

# Growing in God's Love

## A Story Bible Curriculum

### At-Home Kit Instructions

Dear Family of First Presbyterian Church,

Here is your at-home kit! This kit is designed to engage your family in exploring this unit on *The Birth of Jesus*, with 5 stories that have questions and activities for you to do together. There are three activities to do, called The Story, Around the Table, and Family Activity. You can do these activities at your pace, and you don't have to do everything all in the same day or in one sitting. Read the at-home kit instructions sheet to see what to do for this unit.

- 🌿 **The Story**—This is the easy part! Read or listen to one of the stories from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* together as a family. You can find a video of Pastor Rachel recording the story each week in the Virtual Sunday School Classroom. You will see a whiteboard with the words "The Birth of Jesus" written on it, and when you click those words you will be taken to a Youtube video with the reading. The video will change each week with each story. There will also be some questions asked for your child to consider that you can talk about together.
- 🌿 **Around the Table**—This section contains wondering questions that everyone can discuss about the story. Wondering questions have no right or wrong answers. They are meant to evoke imagination and further discussion as everyone thinks about the story and wrestles with their place in it. A great time to ask these questions is during a family meal or at another time when your family can gather together.
- 🌿 **Family Activity**—There are several suggestions for activities you can do together as a family. Choose one that works best for your family. Some activities require supplies found in this kit or things you may have at home. If you are missing something, feel free to substitute or adapt the activity. There are book and/or video suggestions that may be included in a session. You can borrow a book if it is in your local library, purchase a book, or watch a read-aloud version online. Internet links are provided in the at-home kit instructions.

We hope this helps your family learn about the stories of the Bible and guides you through talking about faith in your home. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Rachel or a member of the Christian Education Committee.

Blessings,  
Pastor Rachel

# At-Home Kit Instructions

- In this kit, you will find:
  - ✦ At-home kit letter to families
  - ✦ Instructions on how your family can listen to the stories by clicking on the whiteboard in the Virtual Sunday School Classroom. You can find the classroom in the weekly Banner newsletter or on the church website at [www.firstpresconcord.org](http://www.firstpresconcord.org).
  - ✦ Activities for your family to do and many questions for discussion and learning together.
- The Story

For the next five weeks we will read from **The Birth of Jesus** unit:

  - ✦ How Can This Happen? (Luke 1:26-38)- **November 29**
  - ✦ A Prophet is Born (Luke 1:5-21, 57-80)- **December 6**
  - ✦ A Baby is Born (Luke 2:1-7)- **December 13**
  - ✦ Surprise Visitors (Luke 2:8-20)- **December 20**
  - ✦ Visitors from the East (Matthew 2:1-12)- **December 27**

While these stories are familiar, their familiarity gives us a reason to stop and wonder about them.

  - I wonder how Mary told her parents about the message Gabriel gave her.
  - I wonder who the shepherds told about the angels and the baby in the manger and who believed them.
  - I wonder what Mary said when the visitors from the east showed up at her door.
  - I wonder where Joseph was when the magi came.
  - I wonder how to get beyond the Christmas trappings and celebrate the essence of these stories.
- The following pages will include the “Around the Table” conversation questions and the options for family activities. Feel free to do as few or as many activities as you choose. The activities will help your child and family engage through creativity, storytelling, spiritual practices, and service and mission opportunities.

# At-Home Kit Instructions

## How Can This Happen (Luke 1:26-38)- November 29

### ○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- Have you ever been asked to do something that sounded impossible or scary or confusing?
- What did you do?
- Why do you think Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of God's son, Jesus?
- What would it have been like for a young girl to hear this news?
- Mary was brave in saying yes. What brave thing have you done lately?

### ○ Family Activity: Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

#### • *Brave Decisions*

- Wonder together how Mary was brave.
- Read *Nobody Rides the Unicorn* by Adrian Mitchell (Arthur A. Levine, 2000) or watch the YouTube video "Nobody Rides the Unicorn" ([bit.ly/NobodyRidesTheUnicorn](https://bit.ly/NobodyRidesTheUnicorn), 7:17).
  - How is Zoe like Mary?
  - How can we use our voices to be brave and outspoken, saying yes to God's call to do what is right in our world?

#### • *Saying Yes*

- God chose Mary, an ordinary girl from a small town, to be the mother of Jesus. Ask your child to think about what they can do to be brave and follow what God wants us to do. When they are faced with big moments of injustice or doing the right thing, some children think they are too young or too little. Remind them of their power and their voice.
- Provide paper and colored pencils. Have your child write "I will..." in the middle of a piece of paper. Invite them to take a moment to think about something they could do or try that requires them to be brave. Using the colored pencils, ask them to draw or write something new that they will be brave about. Assist with writing as needed.

#### • *Telling the Story*

- Provide paper and drawing supplies. Retell the story and invite your child to draw the story as they hear it. Invite everyone in the family to draw the story as they hear it. Talk about what is similar and what is different among the retellings and the pictures.
- Show the pictures on Resource Pages 1, 2, and 3. Tell your child that these are different artist's ideas of the same story they told and drew pictures about. Wonder what these pictures say about the angel's news and Mary's feelings.
  1. Do any of the pictures show Mary the way you imagined her?
  2. What feelings do you see in Mary?
  3. What is similar and different in your pictures and these artists' pictures?

# At-Home Kit Instructions

How Can This Happen?  
Resource Page 1



Henry Ossawa Tanner / Public domain



# At-Home Kit Instructions

How Can This Happen?  
Resource Page 2



*The Annunciation*, by Adriaen van de Velde, 1667 /Shutterstock



# At-Home Kit Instructions

How Can This Happen?  
Resource Page 3



Mosaic in Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth, Israel, by meunierd / Shutterstock

# At-Home Kit Instructions

## A Prophet is Born (Luke 1:5-21, 57-80)- December 6

### ○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- What did Elizabeth and Zechariah pray for?
- How long did they wait for their prayers to be answered?  
Where was Zechariah when the angel Gabriel appeared to him?  
What did the angel Gabriel tell Zechariah?  
What happened to Zechariah?  
What was the baby's name?  
What did Zechariah tell his son, John, about his future?
- How old do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth were?  
How do you think Zechariah felt when he heard the angel Gabriel's message?
- What might it have felt like for Zechariah to be unable to speak and share the big news from the angel?
- How do you think Zechariah felt when he was able to speak again?
- What do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit as Zechariah was? What do you think it feels like?
- How do you think John felt about his future as he grew up knowing God had a special plan for him?

### ○ Family Activity: Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

- *When I Grow Up*
  - Wonder together what special plan God has for the children. Tell your child that they are a child of God, are loved by God, and have a purpose in God's world. Using Resource Page 2. Read the prompts aloud, and invite your child to write or draw in the spaces provided. Encourage your child to share, as they wish, what their thoughts are about their futures.
- *Baby Stories at Home*
  - Elizabeth and Zechariah prayed for a baby for a long time. As a family, with your child share pictures—or a baby book—of them when they were little. Tell stories about when they were born and the hopes they had for them then and now.
- *Names*
  - The angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son is to be named John. Look up the meaning of your first and middle name online. Share stories of who people in your family were named after and why.
- *Picturing the Story*
  - Invite the children to draw or paint a picture of their choice from the list below. Once they have finished their pictures, have them display them in order and tell the story in their own words.
    1. The angel Gabriel
    2. A picture of Zechariah and Elizabeth
    3. Zechariah at the temple
    4. A birth announcement for John
    5. The community celebrating John's birth
    6. A part of Zechariah's prophecy from Luke 1:76-79

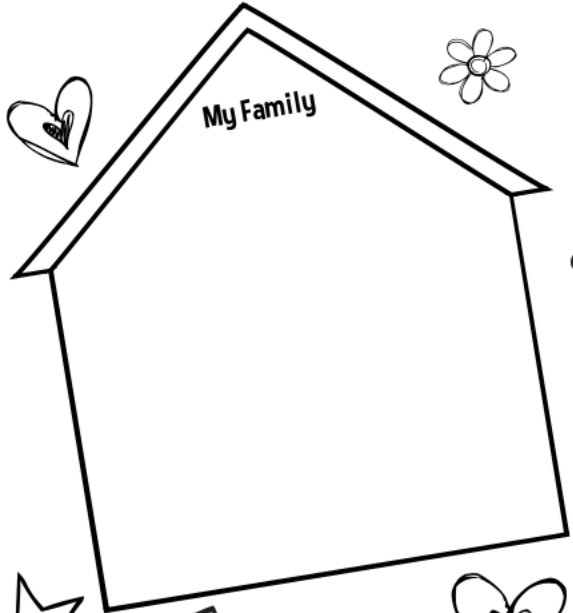


# At-Home Kit Instructions

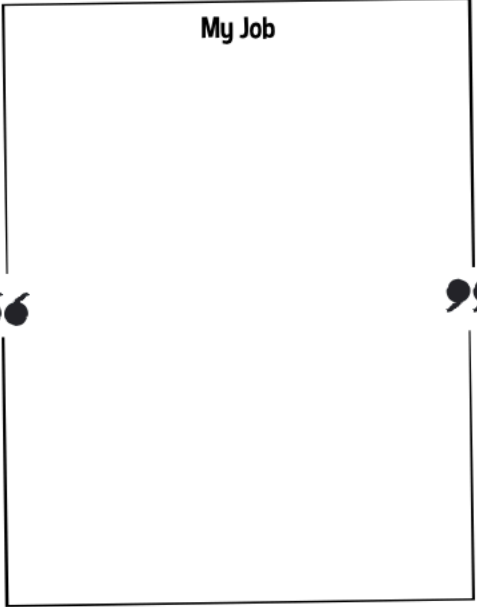
A Prophet Is Born  
Resource Page 2

## When I Grow Up

Name \_\_\_\_\_



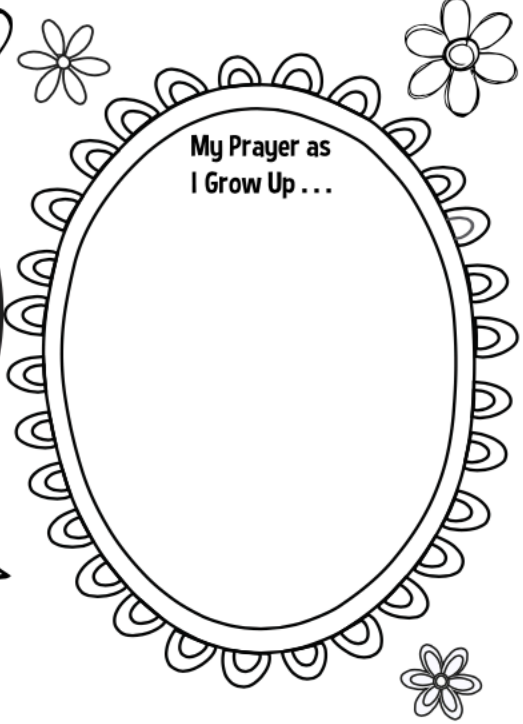
My Family



My Job



I will make God's world a better place by ...



My Prayer as I Grow Up ...



# At-Home Kit Instructions

## A Baby is Born (Luke 2:1-7)- December 13

### ○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- If Mary's baby was born in the room where the animals stayed, what sounds do you think he heard?
- What do you think the room smelled like?
- Who else was in the room?
- What animals do you think were in the room where Jesus was born?
- What noises do you think the animals made?
- How do you think Mary and Joseph were feeling after Jesus was born?

### ○ Family Activity: Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

#### ● *Creation Sings*

- Tell the children that Jesus being born into the world was a gift to all creation. Imagine together how different parts of creation might celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- Read *Song of the Stars* by Sally Lloyd-Jones (or watch the YouTube video "Song of the Stars by Sally Lloyd Jones" ([bit.ly/SongOfTheStarsVideo](https://bit.ly/SongOfTheStarsVideo), 4:32) and talk about how creation celebrated the gift of Jesus in the world as this author imagined it.
- Wonder together how creation may have rejoiced when each child was born. Read *On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillman or watch the YouTube video "On the Night You Were Born" ([bit.ly/OnTheNightYouWereBorn](https://bit.ly/OnTheNightYouWereBorn), 4:07) and talk about how each child is a gift to the world.

#### ● *Giving a Gift*

- You are a gift to your family. You are a gift to your church community. God has given us the gift of God's son Jesus in the world. Wonder together how you can show God's love by giving gifts to others.
- Collect clothes, toys, or other items for babies in your community. Talk to your pastors or church leaders about families in need in your church or in your community that may be welcoming a new baby soon.

#### ● *Telling Your Arrival Story*

- Invite your child to make a booklet with the story of their arrival into their family. Cut paper into quarters and have them draw a picture on each page. Staple the pages together. Use the following questions and others the children suggest as prompts for their books:
  1. What was the day like? (*time of year, day/ month, weather*) What did you look like?
  2. Who was waiting for your arrival? What did anyone say or do?

#### ● *Telling the Story of Jesus' Birth*

- Print out a copy of Resource Page 2 and invite your child to color the picture. As they color, invite them to tell the story of Jesus' birth. Suggest that they add details about what the journey to Bethlehem was like, the time of day, the weather, Mary and Joseph's feelings, the scene around them, others who might have been there, and so forth. Encourage them to use their imaginations!

# At-Home Kit Instructions

A Baby Is Born  
Resource Page 2



# At-Home Kit Instructions

## Surprise Visitors (Luke 2:8-20)- December 20

### ○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- Where were the shepherds? What were they doing? What time of day was it?
- Who visited the shepherds?
- What was the message that was given?
- What did the shepherds do?
- Who do you think were the surprise visitors? The shepherds? The angels? Both?
- Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first visitors to see Jesus?
- How do you think the shepherds felt as they traveled to see the baby Jesus?
- How do you think the shepherds felt as they left baby Jesus?
- How would you feel if you were chosen to be the first visitor?
- How do you feel when you are given a good message?
- People love hearing good news. How could you tell the good news of this story to others?
- What message would you have to give?

### ○ Family Activity: Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

#### • *Telling the Story*

- Invite your child to choose one of the following ways to tell the story again:
  1. Use props, such as a stuffed animal lamb, a shepherd's staff, angel wings and/or halo, or a baby doll, to tell the story.
  2. Make a comic strip of the story. Provide white paper and have your child brainstorm what scenes they would like to portray. Have them draw that number of boxes on one or more sheets of paper. Simple stick figures and short text work well.
  3. Write a skit with characters, dialogue, and stage direction.
  4. Create a sculpture of one or more scenes from the story using play dough.

#### • *Remembering*

- Wonder together what Mary wanted to remember about this special night and what she heard from the shepherds, what the shepherds wanted to remember, and what we want to remember. Provide index cards, and invite your child to write or draw a picture of what they want to remember from this story. Encourage them to post it somewhere they can see it each day.

#### • *Field Trip*

- Take a trip to an open field or pasture at night. If you cannot travel to a field, do this activity in a darkened room.
  - Experience the darkness.
  - Read Luke 2:8–14.
  - Imagine how the shepherds felt when the darkness was dispelled by the “glory of the Lord” and an angel appeared. Think about how you would feel. If possible, have someone light the darkness with a bright light.
- Talk together about times when something unexpected happened. Maybe it was an unexpected phone call, an unexpected message, or an unexpected visit.



## At-Home Kit Instructions

- What did you do?
- How did it change your life?
- Who did you want to tell?
- Did you ponder it as Mary did?
- *Being a Shepherd*
  - Offer someone care by offering food, giving protection, guiding and helping, or providing shelter. If unable to do this firsthand, you can shepherd by supporting a mission.
  - Make cookies and take them to a homebound person in your congregation.
  - Help a new friend in school or work.
  - Play a game together as a family or do something fun safely with another family.

# At-Home Kit Instructions

## Visitors from the East (Matthew 2:1-12)- December 27

### ○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- How do you think the magi knew which star to follow?
- Why do you think the magi brought gifts for Jesus?
- Why was King Herod unhappy?
- Why do you think they didn't tell King Herod where Jesus was?
- Why do you think the magi returned home by a different route?
- What do you think the magi were feeling as they headed home after seeing Jesus?
- What were the magi feeling when they met King Herod?
- What were the magi feeling when they met Jesus?
- Why did the magi give Jesus gifts?
- Why did the magi go home by a different route? g What do you think the magi talked about on their way home?

### ○ Family Activity: Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

#### • Stars

- Share what you know about stars. Watch the YouTube video "What Are Stars?" ([bit.ly/WhatAreStars](https://bit.ly/WhatAreStars), 3:38). Ask the group when they have seen stars that are really bright.
- Learn about different constellations. Watch the YouTube video "Constellations: Connect the Dots in the Sky" ([bit.ly/ConnectTheDotsInTheSky](https://bit.ly/ConnectTheDotsInTheSky), 3:44). Wonder together how the magi knew what star to follow and why God used a star to guide the magi. If you're able to, go outside to look at the stars and search for a constellation such as Orion's Belt or the Big Dipper.

#### • Sharing Our Gifts

- Cut out stars on a bright sheet of paper.
- Invite all the people in your family to think about a gift—whether that be a talent, spiritual gift, or material gift—that they want to give to someone else to honor Jesus. Invite people to write that word or commitment on the star.
- Encourage your family to put their star on their bathroom mirror or refrigerator as a reminder to honor Jesus by giving that gift to someone this week.

#### • Providing Care for Travelers and People Who Are Far from Home

- The magi had to travel a long time—over two years—to reach Jesus. Discuss how your church or family can care for people in your community who have to travel away from their homes. These people may be patients seeking treatment at a local hospital, refugees, college students, new students, immigrants, or someone who has recently moved to your area to begin a new job. Discuss how you can care for and offer hospitality to these travelers. Commit to doing one or two things to care for the travelers in your community.

#### • Giving Gifts

- Remind your child that the magi brought Jesus gifts to honor him. Wonder together:
  1. What do you think it means to honor someone?
  2. Why do you think these were the gifts the magi brought to Jesus?
  3. What gift would you bring to honor Jesus and why?

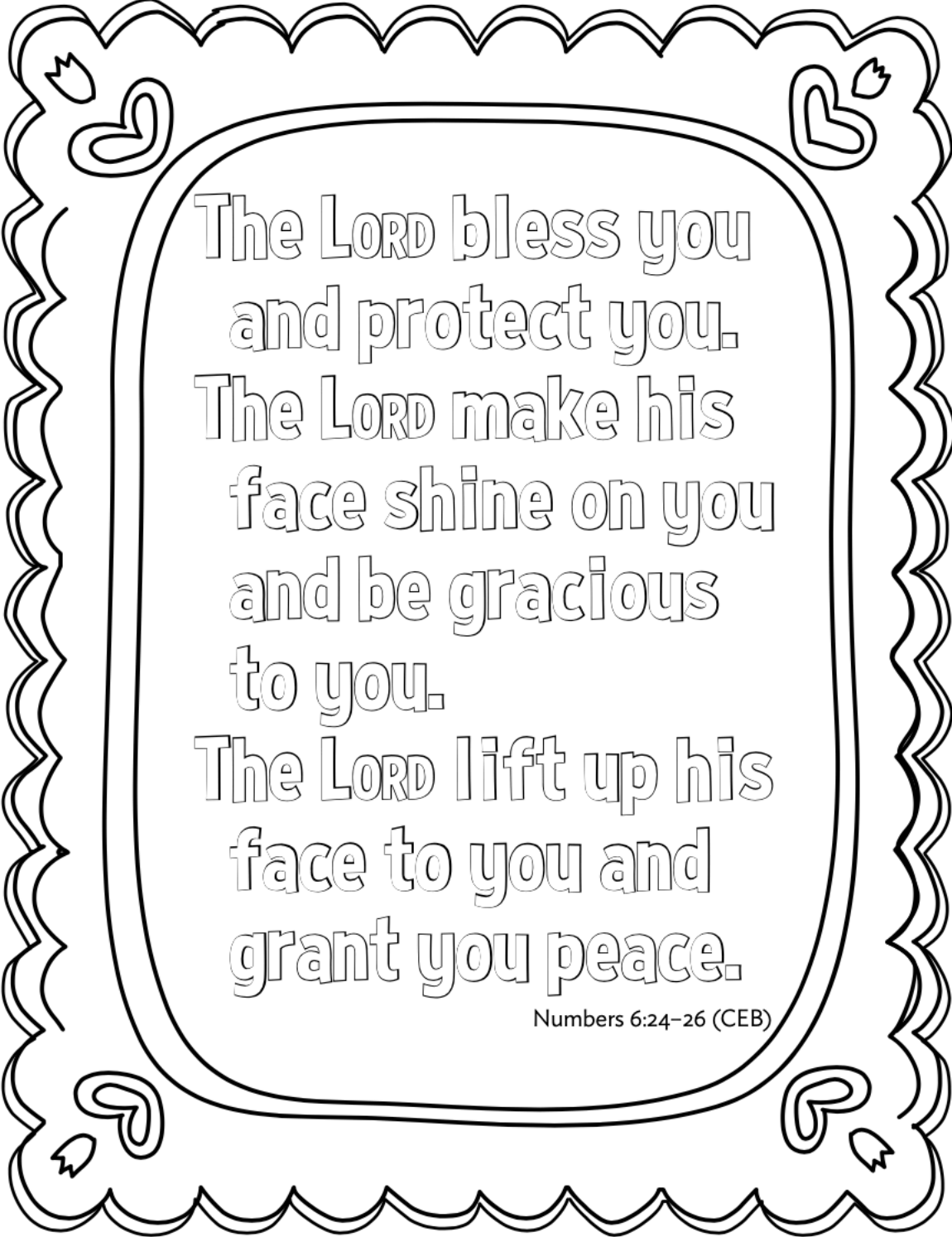
## At-Home Kit Instructions

- Watch the YouTube video, “Giving Gifts for Kids in Need at Seattle Children’s Hospital” ([bit.ly/GivingGiftsVideo](https://bit.ly/GivingGiftsVideo), 2:47). Suggest that the children in the video gave gifts to the children in the hospital understanding the difficult time it is in the lives of the hospitalized children. Recognizing that need honors those children. Ask your child to brainstorm who they could give gifts to and what gifts they could give that would honor the recipients.
- *Telling Stories*
  - Invite the children to tell stories about gifts using the following questions as prompts:
    - What is the best gift you’ve ever received? Why? How did you feel?
    - What is the best gift you’ve ever given? Why? How did you feel?
    - What are some of the gifts God has given to you?
    - How can you share these gifts with others?
- *Traveling Blessing*
  - Print out a copy of Resource Page 2. Encourage your child to color it and hang it up by the front door at home. Suggest that they say the blessing to guests or friends when they leave.



## At-Home Kit Instructions

Visitors from the East  
Resource Page 2



The LORD bless you  
and protect you.  
The LORD make his  
face shine on you  
and be gracious  
to you.  
The LORD lift up his  
face to you and  
grant you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26 (CEB)