



DEVOTIONAL

We are including this free optional devotional add on as a guide to help you dive into scripture topics related to the unit study as a family. Each devotional will include a passage of scripture to read together, ideas of what other scripture to focus on, a memory verse, and a hymn to learn over the course of the unit. All scripture will be in the ESV version.





Caves are mentioned frequently in the Bible. Let's do a study on the verses that include the mention of caves. As you are reading through these verses, share what they were using the caves for. Was it for a home? For a hiding place? To bury the dead?

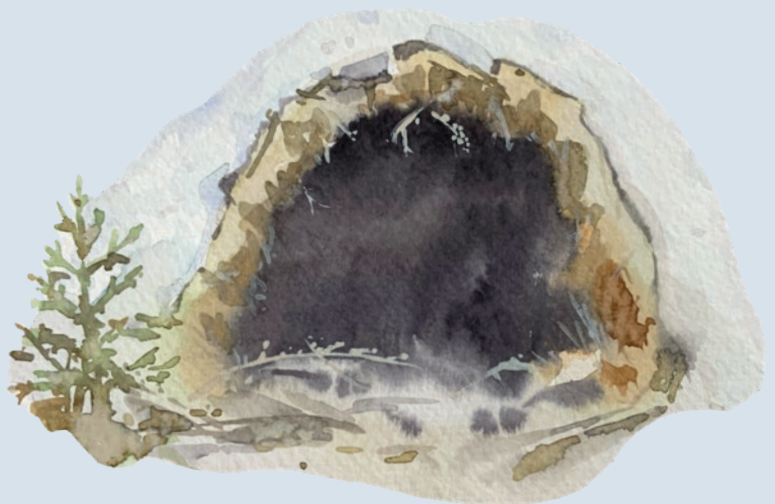
Genesis 19:30, Genesis 25:9-10, Genesis 49:30-31, Joshua 10:16
Judges 6:2, 1 Samuel 22:1-2, 1 Kings 18:4, 1 Kings 19:9

In Exodus 33:22, God put Moses in the cleft of a rock as God passed him. A cleft is a small opening of a rock which could be a small cave or the beginning of a cave.

Memory Verse: Exodus 33:22: and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Hymn Study: Wherever He Leads, I'll Go

This hymn was written in 1936 and began to take form as two friends were serving together at a conference. One of the friends, R.S. Jones, was a missionary and the other friend, B.B. McKinney was a hymn writer. At lunch, they were sharing what God had been doing in each of their lives. The missionary was sharing that he had a health issue that was preventing him from returning to Brazil, where he served. He shared that the news was heartbreaking. McKinney asked what Jones was going to do now that he wasn't returning to Brazil, and his response was the beginning of this great hymn. Jones said, "Wherever He leads, I'll go." McKinney wrote the entire hymn that evening and sang it the next day. Sharing what God is doing in our lives is so impactful! We may not have all the Bible knowledge or all the answers that the great theologians have, but we can share with people what God is doing in our lives. You never know who you will reach for Christ through sharing. Take some time during this unit study to ask people what God is doing in their lives and share what God has been doing in yours. It doesn't have to be a huge thing—God works in simple ways, too!





If you are a gardener and want a large wildflower garden with thousands of flowers, do you think it would work better to plant just a few seeds or many, many seeds? Many! When we plant seeds in our garden, we are sowing them. Sowing is another name for planting. When our wildflower gardens grow thousands of flowers and we cut the flowers to give to family, friends, and neighbors, we are reaping. Reaping is another word for cutting or gathering. The Bible often talks about sowing and reaping in spiritual terms. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says: The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 9:6

Paul was the author of 2 Corinthians and in this letter to the Corinthian church, he is urging the Christians there to give money generously to the Christians in Jerusalem in order to meet their needs. The Christians in Jerusalem were undergoing great persecution and had little resources. He is saying that if they give generously, they will reap generously. This doesn't mean that their money will come back to them necessarily, but they will grow spiritually because generosity leads to even greater generosity. God loves a cheerful giver!

Think about ways that you can be generous. This doesn't have to mean with money—you can be generous with your time and help people if they have a need. You can be generous with your talents. As a family, think about some ways that you can be generous to the people around you and then carry out that generosity! Generosity helps you to think outside of yourself and focus on others. Be generous and watch how it changes you!

Hymn Study: Jesus Paid it All

Take some time to listen to this hymn before we go further. What a great and powerful hymn! This hymn was written in 1865 by Elvina M. Hall. As Elvina was in church on a hot summer morning in Baltimore, Maryland, she became distracted with the sermon. Has that ever happened to you? She kept thinking about the cross and what it meant and words began to flood her brain. She didn't have any paper, so she grabbed her hymnbook and started writing down the words as they came to her. After the service, she handed her words to the pastor. As it turns out, the church organist had written music with no lyrics the same week! The lyrics of Elvina and the music of the organist fit perfectly together and a song was born. God is so great! He worked it out that the words and the music could be joined into one of the greatest hymns of all time.





Bears are mentioned quite a few times in the Bible. David fought off a bear with his hands while protecting his flock of sheep. In another Bible account, Elisha, a prophet of God, was being mocked by a large group of young people in Bethel for being bald. If you dig deeper, he probably was being mocked for his faith in God, rather than for not having hair. Open up your Bibles to 2 Kings 2:23-24 and read this story. Throughout the week, read through all of 2 Kings 2. I love to read the context surrounding the stories so that I can understand them better.

This was most likely a group of young men, not small children. It appears to be a large group since 42 of them were mauled by 2 large bears! Since these people were mocking Elisha, who was a prophet of God, they were also mocking God himself. How do you think God feels about being mocked? God will not be mocked. He sent 2 strong mother bears to demonstrate this!

Memory verse: Galatians 6:7: Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Think about other ways that people mock God and discuss them with your family.

Hymn Study: Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Did you read through all of 2 Kings chapter 2? If so, you saw that Elijah was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire! Can you even imagine? Take some time to listen to this hymn. This hymn was written by a freedman named Wallace Willis. Willis was a slave who had finally been set free! He wrote this song sometime before 1865. It talks about the hope that the slaves have in someday being set free...even if it wasn't until they reached heaven and experienced true freedom. The history of this hymn, called a spiritual, isn't completely known, but many historians say that there is deep meaning in the lines of this spiritual that may be communicating ways to escape slavery through the Underground Railroad. Have you ever heard of the Underground Railroad? It wasn't a railroad at all, but a secret system that the slaves created in order to escape slavery and find freedom in the north. There were other songs that the slaves wrote and passed on that explained ways of escaping. Two of these songs are: Wade in the Water, which taught them how to escape bloodhounds that were searching for escaped slaves, and Follow the Drinking Gourd which was actually a song map that used stars to guide them to the north and to freedom! Some historians believe that Swing Low, Sweet Chariot also had coded messages. It is such a beautiful song and shows us that our ultimate freedom is in Jesus and our blessed hope of living with Him forever.





I think it's so interesting to read about all the different homes animals make! God was so creative when he designed the different animals and gave them instincts about how to build their homes. Did Jesus have a home? We know that He had a mother and a father—Mary and Joseph—and that he had siblings. He had a home while He was growing up. What about as He got older and started His ministry?

In Matthew 8:19-20, we read: And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

At this time in Jesus' life, he was traveling around with His disciples and spent a lot of time in other peoples' homes and didn't appear to have a home to call His own. He was telling the scribe who said he would follow Jesus wherever He went that following Him was costly. It may mean giving up a lot of things! This doesn't mean we have to give up our houses in order to be a follower of Christ—it just means that we should be ready to give up everything if He happens to call us to that. Think about that for a few minutes. What if Jesus asked your family to give up your home and your things and sent you to a new place? How would that make you feel? What would be the most difficult thing to give up? This will look different for everyone. It would be difficult for me to give up my home because it is where I have been raising my children and it is where we gather. This story is also found in Luke 9:57-58. Read through this passage. Is it the same as the Matthew passage?

Memory Verse: Matthew 8:19-20

Hymn Study: What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Take some time to listen to this beautiful hymn. It is such an encouragement! The author of this hymn is Joseph Scriven who lived from 1820-1886. He wrote this as a poem and it later was translated into a song. Scriven had times of deep grief in his life. He was engaged to be married, but shortly before the wedding day, his bride drowned. This caused great grief for Scriven and he penned this poem. He didn't write it for the public, but wrote it out of his grief of his great loss and sent it to his mother, who was also dealing with grief. He shared the poem with a few close friends, also. It later went on to become a beloved hymn that can still comfort us today.





After a large natural disaster such as a major earthquake or devastating tsunami, people will often ask...If God is so good, why does He allow such things to happen? This is a difficult question. When God created the world, he made everything perfect, but when sin entered in, the world and everything in it started to decay. Sin has consequences for both people and for the whole creation. Natural disasters are often the result of the Earth falling deeper into decay. God could stop these disasters from happening, but sometimes He allows them and we do not know why. Even with natural disasters, we can trust that God is good and His plans are good. As a family, read Romans 8:18-25. Discuss this passage together. There is a time coming soon that Jesus will restore everything He has made and return it to the perfect state that He originally created. In the meantime, we have HOPE that what He says is true! We can have faith in the Lord because He has always shown himself to be faithful!

Memory Verse: Romans 8:24-25: For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

As you study natural disasters, find verses on natural disasters in the Bible. Revelation would be a good place to start. You can also go further and look up where God has caused the weather to change! I think those stories are so exciting! Our God is so powerful.

Hymn Study: Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty

This hymn was written by Reginald Heber who lived from 1783-1826. This song was inspired by Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:2-11. Read both of these passages together. As you can see in Revelation, the 4 living creatures sing day and night: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! Holy, Holy, Holy refers to the trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Take a few minutes to listen to this song.

Reginald Heber was born in England and enjoyed writing poetry. As he got older, he took up hymn writing. His most famous hymn was this hymn, but he also wrote many other hymns. Heber was a member of the Church of England and believe it or not, hymn singing was prohibited because they were thought to be extreme! He tried to persuade the church to allow hymns to be sung, but failed in his attempt. After he died in 1826, his wife published his volumes of hymns and they are sung worldwide today.

