

ReFocus Guide: God Works Through Our Stories

Focus:

Matthew begins the story of Jesus with a long list of names. These names show that God works through real people with real histories. Some stories are beautiful, some painful, but all of them become part of God's work to bring hope into the world. This week, we open ourselves to the truth that God works through our stories too.

Day 1: God Works Through Real Stories

Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17 (CEB)

Reflection:

Matthew begins the story of Jesus by naming generations of people whose lives were far from perfect. Their stories include courage, struggle, loss, and redemption. Yet each life becomes part of the larger story God is telling. God continues to work in our lives in quiet and steady ways, often long before we recognize it. God does not wait for us to get everything right. God meets us where we are and gently shapes our hearts toward hope and new beginnings.

Questions:

Where do you see signs that God has been working in your life, even before you were aware of it?

How might God use your experiences to bring encouragement or hope to someone else?

Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for working through the real stories of real people. Help me trust that your grace is shaping my life in ways I cannot always see. Guide me to live with hope and openness today. Amen.

Day 2: God's Promise Through Abraham

Scripture: Matthew 6:33—34 (CEB)

Reflection:

Matthew calls Jesus the Son of Abraham, reminding us of God's promise that all families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham did not know where God would lead him, but he chose to trust and take the next step. God still invites us to take steps of trust. We may not see the whole path, but God gives us enough grace for today and enough light to take the next faithful step.

Questions:

Where do you sense God inviting you to trust more deeply in this season of Advent?

What simple step of faith can you take this week?

Prayer:

God of promise, help me walk with trust as Abraham did. Give me the courage to follow where you lead and to believe your blessings are at work in ways I cannot yet see. Amen.

Day 3: God Works Through Imperfect Stories

Scripture: Matthew 1:3 and Genesis 38 (CEB)

Reflection:

Tamar's story is marked by injustice, grief, and struggle. Yet Scripture honors her courage, determination, and resilience. Matthew includes her in Jesus' family line as a reminder that God does not turn away from painful or complicated stories. God meets us in the places that feel wounded or unfinished and brings healing, strength, and hope. Nothing in our past is beyond God's reach.

Questions:

What part of your story still needs God's healing or peace?

How might your experiences help you understand and support someone else who is hurting?

Prayer:

God of mercy, thank you for seeing the parts of my life that feel complicated or heavy. Heal what is wounded and strengthen what is weary, so my life may reflect your love. Amen.

Day 4: God Works Through Loyalty and Love

Scripture: Matthew 1:5, Ruth 1:16—17

Reflection:

Ruth was an outsider who faced deep loss, yet she chose to remain loyal to Naomi and stepped into a new future she could not yet see. Her love and faithfulness became part of God's work of restoration and hope. Small acts of love matter. Every day faithfulness creates space for God to work in our lives and in the lives of others.

Questions:

Where is God inviting you to show kindness or faithfulness this week?

How might you offer hope to someone who needs encouragement?

Prayer:

Loving God, help me live with the kindness and courage Ruth showed. Shape my heart so that my small acts of love become part of your greater work in the world. Amen.

Day 5: God Bring Hope From What Is Broken

Scripture: Matthew 1:6, 2 Samuel 12:1—13 (CEB)

Reflection:

Bathsheba's story includes deep hurt and injustice, yet God does not erase her or overlook her. Matthew honors her by naming her in Jesus' lineage. Her presence reminds us that God sees those who have been harmed and brings restoration, dignity, and healing.

Questions:

Where do you need to trust that God can bring healing or restoration?

How can you reflect God's compassion to someone who is struggling?

Prayer:

God of hope, thank you for working through every part of the story, even the painful ones. Help me trust that healing is possible and that you are working in ways I may not yet see. Lead me to be a presence of compassion today. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Holy and loving God, thank you for walking with me through every part of my story. As I journey through this season of Advent, open my heart to see how your grace has been shaping me all along. Help me to trust that nothing in my life is beyond your healing, your hope, and your transforming love. Make me mindful of the ways you invite me to offer compassion, courage, and kindness to others. Guide my steps so that my story becomes a reflection of your hope in the world. Amen.