



WEEK ONE

We have hope because God is with us.

Scripture: Matthew 1:1–17

Reflection

Sometimes, when we tell the story of Jesus, we begin with his mother Mary. That is a good place to start. But the Gospel of Matthew begins the story thousands of years before Mary was born. Matthew begins with a list of all the ancestors who came before Jesus. It is a long list with names you may have never heard before. Matthew's list sounds like this:

"Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar..."

And it continues like that until the end of the list where it says,

"And Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations."

$14 + 14 + 14 =$ how many generations between Abraham and Jesus? So many years and so many people!

Throughout those generations, there were ups and downs for the Jewish people. The people of Israel experienced slavery, freedom, prosperity, suffering, and exile. There were times they almost lost hope. But God was with them.

If you study Matthew's list carefully, you will find names of admirable people with integrity, problematic people who caused suffering, and people from other countries who never expected to find themselves in Israel's story. God was present with all of them, showing the way, whether they chose the best path or not.

Matthew's list reminds us that even if our stories are imperfect or take unexpected turns, there is hope for our future because God is with us.

For Discussion

- Grown-ups, have you ever felt scared about being a parent? What did you hope for? How did hope help you be brave? Tell the story to your children.
- If someone told the story of your family, where and when would they begin?
- Where do you find hope in your family story?
- What does your family hope for now?
- Read this sentence together and share your thoughts: *We have hope because God is with us.*