

OUT OF THE BLUE: SIX SURPRISING TALES FROM JESUS' FAMILY TREE SAMPLE

AN ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

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Introduction for pastors and ministry leaders

This is an Advent and Christmas pageant... of sorts. After all, most Christmas pageants feature more fluffy sheep than Hebrew Bible tricksters, mischief-makers, and wayward spies. Like Barn Geese Worship's *Out of the Blue: Advent Devotions* and *Midweek Worship*, this pageant is grounded in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and in Luke's story of Jesus' birth. Because it contains so many Bible stories, this pageant has the potential to be more than a pageant. It could be anything from Sunday School curriculum for the entire Advent season to the core of an intergenerational Advent night to an opportunity for all the ministries of your congregation to come together in one project.

A tree that has been cut down will often sprout a plethora of new shoots from the stump. It doesn't look anything like the neat artistic images of the tree of Jesse with one elegant green shoot. It looks like a hot mess. So does Jesus' family tree. God can work with the messiness of Jesus' family tree. God can work with the messiness of ours, too.

What do I need to pull this off?

Participants: If you present this pageant with the prerecorded option above, you will need a minimum of five people, because the same people could play different parts in every story. The largest number of characters in any one story is eight (Bathsheba's story), which could be played by five people. On the other hand, if each role is played by a different person, you will need about thirty-two people. This option may be more suited to a live-action performance.

Technology: If you choose the prerecorded performance option, you will need a way to record or photograph participants. Smartphones work just fine! You will also need a way to display the videos or photos. If your congregation doesn't have screens or speakers in the sanctuary, consider using a social hall or a classroom with a screen.

Supplies for telling the stories: Your needs will depend on how your participants want to tell their stories. Do you need puppets or art supplies, costumes or simple props? Think through the options in advance so that you can present your participants with an array of possibilities.

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An Advent and Christmas Pageant

Beginning

NARRATOR.

A long, long time ago, there lived a couple who were preparing for the birth of a baby. Their names were Mary and Joseph. The baby was a big surprise, to say the least.

MARY.

Joseph, I'm pregnant.

JOSEPH.

What? When? How?

NARRATOR.

Through the words of angelic messengers, God assured the couple that the child born to them would be holy, and would be called Son of God, and they were to name him Jesus.

While they were preparing for the birth of the baby, an order came from the emperor that all the world must be counted. Every person in the empire was required to return to the hometown of their ancestors to be counted in this census.

So Mary and Joseph set out from their home in Nazareth to the home of Joseph's ancestors in Bethlehem.

The couple maybe didn't know each other very well yet.

MARY.

So, nice day.

JOSEPH.

Mmmhmmm.

MARY.

Also, you're kinda walking a bit fast, you know.

JOSEPH.

This is how fast I walk. I'm just walking. It kinda hurts for me to walk slower. You ever have that problem?

MARY.

Currently it hurts me to walk... like... *at all*.

JOSEPH, *slowing his pace*.

Oh.

I'm sorry.

MARY, *after a bit*.

It's kind of pretty out here in the countryside.

JOSEPH.

Mmmhmmm.

MARY.

Joseph, we have a long way to go. You are going to have to say something more than mmmhmmm.

JOSEPH.

Mmmhmmm?

MARY.

Why don't you tell me a story? Something about yourself. Or something about your family! I am looking forward to meeting some of them in Bethlehem.

JOSEPH.

Mmmhmmm... Actually, I've been meaning to talk to you about that.

MARY, *visibly relieved*.

Oh! You have?

JOSEPH.

We're going to have to find an inn.

MARY.

An inn?! Why?! I thought your whole family was from Bethlehem. Surely we could stay with your parents! Your cousin, maybe, that you mentioned, the one with the huge carpentry shop?

JOSEPH.

Yeah, no. My family's actually kind of a mess.

MARY.

But you're a descendant of King David. You brag about it all the time.

JOSEPH.

Well, yes. But we're all a mess. We've always been a mess. Even David. Especially David!

MARY.

Okay, now you have got to tell me more. How are you all a mess? Exactly what kind of mess are we talking about here?

Family Story 1: Abraham and Sarah

JOSEPH.

Just think about Abraham and Sarah. You may remember the story.

Scripted Version

NARRATOR.

There was once a woman named Sarai.

She had a husband named Abram.

When they were young, Sarai and Abram hoped to have kids.

SARAI.

Honey, I would love to have a big family someday.

ABRAM.

That would be nice.

NARRATOR.

Then they got old. But they still had no children.

SARAI.

Once I thought we would have a nice family. But we are running out of time...

ABRAM.

I'm sorry, honey, don't be sad. Aren't I enough?

SARAI.

Not really.

NARRATOR.

Abram worshiped a great God. The *greatest* God.

GOD.

Hey, Abram.

ABRAM.

Oh, hey, God.

GOD.

Why so glum?

ABRAM.

Well, Sarai and I are sad. We don't have any kids.

GOD.

Well, if you want a kid, I can give you a kid.

ABRAM.

Really? But we're old.

GOD.

Look at the stars.

NARRATOR.

Abram looked at the stars.

ABRAM.

'That's a lot of stars.

GOD.

How about I give you a family that big?

ABRAM.

You can do that?

GOD.

Yeah. But I'll probably make you wait for it.

ABRAM.

'That's okay! I can be patient.

NARRATOR.

God made Abram wait for it. They waited ten years.

SARAI.

Hey, Abram. I'm tired of waiting for a kid. I think God doesn't want me to have a baby.

ABRAM.

We have to be patient!

SARAI.

This is getting ridiculous. Go have a baby with my servant Hagar. Maybe I can adopt her.

NARRATOR.

Hagar got pregnant. But Sarai didn't like that very much.

SARAI.

Now I *know* this isn't fair.

NARRATOR.

Sarai was very angry. She hit Hagar and Hagar ran away. God found Hagar in the wilderness.

GOD.

Hey, Hagar.

HAGAR.

Hey, God.

GOD.

Why so glum?

HAGAR.

I got pregnant and then Sarai was very mean to me. And now I will die in the desert.

GOD.

Don't worry. I will take good care of you.

NARRATOR.

And God did.

Then Abram saw God again.

ABRAM.

Hey, God.

GOD.

Hey, Abram. Why so glum?

ABRAM.

Well, you promised we would have a big family but we're still waiting.

Hagar got pregnant. But now Sarai is angry.

GOD.

That's because you excluded her.

ABRAM.

What?

GOD.

Sarai thinks I made a promise only to you. But she is a part of the promise, too.

NARRATOR.

God made Abram wait a little while longer. So long that he was almost ready to die.

Then God made another promise to Abram.

GOD.

Hey, Abram.

ABRAM.

Hey, God.

GOD.

Why so glum?

ABRAM.

Well, you know.

GOD.

I know I have made you wait. But I will still keep my promise. I am changing your name to Abraham. That is a sign that the promise will come true. And Sarai's name will now be Sarah.

NARRATOR.

Abram had waited so long. Instead of a baby, God was giving Abram a new name! He thought it was so funny he fell over laughing.

GOD.

Trust me! Just wait one year and you will have a baby.

NARRATOR.

Shortly after, God showed up at Abraham's house. This time Sarah was there.

GOD.

Hey, Abraham.

ABRAHAM.

Oh, you're just in time for dinner. Want some food?

GOD.

Sure thing. I just came to tell you that you'll have that baby soon.

NARRATOR.

Sarah heard this. And just like Abraham, she started to laugh.

GOD.

Hey, why is she laughing?

ABRAHAM.

Uhhhh....

GOD.

Just wait one more year. And I promise by this time you will have a baby.

NARRATOR.

And that is what happened! Sarah became pregnant. And by that time next year they had a baby. They named the baby Isaac, which means *laughter*. They named him that because Sarah laughed when she heard she was going to have a baby. But Abraham had also laughed. Isaac was their pride and joy.

Narrated Version

NARRATOR.

There was once a woman named Sarai. She had a husband named Abram.

When they were young, Sarai and Abram hoped to have kids. Sarai always imagined having a big family.

But they got old. And they still had no children.

Abram worshiped a great God. The *greatest* God.

God noticed that Abram was glum, and asked him why he was so sad.

Abram told God that he and Sarai were sad because they didn't have any kids.

God assured Abram that God could give them a kid even though they were old. In fact, God could give them a family as big as all the stars in the night sky. Abram would just have to wait for it.

Abram assured God he could be patient. God made them wait for ten years.

After all that time, Sarai began to think God didn't want her to have a baby. She told Abram to go have a baby with her servant Hagar. She thought maybe then she could adopt Hagar and her baby into the family.

So Hagar got pregnant. But Sarai didn't like that very much. It just didn't seem fair.

Sarai became very angry. She hit Hagar and Hagar ran away.

God found Hagar in the wilderness and asked her why she was glum.

Hagar told God that she was sad because she got pregnant, just like Sarai wanted, but then Sarai was very mean. Hagar thought she would die in the desert.

God promised to take good care of Hagar, and God did.

Then Abram saw God again, and again God asked Abram why he was so glum.

Abram told God they were still waiting on that promise of a big family. And that Sarai was angry because Hagar got pregnant.

God told Abram that's because Abram had excluded her from the promise. The promise wasn't just for Abram. It was for Sarai too.

God made Abram wait a little while longer. So long that he was almost ready to die.

Then God made another promise to Abram, and God changed his name to Abraham. It was a sign that the promise will come true. God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah, because she was part of the promise too.

Abram had waited so long. Instead of a baby, God was giving him a new name! He thought it was so funny he fell over laughing.

God told Abraham to wait just one more year and they would have a baby.

Shortly after, God showed up at Abraham's house. This time Sarah was there. God promised again that they would have the baby soon.

Sarah heard this. And just like Abraham, she started to laugh.

God promised they would have to wait just one more year, and by this time next year, they would have a baby.

And that is what happened! Sarah became pregnant. And by that time next year they had a baby. They named the baby Isaac, which means *laughter*. They named him that because Sarah laughed

when she heard she was going to have a baby. But Abraham had also laughed. Isaac was their pride and joy.