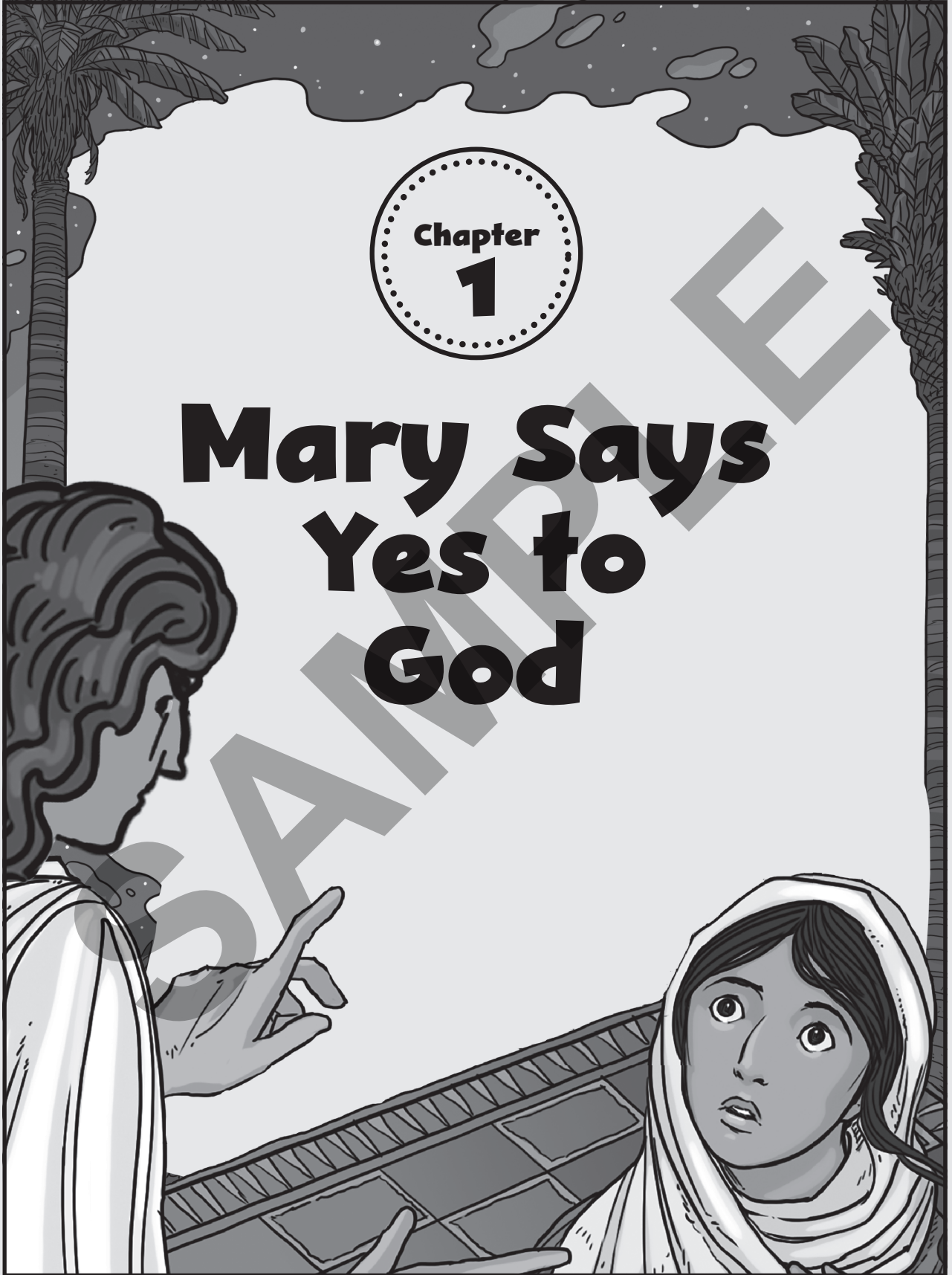


Chapter

1

Mary Says Yes to God



**Chapter
1****Lesson at a Glance****Chapter 1****Scripture Focus**

Luke 1:30–33, 38

Lesson Goals

- to recognize that God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus
- to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God
- to understand that God chose all of us to be his children

Catechism Pillar

Believe

Catechism References

279–301

Materials Needed

- the chapter 1 child's page, removed from each Bible story booklet
- copies of the chapter 1 family page, on page 49 of the catechist guide, one for each child

Background Reflection

In this lesson, the children hear the account of the beginning of our salvation, when Mary responded to the message of an angel with her assent to be the mother of the Son of God. The fact of being chosen for this momentous responsibility was not enough; God needed Mary's yes to put this plan of salvation into action. The same is true for us. Each of us is chosen by God—chosen to be born, chosen to be a child of God, chosen to use our gifts and talents for good. We, too, need to say yes to God, just as Mary did.



Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Take time to review how to make the Sign of the Cross.
- Ask the children to repeat each phrase after you, and then demonstrate the hand gesture that goes with each phrase.
- Accept their efforts at this point. Refinements will come later, after you reinforce this during each session.

Engage

- Introduce the Bible story by asking if anyone in the group has ever been chosen to do something special or received a special invitation. Perhaps someone has been asked to join a team, attend a party, or be part of a wedding.
- Explain that today the children will hear a Bible story about something special Mary was chosen to do.



Dive In! (15 minutes)

- Distribute the child's page, and ask the children to look at the main picture above the Bible story. Briefly discuss the picture by asking the following questions:
 - In the picture, we can see someone's hands and someone with a white robe. Who do you think this might be? (*Accept responses.*) Those are the hands of the angel and the angel's white robe.
 - We also see a young woman in the picture. That is Mary. How do you think she is feeling? Happy? (*No.*) Sad? (*No.*) Kind of wondering and questioning? (*Yes.*)
 - Can you look like you're wondering and questioning? Can you say, "Hmm?" and put your finger on your chin? (*Model this for the children.*)
 - Let's look at the bottom of the page. We can see the angel and Mary through the windows. What do you think they are doing? (*Accept responses.*)
 - Mary and the angel are having a conversation! In a conversation, it is important to talk. But what else is important in a conversation? (*listening*)
- Explain that you will read the Bible story. Tell the children that they will find out what the angel said to Mary and what Mary, after she had listened carefully, said to the angel.
- Read the Bible story to the children slowly, stopping briefly after each sentence. If the children are readers, invite them to follow along. If not, invite them to look at the main picture as you read.

Today's Bible Story

Mary Says Yes to God

A long time ago, in a town called Nazareth, lived a young woman named Mary. She was very good and very holy. She loved God very much. One day, God sent an angel to visit her. The angel had an important message for her. The angel said,

"God has chosen you to be the mother of his Son. You will give birth to a baby and name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of God. He will be the king of a kingdom that will never end!"

Mary said, "Yes! I am the servant of the Lord. May this happen to me, just as you have told me."

And the angel left.

(Based on Luke 1:30–33, 38)



Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Teaching

- Begin the discussion by sharing these or similar words:
 - Do you remember that we said the angel and Mary were having a conversation? What is important in a conversation? (*talking and listening*)
 - What did the angel say in this conversation? (*God has chosen you to be the mother of Jesus.*)
 - What did Mary say in this conversation? (*Yes! I am the servant of the Lord, etc.*)
- Expand the discussion with the following remarks:
 - Who was talking in this conversation? (*the angel and Mary*)
 - Who was listening in this conversation? (*At first, Mary was listening. Then Mary started talking too.*)
 - How do we know that Mary was listening to the angel? (*She said yes to the message of the angel.*)
 - How do we know that the angel was listening to Mary? (*Mary gave her answer, and then the angel left.*)
 - Where do you think the angel went? (*back to God, to deliver the message*)
 - What do you think the angel said to God? (*The angel told God that Mary said yes!*)

- Explain that each of us is chosen by God, using these or similar words:
 - Each of us is chosen by God! God chose us to be born, and God chose us to have certain good qualities (like loving others, telling jokes, drawing pictures, and other good gifts).
 - What good gifts do you have from God? *(Allow the children to volunteer what they like to do or are good at doing.)*
 - When God asks us to do something, he usually does not send an angel. But sometimes our parents or teachers ask us to do things. What things do your parents or teachers sometimes ask you to do? *(Accept responses.)*
 - When we listen to our parents and teachers, we can say yes to God, just like Mary!
 - Let's say yes to God right now! Let's make an exploding yes! *(Ask the children to follow your actions. Crouch down and put your hands on your knees. Slowly come up, moving your hands up your legs and making a "ya, ya, ya, ya" sound. Then "explode" by placing your feet and legs wide, raising your arms up wide, and exclaiming, "YES!")*

Learning Activities

- Choose an activity from the ideas outlined on pages 46–47 in the catechist guide, and explain the directions to the children.
- Lead the children in the activity, taking time to help them connect the activity and today's lesson.
- Introduce the activity on the child's page, reading any directions that are offered.
- Assure the children that if they do not finish the child's page activity by the end of the session, they can complete it at home.

**Go! (10 minutes)****Lesson Wrap-Up**

- Recall the lesson goals by asking the following questions:
 - Who did God choose to be the mother of Jesus? (*Mary*)
 - Who is the Son of God? (*Jesus*)
 - Who chose us to be God's children? (*God chose us to be his children.*)
- Remind the children to take the child's page home.
- Distribute the family page, and encourage the children to share it at home. You may want to staple the child's page and the family page together as the children are getting ready to leave.

Closing Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Invite them to fold their hands, close their eyes, and open their ears and their hearts. They pray this short prayer:
 - Dear God, we know you chose Mary to be the mother of your Son, Jesus. We know you chose us to be your children. Help us say yes to you, like Mary did. Amen.
- Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Activity Ideas

Materials Needed

- none

Conversation: Talking and Listening

- Introduce this activity as a game of talking and listening.
- Explain that you will call on several children and ask them a question.
- Encourage the group to listen carefully to the answers.
- Announce a simple question to the group, like, "What will you do after our session today?"
- Call on someone to answer the question. Remind the group to listen carefully to their answer.
- Try this format:
 - Johnny, what will you do after our session today? (*My mom is taking me to the park.*)
 - Johnny is going to the park after our session today!
 - Sally, what will you do after our session today? (*I will go home and eat lunch.*)
 - Did everyone listen to Johnny and Sally? What will Johnny do after our session today? (*He will go to the park.*) What will Sally do after our session today? (*She will go home and eat lunch.*)
- Continue in this way until several children have answered a question.
- Repeat as time permits, announcing another simple question. Here are a few sample questions:
 - What do you do after you get up in the morning?
 - What is your favorite thing to do on Saturdays?
 - What is your favorite food?
- Review each question and answer briefly to help the children remember the answers.
- Congratulate the children on being good talkers and good listeners!

Materials Needed

- copies of the handout “Mary Says Yes,” on page 48 of the catechist guide, one for each child
- scissors for the catechist

Mary and the Angel

- Cut off the heading where indicated and distribute the handout.
- Ask the children to color in the pictures of the window, the angel, and Mary.
- Show the children the solid fold lines on the handout, and demonstrate how to fold the handout so that it will stand.
- Help the children fold their handouts, even if they have not finished coloring.
- Assure the children that they can finish coloring their handout when they get home.
- Remind the children to stand the picture on their dresser or in another place in their home.
- Explain that the picture will remind them to ask Mary to bless them and their family.

Materials Needed

- towels and robes for costumes (optional)
- coaching ahead of time for two volunteers

Mary Says Yes: A Short Play

- Introduce this activity by explaining that two children will act out the story of the angel’s visit to Mary.
- Choose volunteers to be the angel and Mary. (*Choose children who have loud voices and who do not mind being the center of attention.*)
- Take the volunteers aside to give them their lines. Ask them to repeat their lines a few times. Use the following, or similar, script:

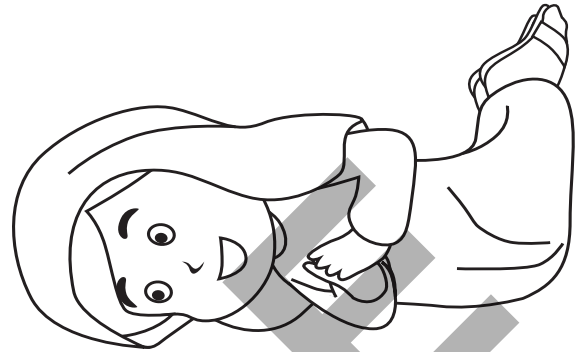
Angel: God has chosen you to be the mother of his Son! Do you agree?

Mary: I agree. I say yes to God.

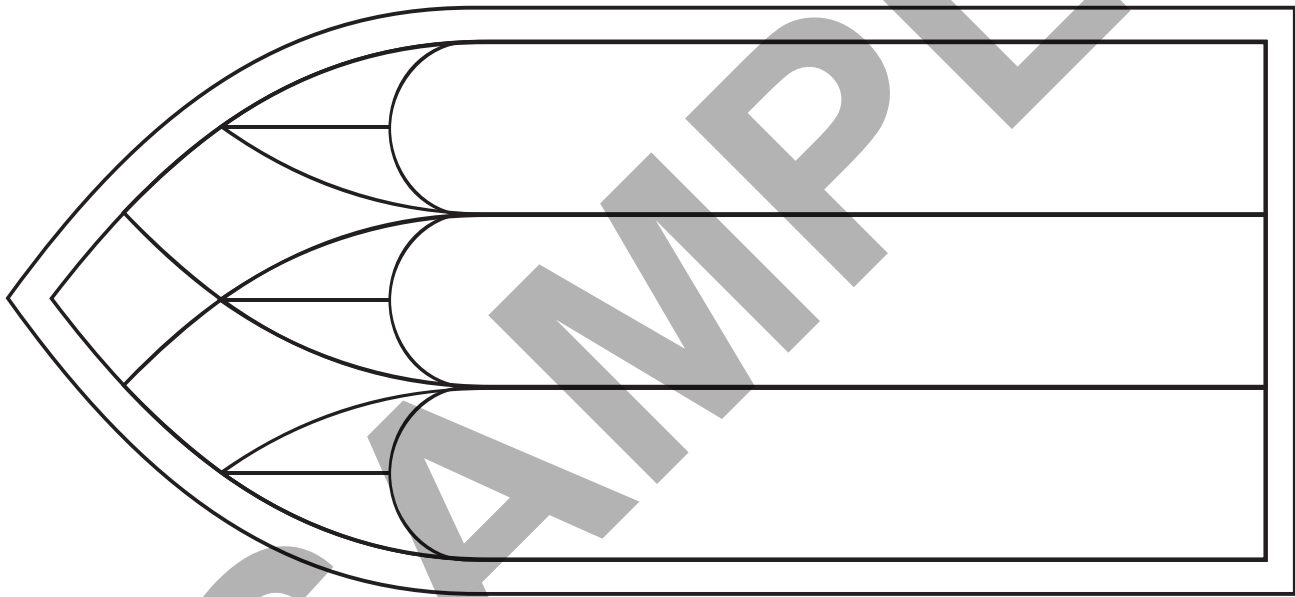
- Arrange an area as a stage, and have the rest of the children gather as the audience.
- Introduce the play as follows:
 - Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to watch an important story. It is the story of Mary saying yes to God. Please enjoy the show!
- Bring Mary to the center of the stage, directing her to kneel with her side facing the audience.
- Signal to the angel to “fly in” with open arms and land in front of Mary, standing sideways to the audience. The angel should say his or her lines. Mary should remain kneeling, looking up at the angel, and say her line. Then they should both stand up, turn to the audience, and say, “The End.”
- Conclude the play with the following words:
 - Thank you, angel and Mary (or name the children), for a wonderful performance. Take a bow!
- Ask for two more volunteers to act out the play again, as time permits.

Mary Says Yes

Have an adult cut off the top and bottom of the page for you. Color the windowpane, Mary, and the angel. Then fold on the solid lines. Stand the paper up. You now have a picture of the angel's visit to Mary.

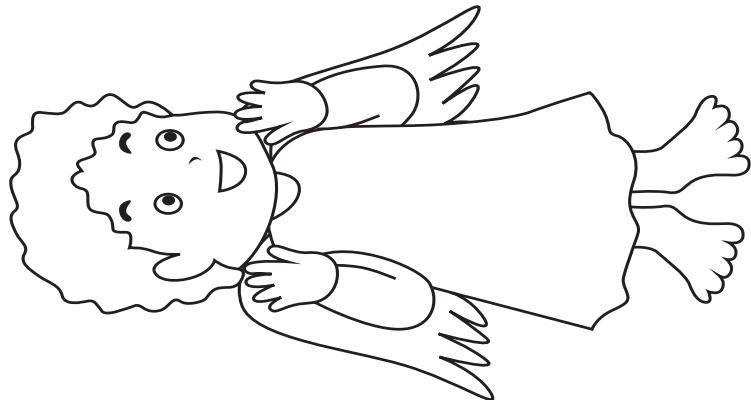


fold



Mary Says Yes

fold



Family Page

Understanding the Scripture

In this Bible story, Mary was just a teenager when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. He told her that God chose her to be the mother of Jesus, his Son. He told her that Jesus would be a great king. His Kingdom would last forever.

This was a great responsibility for Mary to accept. She did not understand how it could even happen. But Mary knew that God was good and loving. Calling herself God's servant, Mary put herself in his hands and said, "Yes." Because Mary trusted God, Jesus came to earth and saved us all. When we say yes to God like Mary did, we can also expect good things to happen. We celebrate Mary's yes to God on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25.

Your Growing Child

The conversation between the angel and Mary was described as "talking and listening." In conversations, both are important. It is important to talk with your child, to share your thoughts and feelings or discuss certain topics. It is also important to listen to your child, to help your child understand confusing or distressing situations, and to help your child use her or his growing reasoning powers to make sense of the world.

Sometimes you may feel that your child is not listening. It is important for your child to know when you are concerned, especially about a safety issue. Introduce your concern with a statement like, "This is really important and you need to listen." Then have her or him repeat back what you just said. Thank your child for listening, and underline your request by repeating, "This is really important."

Family Activities

- Read together the Bible story from today's lesson, "Mary Says Yes to God." Ask your child to retell the story in her or his own words. If possible, encourage your child to complete the child's page activity begun in the session, if she or he has not already done so.
- The next time you are in church, take extra time to visit the Mary altar. You may want to pray the Hail Mary aloud, even though your child may not yet know this prayer by heart. Take a minute of quiet time together, explaining that you are asking Mary to bless your family.
- Do an internet search for "Mary, mother of Jesus" and click on "images." Enjoy looking at the results with your child. Find one or two pictures that appeal to you and your child. If possible, print them and hang them in your child's room.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross:

Loving God, you chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Help us become who you want us to be as we say yes to you in faith and love. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Chapter
2

**Jesus
Is
Born**



Chapter

2

Lesson at a Glance

Scripture Focus

Luke 2:1–7, 8–11, 13, 15–16

Lesson Goals

- to understand that angels told the shepherds about Jesus
- to recognize that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were poor
- to recognize that Jesus loves us and shows us God's love

Catechism Pillar

Celebrate

Catechism References

456–460, 477–478, 527–530

Materials Needed

- the chapter 2 child's page, removed from each Bible story booklet
- copies of the chapter 2 family page, on page 48 of the catechist guide, one for each child
- a manger scene displayed in the prayer corner or another convenient space

Background Reflection

This chapter is a balancing act! In teaching about the birth of Jesus, we retell the beautiful story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, the story of the journey of Mary and Joseph, the stable, the innkeeper, the shepherds, and the angels. But we also must emphasize that this Jesus, who was born as an infant in Bethlehem, is alive and with us today. He came to us out of love and loves us still. Subsequent chapters follow Jesus as he grows up, accepts his mission, and begins to teach. The story of the Word of God becoming a human being begins at the Annunciation, continues at Bethlehem, and becomes part of our story today as we proclaim, "Jesus loves us!"



Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Pray this short prayer:
 - Dear God, thank you for bringing us together to learn more about the birth of Jesus. Amen.
- End with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage

- Introduce the story by asking if anyone in the group has ever seen a baby. As volunteers respond, ask if the baby was born into their family or was a relative's or neighbor's baby, etc.
- Explain that we celebrate the birth of Jesus as a baby at Christmas, but any time of year is a good time to celebrate that Jesus was born like us, as a baby. Continue by sharing that he was born like us to show us God's love.
- Tell the children that all of us were born as babies, and our parents and teachers help us grow up.



Dive In! (15 minutes)

- Distribute the child's page, and ask the children to look at the main picture above the Bible story.
- Briefly discuss the picture by asking the following questions:
 - In the picture, we can see someone in white. Who is this, and what are they doing? (*This is an angel. The angel is announcing something to the shepherds.*)
 - Let's look at the shepherds. Look at their mouths. Are their mouths open or closed? (*open*)
 - Their mouths are open because they are surprised. Can you open your mouth and look surprised? (*Model this for the children.*)
 - Can you look surprised and say, "Oh!" or "Ah!" or "Wow!"? (*Model this for the children.*)
 - Now look at the bottom of the page. What are the shepherds doing there? (*pointing*)
 - Maybe they are saying, "Look, look!" Let's point at the sky like the shepherds! Let's say, "Look, look!" (*Model this for the children.*)
 - Let's find out why the shepherds were so surprised. Let's find out why they were pointing to the sky!
- Read the Bible story to the children slowly, stopping briefly after each sentence. If the children are readers, invite them to follow along. If not, invite them to look at the main picture as you read.

- Continue with the following questions:
 - Why were the shepherds so surprised? What did they see? *(an angel)*
 - What did the angels announce to the shepherds? *(that Christ the Lord is born)*
 - Who is Christ the Lord? *(Jesus)*
 - What did the angels do after this big announcement? *(They sang praises to God.)*
 - Let's sing praises to God right now, just like the angels! *(To the tune of "Amazing Grace," sing the words "Praise God" over and over. Ask the children to repeat each line after you.)*
 - That sounded so great! Just like the angels! What did the shepherds do after they heard the angels singing? *(They went to see Jesus.)*
 - We can go to see Jesus too. We can look for him in the manger in our prayer corner. The Jesus in our prayer corner is a statue, not a real baby, but it reminds us of Jesus and his birth. *(Lead the group to the manger scene in the prayer corner.)*
 - Where else can we find Jesus? *(in church)*
 - Yes, Jesus is in church with us, especially when we receive him in Holy Communion. Someday you will be able to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. That will be a wonderful day!

Today's Bible Story

Jesus Is Born

A long time ago, an emperor named Caesar Augustus wanted to count all the people in his kingdom, so Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, which was Joseph's hometown.

Mary was about to give birth to Jesus, so Mary and Joseph looked for a place to stay in Bethlehem. No rooms were available, but an innkeeper offered them a stable, where animals are kept. And there, in the stable, Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in clean cloths and laid him in a manger, which is a wooden box that holds animal food, like hay.

Meanwhile, shepherds were watching their sheep by night. An angel appeared to the shepherds. They were very afraid at first! But the angel said to them: "Don't be afraid! I have good news! It will bring joy to all people! This very day, in Bethlehem, Christ the Lord is born!"

Suddenly the sky filled with angels, all singing praises to God.

One of the shepherds said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this child!" And so they did.

(Based on Luke 2:1–7, 8–11, 13, 15–16)



Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Teaching

- Begin the discussion by sharing these or similar words:
 - We just heard about the birth of Jesus. Can anyone tell me where people usually put babies so they can sleep? (*in a crib or in a big baby basket or a cradle*)
 - Where did Mary lay Jesus to sleep? (*in a manger, a food box for animals*) Yes, and it was probably full of clean, soft hay, so it was a good bed for Jesus.
 - Who told the shepherds about Jesus? (*the angels*)
 - Where did the shepherds go to see Jesus? (*to the stable in Bethlehem*)
 - Where was Jesus? (*in the manger in the stable*)
 - Why were Joseph and Mary and Jesus in the stable? (*No rooms were available in the inn. Joseph and Mary were poor. They did not have any other place to stay.*)
- Expand the discussion with the following remarks:
 - There are people in some places today who also have no place to stay. What do we call those people? (*poor people or homeless people*)
 - Yes, we call them poor people or homeless people because they do not have much money and have no place to stay. Mary and Joseph had a home, but they were traveling and had no place to stay.
 - They were also poor. They did not have much money. Even if a nice room had been available, they might not have been able to afford it. Jesus did not come to us as a rich king, but as a poor child.
 - Jesus became poor to show us that God loves us and all people, even the very poorest, and that we should all love one another.
- Explain that we celebrate the birth of Jesus because Jesus shows us that God loves us! Tell the children that Jesus shows us that God loves everybody, even the very poorest people. Continue by sharing that Jesus shows us God's love by being born and becoming like us.
- Continue with the following:
 - Let's celebrate that Jesus loves us. (*Gather the children in a big circle, holding hands. Lead the following hand gestures while asking the group to repeat your words after you.*)
 - Jesus loves us! (*Hold hands up high.*)
 - Jesus wants us to love one another! (*Bring hands down and crouch down near the floor.*)
 - God loves us! (*Bring hands up.*)
 - We love God! (*Bring hands down.*)
 - Thank you, God, for sending Jesus! (*Bring hands waist high and sway back and forth. Repeat several times.*)
 - Amen! (*Bring hands up.*) Amen! (*Bring hands down.*) Amen! Amen! Amen! (*Hold hands up and end.*)

Learning Activities

- Choose an activity from the ideas outlined on pages 56–57, and explain the directions to the children.
- Lead the children in the activity, taking time to help them connect the activity and today's lesson.
- Introduce the activity on the child's page, reading any directions that are offered.
- Assure the children that if they do not finish the child's page activity by the end of the session, they can complete it at home.



Go! (10 minutes)

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Recall the lesson goals by asking the following questions:
 - Who told the shepherds about Jesus? (*the angels*)
 - Were Jesus, Mary, and Joseph rich, with lots of money? (*No, they were poor.*)
 - Who loves us and shows us God's love? (*Jesus*)
- Remind the children to take the child's page home.
- Distribute the family page, and encourage the children to share it at home. You may want to staple the child's page and the family page together as the children are getting ready to leave.

Closing Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Invite them to fold their hands, close their eyes, and open their ears and their hearts. Then pray this short prayer:
 - Dear God, thank you for sending us your Son, Jesus, to be like us. Help us to live as he taught, to love you and to love one another. Amen.
- Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Activity Ideas

Materials Needed

- a figure of the baby Jesus from a manger scene

Materials Needed

- items for costumes (*optional*)
- a shallow cardboard box for the manger
- a small baby doll for Mary to carry under her robe
- coaching ahead of time for six volunteers

Seeking the Baby Jesus

- Introduce this activity by explaining that this is a game of hide-and-seek with the baby Jesus. Explain as follows:
 - I will choose a volunteer to stand by the door with their eyes closed. I will hide the baby Jesus somewhere in the room.
 - I will ask the volunteer to try to find the baby Jesus. We will help by saying “hot” or “cold” as the volunteer comes closer to the baby Jesus or moves away from the baby Jesus.
 - After the baby Jesus is found, I will hide the baby Jesus again and ask another volunteer to play the game.

Jesus Is Born: A Short Play

- Introduce this activity by explaining that the children will act out the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Choose volunteers to be Joseph, Mary, and the innkeeper. (*Choose children who have loud voices and who do not mind being the center of attention.*) You may want to choose angels (perhaps three).
- Take the children aside to give them their lines. Ask them to repeat their lines a few times:

Joseph: Let's go, Mary. We need to go to Bethlehem to be counted.

Mary: Yes, Joseph. I hope we can find a place to stay.

Innkeeper: I only have a stable. It is quiet there.

Angels: Glory to God in the highest!

- Arrange an area as a stage, and have the rest of the children gather as the audience.
- Introduce the play as follows:
 - Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to watch an important story. It is the story of the birth of Jesus.
- Bring Mary and Joseph to the center of the stage. Instruct them to say their lines and then walk around in a circle a few times.
- Signal the innkeeper to enter. Instruct the innkeeper to say their line and then bring out the manger.
- Invite Mary and Joseph to kneel down by the manger. Then have Mary take the doll from under her robe and place it in the manger.
- Signal the angels to come onstage and say their line.
- Conclude the play with the following words:
 - Thank you, Mary, Joseph, angels, and the innkeeper (*or name the children*) for a wonderful performance. Take a bow!
- Ask for more volunteers to act out the play again, as time permits.

Materials Needed

- a song sheet for the catechist or song leader
- a CD of Christmas carols (*optional*)
- a computer with internet access (*optional*)
- a computer projector (*optional*)

Let's Sing Christmas Carols!

- Explain that we usually celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, and we celebrate by singing Christmas carols. Tell the children that today is a good day to sing Christmas carols too, because today they learned more about the birth of Jesus.
- Using the song sheet, teach the carol you have chosen, line by line, asking the children to repeat each line after you. Then help the children sing two lines at a time, and then the entire verse. If you have a recording of the Christmas carol, you may wish to play it and have the children sing along for practice. (Suggested carols: "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "O Come Little Children.")
- *Optional:* Show the video "The Rainbow Collections - Little Donkey (Official Lyric Video)" (YouTube, 2:20), which is a song about the donkey carrying Mary to Bethlehem. Then invite the children to get down on all fours and be "little donkeys" like the one in the video. Play the "Little Donkey" song again as you lead the children around the room while they pretend to be little donkeys carrying Mary to Bethlehem.

Family Page

Understanding the Scripture

Angels, shepherds, and singing. Is it Christmas already? As the angel in the Gospel said, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news." The good news is that Jesus is born and came into the world to reconnect us with the love and mercy of God. This is what we celebrate at Christmas, but this is something we can celebrate every day of the year!

In this lesson, the children learned about the birth of Jesus, not in the context of Christmas, but as part of a progressive understanding of the life of Jesus. His birth may be familiar to us in some ways, but we can always learn more as we meditate on this wondrous gift of Jesus, a gift that keeps giving, day in and day out, 365 days a year!

Your Growing Child

As we ponder the meaning of the birth of Jesus in our lives, we are also reminded of the births of other babies. This can bring up the topic of sibling relationships. How will the presence of a new baby affect the older members of the family? Older children are properly concerned with their own activities but, with encouragement, can be enlisted to help out with the new little one occasionally, as needed.

Some extra effort may be needed to assure those closer in age to the baby that they have not been displaced but rather promoted to the position of big brother or big sister. Older siblings may benefit from a gift "from the new baby" or a celebration to show that the family is thrilled that they are now the big sister or brother.

Family Activities

- Read together the Bible story from today's lesson, "Jesus Is Born." Ask your child to retell the story in his or her own words. If possible, encourage your child to complete the child's page activity begun in the session, if he or she has not already done so.
- Take out your family Christmas manger scene and display it this week. Gather around it to pray the prayer below, and any other family prayers, according to your custom. Encourage your child to use the figures to demonstrate Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. If your family manger scene is an heirloom that should not be touched, perhaps you could purchase a different one made especially for children to handle.
- Watch the video "Angels announce the news – Let's learn about Christmas 4" (YouTube, 2:37) with your child. This short video recounts the announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross:

Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus, your Son, to us. Help us to know him better and to follow his teachings. May we celebrate his birth in our hearts today and every day. Amen.