

united kingdom

JESUS' BIRTH

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

JESUS' BIRTH

Introduction

God's people waited expectantly for many years, and God finally sent His Promised King.

Luke 1:26-38 (Matthew 1:21)

God sent *an* angel ... to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. *The angel* appeared to her and said, "*Rejoice! God has been kind to you and is with you!*" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "... You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, *which means God saves*. He will be very great. ... God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will reign over *God's people* forever; His Kingdom will never end!" Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "*Nothing is impossible with God*. ... The power of the Most High God will *cause this to happen* ... and *the baby* will be called the Son of God." Mary responded, "I am *God's* servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Matthew 1:19-21, 24-25

In those days to be pregnant outside of marriage was not only shameful but also illegal. So God sent an angel to Joseph, telling him similar things about the baby, and the angel told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife and raise the child as his own. Joseph obeyed God, and he married Mary.

Transition

And just as the angel said, Mary did have a son a few months later in the small town of Bethlehem.

Luke 2:21-22; 25-28

Eight days *after His birth* ... He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel. ... *Several weeks after that* ... *Mary and Joseph* took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to *God in their place of worship* – *as was their custom*. ... *When they arrived, they met a devout old man who had been promised by God that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Promised King. When he saw Jesus, he took the child in his arms and praised God.* ...

Luke 2:29-32, 34-35

He said, "God, now I can die in peace. I have seen your Promised King who has come to save all people from the punishment for their disobedience. He is a light to reveal God to the entire world! ... This child will be opposed by many, but He will be a joy to many others. ... As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." ...

Luke 2:33, 39, 52

Jesus' parents were amazed at what *the man had said*, ... and they returned home. ... *Jesus grew more and more healthy and wise. Both people and God were very pleased with Him.*

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

The promised King, Jesus, arrives – not quite as expected. He looks nothing like a king (but He is a descendant of David!), and He's actually God's Son! As soon as He's born, others recognise Him as the promised King.

This story shows us that Jesus' birth was a fulfilment of the prophecies in the Old Testament. Jesus is born to a normal family, and He is a descendant of David. Even before He is born, God reveals to His parents – both ordinary people – that Jesus is the Promised King who will indeed save people from their sins. And after Jesus is born, God's Spirit reveals through the old man (Simeon) that this salvation is not just for God's special people in David's Kingdom but for everyone in the world.

Key concepts to include in your story

- Mary and Joseph (who is a descendant of David) are engaged to be married, but Mary is still a virgin
- An angel comes to Mary and tells her to not be afraid but to rejoice!
- Mary will have a baby through the power of God's Spirit
- The angel tells Mary several things about the baby:
 - He will be named Jesus (which means *God saves*)
 - He will inherit the throne of David and reign forever over God's people
 - He will be the Son of God
- Mary responds in obedience
- An angel tells Joseph to go ahead and marry Mary, even though her pregnancy outside of marriage is a disgrace and illegal
- Joseph obeys God
- The baby is born
- Joseph and Mary follow their customs and religious legal requirements and name Him (Jesus) on the 8th day. Several weeks later they take Him to present Him to God.
- God had promised a devout old man that he wouldn't die before he saw the Promised King. The old man sees Jesus at the place of worship.
- The old man
 - Praises God that he has seen the Promised King who will offer salvation to all
 - Says that Jesus would be a light to reveal God to all the world
 - Says that some would reject and some would accept Him
- Mary and Joseph take Jesus home, and He grows up well. God is pleased with Him.

Notes about how the story was crafted

The angel's and Simeon's names have been omitted in order to keep the story simpler and easier to remember.

We have used the term **virgin** in this story for clarity. However, if the term is not appropriate for your audience or you do not feel comfortable using it, you could say something like *a young woman who has never been with a man*.

The angel greeted Mary happily. Some translations translate it as **Rejoice**. Think about how you would greet someone with happy news and use that form of greeting when you tell your story. God has **favoured** Mary, which means that He has been kind to her. God's **favour** refers to God's expression of kindness, His grace, His blessing, on someone. In the written story, we've simply said that God was kind to Mary in order to use more "conversational" language.

We are told in Matthew 1:21 that Jesus' name is significant, because He will save people from their sins. The name actually

means *God saves*, and Mary and Joseph would have known that. So we have included that implicit information in this story in order to help make it clear what Jesus' role is.

Israel has been replaced with **God's people**, the name used throughout this story set to refer to Abraham's descendants – the nation of Israel. We will see as the story set progresses that **God's people** comes to have a broader meaning.

Lord has been replaced by **God** in order to avoid overly religious words.

In many versions of the Bible, Luke 1:35 says something like **the power of the Most High will overshadow you**. This can be a tricky concept to convey because this language is not "normal" conversational language and because the biblical meaning is in no way sexual. **The power of the Most High God will cause this to happen** seems to be a simpler way to convey the correct meaning.

Luke 1:37 – **For nothing is impossible with God** – has been moved to a different location in the angel's dialogue with Mary. In this dialogue, changing the order of the speech does not change the meaning of the story. As you tell this story, craft the dialogue in such a way that it seems most natural to you.

The short background information and the Matthew 1 passage is included in order to give some contextual background to the story. Your audience will understand more of the story if they understand the cultural repercussions of pregnancy outside of marriage, and if they understand better what the angel was asking Joseph to do.

The name of Bethlehem is included in this story. You may want to include it in your story if you mentioned its name in the David story, because the name provides an additional link between Jesus and King David.

You may be wondering why the actual birth of Jesus is not highlighted in this story. There are a couple of reasons for this: 1) The "traditional" birth story is so well-known that it may have become rote to some. Looking at the birth story from a less well-known perspective may facilitate seeing the birth story with new eyes and new significance. 2) The passages of the birth story highlighted here contribute to the theme of Jesus coming as the Promised King and Promised Saviour. The angel tells Mary that Jesus will inherit David's throne forever. The old man says that Jesus is a light for the entire world, providing salvation for them. He also foreshadows the pain and troubles that will come to Jesus (just as was prophesied in Isaiah 53).

Jesus' naming eight days after the birth and the reasoning for going to the place of worship to dedicate Him is included to show that Mary and Joseph were respectful of the religious customs of the day and that they were obedient to God in naming the child Jesus as God had told them to do.

In the written story we've used **place of worship** in place of **Temple** in order to avoid religious terms that have different meanings in the modern world than they did originally. Also, although many people today may have an idea that a **Temple** was the Jewish place of worship in ancient times, they may link it too closely with the modern-day socio-political nation and it may have unwanted connotations. However, if you think this is not a problem, then feel free to use **Temple**.

Luke 2:26 says that Simeon was promised by God that he would see the **Lord's Messiah**. Titles for Jesus like **Christ, Messiah, Saviour, and Son of Man** are messianic titles that show that He is the promised one to come. The messianic title that is used in this story set is **Promised King**. (For a more in-depth discussion of this title please see the notes on the Isaiah story.)

Simeon's (the old man's) comments about Jesus have been simplified in the story in order to simplify the story and highlight the main themes of this story – that 1) Jesus would offer salvation, 2) He would be a light for everyone in all the world, and 3) Some would reject and some would accept Him.

We have omitted Anna's prophecy about Jesus in order to shorten the story.

Jesus grew in favour with God and all the people. Favour in this case refers to the fact that Jesus pleased God and people. We have used a more modern phrase in the example story.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

This story has dialogue that may be difficult for your group to remember, but you can do some things to help them. Try either 1) coming up with hand motions for each of the main points below (you could ask your connect group to help you), or 2) doing a freeze-frame for each scene. Have one or two people represent each scene and stand in different sections of the room. The storyteller walks around the room, stopping at each scene and describing what happens in it. If the storyteller forgets what happens in a scene, the people in that scene can help him/her or do the dialogue for him/her. This visual representation combined with the teamwork approach makes the dialogue much more interesting and memorable.

- Set the scene for your audience
 - Describe Mary – the engagement, she was a virgin, Joseph was a descendant of David
- The angel's appearance to Mary
 - Explanation of the conception through the power of God's Spirit
 - What the child will do and be
 - Mary's response
- Joseph takes Mary as his wife and the birth
- Joseph and Mary's visit to the place of worship
 - Description of the old man
 - The old man's prophecy about Jesus
- Family's return home, and Jesus grows up

Questions for discussion

You don't have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don't ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You'll find that as you continue to interact with God's Word at a deep level, God's Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?
- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? *(Tell it!)*
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get sidetracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- What was the problem with Joseph marrying or not marrying Mary? Wasn't he engaged to her? Didn't he love her?
 - *Engagement – a binding agreement of future marriage – in biblical Jewish culture was as binding as marriage itself. It was entered into in front of witnesses, and could only be broken by death (which left the woman a widow) or divorce (allowed in cases of infidelity). After a year's engagement, the couple would have a public ceremony in which the woman would leave her father's house and they would "come together." At this time the man and woman would live together (the actual meaning of "come together") and the marriage would not be consummated until then (implied in the idea of "coming together"). At the time of the coming together, the woman would typically be 13 or 14 years old. Before the Romans, a woman caught pregnant before the "coming together" of marriage would be stoned to death. The Romans abolished the death sentence for this transgression, but the woman would still be subjected to a public and humiliating trial that would result in divorce and shame for her and her family.*
- If Joseph is a descendant of King David but wasn't really Jesus' father, then how is Jesus a descendant of David?
 - *In the Jewish culture of that time, when Joseph married Mary while she was pregnant and then named the baby, he was legally recognising Jesus as his son. In the Matthew account, the angel tells Joseph to marry Mary and name the baby. Joseph would have understood that to mean that he was to recognise the baby as his own.*
- Why did Mary and Joseph need to present Jesus to God?
 - *In Jewish tradition women who had just given childbirth were considered "unclean" until they offered purification offerings at the Temple forty days after the birth. Mary and Joseph travelled to Jerusalem to do that, but the biblical story includes (in addition to the required purification) that they "presented" Jesus to God at the same time. Although parents often "redeemed" their first-born sons from priestly service by giving a payment to the Temple, scholars believe that Luke refers to something more when he talks about Jesus' presentation. Scholars believe it is a bit like 1 Samuel 1:21-28, when Hannah offers Samuel to God's service. What we do know from the text is that Mary and Joseph show themselves to be "good" Jews, following the Jewish customs and religious laws completely. They also show themselves to be obedient to God (Joseph marries Mary!), they name the child Jesus, and they may even be showing a glimmer of understanding of the significance of Jesus' birth in the fact that they "present" Him to God. You may use a word like "dedicate" in your story if it seems more clear than **present** to you.*
- What does it mean that the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed?
 - *The very fact that some will oppose and some will accept Jesus shows their deepest thoughts. Jesus' arrival on earth pronounces judgement in that people's true characters will become clear by their reaction to His life.*

JESUS' BIRTH – for children

Introduction

God's people waited for many years, and God finally sent His Promised King.

Luke 1:26-38 (Matthew 1:21)

God sent *an* angel ... to a *young girl* named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. *The angel* appeared to her and said, "Rejoice! God has been kind to you and is with you!" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "... You will *become pregnant* and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, *which means God saves*. He will be very great. ... God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will *rule* over God's people forever; His Kingdom will never end!" Mary *didn't understand how this could happen since she didn't have a husband yet*. The angel replied, "Nothing is impossible with God. ... The power of the Most High God will cause *this to happen* ... and *the baby* will be called the Son of God." Mary responded, "I am God's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Matthew 1:19-21, 24-25

In those days to be pregnant outside of marriage was a very bad thing that could bring a lot of trouble. So God sent an angel to Joseph, telling him similar things about the baby, and the angel told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife and raise the child as his own. Joseph obeyed God, and he married Mary.

Transition

And just as the angel said, Mary did have a son a few months later in the small town of Bethlehem.

Luke 2:21-22; 25-28

Eight days *after His birth* ... He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel. ... *Several weeks after that* ... Mary and Joseph took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to God in their place of worship – as was their custom. ... When they arrived, they met a *faithful* old man who had been promised by God that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Promised King. When he saw Jesus, he took the child in his arms and praised God. ...

Luke 2:29-32, 34-35

He said, "God, now I can die in peace. I have seen your Promised King who has come to save all people from the punishment for their disobedience. He is a light to reveal God to the entire world! ... *Many people will be against this child, but* He will be a joy to many others. ... As a result, the deepest thoughts of many *people will be made known*." ...

Luke 2:33, 39, 52

Jesus' parents were amazed at what *the man had said*, ... and they returned home. ... Jesus grew more and more healthy and wise. Both people and God were very pleased with Him.

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- Mary and Joseph (who is a descendant of David) are engaged to be married, but Mary is still a virgin
- An angel comes to Mary and tells her to not be afraid but to rejoice!
- Mary will have a baby through the power of God's Spirit
- The angel tells Mary several things about the baby:
 - He will be named Jesus (which means *God saves*)
 - He will inherit the throne of David and reign forever over God's people
 - He will be the Son of God
- Mary responds in obedience
- An angel tells Joseph to go ahead and marry Mary, even though her pregnancy outside of marriage is a disgrace
- Joseph obeys God
- The baby is born
- Joseph and Mary follow their customs and religious legal requirements and name Him (Jesus) on the 8th day. Several weeks later they take Him to present Him to God.
- God had promised a faithful old man that he wouldn't die before he saw the Promised King. The old man sees Jesus at the place of worship.
- The old man
 - Praises God that he has seen the Promised King who will offer salvation to all
 - Says that Jesus would be a light to reveal God to all the world
 - Says that some would reject and some would accept Him
- Mary and Joseph take Jesus home, and He grows up well. God is pleased with Him.

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

God's people waited for many years, and God finally sent His Promised King. God sent an angel to a young girl named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Now Joseph was a descendant of King David. The angel appeared to Mary and said, "Rejoice! God has been kind to you and is with you!" Mary was startled and confused, but the angel said to her, "Don't be afraid. You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name Him Jesus, which means 'God saves.' He will be very great, and God will make Him King on the throne of His ancestor David. He will rule over God's people forever, and His Kingdom will never end!" Mary didn't understand how this could happen since she didn't have a husband yet. The angel told her, "Nothing is impossible with God. The Spirit of God will cause this to happen and your baby will be called the Son of God." Mary said, "I am God's servant. Let everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her. Now in those days it was a very bad thing for a girl to be pregnant without being married. She could get in a lot of trouble. So God sent an angel to Joseph. The angel told Joseph the same things that he told to Mary. The angel told Joseph not to be afraid to marry Mary, and he was to raise the child as his own son. Joseph obeyed God, and Mary became his wife. And just as the angel said, Mary had a baby boy in the small town of Bethlehem. Eight days after the baby was born, He was named Jesus – just like the angel told Mary and Joseph. Several weeks later, they took baby Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to God in their place of worship. When they arrived, they met an old man named Simeon. Simeon was a faithful man, and God promised him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Promised King. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the child in his arms and praised God. He said, "Now I can die in peace, God. I have seen the Promised King who has come to save all people from the punishment for all the ways they've disobeyed God. Jesus will be a light to reveal God to the entire world! Many people will be against this child, but He will be a joy to many others. The secret thoughts that people have will be made known." Jesus' parents were amazed at what Simeon said, and they returned home. And Jesus grew to be healthy and smart. People liked Him, and He pleased God.

Retelling the story

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storying session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30 Retell the story. Use a Storybook Bible or other illustrations.

Snack – rice cakes

10:45 Craft:

- ~ Use fingerpaints to illustrate the story
- ~ Represents Simeon's promise being fulfilled
- ~ Represents Jesus coming even for me; I need to hold Him close



Resources Needed:

- Storybook Bible or illustrations
- Rice cakes
- Finger paints
- Wipes
- Markers / pens

11:10 Play:

- ~ Build a temple out of blocks
- ~ Use toy people to represent Simeon, Mary, Joseph, the angel and Jesus
- ~ Recreate the story

- Blocks
- Toy people

11:20 Music: (anything with good news in it)

- ~ Calypso Carol
- ~ Handel's Messiah
- ~ Shine, Jesus, Shine
- ~ Praise God from Whom all Blessing Flow
- ~ I Lift My Hands
- ~ His Name is Jesus
- ~ Friend of Sinners

- Develop a CD with music

Little Flames

10:30 Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.)

~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today.

Keep today's focus in mind: "God is pleased when I love Jesus."

Resources Needed:

10:35 Sing: "Happy News" (Sing to the tune of "London Bridge")
We have happy news to tell, news to tell, news to tell ...
We have happy news to tell, we have happy news.

Sing as children walk in a circle under the bridge (made with your arms). On the last line, bring your arms down to catch a child. Then tell them your happy news: Jesus will be born! Continue until each child has had a chance to be "caught" and told the happy news.

10:40 Retell the story:
~ Use Duplo bricks to build a temple. Act out the story with Duplo people.
~ Use pictures for each part of the story. Let the children put them in the right order and try telling the story.

- Duplo bricks and people
- Pictures representing the story (such as the angel coming to Mary, the angel coming to Joseph, Mary & Joseph having baby Jesus in Bethlehem, Simeon holding baby Jesus, Jesus growing up, etc)

10:50 "Knowledge Harvest" conversation: (use similar questions as below)
~ What did the angel say to Mary?
~ How did Mary respond?
~ What did the angel say to Joseph?
~ How did Joseph respond?
~ Where was baby Jesus born?
~ Whom did Mary and Joseph see at their place of worship in Jerusalem?
~ What promise had God given Simeon?
~ What did Simeon say about Jesus?
~ What four things did we learn about Jesus growing up? (*He grew physically, He was wise/smart, people liked Him, God was pleased with Him*)

10:55 Craft:
~ "Simeon holding Jesus" or "Me loving and serving Jesus" – Use a single "cup" of an egg box to glue to a pre-printed hand. Place a Jelly Baby in the egg cup to represent Jesus. (This is similar to this finger painting craft in the illustration ... without using paints.)



~ Paper chains or threaded pasta shapes to show the links between the stories that have been learned: Creation, Fall, Abraham, David, Isaiah, Jesus, etc. Let the last link have the child's name to show that they are part of God's story.

- Egg boxes (single "cup" per child)
- Pre-printed handprints on paper
- Jelly Baby candies
- Coloured rigatoni pasta (pre-marked with story names)
- Thread

11:05 Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time.

- Biscuits

Discussion: "What are some things you can do to show Jesus that you love Him?"
~ Reflect back to them that: "God is pleased when I love Jesus."

- 11:10 Popcorn Prayer
~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"
- 11:15 Games:
~ Similar to "Pin the tail on the Donkey" but place a picture of Jesus in Simeon's hands
~ "Gabriel says" – Use rules from "Simon Says"; talk about obedience
~ "Good News" – Bring a baby doll to class and pretend he is Jesus. Pass him around from child to child as they sit in a circle. Play music and when the music stops the child holding Jesus will shout. They can shout the good news about Jesus being born, any part of the story they remember or something true about whom Jesus is (what is special about Him). Examples of things they can shout: Jesus will be born, He's the Son of God, His name will be Jesus, He will be a King forever, etc.
- 11:25 Learn the words of the week: "God is pleased when I love Jesus." Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words.
- 11:30 If there is any remaining time (or the previous activities finish early), allow the children to freely choose to do whatever they want to do. Play story-relevant music in the background. Leaders should engage with the children during this time: celebrate them, pray for them, love them.
~ Play with story-oriented toys
~ Role play
~ Place Jesus in Simeon's Hands (game from above)
~ "Gabriel says" (game from above)
~ "Good news" (game from above)
~ "Happy News" (song from above)
- A poster or printed picture of Simeon
 - A picture of baby Jesus
 - Tape
 - Music
 - Baby doll
 - Visuals to help learn the phrase
 - Story-oriented toys

Blaze

Resources Needed:

- 10:30 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story
- 10:35 Retelling:
Split into four groups. Ask each group a question pertaining to the story. (Ex. What did the angel say next?) Each time a group gets the answer correct, they earn a section of a paper angel – which they get to tack to the wall. Whoever gets a full angel first wins!
- 10:45 Have the children retell the story in their groups.
Discuss the questions:
~ What do you like about this story?
~ What bothered you about this story?
~ What does this story show you about God?
~ What does this story show you about people?
~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
~ Who will you tell this story to?
- 4 paper angels – each a different colour; separated in parts (body, arms, wings, head, etc)
 - Tape or tack

- 11:00 Craft:
- ~ Use fingerpaints to illustrate the story
 - ~ Represents Simeon's promise being fulfilled
 - ~ Represents Jesus coming even for me; I need to hold Him close



- Finger paints
- Wipes
- Markers / pens
- Paper
- Tack or tape
- Glue
- Scissors

When children have finished with their hand craft, they should begin tacking squares of paper to the wall to build the temple. Once the temple is built, they can tack their hand crafts to the temple.

- 11:15 Sing: "Happy News" (Sing to the tune of "London Bridge")
- We have happy news to tell, news to tell, news to tell ...*
- We have happy news to tell, we have happy news.*

Sing as children walk in a circle under the bridge (made with your arms). On the last line, bring your arms down to catch a child. Then tell them your happy news: Jesus will be born! Continue until each child has had a chance to be "caught" and told the happy news.

- 11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering

TNT

Resources Needed:

- 10:30 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story

- 10:35 Retelling:
- Split into four groups. Ask each group a question pertaining to the story. (Ex. What did the angel say next?) Each time a group gets the answer correct, they earn a section of a paper angel – which they get to tack to the wall. Whoever gets a full angel first wins!
- * Each group's angel must be a different colour and placed on a different wall. (This is important since these angels will be used later in the game: "Run to the Angel.")*

- 4 paper angels – each a different colour; separated in parts (body, arms, wings, head, etc)
- Tape or tack

- 10:45 Have the children retell the story in their groups. Then discuss the questions.

Discuss the questions:

- ~ What do you like about this story?
- ~ What bothered you about this story?
- ~ What does this story show you about God?
- ~ What does this story show you about people?
- ~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- ~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
- ~ Who will you tell this story to?

- 11:00 Craft:
- ~ Each child should trace their hand on a piece of paper and colour or draw a child in their hand to illustrate the story
 - ~ Represents Simeon's promise being fulfilled
 - ~ Represents Jesus coming even for me; I need to hold Him close



- Markers / pens
- Paper
- Tack or tape
- Glue
- Scissors

When children have finished with their hand craft, they should begin tacking squares of paper to the wall to build the temple. Once the temple is built, they can tack their hand crafts to the temple.

- 11:15 Game: "Run to the Angel"
- ~ Gather the children in the centre of the room and say: jump to the red angel. When they have reached the red angel, say: crawl to the blue angel. Continue telling the children different ways of moving to get to the different angels (march, tiptoe, fly, swim, take big/little steps, etc). Then discuss the purpose of the angel and his visits to Mary and Joseph.
 - ~ *The angels are the ones placed on the wall in the earlier "retelling" activity. Each angel should be a different colour and placed on a different wall.*

- 4 paper angels – each a different colour; separated in parts (body, arms, wings, head, etc); these are the same angels used in the earlier activity

- 11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering

- 11:30 (As they leave) Activity pages

- Word search
- Colouring pages