside, like Emily’s hand. Hurts also happen on the inside when our feelings get hurt. What happens in arguments when someone gets hurt?
2. Do you ever feel like you have disappointed someone? What happened? It’s hard to make mistakes, and it doesn’t make it easier when our teachers, coaches, or parents are disappointed with us. It’s like a double whammy. The wonderful news is that God is never disappointed in you. He is so proud of you and loves you so much. He cannot be disappointed.

PRAYER:

God, we know we cannot walk before you and be perfect. But we are thankful for Jesus. He died on the cross and rose again so that we can be blameless in your eyes. Give us strength and mercy to forgive others. Amen.



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 16

GOD ALMIGHTY

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am **Almighty God**; walk before Me and be blameless.”* Genesis 17:1 NKJV

Emily's life had been about keeping people from being mad at her. While Isabella didn't seem to care what anyone thought and Aiden wanted to have fun and keep people laughing, Emily hated when people were angry at her.

“Well, God gives us the answer. He says in the verse that He is Almighty God,” Isabella said. “El Shaddai means Almighty God. Does everyone agree?”

Aiden pressed his lips together, showing he wasn't speaking.

“Fine, we'll go ahead without you,” Isabella said, slowly typing in the name.

A-L-M-I-G-H-T-Y G-O-D

To their relief, it worked!

“You think you are so smart,” Aiden said.

“I'm trying to get us out of here,” Isabella said. As they argued back and forth, Emily shrank back to the corner of the attic and put her hands over her ears. She hated their

fight. Suddenly she froze.

“Ummm, guys, are there earthquakes in Florida?” she asked.

“No, why?” Isabella said.

“Because there are giant cracks in our walls!” Emily screamed, running toward the center of the room.

The children scanned the room. Sure enough, the tiny cracks that had formed all over the walls had spread to gaping holes.

“This is not good. This is not good at all,” Isabelle said. She ran over to the door and tried it again.

“Still locked,” she said. She checked her phone but couldn’t text since her phone had been locked out.

“No, duh!” Aiden responded. The moment he said that the cracks shook and spread further apart.

“I think when we argue, the cracks get bigger!” Emily said. “So please stop fighting! We are literally cracking our house!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are you a person who likes to argue or keep the peace?
2. Why does Emily like to keep the peace? Is that a good reason?

PRAYER:

Dear El Shaddai, we are so thankful that you are a God of peace. We also thank you for your promise to fight for us and destroy evil. Help us to know when to stand up for what is right and when to be a peacemaker. Forgive us when we mess up. We are thankful for Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins. In Jesus’s name, Amen.



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 17

IMMANUEL

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 NIV

“Finally, an easy one, Immanuel!” Aiden said as they huddled around the board, their backs to the walls. Maybe if they didn’t look at the cracks, they would disappear. The shouting match stopped, but everyone was still on pins and needles. Immanuel was a name they had all heard before at church.

“But wait!” Emily said as the verse came into view. “It doesn’t tell us what it means!”

“We are stuck,” Aiden said. “I’m done with this game. I’m going to do something about these cracks.”

He began stuffing old stuffed animals and balled-up baby clothes in the cracks.

“Aiden, that is not going to help at all,” Isabella said. “If Emily is right, then those cracks are being made by us. Stuffing them full of clutter won’t fix them.”

“Dad is literally going to kill us,” Aiden groaned.

“Let’s focus on the game,” Emily said. “Remember that song, O Come, O Come Emmanuel? What was the last line of that song? Shall come to thee, O Israel. Does that give us any help?”

“Look at the clue,” They all read silently together. “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14.” The three children looked at each other helplessly.

“We have the Bible. Let’s look up the verse,” Isabella said. “The answer has got to be in there.”

As Isabella flipped to Isaiah and studied the page, Emily noticed a verse printed next to it. Matthew 1:22-23.

“Hey, what about this?” Emily asked.

Isabella flipped to Matthew and read out loud, *“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’”*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look up the song O Come, O Come Immanuel. What do you think Immanuel means based on that song? _____
2. When all we think about is toys and fun, we do what Aiden did. We stuff clutter into our cracks to try and make us feel better, but it doesn’t work. Only God can heal the cracks in your heart. What made the cracks in your heart?

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, we are so thankful that you came to be with us. We cannot go through life without you. Even when we didn’t know you, you still came to us. Thank you for being a faithful God. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 18

GOD WITH US

*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name **Immanuel**.* Isaiah 7:14 NIV

Emily, you ready?" Isabella asked. "Matthew has the answer!" Emily was sitting near the board, fingers on the keys, ready to type.

"I'm ready!" she said.

"Ok, type God with us," Isabella instructed.

G-O-D W-I-T-H U-S

"Boom!" Aiden offered a high-five to Isabella, who accepted it cautiously. She wasn't ready to forgive Aiden for locking her phone. But if they were going to finish this challenge, they would have to start working together.

"God with us! That's it! Great job, Em!" He hugged Emily.

"I mean, I helped too. It was my idea to look up the verse in Grandma's Bible," Isabella said. Aiden sighed. Just when they start to get along, Isabella always picks a fight.

"Fine. Yep, you're the best, Bella," he said.

“I have an idea,” Emily said. “Maybe the cracks will get smaller if we are nice to each other?”

“Doesn’t hurt to try....” Aiden said. “Bella, ladies first. Say all the amazing things about me.”

“It was Emily’s idea,” Isabella responded. “She can go.”

“OK, Aiden, you know this already, but you are hilarious,” Emily said. Aiden shuffled his feet and mumbled his thanks.

“Bella, you helped us get a lot of these clues. You’re pretty smart,” Aiden said.

“It’s because I’m older,” Isabella said. “You would have gotten them too. Emily, you are always helping me with my chores. Thanks for that.”

Emily beamed. They inspected the walls. The cracks weren’t any smaller, but they had stopped growing larger. And everyone felt a lot better inside too. They were still unsure how to explain this to Dad, but they were about to get a chance to try. Dad’s car was pulling into the driveway.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Something began to change when the Perez kids started saying nice things about each other. What happened?
2. When Jesus looked down and saw the mess we made, He didn’t send someone else. He didn’t make us pay for it or abandon us. He came down. Immanuel. All through the Bible, there are stories of God coming down. He came down to Adam and Eve. He came down to the people at the Tower of Babel. He came down to give Abraham a promise and to wrestle with Jacob. Jesus has come down to you. He is with you right now. How do you know God is with you?

PRAYER:

Immanuel, we see many signs of you being with us at Christmas. The lights on the tree, the church is decorated, cards and artwork with the nativity on it, and we hear songs about Jesus in the manger. Help us to remember that you are always God with Us: Immanuel. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 19

JEHOVAH-NISSI

Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. Exodus 17:15 NIV

“We still have seven squares to go!” Emily said in a panic. “We aren’t going to get out of here before Dad finds out!”

The Perez children froze. What do they do? Try to hide the gaping holes? Finish the game? Bang on the door and ‘fess up to Dad and hope he can fix this mess?

“I know how to fix this,” Isabella said. “I’ll stand by the door. I won’t let Dad in even if he tries.”

Aiden ran to the cracks. “I’ll hide these. We can pretend like they aren’t there! Maybe they’ll go away.” He started stuffing them again and dragging over boxes to cover them up.

Emily walked over to the game. She had to keep trying to get through it. If she could follow the rules perfectly and keep the peace, everything would be ok.

She read the next word, “Jehovah-Nissi.” But when she tried to make out the verse, it became fuzzy.

“Guys, it’s too fuzzy. You have to come closer,” Emily said.

Isabella took a giant step until she was almost doing the splits. Then, finally, she could touch the game with one foot and the door with the other.

“How’s that?” she asked, straining.

“Aiden, come on over. I need to see the clue,” Emily said.

But Aiden saw Isabella’s splits as the perfect goal for the ball at his feet. The temptation was too strong. He eyed his goal, took a deep breath, and drew back his foot.

BANG! The ball sailed towards Isabella’s legs, but was just a little high. Rather than going through, it hit her on the bottom. She fell forwards as the ball bounced back and smacked the dead-center of the game. Keys from the pad went flying, and the screen went black. Emily screamed.

Meanwhile, the cracks in the walls were now big enough for the children to see into their neighbor’s backyard. Then, the wires in the walls began snapping and zapping.

“Who’s up here?” came a thundering voice. The children froze as they heard footsteps approaching. Dad was right on the other side of the door.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The Perez kids dealt with the game the same way they dealt with problems in their lives. Aiden tried to hide the cracks. Like in real life, he tried to cover up problems with humor and fun. Isabella tried blocking the door and keeping people out, like at home when she tried to keep her parents out of her life. How did Emily try to deal with the game? How is that similar to how she deals with her real life?
2. All of us deal with cracks in our lives differently. How do you deal with cracks, or problems, when they come along?

PRAYER:

Dear God, we don’t like cracks in our lives. Some of us fight them, some ignore them, and some try with all our might to fix them on our own. Help us to remember that you are the only one who can fix the problems in our lives. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 20

THE LORD IS MY BANNER

*Moses built an altar and called it **The Lord is my Banner**. Exodus 17:15 NIV*

Dad flung open the attic door. When the game shut down, it must have unlocked the door because he opened it quickly. Dad looked tired and confused, but his face became angry when he saw the cracks in the walls.

“What is going on?!” he asked. He ran his hand over one of the cracks as if he couldn’t believe they were there. All three Perez kids froze and looked at one another.

Emily burst into tears. “We are so sorry, Dad...”Emily began.

“We found this game. Mom bought it for us,” Aiden said, picking it up and handing it to him. “We were trying to have a little fun.”

“Mom bought it for you?” Dad said, inspecting it and giving it a few firm shakes. Suddenly the screen came back on. “Mom did not buy this for you. Where did you get it?” His face was turning red, and his breath was short.

Isabella crossed her arms and went stone-faced.

“This is your house,” she said. “It was in this attic, so you should know. Whoever got this game is to blame. It’s not our fault.”

Emily wasn't as quick to point fingers. She tried to fix things instead.

"It's fun, Dad! We get names of God and clues from verses and have to find out what they mean," Emily said. "See? Jehovah-Nissi. Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. Exodus 17:15. So we have to figure out what that name means from the verse we get. Then we type it in. I think this one must be a banner. The Lord is my banner."

She typed slowly, not to make a mistake:

T-H-E L-O-R-D I-S M-Y B-A-N-N-E-R.

The token slid shakily to the next square as the attic door slammed again. They all jumped.

"It was in one of these boxes," Aiden said in a small voice, still trying to avoid blame. "I thought it was a present for me. The name of it looked like my name. Emily says the cracks are happening because we are arguing."

"Can you fix them, Dad?" Emily asked.

"Fix them?" Dad said helplessly, looking at the giant cracks in his walls. "No. Our home is destroyed. And I was counting on coming home to a quiet, happy home. Instead, it looks like we may be homeless this Christmas. I quit my job."

At that moment, the house gave one last quake, and a giant crack in the attic floor split into a deep dark abyss with Dad on one side and the three kids standing on the other. Both were hanging on for dear life. If anyone let go, they would be gone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean for Isabella, Aiden, and Emily that Dad quit his job?
2. Moses called God his Banner. A banner was a giant sign that showed others what side you were on. When God was Moses's banner, it meant that his life's purpose was to know God, understand things from His view, and do what God called him to do. God has a banner over you. You are His child. What do you think that banner says?

PRAYER:

Jehovah-Nissi, you are our giant banner! When we stand under you, we are safe. We know what we are all about and whose we are. Help us to remember that you gave us your Son Jesus to die on the cross and rise again so we can live forever under a banner of love. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 21

JEHOVAH-JIREH

So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day, it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” Genesis 22:14 NIV

“Guys! Grab onto each other!” Dad yelled. It felt like a hurricane was blowing out from inside the giant crack.

Emily still had the game tucked under one arm. She let go of the chair leg she was holding onto with her open hand and grabbed Aiden’s outstretched arm. He was balancing on a wooden chest that had lodged between the floor planks.

“Isabella, hop on!” Aiden called to his older sister. She was holding onto a broken telescope. She did her famous splits stretch and could reach the chest. The three of them were safe now, but Dad was in trouble.

He was holding onto a ripping box that wouldn’t hold his weight much longer. He looked around frantically for something else to grab ahold of. But there was nothing. He closed his eyes and prayed.

“God, I have tried everything. I tried to be successful and make money. I thought that was what you were supposed to do. But in all that working, I lost sight of the most important thing, Jesus. And now I am about to lose my family and house. I am stuck in a mess and I can’t get out of it. I need your help. Please provide some-thing to save us. Otherwise, we

will all be lost, and it will all be my fault.”

A beam dropped from the roof and landed across the crack, making a bridge. As it fell into the gap, Dad let go of the box just in time. He got down on his hands and knees and began to crawl over to them. His biggest fear used to be heights. Now his biggest fear was losing his family.

“You got this, Dad!” Isabella cheered him on. He stopped and looked at her. He thought she hadn’t wanted him near her, but now he saw she needed her Dad. There was enough room for him to collapse onto the toy chest. They hugged. Back together, the crack in the floor closed up. The attic floor seemed to be pulled back together by some invisible force. The winds stopped, and the darkness melted away.

The cracks in the wall were still there, but a cool breeze began to float through them.

Emily put the game down.

“Jehovah-Jireh,” She said as the verse appeared.

Dad looked at the screen and read, “So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day, it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” Genesis 22:14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What made Dad pray?
2. Sometimes, it takes difficult times for us to ask God to help. But God wants us to ask for his help immediately when we have a problem. So, what can you ask God to help you with right now?

PRAYER:

Dear God, you are so strong and powerful. But sometimes we forget to ask you to help us until things feel impossible. Thank you for being there whenever we need you. Everything is under your control, even when everything seems crazy to us. Amen



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 22

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

So Abraham called that place **The Lord Will Provide**. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord **it will be provided.**” Genesis 22:14 NIV

The attic seemed eerily quiet after the giant crack in the floor closed up. Everyone seemed frozen after Dad read the verse until Aiden spoke up,

“It’s Provider, isn’t it, Dad?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s pretty clear that is the meaning of Jehovah-Jireh,” Dad responded. “So, how does this game work anyways?”

“You type in the meaning right here,” Emily showed him.

T-H-E L-O-R-D W-I-L-L P-R-O-V-I-D-E

As the token slid to square 23, Dad shook his head in disbelief.

“I don’t know where this game came from, but I know this: God sure provided that plank at the right time. If that beam hadn’t made a bridge, I don’t know what we would have done.”

Emily squeezed his hand.

“I felt so helpless,” Dad continued.

“All I wanted to do was save you three, but I couldn’t get to you. Now that I lost my job, I can’t even provide Christmas for you guys this year. I wanted to take you to a ski resort. Christmas with snow! We’ve always dreamed of that, haven’t we? But now, without a job, I don’t even know if Mom and I will have enough money for presents under the tree.” Dad hung his head.

The girls looked at Aiden to see his reaction. What would he think about a Christmas with no presents?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Parents make money to buy food and clothing, and to provide a house and put food on the table. It is expensive to buy all the things you need, but it is even more expensive to buy all the things you may want. It may even be impossible. What is something the Perez kids can do to help the family save money?
2. What makes Christmas to you? Circle the words below that you like or add your own!

PRAYER:

Dear Jehovah-Jireh, thank you for being there when we needed you the most. Even if all the Christmas things disappeared, Christ still came. Jesus still saves because Christmas is about what He did for us, not what we do. Amen

REINDEER	ORNAMENTS
MISTLETOE	SLEIGH
CAROLS	CHIMNEY
STOCKINGS	ANGEL
CANDLES	ELF
CHURCH	CHESTNUTS
PRESENTS	SLEIGH BELLS
FROSTY	GINGERBREAD HOUSE
TREE	JACK FROST
JESUS	



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 23

JEHOVAH-RAPHA

“If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.” Exodus 15:26 NIV

Aiden got up and walked over to where Dad was sitting.

“Dad, it’s OK if we don’t get a ton of presents,” Aiden said. “After playing this game, I have had enough reality for a long time! I mean, a hurricane coming out of a dark canyon in our home?!?! Come on! What VR can beat that?”

Dad returned Aiden’s hug.

“Thanks, buddy. This game is crazy, isn’t it?”

“Aiden thought Mom bought it!” Emily said, laughing.

“Can you imagine what she would say if she could see us right now?” Isabella asked. Suddenly, her phone unlocked. She scrambled to check her messages. One was from Martin.

Hey, I will b at the party 2nite, but I am bringing a friend, so I won’t be able to hang out.

Isabella turned off her phone. She had spent so much time thinking about this party she had forgotten about her family. Now that Dad had quit his job, there would not be any chances to hang out with Martin. Even though she thought she would be sad about that, she felt relief. Martin had other friends, and so did she. It was time to get her head out of the clouds and back to people who cared about her.

“Dad, I am sorry I haven’t been kind to you and Mom. Sometimes I think that it is more important to make my friends happy than to make you happy,” Isabella said.

“You know, Bella,” Dad said, “Lots of kids feel they have to pick between making their friends happy and making their family happy. I don’t want you to do either one. God is ALREADY happy with you, and you are pleasing to Him. You don’t have to make anyone else happy.”

Isabella felt the pressure of making everyone happy lift off her shoulders. She was ALREADY pleasing to God. Isabella looked at the game and realized they were almost to the last clue.

“Jehovah-Rapha,” she read. “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.” Exodus 15:26

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why wasn’t Isabella upset when she realized she couldn’t go to the party anymore?
2. Sometimes, we want something so badly. But when we get it, it is not as cool as we think it is. Has that ever happened to you? What did you think was going to be so cool but then wasn’t?

PRAYER:

Dear God, there are so many cool things that we want. We believe if we had those things, we would be happy. But the only true happiness comes from Jesus. He is a gift that will never disappoint us. Amen.



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 24

YOUR HEALER

*“If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, **your healer**.” Exodus 15:26 NIV*

Emily had been listening to Dad and Isabella talk, but when Dad turned to her, she cringed.

“Emily, like I told Isabella, being a people-pleaser will get you nowhere. Trust me, I know! I tried to be a people-pleaser at work. I did everything I could for the company. I thought saying “no” would mean I was a bad worker. But I was giving up my family, my church, and my life. I also thought I had to earn God’s happiness. All of us are already pleasing to God, and we are to one another as well. It doesn’t mean any of us are perfect. Far from it. We need a Savior.”

Aiden piped in, copying his favorite line, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown!” Everyone laughed.

“Jesus was pleasing to God,” Dad said. “He was perfect and yet He still died so we can be pleasing to God too. His death healed our relationship with God.”

Emily studied the verse.

“Dad, that’s the clue for our name, Jehovah-Rapha. Our healer.” Aiden typed it in.

Y-O-U-R H-E-A-L-E-R

As the token landed on the last square, the cracks in the walls sealed back up. There were no signs of any damage anywhere.

“If God can heal this house, he can heal this family too,” Dad said.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When the Perez family argued and fought, the house started cracking. What happened when they helped each other?
2. One of God’s names is Healer. This means that he can heal the hurts in our bodies, but also the hurt in our souls. What is an example of a hurt soul/spirit/feeling?

PRAYER:

Dear Jehovah-Rapha, you are the healer of our hearts. You are the healer of the whole world. That is why you came down as a baby. You grew up, brought heaven to us, and made it possible for us to live in heaven too. Heaven is where all hurts are healed, and all pain is gone. Thank you for sending Jesus to heal us. Amen.



THE GREAT ADVENT-URE

DAY 25

I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME, YOU ARE MINE

*“Don’t be afraid, I’ve redeemed you. **I’ve called your name. You’re mine.** When you’re in over your head, I’ll be there with you. When you’re in rough waters, you will not go down. When you’re between a rock and a hard place, it won’t be a dead end — Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior.”*

Isaiah 43: 1-2 MSG

“Yay! We made it,” Aiden said jubilantly, running to try the door. But it wouldn’t budge. “Hey! We finished the game! Why aren’t we getting let out?!”

“It looks like there is one more thing you have to do,” Dad said.

The children saw their names appear on the screen.

“What does that mean?” Isabella asked. “Why are our names on there?”

“You have found twelve names of God,” Dad replied. “But what about your names? Do you know what they mean?” All three children stared at him blankly.

“Do you know, Dad?” Emily asked. “You and mom picked out our names.” Dad smiled with a twinkle in his eye.

“Who’s first?” he asked before all three kids hopped up. Emily got there first.

“Emily, your name means hardworking or persuasive.

You work harder than anyone I know, but remember, it is by God’s strength that you work.” Dad said. Emily typed her name’s meaning on the screen and pushed enter.

“Aiden, your name means little fire, energy, and warmth. You sure live up to your name! But the fire in you is that fire of the Holy Spirit. People can see that for miles around when God glows in you.” After Aiden put his name meaning in, Dad turned to Isabella.

“Bella, your name means God is my oath. You have a strong will. When you set your mind to something, you accomplish it! But God is the unshakable rock you stand on. Friends will come and go, and even family will let you down. But Jesus never will. You can count on Him.”

As Isabella typed in the last letter, the door opened softly. The kids heard mom coming in with grocery bags, calling to them. Boy, did they have a story to tell her!

Dad looked around and spotted the tangled lights.

“Hey! I have an idea. What if we finally get these lights up tonight?” Dad asked, looking straight at Emily. She beamed.

“I love you, Dad,” she said as they walked downstairs with boxes of lights in their hands.

“I love you too, kiddo,” Dad responded. “Merry Christmas.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus gives you eternal life in heaven. In addition to that, He gives you good gifts now. Every good thing you have, every gift you will open, the friends you make, the candy you eat, or the music you listen to is a gift from God. Even bad news can be a gift. The Perez kids’ Dad lost his job, but what gift did they get in place of it?
2. Look up the meaning of your name and write it in the space below. No matter what your name means, who does Isaiah 43: 1-2 say you belong to?

PRAYER:

Dear God, Merry Christmas! Thank you for sending baby Jesus to earth. Thank you for promising us good and wonderful gifts. We know you have our name written on your hands. You love us. Thank you for being our Heavenly Father. Amen



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allison Zehnder was raised in West Togo, Africa, as a missionary kid. Moving back to the United States, she graduated from Concordia University Wisconsin with a degree in Theology and minor in Missions and Youth Ministry. Along with Zach, she moved to Mount Dora, Florida, and served as Children's Director for 5 years at the Cross Church. She is co-author of Red Letter Challenge Kids, Being Challenge Kids, Forgiving Challenge Kids, and Serving Challenge Kids. She currently lives in Elkhorn, NE writing for Red Letter Living as well as raising their two sons, Nathan and Brady.

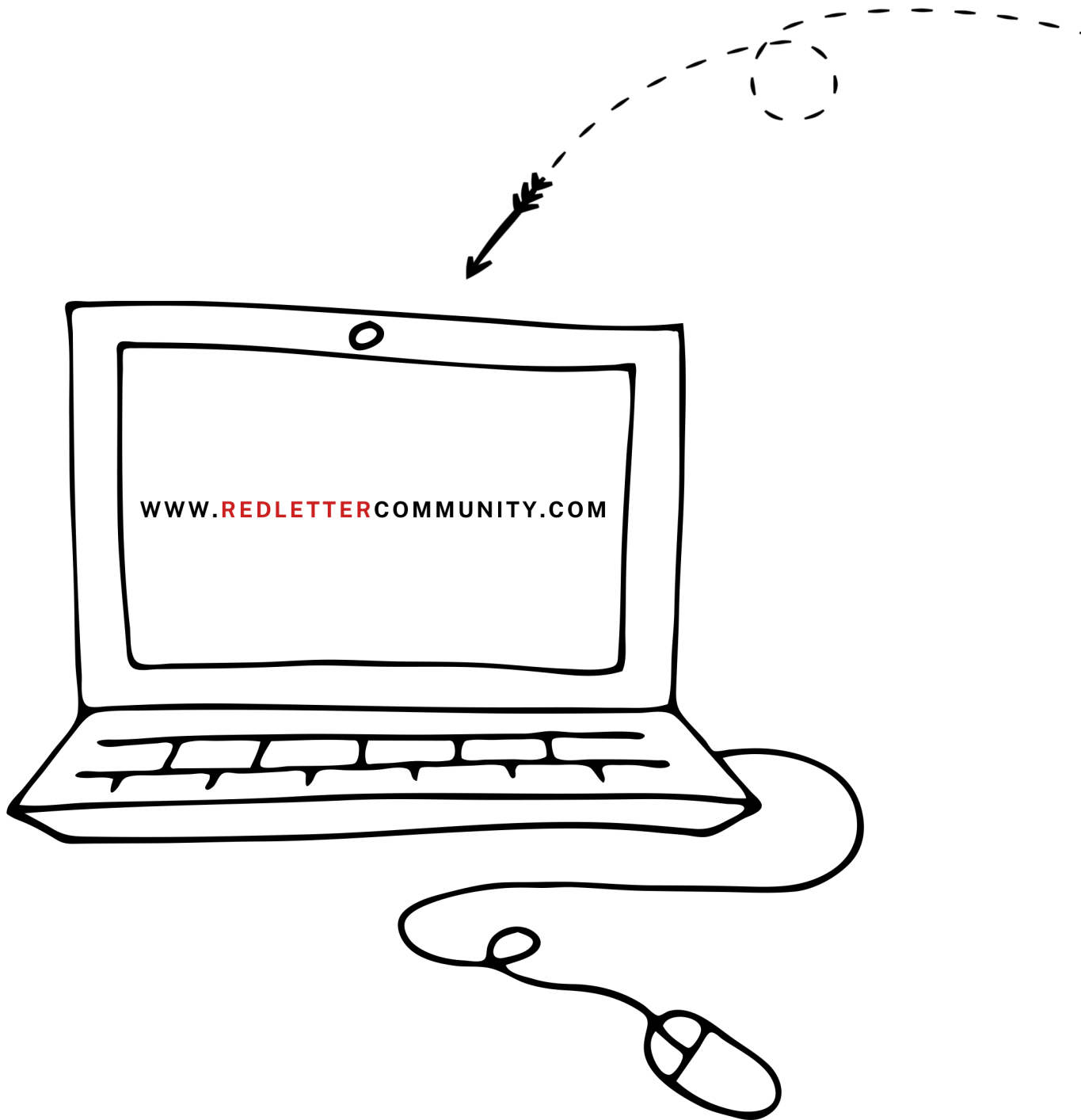
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