Stories: When I was born…

December: Week 2

**Opening - Family Questions:**

1. What stories can you remember about the events surrounding your birth?
2. If an angel told your family that you were going to have another baby this year, what would you say?

(See below for the Howell family’s stories and answers)

**Reading Together:**

1. Intro*: Jesus doesn’t have a birth story like yours, or mine, or ANY of ours. When Jesus’ Mommy Mary found out she was going to have a baby, it was not from a doctor, and it was not from a hospital. It was from an angel! The angel told her that she was going to have a VERY special baby – her baby would be the Son of God. Do you think she was surprised? Do you think she was scared? Do you think she was happy or worried about becoming the Mother of Jesus? The angel also told Joseph that a special baby was coming, and this was before him and Mary even got married. Do you think he was scared, confused, or happy? Let’s read their stories and see what we can learn.\**

\*Note to Parents: Most children are not ready to fully understand the story of the immaculate conception. Many do not know what a “virgin” is, or how it is possible for a woman to have a baby when she isn’t married. Therefore, if you have to adapt the readings, or simply feel more comfortable just telling the stories, please do so. For our boys, we read the Biblical accounts, but we left out or adapted a few words or phrases (changing “virgin” to “woman,” or “how can this be since I am not married?” and we left out the phrase “he had no union with her” entirely.) Family Christmas worship just didn’t seem like the time to explain some of these things, but we still wanted our children to become familiar with the story in an age-appropriate way.

1. Read: Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-24
   1. Who do you think was more surprised by the angel’s news: Mary, or Joseph?
   2. Did Mary try to argue with God’s plans for her? What did she say?
   3. Did Joseph try to argue with God’s plans for him? What did he do?
   4. What does Luke 1:37 mean – “For nothing is impossible with God.”
      1. Do we believe this?
2. Quiz: It’s time to see how closely you were paying attention!
   1. Which month did the angel appear?
      1. The sixth
   2. What town was Mary living in?
      1. Nazareth, a town in Galilee
   3. Who was Joseph’s great-great-great-many-greats-grandfather?
      1. David
   4. Did the angel tell Mary or Joseph that they should name the baby “Jesus”?
      1. Both
   5. What was the name of the angel?
      1. Gabriel

**Apply**: *Every story in the Bible is there to teach us something about Jesus, and something about ourselves. Let’s try to think about what we can learn from this story:*

1. Mary and Joseph learned that their new baby was going to save everyone in the world from their sins.
   1. How did Jesus do this?
2. When Mary learned God’s plan for her life, she said, “I am the Lord’s servant.” She was willing to be what God wanted her to be!
   1. How can we become the Lord’s servants too?

**Closing Prayer**: *Dear Jesus, we want to be your servants. Thank you that you have a plan for our lives, just like you did for Jesus’ life. Thank you for sending Jesus to save us from our sins. Because He came and died for us, we want to live for Him. Please help us to do that! Amen.*

**Further Discussion for Moms, Dads, and Older Kids:**

1. If an angel were to reveal God’s plan for my life today, how would I respond?
2. What can we learn about faith from these stories of Mary and Joseph?
3. In what area of our lives do we need to believe that nothing is impossible with God?
4. How have we experienced Jesus lately as “Immanuel – God with us”?

Howell Family Responses (as promised above):

The twins were tugging on the tiny red and white lights as the rest of our family settled down around the new Christmas tree for worship.

“What stories do you remember Mommy and Daddy telling you about the time when you were born?” I asked Caleb and Toby.

“That I was in your tummy?” Toby volunteered.

“Well you were ALL in my tummy sweety,” I laughed, “but can you think of any other stories?”

A slow smile crossed Caleb’s face as he began, “I remember you couldn’t walk, Mommy.”

“I couldn’t walk?”

“Yeah,” he said, “right after you had me, you had stiches and you were hurting and you could hardly walk. But they took me in the place where they watch all the babies and you missed me! So you went limping out of your room, even though it hurt, because you just wanted to get me and snuggle me.”

I wrapped my arms around him, remembering those first few exhausting hours of being a Mommy, remembering the searing pain of each step mixed with the deep driving need to just hold my new baby. I kissed the top of his head and whispered, “I still want to snuggle you!” as he squirmed away.

“I remember that you took me to the doctor because I didn’t cry,” Toby laughed.

“I did!” I admitted, “I was so worried about you! When Caleb was a baby he cried and cried and cried all day, and then when you came, you never made a sound! You were just quiet, all the time, and I thought something was wrong with you.”

“Tell me again what the doctor said, Mommy?” Toby asked.

“He said, ‘You just have a good baby, ma’am.’ And that’s when I realized that Caleb was a stinker!” We chuckled together, Caleb faked embarrassment, but I think he’s proud of this. Toby is proud too – “Am I still good, Mommy?”

“Most of the time,” I winked. “Now it’s my turn. Did you know that before I was born, Grandma wanted to have a baby so SO bad, but she just didn’t get pregnant? So she prayed and prayed for a baby, for a whole year. Still, nothing happened. Finally, she went to the pastor and asked him to pray for her. He prayed that she would have a baby who grew up to serve Jesus. And then he told her to go away on a vacation and stop worrying! So Grandma and Grandpa went to Grand Cayman Island, and they went snorkeling and scuba diving and swimming at the beach for two weeks. When they came home, Grandma felt soooo sick. And guess what it was? The food?”

“No!” they exclaimed together. “It was you!” (They have apparently learned, just by being part of this family, that being pregnant makes one sick.)

“Daddy’s turn,” I said next and we all turned to look at Greg. “I know that Grandpa Howell brought Grandma and me flowers on the day I was born,” he began. “But do you know what else is weird? Guess which house they brought me home to, from the hospital? The very SAME house they live in now!”

My “pastors’ kids” blinked silently. At ages 6 and 8, they have already lived in 4 houses. This was hard for them to imagine.

“You mean they NEVER moved?” Caleb asked.

“Nope. Not since the day I was born,” Greg assured them.

“What happened when Brooke and Wyatt were born?” I tried asking the twins, unsure of how much they would understand.

“We cried,” Brooke said.

“We pooped!” Wyatt exclaimed. “Den we not sleep!”

“We be in your tummy at da same time,” Brooke remembers.

Yes. All of the above. ALL true answers.