

Americans pride ourselves on our work ethic, and work is good. But no matter what route you choose, be sure to take one week—or two if you can—and vacation.

Vacation Helps:

- » Hold a family meeting and discuss the options.
- » If your children are older, let them in on the family vacation budget. Teaching responsible money skills can't start too soon.
- » Encourage children to make their own packing list. (Be sure to check it, or you may end up at Zion National Park with a bag full of Lego bricks but no underwear!)

Where do I start in Kingdomtide?

The church calendar can be a tricky thing. Most prayer books and lectionaries come with a table in the back which requires an advanced degree in lunar astrophysics and liturgical history even to begin using. We've tried to avoid that in Good Dirt as much as possible, but the fact that the date of Easter slips around with the lunar cycle makes things tricky. After the season of Easter, we begin Kingdomtide (usually called Ordinary Time—as in ordinal, or numbered, because these weeks of the year are assigned numbers from 1 to 29). For ease of use, we've gone ahead and just called these weeks by what date they're closest to. So, "Week of Sunday closest to May 11" means—well, what it says: whatever Sunday is closest to May 11, that's the day to begin that week's set of readings and activities. In some years you will be skipping over some of the 29 weeks, but in other years you'll cycle back around to them, so don't worry.

Week of Sunday closest to May 18

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Sunday

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Till: We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit! What a mystery you are! We love knowing that we have a Father, that Jesus is our God and Savior, and that your Spirit is with us always. We praise you!

Plant: John 1:1-18

Water:

- » **Draw it:** One common symbol for the Trinity is three rings that all intersect each other (like a Venn diagram with three circles). Have each child draw this, and then in each ring, write or draw what that person is like. What is the Father like? What is the Son like? What is the Spirit like? You can use words or images.
- » **Apply it:** How does it make you feel to know that God is Father, Son, and Spirit—that God is three persons who love each other very, very much?

Weed: Think over your day. Where did you encounter the Father today? The Son? The Spirit?

Monday

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Till: God, you are always seeking our growth, working so that we can bear fruit. Feed us. Give us what we need to bring forth the delicious fruit of love, joy, and peace!

Plant: Luke 13:1-9

Water:

- » Enter it: Today's story focuses on how God intends to grow us, so we can bear the fruit of loving him and loving others. Make the story tangible: Together water indoor or outdoor plants. As you do, think about how God is feeding and watering you.
- » Apply it: These two stories seem unrelated, but they aren't. Jesus is pointing out that God is not in the business of chopping us down or crushing us under buildings in response to our sin. His response to our sin is to feed and water us so that we change from the inside! He responds to our fruitlessness with love. God is the good gardener! What are some ways God is feeding and watering you right now? Keep your eyes open today for God feeding and watering you.

Weed: When did God feed and water you? When did you bear good fruit? Were there times that were more fruitless? When did you feel love today? When did you give love today?

Tuesday

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Till: Jesus, you love us so much! You showed us that people are more important than rules, that love is better than just not making a mistake. Help us love like you!

Plant: Luke 13:10-17

Water:

- » Draw it: Draw Jesus healing the woman, with the red-faced critics looking on.
- » Apply it: The leaders of the Jewish people were really trying to be good, but their idea of goodness was to avoid breaking rules. Jesus' idea of goodness was active and life-giving—to love people and help them. Today, instead of trying not to do things wrong, how could you show active love?
- » Weed: What was it like focusing on love instead of rules? When do you tend to forget love and just think about avoiding mistakes? When did you give love today? When did you receive love today?

Wednesday

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Till: God, your kingdom shows up in ways that look unimpressive and tiny to us, like little seeds, but then it bursts out, takes over, and fills the whole world! Help us get in on your kingdom life, and see it around us.

Plant: Luke 13:18-30

Water:

- » Draw it: Make a drawing of your favorite image from today's story. (There are lots to choose from!)
- » Plant it: During this season of Kingdomtide, we're talking about how God's kingdom grows in us and all around us. Get some easy-to-grow seeds, a small pot, and some soil, and let kids plant them today. (Wheatgrass is one easy option—it'll grow anywhere.) Notice how tiny the seeds are! Then, let the kids water it each day.
- » Seek it: Look today for tiny little things that show you God's rule and power—a lovely plant, a kitten, a small act of kindness, a ladybug. Give praise to God for the tiny things that are good!

Weed: Where did you see God's kingdom in tiny things today? How did it make you feel to seek God's rule and power today? What are you grateful for today?

Thursday

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Till: Gather us in Lord, under your wings. Hide us in your arms, so that we can be safe with you. We want to be near you today.

Plant: Luke 13:31-35

Water:

- » Act it: Jesus tells us that God longs to gather us into his arms, so that we know we're safe. Demonstrate this for your kids: one by one, gather each in your arms, and tell them something you love about them. (You might have older kids do this for their younger siblings as well.)
- » Apply it: What is one way you could live as if gathered in God's arms today? How could you remember that he is close?
- » Water it: Make sure you water your kingdom plant today!

Weed: When did you remember to live "gathered close to God" today? When did you forget? When do you need to be close to God tomorrow? How can you remember him then?

Friday

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Till: Jesus, you see right through our pretending. We act like we're big stuff, but you want us to know how to love everyone. Help us have humble, loving hearts.

Plant: Luke 14:1-11

Water:

- » Imagine it: In today's story, Jesus cuts right to the heart of how we pretend in order to impress people. How would it feel to be the person who shoved their way to the important seat, only to be asked to go sit at the kids' table in the corner? How would it feel to choose to sit in the worst seat? How would it feel to be asked to come to the head of the table, the seat of honor?
- » Apply it: When do you feel like you need to show that you're important and get the best for yourself? Today, how could you focus instead on helping someone else feel loved and honored?
- » Water it: Make sure you water your kingdom plant today!

Weed: Today, did you push your way to the front at any point? When did you choose to show love and generosity instead of getting the best for yourself? How can you be generous tomorrow?

Saturday

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Till: Jesus, you know our tricky hearts. Even as we act like we love, we're often just making sure we get paid back for our kindness. Help us to love people who have nothing we want.

Plant: Luke 14:12-24

Water:

- » Draw it: Create a picture of a dinner table. Put a few dignified, rich people at the table, but then put in people who "don't belong" there—the poor, misfits, the dirty or smelly, or other people who get overlooked. How do you think the dignified people might feel? How do you think God would feel about this party?
- » Apply it: Jesus knows our hearts: he knows that a lot of the time, we show love only to people who can love us back. He says that we should

grow a heart that abounds in love even to those who can't repay us. Today, when could you show love to someone you don't think has anything to offer you in return?

» Water it: Make sure you water your kingdom plant today!

Weed: What was it like to offer love to someone who could not love you back? How did you feel? How did they feel? How do you think God felt? When could you do the same thing tomorrow? What are you grateful for today?

Week of Sunday closest to May 25

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Sunday

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Till: God, help us live in your kingdom, where we can have good, healthy hearts that produce good, healthy fruit. Help us not be impressed with fake, hollow fruit, but recognize your life all around us.

Plant: Matthew 12:33-45

Water:

- » Apply it: Jesus teaches us that what's on the inside always shows up eventually on the outside. The hard evidence that God is in something is plain to see: if there's real, tangible love and joy and peace and kindness flowing out of someone, there God is! But the Pharisees didn't want to see it. Why do you think they couldn't see Jesus' fruit and believe?
- » Seek it: Today be on the lookout—be on the hunt—for good fruit all around you. When you see love, or peace, or joy, or patience, or kindness, or self-control, praise Jesus! Do a happy dance!
- » Water it: Make sure you water your kingdom plant today!

Weed: Where did you see good fruit today? How did it feel to praise Jesus for the good fruit? What are you most grateful for today?