

6-SESSION  
BIBLE STUDY

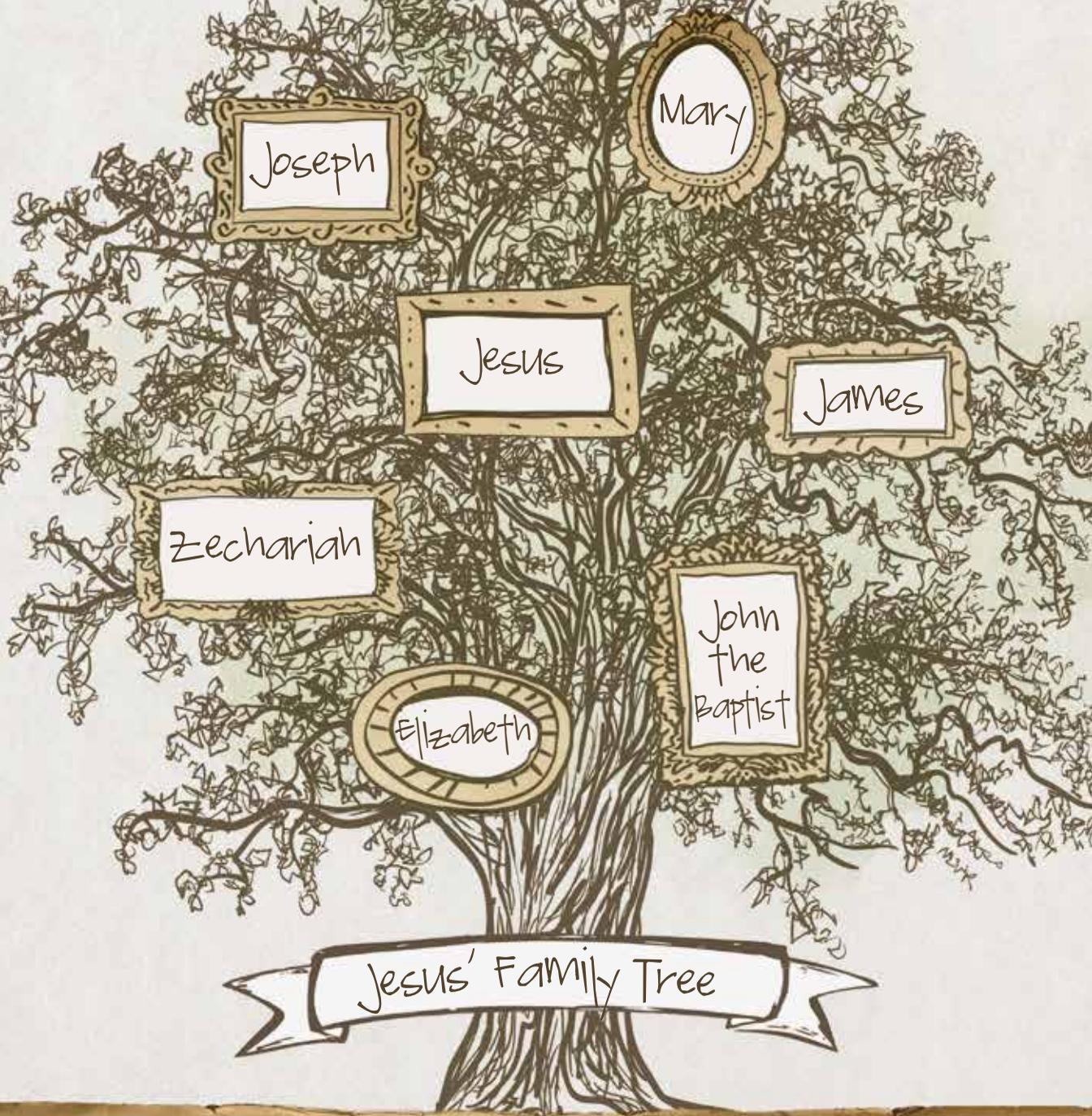
SAMPLE

HEART  
OF THE  
STORY  
SERIES

THE  
*Family  
of Jesus*  
BIBLE STUDY

KAREN  
KINGSBURY

 LifeWay  
Biblical Solutions for Life



## YOU HAVE A FAMILY. YOU HAVE A STORY. JESUS DID TOO.

From America's favorite storyteller Karen Kingsbury, *The Family of Jesus Bible Study* digs deep into the lives, customs, emotions, and challenges of being a part of the family of Jesus. Through Scripture and storytelling, you'll get to know Jesus' closest relatives and take a detailed look at the days when He walked the earth. Karen's first 6-session, DVD-based Bible study makes Joseph, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Elizabeth, James, and Mary feel like your own family. Along the way you'll **fall in love with the Bible all over again.**

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**LOOK AROUND...**

Explore this sample taken from the first week of *The Family of Jesus Bible Study*.  
**Visit [lifeway.com/familyofjesus](http://lifeway.com/familyofjesus) for more info or to order.**

HEART  
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LifeWay Press®  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Number-one *New York Times* best-selling author Karen Kingsbury is America's favorite inspirational novelist, with more than 20 million copies of her books in print. Her last dozen titles have reached the top of national lists.

Karen calls her work Life-Changing Fiction™ because of the response she hears from readers.

She believes God puts a story on her heart, but He has a world full of other hearts in mind. "Only He could do that," Karen often says.

Karen and her husband, Don, and their six kids have Bibles all over the house and Scripture verses on the walls in every room. But no Bible will ever mean as much as the one Don still has, the one with the split down the binding that marked their confrontation before she became a Christian. It is proof that God takes what is broken and makes it beautiful again.

A popular speaker at women's groups around the country, Karen spends her spare time playing tennis and family games with her children, taking walks with Don, and being on-air for her national Salem/FISH afternoon radio program: "The Karen Kingsbury Show," airing weekdays, 2-7 p.m. Karen, with her daughter, Kelsey, also has a DaySpring card and gift line (Possibilities) in stores now. The line features favorite quotes from her books with Kelsey's designs.

Karen truly loves her reader friends, interacting daily with some 300,000 friends on Facebook and 50,000 followers on Twitter. But maybe what excites Karen most these days is her work on *The Family of Jesus Bible Study*.

"I wanted to use my storytelling to make people fall in love with the Bible," Karen says. "Family is important to me. So I started by taking a closer look at the family of Jesus. I was amazed at what I found." Karen believes the stories of these special, real-life people will impact your story in a very powerful way. They may even change your life.

# TENTS AND STAKES

My goal with this Bible study was simple: Use my storytelling to help all of us fall in love with the Bible. But I knew that along the way I would need to mix Scripture and fiction to tell a more complete story of the characters in the family of Jesus.

So I began to look at this project as tent-building.

Scripture is very important to me. God's Holy Word is my absolute authority. For that reason, Bible verses on each of the family members of Jesus became my *tent stakes*. I anchored them deep into the ground and allowed nothing to move them.

Then I added a few more tent stakes—the historical and cultural absolutes of Jesus' day.

With those in place, it was time to paint the canvas. Tent material moves and billows between the tent stakes. Did Joseph bring wild orchids to Mary? Did he cry out to God for help on the way to Bethlehem? We don't know, but in my storytelling I believe he might have done so.

With the tent stakes of Scripture and cultural relevancy deeply embedded in the ground, I allowed myself to dream and imagine. Soon I began to write stories more beautiful than any God has given me.

The question for each story, each scene became this: *Was it possible?* If it was possible for the tent canvas to billow in the way of my storytelling, then I let it billow. In *The Family of Jesus Bible Study*, every time you see content that is screened and attributed to *The Family of Jesus* book, you can know that it is part of my imagining, storytelling, tent-billowing process.

The tent stakes of Scripture and biblical history in this Bible study will take you deeper into what we do know about each family member, into prophecies fulfilled, into Bible passages about character and obedience, and into each family member's unique role in God's redemption story through Jesus. Interactive questions, the group process, home study, and journaling all are a vital part of this study that can help you fall in love with Scripture.

Every story was approved by a pastor and the team at LifeWay for scriptural accuracy. Just to be sure the tent stakes were firmly in the ground.

What resulted were six stories that will make you feel deeply the cost and commitment for each of the family members of Jesus. Those stories can be found in my book *The Family of Jesus* (Howard Books, 2014).

My stories also resulted in this unbelievable Bible study—the one you are about to begin. The team at LifeWay filmed me in six unforgettable teaching and storytelling sessions before a live audience of women. In addition, I met with editorial experts at LifeWay to determine just the right Bible verses and questions to take you deeper into the family of Jesus.

I believe God will use this time to change your heart forever.

So ... step into the tent and let the adventure begin.

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

### *Elements of each session*

**YOUR STORY (START)**—God desires to write His story on the hearts of His creation. Our stories are part of His story because He chooses to use us. So during this study I will be encouraging you to use wisely the days God has given you to write a well-crafted story with your life.

Be willing to share your experiences and insights with your group; they are important and will benefit other women. This opening time segment (approx. 15 min.) is when you get to know each other better. The bond that develops in your group will enrich your study and strengthen you spiritually.

**THE BIBLE CHARACTER'S STORY; FOR EXAMPLE, JOSEPH'S STORY (WATCH, DISCUSS, and STUDY)**—During session 1, for example, I teach about Joseph for about 30 minutes on video. Because I am a storyteller, I share the big picture of what Joseph's life might have been like and highlight several key principles from Scripture.

This time is the heart of the Bible study as, after the video, you interact with life-changing activities and questions prompted by the truth of Scripture. You will better see how each person in Jesus' family contributed to God's ongoing story of redemption and reconciliation. Each screened portion of content comes from *The Family of Jesus* book, giving your group a springboard for finding out more about this family member and for unpacking biblical truths and applications.

If possible, allow 45 to 60 minutes for the video and group interaction segment.

**LIVING IN GOD'S STORY (GOING DEEPER)**—This time of delving more into each Bible character happens between sessions. Use the additional readings as daily devotions, as an opportunity to search other Scriptures (especially Old Testament), and as markers of how God is working in your life and journey.

# COMMITMENTS TO YOUR GROUP

Your experience with your group will be impacted by what you bring to it. Be willing to make personal commitments regarding preparation, confidentiality, respect, and accountability in order to have quality time together.

## PREPARATION

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To get the most out of each group session, try to read through the Watch, Discuss, and Study content each week and answer the questions so you are ready to discuss the material. You may also benefit from reading the hardback book *The Family of Jesus* (Howard Books) for Karen's collection of short stories on each Bible person.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

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You may be prompted to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and must be able to trust the group to keep personal information strictly confidential. Accept each other without judgment.

## RESPECT

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Respect each other's thoughts and opinions, providing a safe place for those insights to be shared without fear of judgment or unsolicited advice. If advice is requested, then lend your opinion, but season it with grace and offer it in love.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

---

Commit to support and encourage each other during the sessions and to pray for each other between meetings. Setting up an email list can help women keep in touch.

JOSEPH:  
HUSBAND,  
PROTECTOR,  
SERVANT



*Lots of men Joseph's age would have chosen Mary. But the friendship between Joseph and Mary's families worked in Joseph's favor and it became the answer to his prayers. It was really going to happen. He was going to marry the girl of his dreams.*

*"What are you thinking?" Mary's voice was soft, like music on the wind.*

*Joseph grinned. "How great God is, letting me have you for the rest of my life."*

*She looked down at her lap, her smile lifting her pretty mouth. . . . "I love talking to Him. Seeking His will." She found Joseph's eyes. "I've done that since I was a little girl."*

*Joseph took a deep breath and admired Mary. Everyone knew about her faith. More than any of the young women in town, Mary loved God, and the proof showed in her eyes.*

THE FAMILY OF JESUS, page 6

Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, is never quoted in Scripture, not even once. In fact, we have no record of anything ever spoken by him. The closest thing we see, in Matthew 1:21, is that he obediently named his son Jesus.

# YOUR STORY

## START

*Everyone has a story. Your group is where you can share your story and hear from others, as together you learn about the family of Jesus.*

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to grow up in Jesus' home? What His siblings were like? What traditions the family observed? What made them laugh and cry?

How would you describe your family to someone you have never met?

Where did you live? How did your family make decisions? How did you feel about your brothers and sisters?

If you were to create a family tree with three to six of the family members who have had the greatest impact on your life, who would you include and why?

For many of us, family is the setting in which we first learned about God.

Can you recall a God-shaping event that led to your knowing Him or to experiencing some other good thing in your life?

God places us in families for good reasons (see Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:12; Josh. 24:15; Ps. 103:17; 127:3-5). He has placed us in specific families for a reason, too.

When we first meet Joseph we're not sure how old he is, maybe late teens or early twenties. He is a carpenter in the family business in Nazareth. Nothing is out of the ordinary about Joseph except for one thing: he is a man who loves God.

What would you most like to ask Joseph?

# JOSEPH'S STORY

## WATCH

Watch Joseph's story from The Family of Jesus Bible Study DVD and discuss the questions with your group.

We have to be very \_\_\_\_\_ with the Word of God and how we handle it.

Joseph knew he could never have any greater calling than to care for and protect Mary and Jesus, his Lord and Savior. What can we learn from the story of Joseph?

Matthew 1:19 (HCSB, "righteous"; NIV, "faithful to the law"; KJV, "just")

Joseph was a between-Sundays guy. He knew how to love and live, faithfully \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ he was given.

May we all say, \_\_\_\_\_ . Let our house be a church.

When we really see Joseph, we can be \_\_\_\_\_ by what we learn; we can become more loyal, more trusting, more faithful, more aware of other people.

## DISCUSS

As you listen to Joseph's story, what do you learn about his character?

How do you feel about God writing a story with the days of your life?

Video downloads of this session are available for purchase at [www.lifeway.com/karenkingsbury](http://www.lifeway.com/karenkingsbury)

If you are on social media, share what you are learning #familyofjesus

## STUDY

*He ran his thumb along Mary's hand and breathed in deep, enjoying the clear spring air. "I feel like God has something big for us, Mary. Right here in Nazareth."*

*"Like what?" She angled her head, admiration bright in her expression. "A bigger carpentry shop?"*

*"Maybe." Joseph narrowed his eyes and watched the streaky sky. "I don't know. I just feel it." It was getting late so he helped her to her feet. "Whatever God has ahead, as long as I'm with you, I'm ready."*

*Mary didn't say anything. The look in her eyes told him she agreed with every word and whatever God's plan for them, they were ready. They would face it together.*

THE FAMILY OF JESUS, pages 6-7

## A CHANGE OF PLANS

---

*Read Matthew 1:18–20.*

What plan was God revealing to these young adults?

Betrothed to the man she would marry, the young Mary, a virgin, learned from an angel that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Mary was understandably frightened and confused about the angel's appearance and message.

Custom required couples to wait a year after a betrothal commitment to prepare for the solemn marriage relationship. Various translations of Matthew 1 describe Mary as "pledged" or "engaged," and verse 19 designates Joseph as "her husband." A betrothal contract was legally binding; only divorce or death could sever the vows.

If you had been in Mary's place, what would you fear telling Joseph?

If you had been in Joseph's shoes, what feelings do you think you would have had upon hearing Mary's news?

## A DIFFICULT DECISION

---

Joseph didn't fly into a rage when he learned Mary was pregnant, as shocking as her news must have been. It was contrary to his nature. Questions likely bombarded him, though: *How could she have betrayed me and our dreams? She's talking about hearing from an angel; is she crazy as well as unfaithful?*

How do verses 19-20 describe a righteous response in an unheard-of situation?

This passage characterizes Joseph as "righteous," or right with God and in good standing with others. In this situation, Mary would be the object of ostracism and shame. According to the laws of the day, she could be stoned to death. Both families would be shunned. Joseph did not want to expose her to "public disgrace." *Father, please, protect my Mary ...*

Not only did Joseph want to do the right thing, he wanted to do it in the right way. "But after he had considered these things" (v. 20) shows him working through a difficult decision, trying to process baffling circumstances and exercise patience before making a hard decision. *I trust You, God. But I never imagined this.*

As was his pattern, Joseph cried out to God and took the next step in faith, determined even in turmoil to find God's purpose for himself and for Mary.

What is the difference between reacting and responding?

Which do you do most?

## TAKING THE NEXT STEP TOGETHER

---

*Read Matthew 1:20–25.*

What guidance did Joseph receive? From whom?

*The Holy Spirit? Joseph felt the hair on his neck stand up. That's what Mary had said. Her words exactly. The baby in her was from God alone. He blinked a few times and nodded. "Mary told me that."*

*A look of utter truth shone in the angel's face. "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."*

THE FAMILY OF JESUS, page 19

Throughout the Bible, angels communicate significant actions or information to people. Through an angel, God reassured and directed Joseph when he needed it most. The angel confirmed to Joseph what had also been revealed to Mary.

What situation has most challenged your ability to trust?

How do you relate to Joseph?

This young man's trust in God would be challenged throughout his life. While Joseph allowed God to use him in His magnificent story of redemption, the ultimate story is God's.

# LIVING IN GOD'S STORY

## GOING DEEPER

*Home study can help you better understand God's work in Joseph's life—and in your own. You may want to read the biblical narrative about Joseph, in Matthew 1:16–2:25 and Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–52. For more insights about Joseph in The Family of Jesus, read chapter 1 (pp. 1–38).*

*In learning to love Jesus more by studying the people who knew Him best, you can also discover principles for relating to your family. Use this unique opportunity to build a stronger home as you learn more about Jesus and His family.*

### DAY 1

## WHEN THE TIME WAS RIGHT

---

Four hundred years of silence hung over the Jewish people since a prophet (Malachi) had spoken on behalf of God. Now all of Israel was waiting. For a sign or a prophet. For the Messiah.

The Hebrew word *Messiah* means “Anointed One”; *Christos*, or Christ, is its translation in Greek. Jesus, the name Joseph was to give the Son born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20–21), means “Yahweh saves” or “the Lord saves.”<sup>1</sup> Salvation of sins would be for “His people.” The fact that only God can save—we cannot save ourselves—is even expressed in identifying the Son of God.

In the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John uniquely share the good news of Jesus as the Promised One. Matthew shows how the Messiah is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, especially resonating with his Jewish audience. Luke, a Gentile and early church historian, highlights Jesus as fully divine Son of God and fully human Son of Man, identifying with all our needs and sorrows.

Read each prophecy and corresponding Old Testament Scripture (left column). Draw lines to match the prophecy to its New Testament fulfillment (right column). How do you see God preparing the world for the Messiah?

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT

*Jesus would be:*

Born of a woman (Genesis 3:15)

Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:26-31

Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-6

Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)

Luke 1:32-33; Romans 1:3

Descended from Abraham  
(Genesis 12:3; 22:18)

Matthew 1:20; Galatians 4:4

Heir to King David's throne  
(2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 9:7)

Matthew 1:1; Romans 9:5;  
Galatians 3:8,16

While the people had not heard from God for so long, He was at work creating the perfect time for His Son to come to earth. Many things were working together for the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah, for Jesus' ministry, and for the writing of the New Testament.

History tells us there were six major Israelite time periods immediately before and including the 400 years of silence: Persian, highlighted by Cyrus' overcoming the Babylonian Empire and the Temple being rebuilt; Greek, with Alexander the Great; Egyptian, with Ptolemy; Syrian, with Antiochus III the Great and Antiochus IV Epiphanes; Maccabean, with Judas Maccabeus; and Roman, which included Herod and Caesar. (Also see the article "What Happened During Those 400 Years?", p. 140.)

The Romans built vast road systems that made it easier for the early Christians to spread the gospel. Also, the Greek language spread throughout the world, making it easier for people to communicate.

Exodus 32 describes how, centuries earlier, the Israelites rebelled when Moses stayed on the mountain for 40 days. Now God had been silent 400 years!

In what sense do you think God's people had made progress in faithfulness?  
In what sense do you think they were practicing the same old unfaithfulness?

Think of our society today. In what ways have we made progress in waiting for God to speak and in obeying Him? How have we stayed the same or even gotten worse?

Now think about your life. How have you grown in godliness? In what ways do you struggle with the same old temptations or sins?

In Old Testament times, a divinely-appointed task was often connected to an office such as prophet or king. These leaders were viewed as anointed or designated for a special task by Yahweh, Israel's God. Israelite kings, beginning with Saul and especially referring to David, were particularly viewed as Yahweh's anointed. The oracle spoken by Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 reflects the hope of Israel for David's dynasty to continue for succeeding generations and to include the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> The Jews linked the inauguration of God's new kingdom to the kingdom of Israel, which would never end.

Focused on the hope of a Messiah from King David's lineage, Joseph's generation was pinning their hopes on a royal Messiah, a powerful king. They anticipated triumphant, resounding victory over their oppressors—not the quiet whisper of an infant's cry.

*Read Luke 2:1–18.*

*I believe you, Father. I do. But sometimes I wonder if I've missed something along the way. He [Joseph] glanced at the manger. A feeding trough? For the King of the world? Bugs and animals and flies? Joseph wasn't sure what he had expected for the child's birth, but he hadn't expected this.*

THE FAMILY OF JESUS, page 28

What expectations do you have of the Son of God?

Compare the angels' declaration of Jesus' birth, in Luke 2, to Paul's description of Jesus' nature, in Philippians 2:

But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!

LUKE 2:10-14

Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.

Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men.

And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.

For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

For Jesus to come to earth as a helpless baby rather than a powerful ruler was the epitome of humility. God's Son willingly gave up His rights and His throne, becoming flesh to live among us, revealing the Father to us (see John 1:14), Jesus fully identified with humanity, yet was without sin. In Him, we see both the love and power of God.

Be assured that one day He *will* return as King of kings and Lord of lords, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (see Rom. 14:11).

*Read Galatians 4:4–5.*

When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

What relationship did Jesus come to establish?

How do you praise God for the gift of His Son?



WANT TO READ MORE?

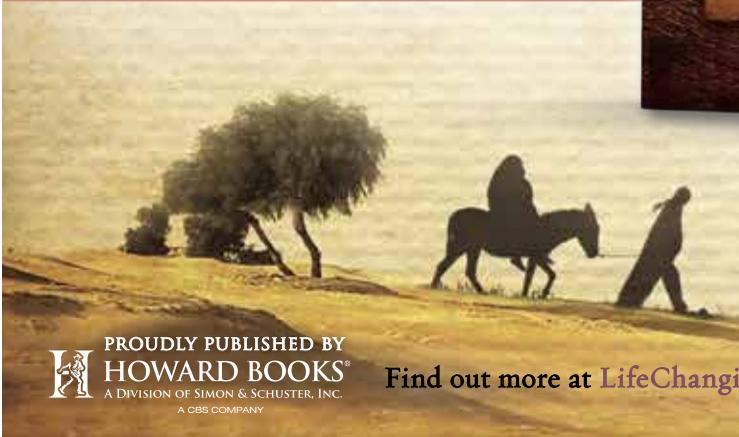
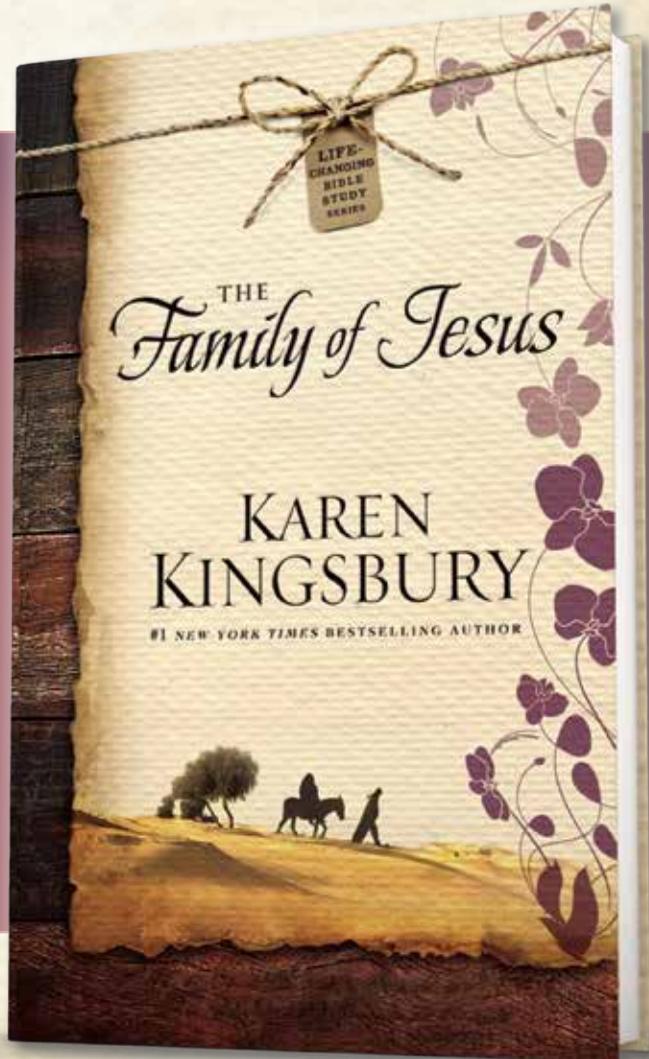
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brother James, John the Baptist,  
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also helps readers experience an  
unprecedented emotional connection  
to the Scriptures, and ultimately  
draws them closer to Christ.



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