

WONDER[®] CELEBRATE

All Ages (3–12)

Winter 2022–23



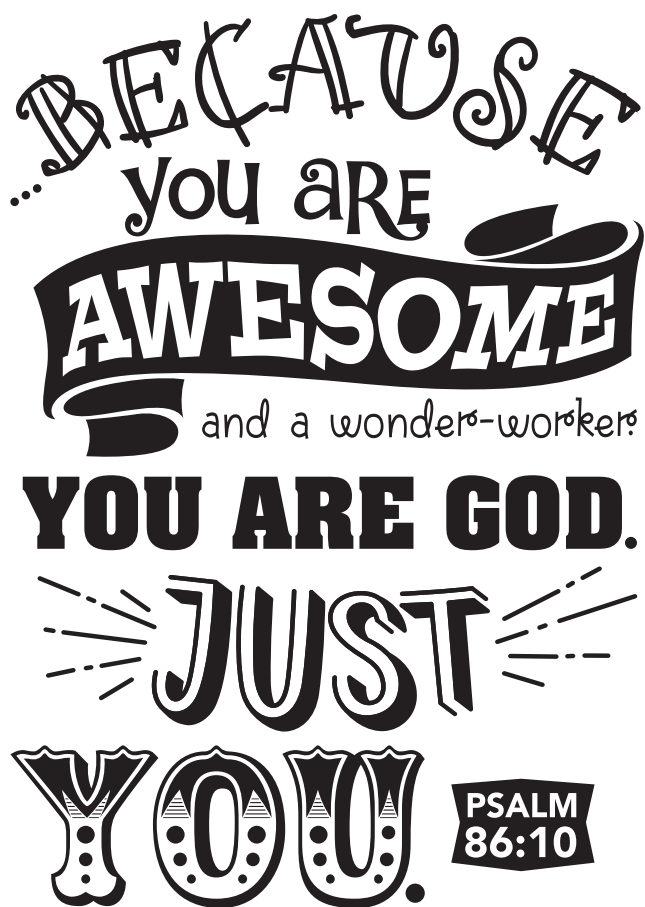
Leader Guide

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

FALL 2022–SUMMER 2023



Fall 2022	Winter 2022–23	Spring 2023	Summer 2023
UNIT 1: CALL	UNIT 1: HOPE	UNIT 1: PARABLES	UNIT 1: IDENTITY
Hannah 1 Samuel 1:1-28	An Angel Visits Mary Luke 1:26-38	The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37	I Am Exodus 3:13-15
God Calls Samuel 1 Samuel 3:1-21	An Angel Visits Joseph Matthew 1:18-24	The Two Houses Matthew 7:24-27	Good Shepherd Psalm 23
Samuel Anoints Saul 1 Samuel 7-8; 10:17-24	Jesus Is Born Luke 2:1-7	The Sower and the Seed Matthew 13:1-9	Abba Mark 14:32-42
Samuel Anoints David 1 Samuel 16:1-13	Angels Visit the Shepherds Luke 2:8-20	The Last Supper Mark 14:12-26	Alpha and Omega Revelation 22:1-13
UNIT 2: SEEKING	UNIT 2: BELIEVE	UNIT 2: RESURRECTION	UNIT 2: BIBLE
David Plays Music 1 Samuel 16:14-23	Wise Men Visit Jesus Matthew 2:1-12	Palm Sunday Mark 11:1-11	Noah Genesis 8:1-22; 9:7-17
David and Goliath 1 Samuel 17:1-51a	Jesus' Baptism Mark 1:4-11	Easter Luke 24:1-12	Jonah Book of Jonah
David and Jonathan 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 20:1-42	Jesus Calls Levi Mark 2:13-17	Emmaus Luke 24:13-35	Daniel Chooses Daniel 1:1-21
Solomon Prays for Wisdom 1 Kings 2:1-4; 3:1-15	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand Luke 4:14-30	Thomas John 20:19-31	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Daniel 3:1-30
Solomon Builds the Temple 1 Kings 6:1-8:66	Jesus Walks on Water Mark 6:45-52	Ascension Luke 24:50-53	Daniel and the Lions Daniel 6:1-28
UNIT 3: VOICE	UNIT 3: KINGDOM	UNIT 3: MINISTRY	UNIT 3: CELEBRATE
Elijah and the Ravens 1 Kings 17:1-7	Jesus and the Children Mark 10:13-16	Peter Matthew 16:13-20	The Year of Jubilee Deuteronomy 15
Elisha and the Widow's Jars 2 Kings 4:1-7	The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin Luke 15:3-10	Peter and Tabitha Acts 9:36-43	The Passover Deuteronomy 16:1-8
Isaiah Is Called Isaiah 6:1-8	The Forgiving Father Luke 15:11-32	Peter in Prison Acts 12:1-17	The Festival of Weeks Deuteronomy 16:1-8
A Time Is Coming Jeremiah 23:5	The Widow's Coins Luke 21:1-4	Pentecost Acts 2:1-41	The Festival of Booths Deuteronomy 16:13-17



Celebrate Wonder All Ages is a curriculum that honors the spiritual life of children. *Celebrate Wonder All Ages* will engage children in open-ended exploration and inquiry of the Bible. Through experiential activities, spiritual practices, and reflection, *Celebrate Wonder All Ages* serves as a biblical guide to help children make meaning for their lives. This curriculum seeks to deepen children's faith formation and to create a safe space for children to ask big questions and claim their spiritual identity as children of God.

Please visit **CokesburyKids.com**, where you can find training videos, blog posts, free stuff, and more.

CELEBRATE WONDER®

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What Is...



Celebrate Wonder All Ages is a curriculum that seeks to celebrate spirituality through wonder. Children are naturally spiritual beings and everyday theologians. We want children to recognize and name this spirituality found within themselves and in all the world around them.

This curriculum is based on spiritual practices, which are incorporated through play, discovery, biblical exploration, faith conversation, and relationship. Children who participate in *Celebrate Wonder All Ages* will come to know and use spiritual practices as a way to deepen their faith and to grow in their spiritual identity as children of God. These spiritual practices then become building blocks for holy moments and enrich the faith lives of each and every child. We hope you will come wonder with us as we celebrate the Spirit of God in the lives of children.

The Components of...



Spiritual Practice

A spiritual practice is an intentional activity or ritual that helps you be aware of God's presence. For children, this means simple and tangible practices to connect to God's love.

Teaching children spiritual practices provides them with the tools needed to know themselves fully as children of God. This is important because children who are equipped with these helpful daily practices can develop deeper connections to encounter the divine.

Children are innately spiritual. Their curiosity and wonder are a model for faith in action. Through spiritual practices, they can remain connected to this natural spirituality. Spiritual practices come in all shapes and sizes. In *Celebrate Wonder All Ages*, they are typically simple and interactive practices for the children to develop their own ways to feel God's presence and to know their identity as children of God.

Peaceful Place

The Peaceful Place is a space for the children to spend quiet time with God. Children enjoy having a comfortable place with quiet activities when they are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Create a feeling of softness and rest by using soft rugs, pillows, and stuffed animals to snuggle with in the area. Each week there will be suggested books and quiet activities you can choose from. Since you know your children and what they need, you are also invited to include your own contributions to the Peaceful Place.

Wonder Table

A Wonder Table is similar to a worship altar found in many worship spaces. It is a holy space meant to help the children see and know God is present. We encourage you to use a smaller table that the children can see and interact with.

Each week there are suggested items to place on the table that coordinate with the church liturgical year and the Bible story. Suggested items include a Bible, a candle, a colored cloth, and so forth. The table can be used as a gathering area for the story time and for participating in spiritual practices.

Wonder Box

The Wonder Box is a place to hold a special item that connects to the Faith Word and to the Bible story. Each week there will be a suggested item to place in the box. The Wonder Box is very special and is kept on the Wonder Table. Each week you will reveal what is inside and discuss its importance.

We encourage you to make your own Wonder Box. It can be any shape or size, but it's best if it has a lid. You can create your own box for the children, or you may wish to include the children in the creation process. The goal is for the children to come to know this box as very special. The Wonder Box is another way for the children to engage in the Bible story and to focus on the lesson.

Core Resources



CELEBRATE WONDER ALL AGES has been adapted to make it easy for ministry with children and families to happen, no matter what your church's current reality is. Whether you're meeting in person all in one room, sending materials home for families to use together, offering a large group opening and small groups in person or virtually, or hosting an intergenerational gathering for your whole church, CELEBRATE WONDER ALL AGES will work for you. The CELEBRATE WONDER ALL AGES Kit contains a Leader Guide, Reproducible Kids' Book, Class Pack, CD-ROM, and DVD! The CD-ROM has digital copies of the Leader Guide, Reproducible Kids' Book, and Class Pack.

Kit:

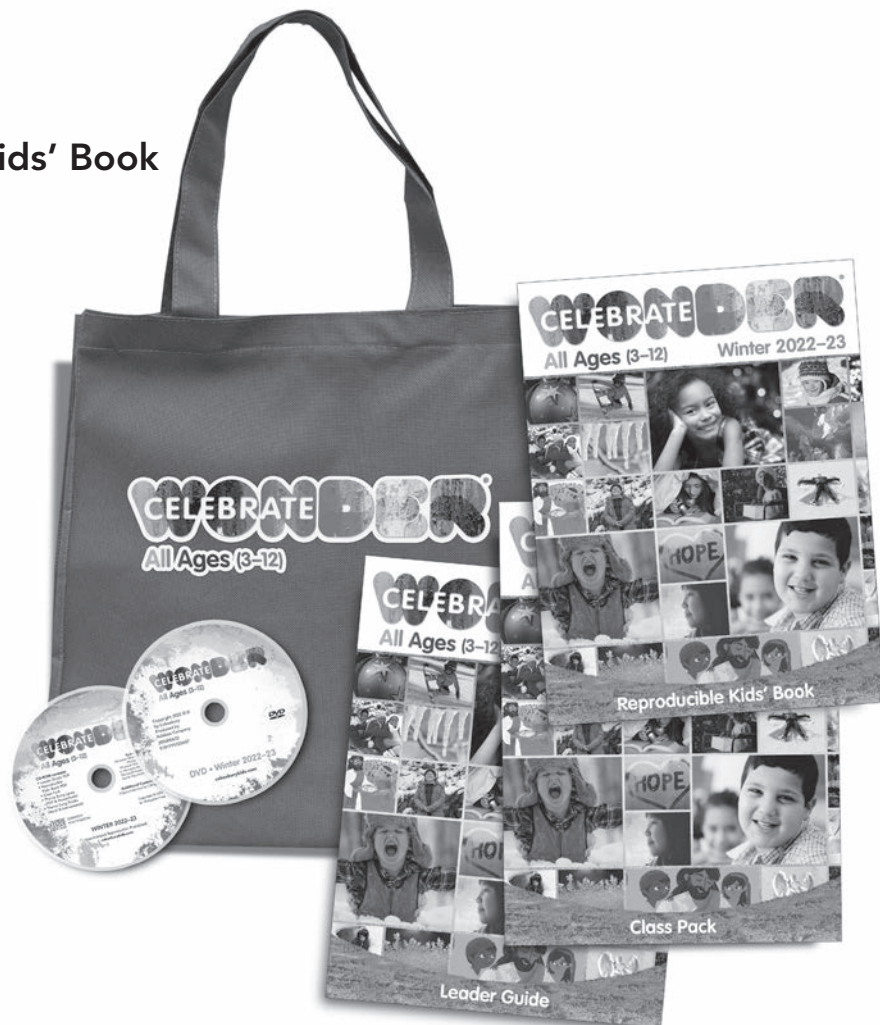
Leader Guide

Reproducible Kids' Book

Class Pack

CD-ROM

DVD



Core Resources

Celebrate Wonder DVD

The *Celebrate Wonder DVD* features a child host who will engage the children through storytelling, life application, and exploration of the Faith Word. The DVD includes a music video and thirteen sessions (one for each Sunday) that are 3–5 minutes each.



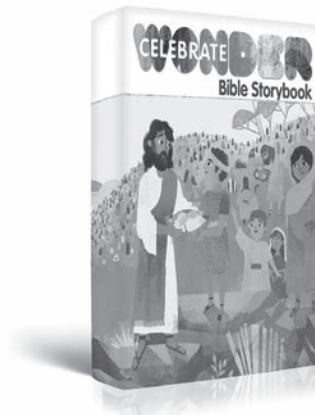
CEB Bible

This interactive Bible includes four-color icons and illustrations throughout, with a wealth of notes, historical facts, book introductions, devotionals, and other interactive elements to capture inquisitive young minds. The *Deep Blue Kids Bible* encourages a thirst for God's timeless message. For children ages 7–12.



Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook

A colorfully illustrated children's Bible storybook that will engage the children through simple storytelling and open-ended questions that encourage the children to wonder about the Bible story and make connections between the Bible and their lives. Includes 150 stories!



Supplies

These are basic supplies you will want to have readily available.
All supplies for each lesson and activity will be listed in the session outline and above the activity in the Leader Guide.

Box of tissues	Markers (washable and permanent)	Projector or television
Card stock	Metal brads	Resealable plastic bags
CD player	Mural paper	Ribbon
Chenille stems	Napkins	Scissors (adult and safety)
Colored and white copy paper	Paintbrushes	Smocks
Colored pencils	Paper bowls	Stapler, staples
Computer and printer	Paper clips	Stickers
Construction paper	Paper cups	Tape (clear, masking, and double-stick)
Cotton balls	Paper or plastic table coverings	Tissue paper
Cotton swabs	Paper plates	Washable paint
Crayons	Paper punch	Watercolor paints
DVD player	Paper streamers	Watercolor pencils
Glue, gluesticks	Paper towels	Wet wipes
Handwashing supplies	Pencils	Wooden craft sticks
Index cards	Plastic containers for paint and water	Yarn
Lunch-sized paper bags	Posterboard	

Whether you are using this kit with all ages in one room or with children separated into groups by ages, you will find everything you need in this kit. Here are some ideas for how to make the sessions work for you.

Preparing to Lead

No matter your context, start each week by reviewing the session. Look over the “Prepare to Lead” and the “Prepare to Wonder” sections. This background information helps you navigate any questions you or the children may have. The spiritual practice helps prepare your heart for leading and for helping children explore their faith. Use the “Prepare to Lead” section at the beginning of each session to decide which activities you would like to complete and to make sure you have the corresponding supplies.

As you think about leading, give yourself time and space to ponder the Bible story each week and to pray for yourself, any other volunteers you will be working with, and the children you will lead. When children and adults engage in faith formation together, God can show up in beautiful ways.

Consider Your Context

The most important component of using any curriculum is your own unique context. Before you begin using Celebrate Wonder All Ages, consider how this resource will work best for you. Be sure to think about your time, your space, and the children you will be interacting with to determine what is best for your ministry.

On the next three pages, you will find suggestions and tips for using this resource in several common faith formation models used with children: Age-Graded Ministry, One-Room Ministry, and Large Group/Small Group Ministry.

Meeting Virtually?

If your ministry is meeting virtually, we have several resources to help you share this content with those in your ministry. This Leader Guide, the Reproducible Kids’ Book, and the Class Pack are all available in digital format, along with other resources such as shareable social media images and Zoom backgrounds. Celebrate Wonder videos are also available on our streaming platform, Amplify, which allows you to set up a subscription for the families in your ministry.

Preschool Groups – Suggested Schedule

1. Welcome children on their level and invite them to mark their attendance (if using the Attendance Chart in the Class Pack).
2. Invite children to complete one of the “Come Together” activities or play and interact with items in the Peaceful Place.
3. Gather children together to read the story from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Then watch the session video from the Celebrate Wonder DVD.
4. Wonder together using the unit’s Wonder Story Mat and Faith Word Poster found in the Class Pack. Show the class what is in the Wonder Box and ask them what that might have to do with this week’s story.
5. Have children respond to the story by choosing either the all ages “Experience Wonder” activity, a supplemental preschool activity, or by continuing to interact with items in the Peaceful Place.
6. Gather your group back together to participate in the spiritual practice and closing prayer. Send the Family Celebration Letter and Take-Home Pages home with each child.

Elementary Groups – Suggested Schedule

1. Welcome children on their level and invite them to mark their attendance (if using the Attendance Chart in the Class Pack).
2. Invite children to complete one of the “Come Together” activities based on their ages.
3. Gather children together to read the story from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook* or a CEB Bible. Then watch the session video from the Celebrate Wonder DVD.
4. Wonder together using the unit’s Wonder Story Mat and Faith Word Poster found in the Class Pack. Show the class what is in the Wonder Box and ask them what that might have to do with this week’s story. Help children learn the monthly Bible Verse by doing “Examine the Bible Verse” or allowing children to interact with items in the Peaceful Place.
5. Have children respond to the story by choosing either the all-ages “Experience Wonder” activity or a supplemental activity based on their ages.
6. Gather your group back together to participate in the spiritual practice and closing prayer. Send the Family Celebration Letter and Take-Home Pages home with each child.

One Room Suggested Schedule

1. Welcome children on their level and invite them to mark their attendance (if using the Attendance Chart in the Class Pack).
2. Invite children to complete one of the “Come Together” activities or play and interact with items in the Peaceful Place. You may choose to use the Come Together Reproducible pages based on the ages of the children in your group, or may choose the All Ages activity for everyone.
3. Gather children together to read the story from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Then watch the session video from the Celebrate Wonder DVD.
4. Wonder together using the unit’s Wonder Story Mat and Faith Word Poster found in the Class Pack. Show the class what is in the Wonder Box and ask them what that might have to do with this week’s story.
5. Have children respond to the story by choosing either the all-ages “Experience Wonder” activity, a supplemental activity, or by continuing to interact with items in the Peaceful Place.
6. Gather your group back together to participate in the spiritual practice and closing prayer. Send the Family Celebration Letter and Take-Home Pages home with each child.

Tips for One Room Ministry

If you only have time for one or two activities, choose activities based on the average ages of your group.

Partner older children with younger children to help guide them through the session.

Have a variety of Bibles on different reading levels available for children to use.

Start with the Large Group Time:

1. Everyone will watch the session's video from the DVD.
2. Wonder together using the unit's Wonder Story Mat and Faith Word Poster found in the Class Pack. Show the class what is in the Wonder Box and ask them what that might have to do with this week's story.
3. Send the kids to their small groups.

Small Group Time:

1. Welcome children on their level and invite them to mark their attendance (if using the Attendance Chart in the Class Pack).
2. Read the Bible story from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook* or a CEB Bible.
3. Do the reproducible that coordinates with the age group of your small group.
4. Choose an activity from the "Experience Wonder" section, one of the supplemental activities based on the age and/or interests of your small group, or allow children to interact with the items in the Peaceful Place.
5. Gather the group back together to participate in a spiritual practice and closing prayer. Send the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Tips for Small Groups

Adjust the order of activities based on the needs of your group.

Choose activities based on the age of your group, but also consider their interests. Many of the activities can be adapted for different age groups.

Allow for fellowship time within your group by inviting children to share their thoughts and prayer requests during the closing prayer time.

Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. (Luke 2:10)

An Angel Visits Mary – Luke 1:26-38

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Angel (Drawing)
Lacing Angel (Craft)
An Angel's Message (Puzzle)
Good News (Writing)
Mixed Messages (Game)
Nativity Book: Mary (Art)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Bible Verse Fun (Movement)
Clay Angel (Art)
Hope Helps (Activity)
Share Hope (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>Advent wreath</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>candles or battery-operated candles</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>candle lighter</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>quick drying clay</i>
<i>pencils</i>	<i>angel cookie cutter</i>
<i>highlighters</i>	<i>diverse pictures of angels</i>
<i>hole punch</i>	<i>dowel rods</i>
<i>yarn</i>	<i>ribbon</i>
<i>baskets</i>	
<i>envelopes</i>	

Suggested Books

The Nativity by Julie Vivas
The Message of Birds by Kate Westerlund

Tips for the Leader

- Today is the second Sunday of Advent. Be sure to light two candles during the Spiritual Practice time if you are using an Advent wreath.
- If you have not yet made an Advent wreath to use, see Session 13 in the Fall Leader Guide and Fall Reproducible Kids' Book.
- This session, there are many activities that will work for all ages. Choose activities based on the interests and abilities of the children in your group.
- As it is the start of a new month and a new quarter, make sure you have all of your new posters and figures from the Class Pack ready to go.
- Did you know we have social media images you can share on your church or ministry's page? Check out your CD-ROM or digital files to download these images to share.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: HOPE

Mary certainly didn't expect to be visited by an angel. She was a young girl, around the age of thirteen years old. She was not a queen or a princess, but simply a young girl engaged to be married. Mary lived in a small town, Nazareth in Galilee, that is never mentioned in the Old Testament. She was an ordinary girl in an insignificant town, until the angel's visit.

The angel told Mary that she had found favor with God. In those days, many assumed those who are blessed by God would enjoy wealth and good health. Mary's blessing, however, was that she was to have a child out of wedlock. Mary's response of "How can this be?" seemed very appropriate. The angel assured her it was true, and the baby was God's Son. God was at work among ordinary people, choosing to send Jesus as a message of God's love in an unexpected and unconventional way.

The Bible story may be familiar, and you may feel ordinary, but this story reminds us that God is always doing miraculous and extraordinary things. As you celebrate Advent and Christmas with children, be open to the unexpected. Enjoy celebrating God's unconventional message of love as you hear and teach this familiar story.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

This month we will explore the familiar stories of Advent. Take some time to find a nativity scene. Each week, add a figure to the nativity. When you place a figure, such as Mary, thank God for the hope she or the other nativity figures bring. We would not have the hope of Jesus without all the people in the story, including you!

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, purple cloth, battery-operated candle, an angel*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a purple cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22). Place an angel inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *hope* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are preparing for the birth of Jesus.

ASK: Why is Jesus' birth so special?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary age child to read, "Mary's Joy" (pp. 192–193), from the storybook Bible or read Luke 1:26–38 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus and messages of hope. Amen.

Tip: *Each week you will place a different angel in the Wonder Box. Try to find a variety of angels to use each week.*

Angel – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Angel" (Reproducible 1A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "Angel" to each preschooler.
- Invite the preschoolers to draw an angel and color the page.

SAY: In our Bible story today, an angel visited Mary.

ASK: What do you think the angel looked like? Do you think all angels look the same?

Lacing Angel – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, colored pencils, yarn, scissors, hole punch

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Lacing Angel" (Reproducible 1B) for each child.

- Have the children cut out and color the angel.
- Direct the children to punch holes on the indicated spots.
- Let the children use the yarn to weave through the holes to make an angel.

SAY: There are many angels in the story of Jesus' birth.

WONDER: Why do you think angels are so important?

An Angel's Message – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, highlighters

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "An Angel's Message" (Reproducible 1C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "An Angel's Message" to each child.

SAY: Angels are God's messengers, and often share important news or messages with God's people.

- Invite the children to solve the puzzle by finding the words and filling in the angel's message.

Good News – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Good News" (Reproducible 1D) for each child.

SAY: The angels shared good news with Mary.

ASK: Have you ever heard good news before? What is the best news you have ever heard? How did it make you feel?

SAY: In the Bible, God used angels as messengers to share good news. Today, God can use us to share good news too!

- Have the children complete the page and invite willing volunteers to share their work.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 1 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 1F–1G. Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: What do you think Mary felt when the angel appeared?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14). Locate and cut out the Unit 1 story figures (Class Pack—p. 6) if you haven't already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *hope*.

ASK: What do you think the word *hope* means? What gives you hope?

- Show the children the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22).
- Read the definition of hope from the Faith Word Poster.

SAY: Today we are learning about Mary.

ASK: Who is Mary?

- Have a child place Mary on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- ☐ Why is Mary special?
- ☐ Why did an angel appear to Mary?
- ☐ What do angels look like?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the angel.

WONDER: Angels are special messengers from God. How would you describe this angel?

Experience Wonder

Mixed Messages – All Ages

Supplies: paper, pen, basket

SAY: Today we heard the story of an angel visiting Mary. This was an important part of the story of Jesus' birth because the angel shared a message of hope.

ASK: Do you think Mary felt hopeful when she heard the angel's message?

- On strips of paper, write the following messages: God is good, hope is hopeful, Christmas is coming, angels are angelic. Place the messages in the basket.
- Have the children gather in a circle.
- Let a child draw a strip of paper from the basket.
- Have the child whisper the message to the person on their right or left. Encourage the child to say the message as fast as they can. They cannot repeat their message.
- Direct the children to whisper the message around the circle until it reaches the last child. The last child will share out loud what he or she heard.
- Play the game as time allows.

WONDER: Is it easy to share messages? Why or why not? What if Mary misunderstood the angel's message?

Nativity Book: Mary – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, crayons or markers, pencils, hole punch, envelopes

Prepare Ahead: Copy "Nativity Book: Mary" (Reproducible 1E) on card stock for each child.

SAY: This month we are going to make a special nativity book to help us remember the story of Jesus' birth. Today we learned about Mary.

ASK: What do you remember about Mary?

- Invite the children to remember the Bible story by writing and coloring the first page of their book. Assist younger children with writing.
- Help children to cut out the Mary page of their book and punch holes to assemble the book later.
- Give each child an envelope to keep their pages in until the whole book is completed.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 1 Bible verse is Luke 2:10. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Luke in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Luke located in the New Testament? (*third book*) In what chapter of Luke is our verse located? (*2*) What is the verse number? (*10*)

SAY: Our Bible verse reminds us that the news of Jesus' birth was wonderful and joyous news.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15). Read it together.

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 1 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 1F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; The Nativity, by Julie Vivas; The Message of Birds, by Kate Westerlund; paper; crayons or markers; pens; baskets

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 1 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 1F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's story or color the Unit 1 Faith Word Coloring Page.
- Have the children write or draw messages of hope for their friends and family. Encourage the children to place the messages in a basket to be shared with your church family.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Hope Through Attentiveness

Supplies: Advent wreath, candles or battery-operated candles, candle lighter

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we will light candles to remind us to look for light and hope in the world.

- Gather around your Advent wreath and light two candles.

SAY: During Advent, we light candles to prepare for Jesus. Jesus brings light, joy, and hope to everyone. Today is the second Sunday of Advent.

- Have the children repeat the following prayer with you, one line at a time.

PRAY: We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus brings hope. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is love. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 1F–1G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice with you. Be sure to share this month's faith word with your family.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Bible Verse Fun

Supplies: none

SAY: We heard good news in our Bible story today!

ASK: What was the good news we heard? (*Mary was going to have a baby. Jesus would be born.*)

- Gather the children together.
- Have the children do the hand motions as you read the Bible verse.
- Look! (place hands on their forehead and look around); I bring good news (cup their hands around their mouths like they are shouting); To you (point to a friend); Wonderful, joyous news (jump up and down); For all people (open arms and make a rainbow motion over their heads); Amen (sit down).
- Do this several times.

SAY: Our Bible verse helps us remember the good news we heard today!

Early Elementary – Clay Angel

Supplies: quick drying clay, angel cookie cutters, diverse pictures of angels, dowel rod, ribbon

SAY: Let's create our own angels to take home and hang on our Christmas trees.

- Give the children supplies to create an angel out of clay.
- Help the children use the dowel rod to put a hole at the top of their angel.
- String the angel with the ribbon to make an ornament.

Older Elementary – Hope Helps

Supplies: none

SAY: Sometimes it can be hard to find hope. There is a lot that goes on in our world, and it might seem hard to know God is bringing hope.

ASK: Do you have hope? What gives you hope? How does God give you hope?

- Help children use the acronym HOPE to remember they have hope in God. Encourage the children to write or draw as they learn the acronym.

H – Hope is alive – I can see hope in Jesus

O – Only if we look for it – list three things you are grateful for

P – Praise be to God – Say a prayer to God for hope

E – Hope is everywhere – look around and name one thing that gives you hope

ASK: Is it hard to have hope?

SAY: When we celebrate Jesus' birth each year, we remember that we always have hope in God. As you celebrate Christmas this year, remember to find hope.

- Ask a child to say a prayer.

Intergenerational Activity – Share Hope

Supplies: paper, pens, basket

- Have the participants write or draw what hope means to them and then place their paper in the basket.
- Let one person draw out someone else's paper from the basket and encourage each person to find the person who wrote or drew the message. Continue with others until everyone is paired up.
- Once everyone is in pairs, have the pairs share with each other about their hope messages.
- After a few minutes encourage the pairs to come up with a combined message of hope. This can be a message of hope they might want to share with the church family during the Advent season.
- Allow participants to share their hope messages in worship.

Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. (Luke 2:10)

An Angel Visits Joseph – Matthew 1:18-24

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

- Know His Name** (Coloring)
- My Name Is...** (Journaling)
- Names for Jesus** (Activity)
- Are All Angels the Same?** (Matching)
- Were You There?** (Drama)
- Nativity Book: Joseph** (Art)
- Peaceful Place** (Response Activities)
- Dress Like Joseph** (Creative Play)
- Follow God's Directions** (Game)
- Your Part** (Activity)
- Come Jesus, Come** (Drama)

Supplies At-a-Glance

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>crayons</i> | <i>blank nametags</i> |
| <i>colored pencils</i> | <i>baby name books</i> |
| <i>markers</i> | <i>Advent wreath</i> |
| <i>scissors</i> | <i>candles or battery-operated candles</i> |
| <i>tape</i> | <i>candle lighter</i> |
| <i>card stock</i> | <i>Bible dress-up clothes</i> |
| <i>pencils</i> | <i>paper</i> |
| <i>hole punch</i> | |
| <i>envelopes</i> | |

Suggested Books

- The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi*
- Brown Bear's Wonderful Secret by Caroline Castle*

Tips for the Leader

- This month's faith word is *hope*—to trust in God's promises. Ask children if they remember the faith word this week. Advent is a great time to discuss hope!
- If your faith tradition celebrates different words of Advent on different days, you can adjust the prayers in the Spiritual Practice section as needed!
- If you don't have an Advent wreath, you can use any combination of five candles and greenery if you wish.
- The Christmas story is most likely familiar to many children, but be sensitive to those who may have never heard it before. Have other children help share the details with those who may not know the story.
- There are many opportunities in this session to reenact the story. Enjoy retelling a familiar story with children in new and different ways. Some of their observations may surprise you!

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: HOPE

In the Bible, God often uses dreams to send messages. This is the first of three visits an angel makes to Joseph in a dream. In addition to the announcement of Jesus' birth, Joseph also receives angelic instruction concerning taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape King Herod.

Overall, the Bible mentions little about Joseph. We are told Joseph is a righteous man and this statement is supported by his actions. Upon learning Mary is pregnant, Joseph makes plans to divorce her quietly. In those days, once a couple was engaged, they were considered married. If Joseph had died during that time, Mary would have been a widow. For Mary to have become pregnant before they had marital relations would have been considered adultery. However, after the angel's visit, Joseph still took Mary as his wife. Joseph's willingness to trust God gives us a good idea of Joseph's character.

Some people are hesitant to call Joseph the father of Jesus. However, Jesus was Joseph's adopted son. The Bible refers to Jesus as the son of Joseph from Nazareth and as the carpenter's son. It is through Joseph that Jesus' lineage is traced back to King David. Joseph was a good man, who chose to trust God. We can learn from Joseph when we doubt in hard or even unfair situations; we can remember his dream of "Emmanuel" and trust, like Joseph, that God is with us.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

In this lesson, we will talk about Jesus' name. Does your name have an important meaning? If so, do you feel like your name fits you and your life experiences? If not, look through a name book or look online, and see if another name fits. Although we can't easily change our names, you can be present to the life you are living and how that aligns with the coming of Jesus. Jesus brings hope and joy. How do you bring hope and joy? What name could you choose for yourself that would share the important message of Jesus?

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, purple cloth, battery-operated candle, an angel*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a purple cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22). Place the angel inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *hope* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are preparing for the birth of Jesus.

ASK: Why is Jesus' birth so special?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Joseph's Joy" (pp. 138–139) from the storybook or read Matthew 1:18-24 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for sending messengers to teach us about Jesus. Amen.

Tip: *Each week you will place a different angel in the Wonder Box. Try to find a variety of diverse angels.*

Know His Name – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Know His Name" (Reproducible 2A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "Know His Name" to each preschooler.

ASK: What is your name? How do you spell your name?

ASK: Do you know the name of the baby we are celebrating? How do you spell his name?

- Help the children spell Jesus.
- Invite the preschoolers to color the page.
- Have the children say Jesus' name and tell them Jesus loves them.

My Name Is... – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils, scissors, tape

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "My Name Is..." (Reproducible 2B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "My Name Is..." to each child.

ASK: Do you know how you got your name? What is the name of the baby we celebrate during Advent?

- Have the children write their names on the page.
- If you choose, the children can cut out their nametags and wear it on their shirts.
- Allow children to share how they got their names. If a child does not know, encourage the children to ask their families about their name stories.

Names for Jesus – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Names for Jesus" (Reproducible 2C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Names for Jesus" to each child.

SAY: Today, we learned God instructed Joseph to name Mary's baby Jesus.

ASK: Are there other names for Jesus?

- Have the children look at the page and read the names for Jesus.
- Invite the children to color the page and write names they might use for Jesus.

Are All Angels the Same? – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers, paper

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Are All Angels the Same?" (Reproducible 2D) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Are All Angels the Same?" to each child.

WONDER: What do you think angels look like?

- Have the children match the angels on the page.
- Allow children to draw their own angel.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you, and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 2 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: How do you think Joseph felt when he woke up from his dream?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 2F–2G. Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: What would you have named baby Jesus?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14). Locate and cut out the Unit 1 story figures (Class Pack—p. 6) if you haven't already.

SAY: Today's faith word is *hope*.

ASK: What does the word *hope* mean? What do you hope for?

- Show the children the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22).
- Read the definition of the word *hope* from the Faith Word Poster.

SAY: Today, we are learning about Joseph.

ASK: Who is Joseph?

SAY: There are many Josephs in the Bible. Today we are talking about Joseph of Nazareth in the New Testament. He was going to be Mary's husband and got an important message from God about Jesus.

- Have a child place Joseph on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- How was this story the same as Mary's story? How was it different?
- What did the angel say in the story?
- Why did God send Jesus?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the angel.

WONDER: Angels are important in the story of Jesus' birth. God sends messages to God's people in many ways. How would you describe this angel?

Experience Wonder

Were You There? – All Ages

Supplies: none

SAY: In the Bible story, Joseph plays an important role in the birth of baby Jesus.

ASK: What other people or characters are in the Christmas story?

- Divide the children into small groups.
- Have the groups create new characters who might have been at the birth of Jesus or who might be at Jesus' birth today.
- Then have the children make up a skit about the birth of Jesus.
- Allow the children to be silly and creative.
- After a few minutes, invite the groups to share their skits.

Nativity Book: Joseph – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, crayons or markers, pencils, hole punch, envelopes

Prepare Ahead: Copy "Nativity Book: Joseph" (Reproducible 2E) on card stock for each child.

SAY: This month we are going to make a special nativity book to help us remember the story of Jesus' birth. Today we learned about Joseph.

ASK: What do you remember about Joseph?

- Invite the children to remember the Bible story by writing and coloring the second page of their book. Assist younger children with writing.
- Help children to cut out the Joseph page of their book and punch holes to assemble the book later.
- Give each child an envelope to keep their pages in until the whole book is completed.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 1 Bible verse is Luke 2:10. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Luke in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Luke located in the New Testament? (*third book*) In what chapter of Luke is our verse located? (2) What is the verse number? (10)

SAY: Our Bible verse reminds us that the news of Jesus' birth was wonderful and joyous news.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15). Read it together.

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 1 Faith Word (Kids' Reproducible Book 1F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; The Name Jar, by Yangsook Choi; Brown Bear's Wonderful Secret, by Caroline Castle; paper; crayons; markers; blank nametags; baby name books

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 1 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 1F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Encourage the children to use the name books to look up the meaning of their names or other names they like.
- Have the children write a chosen name on the nametags. Let the children share the name they chose, what it means, and why they chose it.
- Encourage children to color the Faith Word Coloring Page.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Hope Through Attentiveness

Supplies: Advent wreath, candles or battery-operated candles, candle lighter

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we will light candles to remind us to look for light and hope in the world.

- Gather around your Advent wreath and light three candles.

SAY: During Advent, we light candles to prepare for Jesus. Jesus brings light, joy, and hope to everyone. Today is the third Sunday in Advent.

- Encourage the children to spend time quietly observing the candles.
- Have the children repeat the following prayer with you, one line at a time.

PRAY: We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus brings hope. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is love. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus gives us joy. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Pages for today (Reproducibles 2F–2G). Ask your family to participate in the Family Spiritual Practice and say the special prayer together this week.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Dress Like Joseph

Supplies: Bible dress-up clothes

- Gather the children together.

ASK: Who did we learn about in the Bible story? What did Joseph look like?

- Encourage the children to dress up like Joseph and other characters in the story.
- Have the children act out what Joseph would have done in the Bible story by pretending to be asleep and then having a dream with the messenger.
- Let the children pretend and act out the story.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for Joseph. We know he is an important part of the story and teaches us so much about the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Early Elementary – Follow God's Directions

Supplies: none

SAY: God gave specific directions to Joseph through a messenger.

ASK: Did Joseph follow God's instructions? Do you think it was easy or hard to listen to God?

- Have the children follow directions like "Simon Says."
- The leader will begin as IT.

- IT will give a specific instruction. But if IT wants the group to follow the direction they must say, "God says." If they give the direction without saying this, the children are not to follow the direction.
- If a child completes an action without IT saying, "God says," first, that child is out.
- Play the game as long as time allows.

Older Elementary – Your Part

Supplies: paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils

SAY: We are all a part of God's story.

ASK: How is Joseph a part of the story? What role does Joseph play? Is Joseph's role important? Who is the most important person in the story?

SAY: Without Joseph, Mary might have not been able to make it to Bethlehem and the story of Jesus's birth might have been very different.

ASK: What does it mean to be a part of God's story? How are you a part of God's family and God's story?

- Invite the children to draw the holy family on a piece of paper.

ASK: If you were there, what role would you have played in the story? Was anyone in the story missing?

SAY: Everyone was needed to help Jesus come into the world. Today, you are needed to share Jesus with others.

Intergenerational Activity – Come Jesus, Come

Supplies: none

ASK: What does our Bible story teach us about Jesus? What did we learn about Joseph?

SAY: We are anxiously awaiting Jesus and Christmas. But before Christmas can come, we must learn about each person in the story.

- Have the participants name each person in the story of Jesus' birth.
- Once all characters have been named (there are no right answers) ask willing volunteers to play the parts.
- When Bible characters are established, have the volunteers act out the story. Give the volunteers a few minutes to plan.

SAY: Everyone is a part of God's story. Today, we learned about Joseph. Joseph plays an important role and so do you!

Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people (Luke 2:10)

Jesus Is Born – Luke 2:1-7

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

In a Manger (Craft)
Jesus' Journey (Craft)
Hope (Journaling)
Born in Bethlehem (Coloring)
Christmas Cards (Craft)
Nativity Book: Jesus (Art)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Jump for Joy (Movement)
Jesus Is Born (Game)
Practice Hope (Activity)
Christ Candle (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>construction paper</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>stickers</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>pencils</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>hole punch</i>
<i>straw</i>	<i>envelopes</i>
<i>gauze</i>	<i>baby dolls</i>
<i>glue</i>	<i>baby blankets</i>
<i>craft sticks</i>	<i>play nativity sets</i>
<i>globe or world map</i>	<i>Advent wreath</i>
<i>music</i>	<i>candles or battery-operated candles</i>
<i>music player</i>	<i>candle lighter</i>
<i>card stock</i>	

Suggested Book

The Carolers by Georgia Guback

Tips for the Leader

- Today's story focuses on Jesus' birth, but it is still the fourth Sunday of Advent. Use this as an opportunity to continue to discuss the church calendar with the children in your group.
- If your faith tradition celebrates different words of Advent on different days, you can adjust the prayers in the Spiritual Practice section as needed.
- Check in with your children to see if they remember this month's memory verse.
- Christmas is a time where conversations around gifts naturally happen. However, be sensitive to children in your group who may not experience the same level of gift giving and receiving as others. Try to discuss intangible gifts that Jesus gives us such as hope, peace, love, and so forth.
- A prepared leader is a successful leader! Make sure to have all your supplies and resources ready to go before you start the lesson.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: HOPE

"In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists." These words begin the second chapter of Luke. At the time of Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus was the most powerful person in the world. Therefore, when Emperor Augustus decided that everyone needed to travel to their hometowns to be registered, that was what happened. It didn't matter if this required a very long journey. It didn't matter if the woman to whom you were engaged was about to have a baby. Emperor Augustus had decreed that everyone must go.

Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem. Although images of this journey often picture Mary riding on a donkey, the Bible doesn't tell us whether they had a donkey or whether she traveled by foot. Either way, it was surely a long journey, with Mary nearing the end of her pregnancy.

We know what happened next. When they reached Bethlehem, it was time for Mary's child to be born. However, many other people were in Bethlehem to be registered and as a result, there was no room for Mary and Joseph. And so Mary's baby, Jesus, also known as Emmanuel, was laid in a manger on a bed of hay.

God's Son began life humbly, in stark contrast to the power of Emperor Augustus. Jesus, God's Son, was born to be a new king. A king, who would rule with hope and righteousness. Jesus was a new kind of king, and this is demonstrated from the very beginning of the Christmas story.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Today, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Each year Christmas comes, but what might make this year different? As you reflect on the hope Jesus brings, try to remember things that make you hopeful. You might also reflect on things that deflate your hope. Consider ways Jesus can be a light of hope in the midst of chaos and confusion. Jesus was born in utter chaos, but there was still hope. We might not always feel hope, but on Christmas, just for a moment, maybe you can find a glimpse of hope in the Christ Child.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, purple cloth, battery-operated candle, a small baby doll*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a purple cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22). Place the baby doll inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *hope* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: Today we will remember the birth of baby Jesus!

ASK: What do you think Jesus looked like when he was born?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read, “Jesus Brings Joy” (pp. 198–199), from the storybook Bible or read Luke 2:1-7 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for sending us the baby Jesus. Amen.

In a Manger – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons, scissors, straw, gauze or some other form of white cloth, glue*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “In a Manger” (Reproducible 3A) for each preschooler.*

ASK: Do you remember where Jesus was born?

- Hand out a copy of “In a Manger” to each preschooler.
- Help the children cut out baby Jesus.
- Have the children glue the straw to the manger on the page.
- Next have the children glue the gauze on Jesus to wrap him snugly.
- Then have the children glue Jesus in the manger.

Jesus' Journey – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors, glue, craft sticks

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Jesus' Journey" (Reproducible 3B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Jesus' Journey" to each child.
- Have the children color the page and cut out the pieces.
- Direct the children to glue the Holy Family to a craft stick. Then, help the children cut a slit on the path along the identified line.
- Show the children how to stick the Holy Family through the slit and move them along the path.

SAY: In today's Bible story, Mary and Joseph traveled the Bethlehem.

Hope – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Hope" (Reproducible 3C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Hope" to each child.

SAY: This month we are leaning about hope.

ASK: What does hope mean to you?

- Encourage the children to color the page and write or draw what the word *hope* means to them.
- Invite willing volunteers to share what hope means to them.

Born in Bethlehem – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, colored pencils, globe or world map

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Born in Bethlehem" (Reproducible 3D) for each child.

SAY: Today we heard that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

ASK: Where is Bethlehem? Do you know where you were born?

- Help children find Bethlehem on the map or globe.
- Have the children color the page.
- At the bottom, have the children draw or write where they were born.
- Invite the children to share where they were born.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 3 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What is your favorite part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 3F–3G. Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: Why is Jesus' birth so special?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14). Locate and cut out the Unit 1 story figures (Class Pack—p. 6) if you haven't already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *hope*.

ASK: What do you think the word *hope* means? How have you seen hope this Advent?

- Show the children the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22).
- Read the definition of the word *hope* from the Faith Word Poster.

SAY: Today, we are learning about Jesus. Today, we learn Jesus is born!

- Have a child place Jesus on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- Who is Jesus?
- How did Mary and Joseph feel about baby Jesus?
- Why is Jesus special?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the baby doll.

SAY: Jesus was a baby who brings us hope.

Experience Wonder

Christmas Cards – All Ages

Supplies: construction paper, crayons or markers, stickers

ASK: Who do you want to tell about baby Jesus?

- Encourage the children to make a Christmas card.
- Let the children draw, decorate, and write on their cards.
- If the children are willing, collect all the cards.
- Place the cards near your worship space for the church family to take as a Christmas gift or identify a ministry or organizations you can share the cards with.

Nativity Book: Jesus – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, crayons or markers, pencils, hole punch, envelopes

Prepare Ahead: Copy "Nativity Book: Jesus" (Reproducible 3E) for each child.

SAY: This month we are going to make a special nativity book to help us remember the story of Jesus' birth. Today we learned about Jesus.

ASK: What do you remember about baby Jesus?

- Invite the children to remember the Bible story by writing and coloring the next page of their book. Assist younger children with writing.
- Help children to cut out the Jesus page of their book and punch holes to assemble the book later.
- Give each child an envelope to keep their pages in until the whole book is completed.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 1 Bible verse is Luke 2:10. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Luke in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Luke located in the New Testament? (*third book*) In what chapter of Luke is our verse located? (*2*) What is the verse number? (*10*)

SAY: Our Bible verse reminds us that the news of Jesus' birth was wonderful and joyous news.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15).
- Read it together.

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 1 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 1F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; The Carolers, by Georgia Guback; paper; crayons; baby dolls; blankets; play nativity sets

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 1 Faith Word coloring sheet (Reproducible 1F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to wrap the babies snugly and to play with the dolls.
- Have each child color the Faith Word coloring sheet.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Hope Through Attentiveness

Supplies: Advent wreath, candles or battery-operated candles, candle lighter

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we will light candles to remind us to look for light and hope in the world.

- Gather around your Advent wreath and light four of the candles.

ASK: Why do you think we light candles at Christmastime?

SAY: During Advent, we light candles to prepare for Jesus. Jesus brings light, joy, and hope to everyone. Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent.

- Have the children repeat the following prayer with you, one line at a time.

PRAY: We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus brings hope. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is love. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus gives us joy. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is our peace. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (Reproducibles 3F–3G). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual devotion with you. There is a special Christmas recipe for you to do at home with your family this week!

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Jump for Joy

Supplies: music, music player

- Have the children stand up.

SAY: Today, Jesus is born! Let's jump for joy.

- Encourage the children to jump in place.

SAY: Jesus brings us hope and Jesus brings us joy.

SAY: Jesus is born. Jesus brings hope. Jesus is special because Jesus is the son of God. We love Jesus, and Jesus loves us. Let's jump for Jesus.

- Have the children jump each time you say Jesus.
- Play fun music and encourage the children to continue to dance and jump for joy.

Early Elementary – Jesus Is Born

Supplies: baby supplies such as a bottle, diapers, a blanket, and so forth (try to have as many baby supplies as you have children); marker

Prepare Ahead: On one or more of the baby items write, "Jesus is born."

- Gather the children in a circle.

SAY: Today, Jesus is born!

ASK: What things do you need for a new baby? Do any of you have a baby in your family? How do you take care of a baby?

- Give the children the baby supplies, spreading them out around the circle. Not every child should be holding a supply.
- Have the children pass the supplies to their left. When you say, "stop," the children should stop passing the supplies.
- When the children have stopped, have a child not holding a supply call out another child's name.
- The child holding that supply should look at their supply and see if it has a message.
- If it does not, the game continues. If it does, that child must shout, "Jesus is born," and then he or she is out of the circle.
- Play the game until there is only one child left.

Older Elementary – Practice Hope

Supplies: none

SAY: We have been talking about hope. Over the past few weeks, we have discussed and defined hope. As Christians, we believe Jesus brings hope, and today Jesus is born and brings hope for the whole world!

SAY: Sometimes we might not feel like we have hope, but we can practice having hope when it seems hard to hope.

- Have the children divide into pairs. Invite each pair to do the following practice with each other.

Participant 1: *what gives you hope?*

Participant 2: *(response)*

Participant 1: *Jesus brings you hope.*

- Then have the children switch.
- After each pair has finished the practice, bring all the children together.

SAY: You can do this practice with your friends and family when it feels hard to have hope, and you can remember the birth of Jesus as a message of hope.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to give us hope. Help us to know we can always have hope in you and your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Community Prayer

Supplies: a battery-operated candle

- Gather everyone together in a circle.

SAY: Today, we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

- Give someone the candle and turn it on.

ASK: What does the birth of Jesus mean to you?

- As each person answers, pass the candle. The group does not have to go in order and not everyone is required to share.
- After everyone has had a chance to share, say a prayer together.

Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people (Luke 2:10)

Angels Visit the Shepherds – Luke 2:8-20

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Shepherds & Sheep (Matching)
Angels In the Sky (Drawing)
Follow the Shepherd's Staff (Puzzle)
Shepherds' Song (Coloring)
Nativity Book: Shepherds (Art)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Five-Finger Star (Activity)
Star Painting (Art)
The Shepherd's Report (Creative Writing)
The Jesus Story (Storytelling)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>candle lighter</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>play nativity sets</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>drawing paper</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>star-shaped cookie cutters</i>
<i>ribbon</i>	<i>paper plates</i>
<i>hole punch</i>	<i>yarn</i>
<i>construction paper</i>	<i>wipes</i>
<i>Advent wreath</i>	<i>flashlight</i>
<i>candles or battery-operated candles</i>	

Suggested Book

Nativity by Cynthia Rylant

Tips for the Leader

- If your faith tradition celebrates different words of Advent on different days, you can adjust the prayers in the Spiritual Practice section as needed.
- If you do not have or are unable to purchase the suggested books, try looking up a read-aloud version on YouTube. Many books are available this way.
- If your children's programs are not meeting on Christmas Day, consider sending some of the activities or reproducibles home with children or share them in your Christmas worship or celebrations.
- Don't forget you can access digital versions of the Leader Guide and Reproducible Kids' Book even if you did not purchase the digital kit. Check your CD-ROM for digital resources.
- Christmas is a great time to share a special treat or snack with your children. Be sure to check for allergies in your group if you plan to do this.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: HOPE

Although we hear the Christmas story every year, the message remains inspiring and empowering. God did not choose to make a flashy and attention-gathering entrance. Instead, God chose to reveal God's presence with us through the birth of a baby born in humble yet holy circumstances.

The angels appeared to the shepherds. At the time Jesus was born, shepherds were on the very fringes of society, looked down upon as shiftless and untrustworthy. Shepherds often slept outside with their flocks. Yet, it was these shepherds who were the first to receive the news of Jesus' birth.

The shepherds received the news of Jesus' birth from an angel. One can imagine the sudden appearance of an angel and then an entire heavenly host must have caused some trembling in the fields. In response to the surprising angelic announcement, the shepherds hurried off to Bethlehem. The shepherds' response was almost as surprising as the angel's visit. The shepherds went quickly to find Mary and Joseph and the child of whom they had been told. Once they had seen the baby, the shepherds went and told the news to others. This news was far too wonderful to be kept.

The entire Christmas story is one of surprise. A young girl, an unexpected father, a long and tiring journey, stinky animals, and a baby who is a newborn king. Although we participate in the telling of the Christmas story every year, we must not forget the unexpected ways the joy of the world can show up. Christmas is a never-ending miracle when you remember that even shepherds are given the gift of God's unfailing love.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

The shepherds were the first ones to receive the message that Jesus was born. Have you ever been the first person to receive good news? Is there someone in your life who needs good news? Take some time during this busy season to see a friend or family member who might need the gift of your presence. Invite someone to church, pray with them, or simply send them a card. We can always share good news.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, white cloth, battery-operated candle, a sheep*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a white cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22). Place the sheep inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *hope* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are learning about the story of Jesus' birth.

ASK: What do you remember about the story? Do you know the next part of the story?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Joyous News" (pp. 200–201) from the storybook or read Luke 2:8–20 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for giving us baby Jesus. Amen.

Shepherds and Sheep – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Shepherds and Sheep" (Reproducible 4A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "Shepherds and Sheep" to each preschooler.

SAY: Today we are learning about shepherds.

ASK: What is a shepherd? What does a shepherd do?

- Have the children match the sheep with the shepherds.
- Encourage children to color the page.

Angels in the Sky – Younger Elementary

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Angels in the Sky" (Reproducible 4B) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "Angels in the Sky" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, messengers appear in the sky to the shepherds.

ASK: What do you think they said? What do you think they looked like? What did the sky look like?

- Have the children draw what they think might have happened.
- Invite willing volunteers to share.

Follow the Shepherd's Staff – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Follow the Shepherd's Staff" (Reproducible 4C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Follow the Shepherd's Staff" to each child.

SAY: Shepherds played an important role in the story of Jesus' birth, and are mentioned several times in the Bible, not just in the Christmas story.

ASK: What do you know about shepherds?

- Invite the children to complete the puzzle.

Shepherds' Song – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Shepherds' Song" (Reproducible 4D) for each child.

SAY: This month we have heard about messengers who shared good news with Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. In our Bible story today, the shepherds also became messengers of good news.

ASK: With whom can you share the good news of Jesus?

- Go over the song together and encourage the children to color the page.
- Invite the children to sing the song with you.

SAY: We can all share the good news of Jesus!

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you, and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 4 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story? Did you learn anything new?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Page from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 4G. Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: What do you think the shepherds felt when the messengers appeared in the sky?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 11 & 14). Locate and cut out the Unit 1 story figures (Class Pack—p. 6) if you haven't already.

SAY: Today's faith word is *hope*.

ASK: What does the word *hope* mean? What messages of hope have you heard this Advent?

- Show the children the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22).
- Read the definition of the word *hope* from the Faith Word Poster.

SAY: Today shepherds hear an important message about Jesus' birth and they go to see the baby Jesus.

- Have a child place the shepherds on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- ☐ What is a shepherd?
 - ☐ Why were the shepherds the first ones to hear about baby Jesus?
 - ☐ What do shepherds look like?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the sheep.

WONDER: Shepherds kept sheep. They were usually dirty because they lived outside. But God chose the shepherds to hear the message of Jesus. The message of Jesus is for everyone.

Experience Wonder

Nativity Book: Shepherds – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, crayons or markers, pencils, hole punch, ribbon, construction paper

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Nativity Book: Shepherds" (Reproducible 4E) for each child. Cut ribbon into 6-inch pieces to assemble the books.

SAY: This month we are making a special nativity book to help us remember the story of Jesus' birth. Today we learned about the shepherds.

ASK: What do you remember about the shepherds?

- Invite the children to remember the Bible story by illustrating the last page of their book.
- Help children to cut out the shepherd page of their book and punch holes to assemble the book.
- Encourage children to make a cover for their book out of construction paper or card stock.
- Help children assemble the book by placing the pages in order and placing their cover around the book.
- Thread the ribbon through the holes and tie to make a book.
- Invite children to use their book to retell the Christmas story.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 1 Bible verse is Luke 2:10. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Luke in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Luke located in the New Testament? (*third book*) In what chapter of Luke is our verse located? (*2*) What is the verse number? (*10*)

SAY: Our Bible verse reminds us that the news of Jesus' birth was wonderful and joyous news.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and read it together.

SAY: Today, the shepherds hear about Jesus' birth.

ASK: If you were to tell someone today about Jesus, what would you say?

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 1 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 1F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Nativity, by Cynthia Rylant; paper; crayons; play nativity sets

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 1 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 1F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's Bible story.
- Encourage children to color the Unit 1 Faith Word Coloring Page.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Hope Through Attentiveness

Supplies: Advent wreath, candles or battery-operated candles, candle lighter

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we will light candles to remind us to look for light and hope in the world.

- Gather around your Advent wreath and light the four candles plus the center Christ candle.

ASK: Why do you think we light candles at Christmastime?

SAY: During Advent, we light candles to prepare for Jesus. Jesus brings light, joy, and hope to everyone. Today we celebrate Christmas Day.

- Have a time of silence where the children can observe the candles before closing in prayer together.
- Have the children repeat the following prayer with you, one line at a time.

PRAY: We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus brings hope. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is love. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus gives us joy. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus is our peace. We light a candle for Jesus because Jesus' light never burns out. Thank you God, for Jesus. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Page for today (Reproducible 4G). See if you can share the story you learned today with a friend or family member this week.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Page and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Five-Finger Star

Supplies: none

- Gather the children together.
- Have the children hold up their hand.
- SAY:** We can remember the birth of Jesus with our fingers.
- ASK:** When you hold up your hand, does it look like a shape? (a star)
- Show the children how to use their fingers to tell the story of Jesus.
 - Thumb – Jesus is born in Bethlehem
 - Pointer finger – In a manger with furry friends
 - Middle finger – Jesus is for everyone
 - Ring finger – He teaches us to love the whole world
 - Pinky – Amen.
- Repeat as many times as desired.

Early or Older Elementary – Star Painting

Supplies: paint, star-shaped cookie cutters, paper plates, hole punch, yarn, wipes

SAY: The angel visited the shepherds at night when they were watching over their sheep.

ASK: How would it feel to spend the night in an open field with the night sky above you?

- Invite the children to take a cookie cutter and dip it in the paint.
- Have the children press the cookie cutter on the paper plate to make stars.
- Allow the children to recreate a sky on the plate.
- After the plate has dried, punch a hole in the plate and tie yarn through the hole.
- Hang up the children's sky creations.

Older Elementary – The Shepherd's Report

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pens, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "The Shepherd's Report" (Reproducible 4F) for each pair or small group.

- Hand out a copy of "The Shepherd's Report" to each pair or small group.

SAY: The shepherds heard the good news of Jesus.

ASK: What good news have you heard? What good news does Jesus bring?

SAY: We can look and see the good news all around us.

ASK: What good news do you have to share?

- Invite children to work together to create a report of good news they want to share.
- Invite pairs or groups to share.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for the good news of Jesus. Help us to see and hear good news all around us. Amen

Intergenerational Activity – The Jesus Story

Supplies: a flashlight

- Gather everyone together in a circle.

SAY: We have heard the story of Jesus' birth.

ASK: What was your favorite part? Why?

- Turn down the lights.
- Give a participant the flashlight.
- Have the first person hold the flashlight to light the room and begin to tell the Christmas story.
- When you say stop, have the first participant pass the flashlight to the next person. Have that person continue telling the story.
- Continue telling the story in this way until the story ends. When you get to the arrival of baby Jesus, turn the lights back on.

ASK: What was it like to tell the story this way? Was anything missing from the story?

SAY: The shepherds were the first ones to hear about the birth of Jesus, but they then told the story to everyone.

ASK: What do you think they said? How would you tell the story of Jesus?

- Close in prayer together.

"This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." (John 6:14b)

Wise Men Visit Jesus – Matthew 2:1-12

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

- Star Shapes** (Tracing)
- Gifts for Jesus** (Writing)
- Solve the Star** (Math)
- Follow the Star** (Puzzle)
- Stars in the Sky** (Science)
- Find the Star** (Game)
- Peaceful Place** (Response Activities)
- My Gift** (Art)
- Search the Sky** (Movement)
- Take Action** (Writing)
- Different Stars** (Group Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>crayons</i> | <i>recyclable materials</i> |
| <i>colored pencils</i> | <i>such as boxes,</i> |
| <i>markers</i> | <i>containers, and</i> |
| | <i>magazines</i> |
| <i>scissors</i> | <i>construction paper</i> |
| <i>pencils</i> | <i>glue</i> |
| <i>posterboard or</i> | <i>paper</i> |
| <i>large pieces of</i> | <i>pens</i> |
| <i>paper</i> | <i>clipboards</i> |
| <i>items shaped like</i> | |
| <i>stars</i> | |
| <i>star stickers</i> | |

Suggested Books

Home by Another Way: A Christmas Story
by Barbara Brown Taylor

Follow the Star by Make Believe Ideas

Tips for the Leader

- This month's faith word is believe—to know in your heart what is true about God and faith.
- Children may have trouble expressing what they believe. Try to help them express their beliefs by asking them questions and sharing (without weight or judgment) what you believe.
- Have this month's Bible Verse and Faith Word posters posted in your room or easily accessible.
- In the church calendar, we are now in the season of Christmastide. The liturgical color is white until after Epiphany. If you have a wonder table set up, be sure to change the color of cloth from purple to white.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: BELIEVE

The magi, or wise men, were Gentiles, traveling from the east. They came searching for Jesus. The magi had not been waiting for the birth of the Messiah. They came because they were astrologers who had seen a new star. They believed the appearance of a new star meant a king had been born, and they were curious.

The magi's search for the new king leads them to King Herod. From King Herod's chief priests and scribes, they learn of Micah's prophecy that a new leader will be born in Bethlehem. They also receive a request from King Herod to report back to him when they find the one they are looking for.

After their interaction with King Herod, the magi continue their journey following the star that leads them to Bethlehem. Matthew tells us when the star stopped, the magi are "filled with joy." The magi act on their feelings of joy by worshiping Jesus and offering him gifts. The last we hear of the magi is their choice to ignore King Herod's request to report back to him and instead to heed the warning they received in a dream and to return home by a different route.

Like the magi, we receive the news of Jesus' birth with joy. Although Jesus has been born, the joy does not end. It is only the beginning of a joyous journey. As you explore the story of the magi with children, consider all the magi may have seen, heard, smelled, or even touched, on their journey to Jesus. Help children to slow down and to notice the joy all around them and be thankful for the joy of Jesus.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Draw a star on a piece of paper. At each point of the star write different things you believe. In the middle of the star, write one or more ways you can take what you believe and put your beliefs into action. Throughout the week, try to make small steps to put your beliefs into action.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, white cloth, battery-operated candle, a star*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a white cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the star inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *believe* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: We have learned about the birth of Jesus, and this month we will be learning about people who believed in him.

ASK: Can you think of people who believed in Jesus? Have you heard of the magi?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read, “The Magi” (pp. 140–141), from the storybook Bible or read Matthew 2:1-12 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for showing us the way to Jesus. Amen.

Star Shapes – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “Star Shapes” (Reproducible 5A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of “Star Shapes” to each preschooler.

ASK: What shapes do you know? Do you know how to draw a star?

- Invite the preschoolers to trace and color the star shapes.

SAY: We are learning about the wise men who followed a star to meet Jesus.

Gifts for Jesus – Younger Elementary

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons or colored pencils*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “Gifts for Jesus” (Reproducible 5B) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of “Gifts for Jesus” to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, the wise men bring gifts to Jesus.

ASK: What gifts did they bring? What gifts would you bring? Who did you give gifts to at Christmastime? Why did you give them a gift?

- Have the children write or draw the names and pictures of the gifts they would give or gave to others. They might also draw gifts for Jesus.
- Let the children be creative.
- Invite willing volunteers to share.

Solve the Star – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Solve the Star" (Reproducible 5C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Solve the Star" to each child.

SAY: In the story of Jesus' birth, God sends many messengers and signs to help people know about what happened.

ASK: Does God send you signs or messengers? What does that look like?

- Invite the children to solve the math problems and connect the dots to reveal an image.

Follow the Star – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Follow the Star" (Reproducible 5D) for each child

SAY: In today's Bible story, the magi (also called the wise men) followed a star to find baby Jesus.

- Invite the children to complete the puzzle and color the page.

Stars in the Sky – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Stars in the Sky" (Reproducible 5E) for each child.

SAY: In the Bible, the magi, or wise men, were watching the stars when they saw the very bright star that led them to Jesus. Today, scientists who study stars are called astronomers.

ASK: Have you ever noticed the stars in the sky? Have you ever seen a constellation?

- Invite kids to match the constellations and wonder about the stars.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 5 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What do you think the magi's journey was like?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 5F–5G. Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: Why did the magi visit Jesus?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17). Locate and cut out the Unit 2 story figures (Class Pack—p. 19) if you have not done so already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *believe*.

ASK: What do you think the word *believe* means? What is something you know about God?

- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).
- Read the definition of the word *believe* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Who believed in this Bible story?

SAY: Today, we heard about the wise men, or magi. The wise men followed a star to find the baby Jesus.

- Have a child place the wise men on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- Are wise men special? Why?
 - Why did the wise men follow the star?
 - Have you ever watched the stars?
 - What do you think the wise men believed?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the star.
- WONDER:** A star led the wise men to Jesus. What leads you to Jesus?

Experience Wonder

Find the Star – All Ages

Supplies: yellow or white construction paper, scissors

Prepare Ahead: cut a large star out of construction paper.

SAY: The wise men had to follow a star to find Jesus. Let's play a game with this star to remind us of the Bible story.

- Gather children in a circle.
- Choose one person to be IT.
- The person who is IT will go and wait outside the door or in a corner with their eyes closed.
- Give the star to one person in the circle. That person should hide the star by sitting on it.
- Have the person who is IT come back to the circle. They will then have to guess with whom the star is hidden.
- Once IT finds the star, the person hiding the star will then become IT.
- Repeat the game until everyone in the circle has had a turn to hide the star and be IT.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is John 16:4b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is the Book of John in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of John located in the New Testament? (*fourth book*) In what chapter of John is our verse located? (*16*) What is the verse number? (*4*)

SAY: The wise men came to see Jesus and to honor him.

ASK: What does it mean to honor Jesus? Why is Jesus worthy of being honored?

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and read it together.

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 2 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 5F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Home by Another Way: A Christmas Story, by Barbara Brown Taylor; Follow the Star, by Make Believe Ideas; paper; crayons or markers; items shaped like stars; star stickers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 5F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the children trace stars on paper and write ways they can follow Jesus. Invite children to decorate their page with star stickers.
- Encourage the children to color the Unit 2 Faith Word Coloring Page.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Belief Through Connection

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month, we are going to practice encouraging one another in our beliefs.

SAY: Today, we have been learning about believing.

ASK: What does it mean to believe? What do you believe?

- Go around the circle and say to each child, "Jesus believes in you."
- Have the children respond with, "I believe in Jesus."

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for helping us believe by giving the gift of Jesus. Help us encourage one another in our beliefs. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (Reproducibles 5F–5G). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice with you. Be sure to tell your family about our new faith word this month!

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – My Gift

Supplies: recyclable materials such as cardboard boxes, empty containers, old magazines, and so forth; construction paper; scissors; glue

- Gather the children together.

SAY: In the Bible story, the wise men gave gifts to Jesus. They gave gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh.

ASK: What are these things? What gifts would you give to Jesus?

- Show the children the supplies.
- Let the children use the supplies to create a gift for Jesus.
- Invite willing volunteers to share their creations.

Early Elementary – Search the Sky

Supplies: posterboard or large pieces of paper, markers

SAY: Our Faith Word this month is *believe*. Let's say a chant about what we believe.

- Share this chant with the children. Encourage them to do it with you:

Look up (*point up*)

Look down (*point down*)

Jesus is all around (*make a searching motion with your hand on your forehead*)

We share gifts (*place right hand out with palm facing up*)

We believe (*place left hand out with palm facing up*)

Jesus is the newborn king! (*raise both arms*)

- Divide the children into small groups. Let them come up with their own chants and motions. Have children write their chants on paper or posterboard.
- Invite willing groups to share.
- Display children's chants.

Older Elementary – Take Action

Supplies: paper, pens or pencils, clipboards (optional)

SAY: We don't know a lot about the wise men, but we do know they used their faith to take an action and follow the star to Jesus. Believing is more than just what we think we know or see. Believing requires action.

ASK: What do you believe? What can you do to put your beliefs into action?

- Give each child a piece of paper on a clipboard. Have the children find a quiet space to write down a way they want to put their faith into action.
- Divide the children into pairs.
- Invite the children to share what they wrote down with their partner.
- Have the partners think of ways they can support each other to carry out their action.
- After a few minutes, bring the group together. Have willing volunteers share before closing in prayer together.

PRAY: Dear God, help us to put our beliefs into action. Amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Different Stars

Supplies: none

- Divide the participants into small groups.
- When you say "go," give the groups two minutes to make the shape of a star together. Let them be creative. They can use their hands, their bodies, supplies in the room, and so forth. There is no right way to make a star.
- When time is up, bring the large group back together and allow small groups to share their stars.

ASK: How did you go about deciding how to make your star?

SAY: In the Bible story, the magi followed the star to find Jesus. They worked together to get there. When they arrived they found the King of kings and the savior for the whole world. This story can remind us that even though we might practice our beliefs in different ways we can all come together to worship Jesus.

- Say a prayer together.

"This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." (John 6:14b)

Jesus' Baptism – Mark 1:4-11

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Shapes of Baptism (Art)
John the Baptizer (Craft)
Find Happiness (Bible Activity)
Water Word Search (Puzzle)
John Baptizes Jesus (Coloring Page)
Paint with Water (Craft)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Water Play (Sensory)
I Am Loved (Game)
Baptism Bracelet (Craft)
Family of Faith (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

crayons	paper water droplets
colored pencils	
markers	small basket or box
highlighters	water table and different sized containers
scissors	
play dough or fast drying clay	towels or paper towels
watercolors	yarn or plastic string
small containers	blue and yellow beads
paintbrushes	
card stock	pitchers
construction paper	small bowls

Suggested Books

The Boy and the Ocean by Max Lucado

Baptized in the Water: Becoming a Member of God's Family by Glenys Nellist

Tips for the Leader

- When talking about baptism, be aware of children who may not have been baptized yet. Talk about baptism as a sign to show how much God loves us, and how much we love God. It is OK if children in your group have not been baptized. Talking about baptism is a great time to talk about how sacraments are done in your faith community.
- Today's session involves water! Be sure to have towels or paper towels on hand.
- As you share God's love with children, it is important to remember how beloved you are to God too! Take time this week to rest in God's love or engage in the spiritual practice on the next page.
- The color white is still used on the Wonder Table today to celebrate Epiphany and Jesus' baptism.
- Consider using left over water from the water play activities in this session to water plants.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: BELIEVE

We all benefit—children especially—from affirmations of love. A kind word from a good friend, meaningful time spent with a mentor, a gift from a family member—affirmations of love like these help us see ourselves the way God sees us. This week's session provides an opportunity for you to affirm and remind the children in your class how much God loves them.

John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus. When Jesus' mother Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth—John's mother—she discovered that she too was pregnant. Elizabeth told her that her baby jumped for joy (Luke 1:44) at the sound of Mary's voice. Many interpret this as John recognizing Jesus, even in the womb.

The story of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Mark begins with John the Baptist, now a grown man, already preaching and baptizing. Coming out of the wilderness with his wild hair and clothing and strange dietary choices, John encouraged people to be baptized to show that they had changed their hearts and lives. Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descends on Jesus as he emerges from the water following his baptism. A voice from heaven declared, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." This heavenly declaration affirms God's love for God's Son. God's blessing also serves as a model for those of us who work with children.

Baptism is a special act of love where we show our love for God by following Jesus' example. God also shows us love in this act as well, as God happily claims us as beloved children. You can share your admiration and love for the children too. When we share love with another person—in whatever way we choose to express it—we can show that person how much God loves them and how special they are to God.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

What makes you happy? What do you delight in? This week, look for ways your faith brings happiness. When you feel happy, know that God shares our joy. God is there in both the joy and the pain, and it's important not to forget to feel the happiness all around us. Write down small moments of happiness you experience this week.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, white cloth, battery-operated candle, a happy face*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a white cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the happy face inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *believe* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are learning stories of people who believed in Jesus. Today we will hear about a special day for Jesus.

ASK: Who believes in you? What special days do you remember?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read the story, “Jesus’ Baptism” (pp. 174–175) from the storybook or read Mark 1:4-11 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for claiming us and finding happiness in your children. Amen.

Shapes of Baptism – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, play dough or fast drying clay*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “Shapes of Baptism” (Reproducible 6A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of “Shapes of Baptism” to each preschooler.

SAY: These are shapes that represent baptism.

ASK: What shapes or objects do you see? Do you know what baptism is?

- Encourage the children to use the play dough or clay to mold the shapes on the page.

John the Baptizer – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, colored pencils, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "John the Baptizer" (Reproducible 6B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "John the Baptizer" to each child.

SAY: In today's Bible story, John the Baptizer baptizes Jesus. John wore funny clothes and ate funny things.

ASK: What do you remember about John the Baptizer? Why did John baptize Jesus?

- Have the children color, cut out, and assemble the pieces.
- Provide children with help cutting out smaller pieces if needed.
- Encourage the children to use the paper doll to tell the Bible story.

Find Happiness – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, Bibles, pencils, markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Find Happiness" (Reproducible 6C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Find Happiness" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story today, we learned that after Jesus was baptized, a voice from heaven said "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." I wonder if there are other mentions of happiness in the Bible.

- Have the children look up the Bible verses on the page.

ASK: What do these verses have in common? What makes you happy? What makes God happy?

- Have the children define happiness on the page.
- You might choose to divide the children into pairs or groups to look up the Bible verses.

Water Word Search – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers, highlighters

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Water Word Search" (Reproducible 6D) for each child.

SAY: The story of Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth. What do you remember from today's story?

- Invite the children to use a highlighter to find all the words in the puzzle.
- Encourage children to color the page.

John Baptizes Jesus – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Copy "John Baptizes Jesus" (Reproducible 6E) for each child.

SAY: John and Jesus were cousins. John baptized Jesus and it was a special day.

ASK: Who is there for you on special days?

- Invite children to color the page to remember the Bible story.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 6 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 6F–6G. Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: Why was Jesus baptized?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17) Locate and cut out the Unit 2 story figures (Class Pack—p. 19) if you haven't done so already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *believe*.

ASK: What do you think the word *believe* means? What is something you know or learned about God today?

- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).

- Read the definition of the word *believe* from the Faith Word Poster.

SAY: Today we heard the story of Jesus' baptism.

ASK: Who believed in the Bible story?

- Have a child place Jesus being baptized on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- Why do we use water when we are baptized?
- Who is John the Baptizer?
- What makes baptism special?
- Have you ever seen a baptism?

- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the happy face.

ASK: What does a happy face have to do with our Bible story?

SAY: When Jesus was baptized, God shared God's happiness in Jesus.

WONDER: How does God feel about you?

Experience Wonder

Paint with Water – All Ages

Supplies: watercolors, containers of water, paintbrushes, card stock or construction paper

SAY: Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer in the Jordan River. What do you think the river looked like?

- Invite the children to paint a picture of Jesus' baptism.
- Allow willing volunteers to share.

SAY: God finds happiness in you and in your paintings.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is John 16:4b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is the Book of John in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of John located in the New Testament? (*fourth book*) In what chapter of John is our verse located? (*16*) What is the verse number? (*4*)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of John, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and read it together.

SAY: Jesus' baptism is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is a prophet for God.

ASK: What is a prophet? Why do we believe in Jesus?

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 2 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 5F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; The Boy and the Ocean, by Max Lucado; Baptized in the Water: Becoming a Member of God's Family, by Glenys Nellist; paper; crayons; water droplets; basket or box

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 5F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's story.
- Have the children use the water droplets to write or draw about their joys and concerns. Encourage the children to place their joys and concerns in the basket.
- At the end of the lesson, pray over the joys and concerns.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Belief Through Connection

Supplies: bowl, pitcher of water, towel

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month, we are going to practice encouraging one another in our beliefs.

SAY: Today, we learned about Jesus' baptism.

ASK: What did you learn?

- Place the bowl in the center of the children. Pour the water from the pitcher into the bowl.
- One at a time, encourage the children to dip their fingers into the water. When the children dip their fingers in the water, say this blessing over each child.

SAY: (Child's name), God finds happiness in you.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for helping us believe by giving the example of Jesus. Help us encourage one another in our beliefs. Amen.

Tip: If a child does not want to get their hands wet, simply say the blessing over them.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Pages for today (Reproducibles 6F–6G). Ask your family to participate in this week's Spiritual Practice with you, and share what you learned about baptism with your family and friends.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Water Play

Supplies: different containers of water or a water table, cups, plastic containers, other items to play with in the water, towels

SAY: Baptism is a special way we remember Jesus and God's love.

- Help the children roll up their sleeves.
- Invite the children to play in the water.
- After the children have played, encourage them to put their hands all the way in the water. Then have them lift their hands out and watch the water drip from their fingers.
- Encourage children to watch the water as it falls off their fingers.

SAY: Water is special and so are you.

Early or Older Elementary – I Am Loved

Supplies: none

- Gather the children together in a circle.

SAY: God loves us no matter what!

ASK: Is there any reason God would stop loving you? (*no*)

- Pick a child to be IT. All the other children will close their eyes.
- After the children have closed their eyes, IT will smile or frown. The other children will decide if IT is smiling or frowning by mimicking the emotion on their face.
- Have the children open their eyes. If their face is matching IT, they stay in the circle.
- Pick a remaining player to be IT. Repeat the game until there is only one player left.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for loving me no matter what. I know it doesn't matter if I am happy or sad, you still find happiness in me. Amen.

Older Elementary – Baptism Bracelets

Supplies: yarn or plastic string, blue and yellow beads

SAY: Today, we are remembering Jesus' baptism. You might hear people say, "remember your baptism." When you hear about baptism, you can also remember God loves you.

- Give children yellow and blue beads and yarn.

SAY: The blue beads represent the water at baptism. The yellow beads represent God's happiness.

- Invite the children to make a bracelet.
- After making bracelets, gather the children together. Encourage the children to wear their bracelets.

SAY: Use your fingers to twist the beads on your bracelet. When you need a reminder that God loves you, you can touch and move your bracelet.

Intergenerational Activity – Family of Faith

Supplies: pitcher of water, small bowls (one bowl for every two people), paper towels

SAY: Community is an important part of believing and baptism. We need one another to support us along our faith journey.

- Divide the participants into pairs. Try to pair someone older with someone younger.
- Have the pairs talk about baptism. Encourage them to share their baptism stories or to talk about other important moments of their faith, such as confirmation, new babies, church camps, and so forth.
- Give each pair a bowl of water and paper towels to dry their hands.
- After their conversation, encourage both participants to place their hands in the water and say a prayer.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for faith friends who help us learn more about you. Thank you for our family of faith. Amen.

- If time allows, have participants switch partners and repeat the activity.

Tip: It is OK if someone has not been baptized. Encourage conversation about other meaningful moments of faith or memories.

"This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." (John 6:14b)

Jesus Calls Levi – Mark 2:13-17

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

- My Favorite Food** (Activity)
- A Special Feast** (Drawing)
- Who Believes in You?** (Journaling)
- Just One Person** (Reflection)
- Bible Money** (Math Game)
- Peaceful Place** (Response Activities)
- Food and Friends** (Game)
- Stack and Share** (Activity)
- Follow the Leader** (Game)
- Following Feet** (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>crayons</i> | <i>crackers</i> |
| <i>colored pencils</i> | <i>water</i> |
| <i>markers</i> | <i>napkins</i> |
| <i>scissors</i> | <i>small cups</i> |
| <i>card stock</i> | <i>stackable plastic coins</i> |
| <i>play food and dishes</i> | <i>permanent marker</i> |
| <i>chalk</i> | |

Suggested Books

- Lions Lunch* by *Fiona Tierney*
- Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by *Jacqueline Briggs Martin*

Tips for the Leader

- There is food as a part of today's "Go In Peace" section. Be sure to always check for allergies before serving any food.
- Try to talk about food in this session in the historical context as it was included in the Bible story. Avoid adding moral values to food in this discussion.
- The Scripture today mentions Levi being a sinner. Be sure to talk about sinners in a way that is appropriate for the age group of the children you are leading and that is in line with your faith community's beliefs.
- This is a great session to remind children that Jesus loves us all, no matter what!
- If your faith tradition follows a church calendar, today is the first Sunday of "ordinary time" for this year. The color for "ordinary time" is green. There are instructions to switch out the colors on your Wonder Table, if you so desire.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: BELIEVE

In Jesus' time, tax collectors were not popular. The payment of taxes to the Roman Empire caused resentment among people. Additionally, tax collectors made their living by charging more money for taxes than the Romans expected and keeping the difference, a system seemingly designed to encourage greed and dishonesty.

In this week's lesson we hear the story of Levi. Levi was a tax collector and was sitting at a tax booth, probably collecting a toll along a major road. When Jesus saw Levi, he issued the invitation, "Follow me." With these words, Jesus extended an invitation to someone who most likely took pride in cheating and corruption.

It is likely that Jesus' association with tax collectors surprised many. Jesus even shares a meal with other tax collectors. In biblical times, eating together was a sign of trust and hospitality. Witnesses, especially the Pharisees, were angry and confused. How could Jesus, a man of truth and justice, invite a tax collector to follow him?

Yet, we can learn from Levi. Levi showed no hesitation to abandon his old ways. When Jesus called, Levi followed. We do not know any more other than Jesus' reminder that even those who seem unrighteous are invited to follow too.

Jesus' invitation to Levi also serves as a reminder that, as followers of Jesus, we too are called to invite others in. We are called to seek out those who may be left out, lonely, or feel less than. An invitation from Jesus is an invitation to take your place in God's beloved family. It is something we are offered and something to be shared.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Go for a walk. Try to take a route you might not have taken before, hike a different trail, or invite a friend. Sometimes, we always go the same ways. But Jesus shakes things up. As you go a different way, remember Jesus always goes with us.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, various coins*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the coins inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *believe* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are learning about important people who believed in Jesus. Today, we learn about a man named Levi. Levi is a tax collector. Tax collectors were not always nice, but in the Bible story, Jesus helps Levi become a follower.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus helps Levi?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read, “Jesus Calls Levi” (pp. 176–177), from the storybook Bible or read Mark 2:13-17 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for giving us Jesus who calls each of us to follow him. Amen.

My Favorite Food – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “My Favorite Food” (Reproducible 7A) for each preschooler.*

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus shares a meal with people to teach us that everyone is welcome at God’s table.

ASK: What foods do you think they ate at the table?

- Hand out a copy of “My Favorite Food” to each preschooler.
- Invite the preschoolers to use crayons to circle the foods and color the picture.

ASK: What is your favorite food?

A Special Feast – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "A Special Feast" (Reproducible 7B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "A Special Feast" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus invites Levi and other people who have made mistakes to eat with him.

ASK: Why would Jesus invite people who might not be very nice or kind to eat with him? If you could share a meal with anyone, who would it be? What would you eat?

- Encourage the children to draw the food and people who might join them at their table and color the page.

Who Believes in You? – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Who Believes in You?" (Reproducible 7C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Who Believes in You?" to each child.

SAY: Jesus believed in Levi and helped him change his ways.

ASK: Who believes in you? Who helps you have faith and do the right thing?

- Encourage the children to write and draw their answers.

Just One Person – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Just One Person" (Reproducible 7D) for each child.

- Read the story together aloud, or have children read silently. Invite children to color the page as you discuss the story.

ASK: Did anyone make a difference in the story? Who? How? Who made a difference in the Bible story?

SAY: Sometimes it takes just one person in our lives or in the world to make a big difference!

ASK: What can you do to make a difference? Who could you help follow Jesus?

PRAY: Thank you, Jesus, for making a difference in our lives. Help us make a difference too. Amen.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 7 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story? What was the most important part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 7F–7G. Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: Why do you think Levi decided to follow Jesus?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17). Locate and cut out the Unit 2 story figures (Class Pack—p. 19) if you have not done so already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *believe*.

ASK: What do you think the word *believe* means? What is something you know or learned about God today?

- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).
- Read the definition of the word *believe* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Who believed in the Bible story?

- Have a child place Levi on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- What is the most important part of the story?
- Why did Jesus eat with people who had made bad choices or made mistakes?

- Who would you like to eat with? Is there anyone you would never eat with? Why?
 - Open the Wonder Box to reveal the coins.
- WONDER:** What do coins have to do with our Bible story?
- SAY:** These coins can remind us of who Levi was. He was a tax collector. In the Bible, tax collectors were cheaters. But Jesus helped Levi change his ways.
- ASK:** Do you think people can change? How does Jesus help us change?

Experience Wonder

Bible Money – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Bible Money" (Reproducible 7E) on card stock. Make as many copies as you need for the size of your group. Cut out and hide the coins around the room.

- Have the children find as many coins as they can.
- After all the money has been located, gather the children together.
- See who has collected the most coins, then ask that child to give half of his or her money to another child.
- Have the child who received the money, give all his or her money to the child with the least amount of money.

ASK: How did it feel to give away your money? Was it hard or easy?

SAY: In the Bible story, Levi was greedy. He took too much money from people. Even though Levi did not treat people fairly, Jesus asked Levi to follow him.

ASK: What does it mean to follow Jesus? Can anyone follow Jesus?

- Repeat the game if desired.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is John 16:4b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is the Book of John in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of John located in the New Testament? (*fourth book*) In what chapter of John is our verse located? (*16*) What is the verse number? (*4*)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of John, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster. (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13). Read it together.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus teaches us that we can all be followers. The Bible verse reminds us that Jesus is special and we are called to follow him.

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 2 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 5F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Lions Lunch, by Fiona Tierney; Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin; paper; crayons or markers; play food and dishes

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word coloring sheet (Reproducible 5F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Encourage the children to use the toy food and dishes to set the table for a feast they would share with Jesus. If the food they like is not there, encourage them to draw and cut out the foods they would like to have at their feast.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's story.
- Have each child color the Faith Word coloring sheet.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Belief Through Connection

Supplies: crackers, napkins, water, small cups

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month, we are going to practice encouraging one another in our beliefs.

SAY: Today, we have been learning about believing.

ASK: What does it mean to believe? What do you believe?

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice.

SAY: Today, we learned about Jesus eating with people whom others did not want to eat with. We also learned that Jesus asked Levi to follow him. Let's have a snack together to remember the story.

- Give each child a snack.
- As you pass out the snacks, say a blessing over each child.

SAY: (Child's name), Jesus loves you and invites you to his table.

PRAY: Thank you God, for setting a table for everyone. Thank you for the example of Jesus, who invites everyone to the table. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 7F–7G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice with you. There is a special mealtime prayer to say with your family this week.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Food and Friends

Supplies: play food items

- Gather the children together.

SAY: Who did Jesus eat with in the Bible story? Who do you eat meals with?

- Give one child the play food item. When you say go, have the children pass the food.
- When you say stop, the child holding the food can shout out their favorite food. Then the child moves to the middle of the circle.
- Play the game until each child has had a turn.
- Once everyone is in the middle, say a prayer.

PRAY: Dear God, help us to share our food with everyone. Amen.

- Repeat the game with other play food items if desired.

Early Elementary – Stack and Share

Supplies: stackable plastic coins, permanent markers

ASK: What did you learn about Levi from today's Bible story?

- Stack coins in front of you. See how high you can stack the coins. If you choose, let the children help you.
- Before the coins are unsteady, knock over the coins.
- See the children's reactions.

SAY: Jesus told Levi not to be so mean.

ASK: Was it mean to knock down our coins?

SAY: Jesus asked Levi to stop worrying about money and instead to follow him.

- Give each child a coin. Pass the marker and invite the child to draw a cross or heart on their coin.
- Have the children hold the coin in their hands.

PRAY: Dear God, help us to remember to follow you and to know that you are what is important. Amen.

Older Elementary – Following

Supplies: none

- Line up the children. When you say go, the children will follow the leader. When you say switch, the children will turn around and follow the person at the other end of the line. When you say mix, the children will switch places in line.
- Each child must move at least two spaces in the line.
- Continue playing the game for several minutes, then gather the children together.

SAY: In the game, we had to listen and follow.

ASK: Who or what kinds of things do you listen to and follow? Why? Is it easy to follow Jesus?

SAY: There are so many things we can be influenced by in our world, but it is important to remember that Jesus asks us to follow him first and foremost.

Intergenerational Activity – Following Feet

Supplies: chalk

SAY: Jesus invites us to follow him.

- Take the group outside and line them up down a straight path, preferably toward a door to your church building.
- Have each participant trace their shoes/feet on the sidewalk to show a path toward the door.
- Encourage the participants to decorate their footprints.

SAY: We can help everyone follow Jesus.

"This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." (John 6:14b)

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand – John 6:1-14

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Bread and Fish (Counting & Coloring)

I Can Help (Journaling)

Food in the Bible (Bible Activity)

A Crowd of 5,000 (Coloring)

Fishing (Puzzle)

A Snack to Share (Snack)

I Can Help, I Can Share (Body Prayer)

Fish Face (Game)

Enough (Craft)

Picnic (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

crayons

bowls

colored pencils

scoops or tongs

markers

fine-tip markers

scissors

brown paper bags

pencils

stickers

*snack-sized plastic
bags*

construction paper

goldfish crackers

string

stick pretzels

hole punch

*large labels or
stickers*

Suggested Books

The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Only One You by Linda Kranz

Tips for the Leader

- Choose activities and reproducibles that work for the ages of the children, but also remember that you can adapt other activities to work for your group.
- Food is served in this session. Always be sure to check for any allergies before serving food.
- If you have extra time, try counting to 5,000 in different ways with the children (by 5s, by 10s, by 100s, and so forth). This is a great activity to do in a classroom setting while waiting for parents to pick up children.
- Check in with the children to see if they can remember this month's Bible Verse.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: BELIEVE

The story of the feeding of the multitudes is the only one of Jesus' miracles recorded in all four Gospels. In John's record of this event, the miraculous feeding began with a young boy's lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish. The feeding of the thousands—five thousand men plus women and children—is told as a demonstration of Jesus' ability to perform miracles. But it is also the story of a young boy sharing what he had. Jesus used the boy's gift to provide for many.

The disciples are overwhelmed by the thought of how much food it would take to feed all the people who have been listening to Jesus teach. They tell Jesus it would take more than half of a year's salary to buy enough food for the crowd. The disciples are ready to dismiss the gift of five loaves and two fish because it is not enough.

How often are we reluctant to give because our gift isn't enough to make a difference? We might not always have money, or fish, or bread, but you are still enough. We must believe that we are enough. When we know we are filled with God's love we can do things like share our lunch and provide abundant love for thousands of others. God's love is enough to make a difference.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Draw five squares on a piece of paper. Imagine these are the five loaves the boy had to share with the crowd. Use the following prompts and write your answers on your paper:

- What makes you enough?
- When do you feel like you fall short?
- What can you provide or share with others?
- Name ways God provides for you.
- What makes it hard to believe?

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, a brown paper bag*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the paper bag inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *believe* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus will feed a huge number of people.

ASK: What is the most people you have ever eaten with? Can you count to five thousand?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Jesus Feeds 5000" (pp. 254–255) from the storybook or read John 6:1-14 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, help us know we can count on you and to know you are always enough. Amen.

Bread and Fish – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy, "Bread and Fish" (Reproducible 8A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand a copy of "Bread and Fish" to each preschooler.
- Invite the preschoolers to count and color the bread and fish.
- Help the children cut out the pieces. Encourage the children to use the loaves of bread and fish to help you retell the Bible story.

I Can Help – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "I Can Help" (Reproducible 8B) for each child.

- Hand a copy of "I Can Help" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, a young boy helps Jesus perform a miracle. On your page, write ways you can help others.

- Invite the children to complete the page and invite willing volunteers to share.

Food in the Bible – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Food in the Bible" (Reproducible 8C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Food in the Bible" to each child.

SAY: There are lots of stories in the Bible about food.

ASK: What Bible stories can you think of that talk about food?

- Encourage the children to look up the Bible verses.
- Invite the children to draw the food on the page.

A Crowd of 5,000 – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "A Crowd of 5,000" (Reproducible 8D) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "A Crowd of 5,000" to each child.

SAY: There were five thousand people in the crowd. That's a lot of people!

ASK: What do you think the people looked like? What do you think they were doing?

- Invite the children to draw the crowd and color the page.

Fishing – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Fishing" (Reproducible 8E) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Fishing" to each child or pair.
- Have the children complete the puzzle.
- Encourage the older children to help the younger children.

SAY: Today, we are learning about how a boy's lunch helped feed so many people.

ASK: Have you ever been fishing? Do you like fish?

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 8 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 8F–8G. Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: Why do you think the boy chose to share his lunch?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17). If you have not done so already, cut out the Unit 2 story figures (Class Pack—p. 19).

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *believe*.

ASK: What do you think the word *believe* means? What is something you know about God?

- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).
- Read the definition of the word *believe* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Did the disciples believe in Jesus in the Bible story? Who believed in the Bible story?

- Have a child place the boy with his lunch on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- What food would you share with five thousand people?
- How did Jesus feed that many people?

- How do you think the young boy felt after sharing his lunch?
- Where do you see yourself in this story?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the brown paper bag.

WONDER: What do you think is inside the bag?

- Show the children the empty bag.

SAY: Although the bag is empty, we can be filled up with God's love. Sometimes we must believe, even when it seems impossible.

Experience Wonder

A Snack to Share – All Ages

Supplies: *snack-sized plastic bags, goldfish crackers, stick pretzels, large labels or stickers, bowls, scoops or tongs, fine-tip markers*

Prepare Ahead: *Stick a label or sticker on a plastic bag for each child. Place the goldfish and pretzels in separate bowls with a scoop or tongs for serving.*

SAY: In the Bible story, the young boy shared what he had. Let's make a special snack that we can share with someone to remind them of God's love.

- Begin by washing hands or using hand sanitizer.
- Invite the children use markers to write a special message like "God Loves You" on the sticker on their bag.
- Encourage the children to scoop out goldfish and pretzels into their bags. You may choose to have children count out five pretzel sticks and two goldfish, or you may choose to have them include as much as they would like.
- Close the bags and encourage the children to share their snack with someone else.
- Enjoy a snack together.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

- Say: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is John 16:4b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is the Book of John in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of John located in the New Testament? (*fourth book*) In what chapter of John is our verse located? (*16*) What is the verse number? (*4*)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of John, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus shows us he can perform miracles. He truly is a prophet.

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 2 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 5F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; The Rainbow Fish, by Marcus Pfister; Only One You by Linda Kranz; paper; paper strips; crayons or markers; brown paper bags; stickers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 5F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the children decorate their bags. Have the children use the strips of paper to write down things they might need help with. Encourage children to place the strips of paper in their bags.
- Encourage the children to use their bags as they pray throughout the week.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's story.
- Have each child color the Faith Word Coloring Page.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Belief Through Connection

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month, we are going to practice encouraging one another in our beliefs.

ASK: Are you a helper? What are ways you help others?

SAY: We can all help in different ways. In the Bible story a young boy helps by sharing his lunch.

- Go around and have each child say, "I can help by..."
- After each child shares, the other children can respond with, "Thank you for helping."
- Let each child have a turn.

PRAY: God, show us ways we can help teach others about you. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Pages for today (Reproducibles 8F–8G). Ask your family to help you with the Spiritual Practice and activities this week.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – I Can Help, I Can Share

Supplies: none

- Gather the children together.

ASK: Did you know that it was just a young boy like you who helped feed five thousand people? How old are you? Do we have to be a certain age to help? What ways do you help?

- Do the following body prayer:

I can help (*reach arms out with palms up*)

I can share (*move arms outward*)

I can spread God's love (*cross your arms over your chest*)

Everywhere! (*move arms above your head and make a circle*).

Amen.

- Repeat the prayer as many times as desired.

Early Elementary – Fish Face

Supplies: none

ASK: What does a fish look like? What kind of face does a fish make? Can you make a fish face?

- Gather the children together in a circle.
- Have the children make fish faces.
- Pick a child to be IT. IT must pass the message, "two fish and five loaves," to the child next to them while making a fish face.
- The children will pass the message to each child while making their fish faces.
- When the message reaches the last child, see if the message is still the same.

SAY: This might be a silly game, but our true message today is that Jesus can perform miracles using what we have. With Jesus, what we have is enough.

- Have the children make fish faces and repeat the following prayer after you.

PRAY: I am enough. You are enough. With Jesus there is always enough. Amen.

Older Elementary – Enough

Supplies: paper, string, scissors, markers, hole punch

SAY: Sometimes we might not feel like we have enough, or we can do enough, but our Bible story reminds us that there are always ways we can help even when we just have a little.

ASK: Are there ways you can help?

- Have the children use the paper to make a fish. On the fish, have the children write down one way they want to help others or the world.
- Punch one hole in each fish. String the fish together with the yarn or string to make a garland.
- Gather the children together. Have each child hold a piece of the stringed fish and say a prayer together.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for showing us that we always have enough to help. Amen.

- Hang up the fish garland.

Intergenerational Activity – Picnic

Supplies: snacks to share

- Gather the group to have a picnic outside.
- Encourage participants and families to bring finger foods to share together.
- Encourage children and other participants to make special decorations for the picnic that share what they have been learning at church.
- Invite your pastor to share a message with the group.

"This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world." (John 6:14b)

Jesus Walks on Water – Mark 6:45-52

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Walking on Water (Coloring Page)
Faith Feet (Craft)
We Don't Always Know (Journaling)
Don't Be Afraid (Prayer Activity)
Why Are You Afraid? (Coloring Page)
Water Painting (Art)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
I'm Not Afraid (Movement)
Fears Wash Away (Activity)
Confident Faith (Activity)
Trusting Others (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>watercolor paints</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>paintbrushes</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>card stock</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>peaceful music</i>
<i>chenille stems</i>	<i>water pitcher</i>
<i>hole punch</i>	<i>bowl</i>
<i>beads</i>	<i>towels</i>
<i>pencils</i>	<i>shaving cream</i>
<i>ocean sounds</i>	<i>plastic containers</i>
<i>music player</i>	<i>toothpicks</i>
<i>timer</i>	<i>blindfolds</i>

Suggested Books

When Lions Roar by Robie H. Harris
Can I Tell You a Secret? by Anna Kang

Tips for the Leader

- There are many opportunities to discuss fears and worries in this session. Be sensitive to what children share with you and honor their feelings.
- Did you know you can stream Celebrate Wonder videos and other Cokesbury Kids content on Amplify? Visit www.amplifymedia.com to learn more.
- See how many children in your group can remember this month's Bible Verse.
- If you choose to do the Water Painting activity, you may want to provide smocks or cover tables in your space, depending on the ages of the children you are working with.
- As a trusted adult in a child's life, you are making a huge difference by sharing God's love. Rest in the fact that God is using you in amazing ways.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: BELIEVE

Today we will hear the story of Jesus walking on water. This miracle takes place at night on the Sea of Galilee. It immediately follows the story we heard last week of Jesus feeding a multitude of people with a boy's lunch of two fish and five loaves. Jesus had been teaching on the shore when he makes his disciples get in the boat and set sail without him. He then dismisses the crowds and spends time in prayer.

Meanwhile, strong winds have come up on the lake and the boat the disciples are in is being battered by the waves. (Storms are common on the Sea of Galilee because it is surrounded on nearly every side by mountains.) While the disciples are in the boat surrounded by waves, Jesus walks across the water to them. The disciples are afraid when they first see him. They are awestruck by Jesus walking on the water.

As Jesus approaches the disciples, he identifies himself by saying, "It's me." Jesus also senses the disciples' fear and reassures them, saying, "Do not be afraid." The miracle ends abruptly as the disciples' boat suddenly reaches shore. The next day, the crowds Jesus had been teaching on the shore are confused about how Jesus crossed the lake. It appears that only the disciples witnessed the miracle of Jesus walking on water.

There is so much mystery and wonder in this story. Allow children to be curious. The disciples had a fear response to Jesus. (Many of us probably would have too.) But what if there was more curiosity than fear evoked in the story? We might not always understand the miracles of Jesus, but we can be curious about what God is trying to teach us and be open to trusting Jesus.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

The story of Jesus walking on water can be a strange one and hard to believe. But what's more important than believing is seeing the wonder in the story. This week, spend some time reading the Bible story. Write down what makes the story wonder-filled. You might also write down questions children might have about the story. Consider your own questions about this story. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you remain open to all the mysteries of our faith and to help guide God's children in faith.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, sandals*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the sandals inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *believe* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are learning about people who believed.

ASK: What do you believe?

ASK: Can you walk on water? Did Jesus walk on water? How?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read, “Jesus Walks on Water” (pp. 180–181), from the storybook Bible, or read Mark 6:45-52 from the CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, help us believe even when it’s hard and scary. Amen.

Walking on Water – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons, scissors*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “Walking on Water” (Reproducible 9A) for each preschooler.*

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus walked on water.

ASK: Can you walk on water?

- Hand out a copy of “Walking on Water” to each preschooler.
- Invite the preschoolers to color the page.
- Assist preschoolers in cutting out and folding their booklets.
- Use the booklet to help you retell the story with the preschoolers.

Faith Feet – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, card stock, crayons, scissors, hole punch, chenille stems, beads

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Faith Feet" (Reproducible 9B) on card stock for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Faith Feet" to each child.
- Have the children color and cut out the sandal.
- Direct the children where to punch holes. Use the chenille stems to lace the sandal and add beads. Tie a knot or use a piece of tape to secure the chenille stems in place.

SAY: In our story today, Jesus told the disciples not to be afraid and to have faith in him. Use your sandal to remind you to have faith in Jesus.

We Don't Always Know – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, Bibles, pencils, markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "We Don't Always Know" (Reproducible 9C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "We Don't Always Know" to each child.
- Have the children look up the Bible verses.

ASK: What do these verses have in common?

- Encourage the children to draw or write questions they have about faith on the page.
- Engage the children in conversation. It is OK not to have all the answers but remind the children they can always talk to a mentor or read the Bible to better understand our faith.

Don't Be Afraid – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or colored pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Don't Be Afraid" (Reproducible 9D) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Don't Be Afraid" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, the disciples were scared, but Jesus reminded them that he was with them.

ASK: What makes you feel scared or afraid?

- Encourage the children to move a finger through the labyrinth on the page. As they move their fingers, invite the children to silently say a prayer or recite the Bible verse on the page.
- Invite the children to color the page.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 9 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story? What do you think was the most important part of the story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 9F–9G. Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: Why were the disciples afraid?

Wonder with Me

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17). Locate and cut out the Unit 2 story figures (Class Pack—p. 19), if you haven't done so already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *believe*.

ASK: What do you think the word *believe* means? What is something you know about God?

- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).
- Read the definition of the word *believe* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Did the disciples believe in Jesus in the Bible story? Who believed in the Bible story?

- Have a child place Jesus walking on water on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- ☐ Have you ever been in a storm? What did you feel?
- ☐ What did you learn from the Bible story?
- ☐ What makes you afraid?
- ☐ How do you know God is with you?

- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the sandals.

WONDER: What do the sandals have to do with the Bible story?

SAY: We can always walk with Jesus when we are afraid.

Experience Wonder

Why Are You Afraid? – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Why Are You Afraid?" (Reproducible 9E) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Why Are You Afraid" to each child.

ASK: What were the disciples feeling in the Bible story? What do you think their faces looked like?

- Have the children draw the disciples' faces and color the page.
- See if the children can make fearful faces.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us comfort when we are afraid. Amen.

Water Painting – All Ages

Supplies: watercolor paints, construction paper or card stock, paintbrushes, music player, peaceful music

- Give each child a piece of paper and painting supplies.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid. Following Jesus can make us feel calm and give us peace.

ASK: What makes you feel peaceful?

- Put on peaceful music.
- Encourage children to paint with watercolors. You may encourage them to paint what they remember from the Bible story or whatever they are feeling.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is John 16:4b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is the Book of John in the Old or New Testament? (New). Where is the Book of John located in the New Testament? (fourth book) In what chapter of John is our verse located? (16) What is the verse number? (4)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of John, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

SAY: It might be hard to believe that Jesus could walk on water. Although we might not fully understand, our Bible verse reminds us that Jesus can do amazing things.

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 2 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 5F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; When Lions Roar, by Robie H. Harris; Can I Tell You a Secret?, by Anna Kang; paper; crayons or markers; ocean sounds; music player

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word coloring sheet (Reproducible 5F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the ocean sounds playing.
- Encourage the children to lie down and listen to the sounds as they pray or think about the Bible story.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of their favorite part of today's story.
- Have each child color the Faith Word coloring sheet.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Belief Through Connection

Supplies: water, towels, bowl, pitcher

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month, we are going to practice encouraging one another in our beliefs.

SAY: Today, we have been learning about believing.

ASK: What does it mean to believe? What do you believe?

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:

ASK: Can you hold water in your hands?

- Have the children cup their hands. Place a bowl under the child's hands.
- Go to each child and pour water into their hands. Let the excess water drip into the bowl.
- As the water drips say to the child, "We can't hold everything, but Jesus is there to help us believe."

- Give each child a towel to dry their hands.

PRAY: God, thank you for teaching us we don't have to be afraid when we trust in you. Help us to believe. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.*

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 9F–9G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual devotion with you.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – I'm Not Afraid

Supplies: *none*

- Gather the children together.
- Ask the children to show you a scared face.

ASK: What makes you feel scared? Why were the disciples scared?

- Say the following prayer with the children:

Sometimes I am scared (*cover your head with your hands*),

Sometimes I am worried (*crouch down low*).

But when I am afraid (*stand back up*),

I know God sent Jesus for me (*raise arms up, then place hands on your heart*).

Amen. (*fold hands in prayer position*)

- Repeat as many times as desired.

Early Elementary – Fears Wash Away

Supplies: shaving cream, towels, plastic containers, toothpicks, water

- Give each child a container. Place some shaving cream in each child's container.
- Invite the children to use a toothpick to draw an image or write a word about something that scares them.
- When the child is done, pour water over the shaving cream. Let the child watch the shaving cream dissolve.

SAY: Jesus helps us overcome our fears. Like the disciples, we might not always believe, but we can remember the Bible story to help us feel less afraid.

Older Elementary – Confident Faith

Supplies: water dropper, water

- Have the children hold out their hands.
- Use the water dropper to drip one water droplet on their hands.
- Have the children try to keep the water droplet in their hands as long as they can.
- You can make it more challenging, by having the children move their hands around.
- As the children try to keep the water in their hands, say the following prayer.

PRAY: God of water, God of fear. Give us faith to know you are near. And when we have disbelief, remind us of your power and faith. Amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Trusting Others

Supplies: timer, blindfolds

ASK: Today we learned to trust in Jesus, but we can also learn to trust in each other.

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Give participants five minutes to get to know each other. Encourage participants to ask questions such as "What makes you afraid?" and "Who do you trust?"
- At the end of the five minutes, have participants complete a simple trust walk. One partner will put on a blindfold and the other partner will lead the blindfolded person around the room. Then repeat with the other partner.

ASK: How does it feel to trust others? Is trusting others different from trusting God or Jesus?

- Close in prayer together.

Tip: Make sure your space is safe by removing any potential hazards that may cause participants to trip or fall when doing a trust walk.

God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. (Mark 10:14b)

Jesus and the Children – Mark 10:13-16

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Jesus Loves Me Bracelet (Craft)
Stop and Go (Craft)
God's Kingdom (Journaling)
God's Special Child (Writing)
I Can Come to Jesus (Prayer)
God's Kingdom Mural (Collaborative Art)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Come to Jesus (Game/Movement)
Bible Toys (Art)
Invitations to God's Kingdom
 (Creative Writing/Art)
Kingdom Liturgies (Worship Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>various art supplies such as stickers and paper scraps</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	
<i>markers</i>	<i>pictures of people of all ages</i>
<i>scissors</i>	
<i>tape</i>	<i>recyclable materials such as boxes and containers</i>
<i>stapler</i>	
<i>glue</i>	<i>various types of paper</i>
<i>craft sticks</i>	
<i>large pieces of paper</i>	<i>pens</i>

Suggested Books

For Every Child by Caroline Castle
God's Coming Visit by Franz Huber

Tips for the Leader

- At the start of a new month, make sure your classroom is still a space where children feel welcome. Greet each child on their level, especially those you haven't seen in a while!
- It's a new month so be sure to have this month's Bible Verse and Faith Word posters posted in your room or easily accessible.
- This month's faith word is *kingdom*—God's dream for the world, where all people are loved and included.
- Spend time considering what you believe about God's kingdom. Open your heart to new observations as you explore God's kingdom with children.
- Don't forget to have all your supplies and materials prepped and easily accessible for your lesson. A prepared leader is a successful leader!

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: KINGDOM

In today's lesson, we will explore the familiar Bible story of Jesus blessing the children. The disciples tried to keep the children from Jesus. We are not told why the parents were bringing their children to Jesus. In those days, the infant mortality rate was high. It is likely that the parents had heard of Jesus' healing miracles and wanted him to bless and protect their children.

When the disciples attempted to discourage the parents from bringing their children to see Jesus, they weren't intentionally being mean to children. They were acting in a way consistent with the social norms and expectations of the time. When Jesus reprimanded the disciples for keeping the children away, he made a clear statement that access to him and to God's love was for everyone. By blessing the children, Jesus showed that they were full members in God's family.

In addition to welcoming and blessing the children, Jesus used them as an example to teach the disciples about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like the children. The kingdom of heaven can be a difficult concept for children (and adults) to understand. Some people refer to the coming kingdom of heaven, alluding to a time in the future when Jesus will return. However, during his ministry, Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is a present reality. The spirit of God is within us and among us.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

This week, meet or talk with someone who is older or younger than you. When you are talking, ask these questions:

What do you believe about God?

What does the kingdom of heaven look like?

If you could give one piece of advice, what would it be?

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, child's toy such as a stuffed animal*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21). Place the toy inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *kingdom* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we will be learning about God's kingdom.

ASK: How old are you? Does Jesus love you?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Jesus and the Children" (pp. 182–183) from the storybook or read Mark 10:13-16 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for Jesus who welcomes and loves us. Amen.

Jesus Loves Me Bracelet – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors, tape or stapler*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Jesus Loves Me Bracelet" (Reproducible 10A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "Jesus Loves Me Bracelet" to each preschooler.

SAY: Jesus loves you, and Jesus loves me! Let's make a bracelet to remind us how much Jesus loves us.

- Invite the preschoolers to color their bracelets.
- Help the preschoolers cut out and assemble their bracelets to wear. Attach the bracelet by stapling or using a piece of tape.

SAY: When you look at your bracelet you can always remember Jesus loves you!

Stop and Go – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors, craft sticks, glue

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Stop and Go" (Reproducible 10B) for each child.

- Hand a copy of "Stop and Go" and a craft stick to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, the disciples did not want the children to be with Jesus. It's almost like they said "Stop!" But Jesus invited the children to come to him. Jesus said "Go!"

- Encourage the children to color and cut out the stop and go signs.
- Show the children to glue a craft stick in between the two signs.
- Invite the children to use the sign to retell and act out the Bible story.

God's Kingdom – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, colored pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "God's Kingdom" (Reproducible 10C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "God's Kingdom" to each child.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus says the kingdom of heaven belongs to the children that came to him.

ASK: What do you think that means?

- Invite the children to draw what they think God's kingdom looks like.
- Invite willing volunteers to share.

God's Special Child – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "God's Special Child" (Reproducible 10D) for each child.

SAY: Jesus loved all the children that came to him. They were each special to him.

ASK: What makes you special?

- Invite the children to complete and color the page.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 10 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was your favorite part of the story? What would it feel like to get a hug from Jesus?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 10E–10G. Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: Why did the disciples prevent the children from seeing Jesus?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 3 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 18). Locate and cut out the Unit 3 story figures (Class Pack—p. 3) if you haven't already.

SAY: Today's faith word is *kingdom*.

ASK: What is God's kingdom like?

- Show the children the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21).
- Read the definition of the word *kingdom* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Who is included in God's kingdom?

SAY: Today, we learned that Jesus welcomes children into God's kingdom.

- Have a child place the children on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- What is the best part of the story?
- What confuses you about this story?
- What does God's kingdom look like?

- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the toy.

WONDER: What does a toy have to do with the Bible story?

SAY: People of all ages are a part of God's kingdom.

ASK: Do you think the children had toys when they were talking with Jesus?

Experience Wonder

God's Kingdom Mural – All Ages

Supplies: large pieces of paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils, stickers, various art supplies, tape or stapler

SAY: This week we are going to work together. Children of all ages can help each other to do God's work.

- Pair up the children by putting an older child with a younger child.
- Give each group a large piece of paper and invite the children to draw a mural together. Encourage them to draw what the kingdom of God looks like.
- When the groups are done, tape together each mural.
- Hang the mural in your church space.

PRAY: Thank you God, for a kingdom where everyone has a part. Help us show your kingdom to everyone. Amen.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 3 Bible verse is Mark 10:14b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Mark in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Mark located in the New Testament? (*second book*) In what chapter of Mark is our verse located? (*10*) What is the verse number? (*14*)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of Mark, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

SAY: Our Bible verse comes from today's Bible story.

ASK: What do you think this verse means? Why would others want to be like children?

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 3 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 10F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; For Every Child, by Caroline Castle; God's Coming Visit, by Franz Huber; paper; crayons; pictures of people of all ages

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 10F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the children look at the pictures.
- Encourage the children to draw what they think they might look like as they grow up.
- Encourage the children to color the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring God's Kingdom Through Community

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we are going to practice ways that we can be encouraging members of God's community.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice.

ASK: What is one thing that makes you special?

- Go around the group and ask each child to name something special about themselves.
- After each child responds, have the group say, "You are a special child of God." If a child cannot think of an answer, let the group help.

PRAY: Loving God, thank you for making us each special. Thank you for welcoming us and making us all a part of your kingdom. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Pages for today (Reproducibles 10E–10G). Have your family help you with this week's spiritual practice. Be sure to tell your family about our new faith word and say the special prayer at home.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Come to Jesus

Supplies: paper, markers, tape

Prepare Ahead: Write "JESUS" on a piece of paper and tape it to one wall.

SAY: Today we learned that Jesus called the children to him.

- Gather the children together.
- Play a version of "Mother May I" by having the children line up on one side of the room opposite from the "JESUS" paper.

SAY: We are going to get to Jesus in different ways.

- Instruct the children to take different movements forwards and backwards until the group gets to Jesus. Examples of movements are: take giant steps, take baby steps, walk fast, walk slow, hop, gallop, skip, and so forth.
- When the children get to Jesus, encourage them to give high-fives, fist bumps, or hugs.

SAY: Everyone is welcome with Jesus.

- Repeat the game as time allows.

Early Elementary – Bible Toys

Supplies: recyclable materials such as boxes and containers, markers, scissors, tape, glue

ASK: What kinds of toys do you think Jesus played with? What toys were in the Bible?

- Invite the children to use the materials to create a Bible toy or a brand new toy. Children can work individually, or in pairs or small groups.
- Allow willing volunteers to show the group their toys.
- Leave time for the children to play with their toys.

Older Elementary – Invitations to God's Kingdom

Supplies: paper, scissors, markers, glue, various art supplies

SAY: Jesus welcomed the children in his presence, and we can welcome everyone into God's kingdom. God's kingdom is a place where everyone is included and loved.

ASK: What would it look like to invite someone to God's kingdom?

- Encourage children to brainstorm their answers.
- Working individually, or together in pairs or groups, invite the children to design and create an invitation to God's kingdom.
- Invite willing participants to share what they have created.

Intergenerational Activity – Kingdom Liturgies

Supplies: paper, pens

SAY: Every one in our church family is unique and special to God. We all have a role to play in God's kingdom.

- Divide participants into groups by age such as young children, youth, and adults.
- Have the groups write a prayer, call and response, or song for worship.
- Give the groups plenty of time to work on it.
- Bring the participants back together.
- Invite the groups to share.
- If you can, incorporate the liturgies into worship.

God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. (Mark 10:14b)

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin – Luke 15:3-10

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

Sheep and Coins (Art)
Color and Celebrate (Color by Number)
Search and Find (Puzzle)
I Am Found Book (Art)
Now I'm Found (Music)
Can You Find It? (Game)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
God Celebrates Me (Movement)
Celebration Hat (Craft)
Circle Drawings (Activity)
Cards for the Community (Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>pencils</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>party hats and noisemakers</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>drawing paper</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>stickers</i>
<i>glue</i>	<i>hole punch</i>
<i>cotton balls</i>	<i>string or yarn</i>
<i>foil</i>	<i>cards or stationery</i>
<i>construction paper</i>	
<i>tape</i>	

Suggested Books

Who Counts?: 100 Sheep, 10 Coins, and 2 Sons by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Tips for the Leader

- Be careful of the language you use in the session when talking about who belongs in God's kingdom and "who is missing." Help children understand that there aren't any qualifications for being included in God's kingdom. God includes everyone.
- Be sure to have any copies made and supplies you want to use for this session ready to go!
- Having music playing while children complete activities can help create a calm and safe atmosphere.
- Be sensitive to any children who may feel left out based on today's discussion.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: KINGDOM

These two parables are short and share many similarities in format. Jesus told these parables to teach the lesson that each one of us is valuable to God. In the story of the lost sheep, Jesus tells of a shepherd who leaves his flock to search for the one who is lost. Even though the shepherd still had ninety-nine sheep, he did not accept even the loss of one.

In the story of the lost coin, the coin would have been worth about a day's wages. While this is a significant amount of money, it is not a very large sum of money. The point of the story would have been lost if a great sum of money were involved. Rather, the woman has lost a single coin, a loss that some people would have just accepted. The woman, however, searches her entire house, cleaning every corner, until the coin is discovered.

The stories don't end with the recovery of the lost items. They end in celebration and rejoicing. The shepherd rejoices over his previously lost sheep. The woman calls her friends and invites them to celebrate with her because she has found what she thought was lost. With the addition of this scene, Jesus poses a question for us. Will we join in the celebration?

Every child will be able to relate to the experience of losing something. Each one of us has experienced that sinking feeling when we discover that something is not right, something is missing. Listen to your children's stories. Help them to identify with the feelings in the story. Then, help them understand God values them even more than the shepherd valued the sheep or the woman valued the coin. God celebrates with us, and God celebrates each of us.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

During the week, look for loose change. See how much you can find or collect. On Sunday, take the change to church and show it to your children. Encourage them to do the same. On the following Sunday, have the children bring their change to church. Collect the change and give it to the church or to an important community organization.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, coins, and a sheep*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21). Hide the coins and sheep somewhere in the room, do not place them in the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *kingdom* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we are learning about God's kingdom.

ASK: Have you ever lost something? What happened?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read, "The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin" (pp. 228–229), from the storybook Bible or read Luke 15:3-10 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for showing us who you are through the stories of Jesus. Amen.

Tip: *Do not place today's items in the Wonder Box, but hide them somewhere in the room for children to find later.*

Sheep and Coins – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors, glue, cotton balls, foil*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy, "Sheep and Coins" (Reproducible 11A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "Sheep and Coins" to each preschooler.
- Invite the preschoolers to color the page.
- Help the preschoolers use pieces of cotton balls to glue on the sheep and pieces of foil to glue on the coins.

SAY: Today, we are learning about a lost sheep and a lost coin.

Color and Celebrate – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Color and Celebrate" (Reproducible 11B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Color and Celebrate" to each child.
- Invite the kids to color the page.

ASK: What was lost in the Bible story today?

Search and Find – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Search and Find" (Reproducible 11C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Search and Find" to each child.

SAY: Jesus spoke about lost things being found.

ASK: When you hear this Bible story, what do you feel? Have you ever been lost? Have you ever been found?

- Invite the children to solve the puzzle.

I Am Found Book – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers, construction paper, scissors, glue

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "I Am Found Book" (Reproducible 11D) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "I Am Found Book" and a piece of construction paper to each child.
- SAY:** Jesus told two parables, one about a lost sheep, and one about a lost coin.
- ASK:** What do you remember from the Bible story?
- Invite kids to color and cut out the pieces on the page.
- Instruct children on how to fold their construction paper into a trifold book.
- On the outside of the book, glue the individual coin and the individual sheep. Glue the words "I was lost..." on the outside of the book.
- Instruct the children to open their book and glue the picture of Jesus with the sheep on one side of the page, and glue the picture of Jesus with the coin on the other side of the page.
- In the middle of the book, have children glue the words "But now I'm found" in the center section.
- Encourage the children to add details from each story to either side of the page.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 11 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What did Jesus teach in this story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 11F–11G. Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: Why should everyone celebrate when the lost items are found?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 3 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 18). Locate and cut out the Unit 3 story figures (Class Pack—p. 3) if you haven't already.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 3 Wonder Story Mat.

SAY: Today's faith word is *kingdom*.

ASK: What do you think the word *kingdom* means?

- Show the children the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21).
- Read the definition of the word *kingdom* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: Who is included in God's kingdom?

SAY: It is important that we all are a part of the kingdom of God.

- Have a child place the lost sheep on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- What does it mean to be lost?
- Have you ever looked for something that was missing?
- What do you like most about this story?

- Open the Wonder Box to reveal that it is empty.

SAY: There is nothing in our Wonder Box today. We need to look for what goes inside.

- Help the children look around the room for the lost items and place them in the Wonder Box.

Experience Wonder

Can You Find It? – All Ages

Supplies: a stuffed sheep and a play coin

SAY: Let's play a game to remind us of the Bible story.

- Gather the children together in a circle.
- Choose one person to be IT. IT will go outside the room or close their eyes in the corner.
- Give the sheep and the coin to two people in the circle. Have them hide the items in their lap or behind their back. As a variation for older children, have them pass the items to other people when IT isn't looking.
- Invite the person who is IT back to the circle. Ask them "Can you find it?" They will then have to guess who is hiding the sheep and the coin.
- Once IT guesses correctly, encourage the whole group to celebrate by clapping and cheering.
- Choose another child to be IT and repeat the game.

WONDER: How does it feel to look for something that is lost? How did it feel to celebrate?

Now I'm Found – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Now I'm Found" (Reproducible 11E) for each child.

- Teach the children the song and invite the children to color the page.
- Sing the song together.
- Encourage the children to take the song home and sing it with their families.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 3 Bible verse is Mark 10:14b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Mark in the Old or New Testament? (*New*). Where is the Book of Mark located in the New Testament? (*second book*) In what chapter of Mark is our verse located? (*10*) What is the verse number? (*14*)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of Mark, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

ASK: Is anyone missing from the kingdom of God?

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: *copies of the Unit 3 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 10F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Who Counts?: 100 Sheep, 10 Coins, and 2 Sons, by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso; sand tray; sand; coins; box or basket*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 10F) for each child.*

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Let the children use the sand tray to find coins. Each time a coin is found, have the child place it in a box.
- Encourage children to draw their favorite part of today's story.

Tip: *All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.*

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring God's Kingdom Through Community

Supplies: *party hats, noisemakers*

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we are going to practice ways that we can be encouraging members of God's community.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:

SAY: In the Bible story, a sheep and a coin were missing.

ASK: What happens next?

SAY: The community celebrates finding what is lost. Celebration is so important. In God's kingdom, we celebrate one another.

- Invite the children to celebrate together. Let the children wear the party hats and use the noisemakers.

ASK: What are some things we can celebrate as a church family?

- Allow the children to list joys and celebrations.

SAY: God celebrates with you. You are an important child of God.

PRAY: God of lost things, thank you for always finding us and bringing us to you. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 11F–11G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice with you. There is a special game to do at home this week.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – God Celebrates Me

Supplies: paper, crayons

- Gather the children together.

ASK: What was lost in the Bible story? Did they find what was lost?

- Let the children pretend to be sheep.
- Have the children make a circle with their arms to be coins.

ASK: Are you a sheep? Are you a coin?

- Say the following chant:

I am not a coin (*make a circle with arms*) I am not a sheep (*pretend to be a sheep*)

But I am a child of God (*raise arms up with palms facing up*)

And God celebrates me! (*give yourself a hug*)

- Repeat as many times as desired.

Preschool or Early Elementary – Celebration Hats

Supplies: paper, markers, tape, stickers, hole punch, string or yarn

SAY: Jesus taught us that we should celebrate when lost things are found and when people are included in God's kingdom.

ASK: How do you like to celebrate?

- Let the children use the supplies to make a cone celebration hat.
- Have the children color and decorate the paper.
- Roll the paper into a cone. Tape the cone together. Punch two holes on each side of the hat and attach a piece of string or yarn to make a face loop.
- Encourage the children to wear their hats during the session.

Older Elementary – Circle Drawings

Supplies: paper, pencils

ASK: Can you draw a sheep and coins by only using circles and by never picking up your pencils?

- Have the children draw sheep and coins.

ASK: Was this hard? What does a circle represent?

SAY: God's kingdom is all about community. The community celebrates when we are all included and connected. Circles can remind us of the kingdom of God.

- Gather the children in a circle. Then, go around the circle and invite each person to say a prayer. When everyone has had a chance to share, say amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Cards for the Community

Supplies: paper, crayons, markers, cards or stationery

Prepare Ahead: Ask your church staff if there are a list of church members who have not been at church recently or who are sick or homebound.

- Divide up the names and invite the group to make cards for the community members who have not be able to come to church in a while. Send kind messages, words, and pictures.
- Mail the cards to your church friends, being sensitive to those who are no longer able to leave their homes.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for everyone in our church family. Amen.

God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. (Mark 10:14b)

The Forgiving Father – Luke 15:11-32

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

- My Family** (Coloring)
- Bible Story Puppets** (Craft)
- The Older Brother** (Journaling)
- Finding Love and Forgiveness** (Puzzle)
- What Happened?** (Storytelling)
- All Ages** (Art)
- Peaceful Place** (Response Activities)
- Hugs** (Activity)
- Standing in My Shoes** (Craft)
- What Would You Do?** (Activity)
- Prayers of Forgiveness** (Prayer Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>crayons</i> | <i>drawing paper</i> |
| <i>colored pencils</i> | <i>paper hearts</i> |
| <i>markers</i> | <i>heart stickers</i> |
| <i>scissors</i> | <i>basket</i> |
| <i>glue</i> | <i>pairs of shoes that are too big for children</i> |
| <i>tape</i> | |
| <i>highlighters</i> | |
| <i>modern-day costumes and props (optional)</i> | |

Suggested Books

Sorry by Jean Van Leeuwen
Who Counts?: 100 Sheep, 10 Coins, 2 Sons by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Tips for the Leader

- This session discusses family. Be sensitive to children in your group who come from non-traditional family backgrounds or who may have experienced family trauma. Try your best not to discuss God's family as nuclear families.
- While learning about forgiveness is important, the most important thing young children need to know is God's love and grace for them.
- If your children have participated in this month's sessions, check in with them to see if their understanding and ideas about God's kingdom have changed. Their answers may surprise you!
- If you have been using the suggested books in the Peaceful Place, consider leaving books used previously out for children to enjoy again.
- Don't forget that you can download digital copies of this curriculum either from your CD-ROM or your digital files. This is a great way to share ministry resources with families.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: KINGDOM

Many teachings on this well-known parable focus on the happy return of the younger son. However, the parable of the forgiving father is really about all three of the characters in the story—the younger son, the father, and the older brother. At some point in our lives, each of us has probably felt like each one of these three family members. Most of us can relate to the father, as we have had the experience of continuing to love someone despite a mistake. And then there's the older brother. At one time or another we have each felt that life is unfair. And, of course, we must remember the younger son. We have each made poor choices and been in a situation where we needed to ask for forgiveness.

Hopefully, we have each also experienced the relief of being forgiven and loved no matter what. We can all strive to be like the forgiving father, but we can also strive to be the younger son who recognizes our wrongs and asks for forgiveness. We can even be like the older brother who might be hesitant to offer forgiveness, but continues to be in conversation with those whom we feel have done wrong.

Jesus used the parable of the forgiving father to teach people that every person is important to God. There are things to learn from each person in this story. When we can put ourselves in the shoes of others, we can be reminded that God's unfailing love and forgiveness is offered to everyone.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Sometimes forgiveness is hard, and forgiveness is not always required. However, are there things for which you might need to give yourself forgiveness? Consider something you might be holding against yourself. Something you said, did, or didn't do. This Bible story reminds us that no one is perfect, but we can always run into God's loving arms. When we can know we are forgiven we better understand God's unconditional love. This week, rest in the knowledge that you are a beloved child of God.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, a picture of a house*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21) Place the picture of the house inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *kingdom* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we have been talking about God's kingdom.

ASK: What does it feel like to be a part of God's kingdom? What does it mean to forgive someone?

- We recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "The Forgiving Father " (pp. 230–231) from the storybook or read Luke 15:11-32 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for showing us your love and forgiveness. Amen.

My Family – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy, "My Family" (Reproducible 12A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "My Family" to each preschooler.

SAY: Today we heard a Bible story about a father and his two sons.

ASK: Who is in your family? Who is special to you?

- Have the children draw their family or people who are special to them on the page.

Bible Story Puppets – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers, scissors, craft sticks (3 per child), glue or tape

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Bible Story Puppets" (Reproducible 12B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Bible Story Puppets" and 3 craft sticks to each child.

ASK: Who were the characters we learned about in the Bible story?

- Invite the children to color and cut out the figures.
- Attach each figure to a craft stick with glue or a piece of tape.
- Encourage the children to use the puppets to retell the Bible story.

The Older Brother – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pens

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "The Older Brother" (Reproducible 12C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "The Older Brother" to each child.

SAY: The older brother in the Bible story was unsure about his younger brother's return.

ASK: How do you think he was feeling?

- Have the children draw the emotions of the older brother.
- Encourage the children to write down how the brothers' feelings might have changed how the Bible story ended.

Finding Love and Forgiveness – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, highlighters, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Finding Love and Forgiveness" (Reproducible 12D) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Finding Love and Forgiveness" to each child.

SAY: The Bible story today teaches us that God offers love and forgiveness to everyone.

ASK: Have you ever experienced love? Have you ever experienced forgiveness? What did it feel like?

- Invite the children to look for the words from the Bible story and to color the page.
- Encourage older children to help younger children.

SAY: In God's kingdom, people are loved and forgiven.

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 12 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: Who do you identify with or feel like in the Bible story?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 12F–12G. Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading and/or acting out the story, one section at a time.

WONDER: Why did the younger brother leave his family? Why did he come back?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 3 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 18). Locate and cut out the Unit 3 story figures (Class Pack—p. 3) if you haven't already.

SAY: Today's faith word is *kingdom*.

ASK: What is God's kingdom like?

- Show the children the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21).
- Read the definition of the word *kingdom* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: What does forgiveness have to do with God's kingdom?

- Have a child place the lost son on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- ☐ How did the younger brother, older brother, and father feel in the story?
- ☐ How does this story make you feel?
- ☐ Where is God in this story?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the house.

SAY: The younger son left and returned home. He was welcomed by his father and forgiven.

WONDER: Where do you feel welcomed and forgiven?

Experience Wonder

What Would Happen? – All Ages

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book*, modern-day costumes and props (optional)

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "What Happened?" (Reproducible 12E) for each child.

SAY: Jesus told many parables to help teach people something. Parables are special stories that we can learn from. Even though Jesus told parables long ago, we can still learn something from them today.

ASK: What would happen if Jesus told this parable today?

- Allow the children to write or draw what this story might look like today.
- After a few minutes, divide the children into small groups.
- Invite the groups to share what they wrote or drew. Then, have the groups come up with a skit to act out the story if it were to happen today. Allow children to choose costumes and props if you have them available.
- Allow time for the small groups to share their skits.

Examine the Bible Verse – Early and Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 3 Bible verse is Mark 10:14b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Mark in the Old or New Testament? (New). Where is the Book of Mark located in the New Testament? (second book) In what chapter of Mark is our verse located? (10) What is the verse number? (14)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of Mark, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

ASK: Is the younger son a part of the Kingdom of God? What about the older son?

Peaceful Place – Preschool and Early Elementary

Supplies: *copies of the Unit 3 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 10F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Sorry, by Jean Van Leeuwen; Who Counts?: 100 Sheep, 10 Coins, 2 Sons, by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso; paper; crayons; paper hearts; heart stickers; basket*

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 10F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.

- On the hearts, have the children write down a name of someone they need to forgive and place them in the basket.
- Pray over the basket as a group, without reading the hearts.
- Encourage the children to color the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page.
- Invite children to draw their favorite part from the Bible story.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring God's Kingdom Through Community

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we are going to practice ways that we can be encouraging members of God's community.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice.

ASK: What is forgiveness? Who was forgiven in the Bible story? Who forgave? What does forgiveness look like?

SAY: Let's use the word Son and remember our Bible story when we need to ask for forgiveness.

S – Sorry: Say sorry for what you have done.

O – Open to change: Admit you want to change or do things differently.

N – Not again: Try not to make the same mistake again.

- Give time for children to say silent prayers before closing in prayer together.

PRAY: God of forgiveness, thank you for showing me your love. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.*

SAY: Let's look at your Take-Home Pages for today (Reproducibles 12F–12G). Be sure to share the story you learned today with a friend or family member. There is a special activity for you to do at home to help you think about the people who are special and important to you.

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Hugs

Supplies: heart stickers (2 per child)

SAY: In the Bible story, the father welcomes home his son with hugs and kisses.

ASK: How does your family greet you when you come home? How do you show your friends love?

- Invite the children to stand up and wrap their arms around themselves like they are giving themselves a big hug.

SAY: Imagine God's arms are wrapping around you.

- Have the children stretch their arms out as wide as they can.

SAY: God loves you this much. Each time you need to remember God's love, you can stretch your arms out wide and give yourself a big hug.

SAY: We can also share God's love with others.

- Give each child a heart sticker and say, "God loves you!" Give each child a second heart sticker and encourage them to give that sticker to a friend.

Early Elementary – Someone Else's Shoes

Supplies: pairs of shoes that are too big for kids, paper, markers

SAY: Sometimes it can be hard to understand where other people are coming from.

ASK: Whose feelings in the Bible story were most difficult to understand? Why?

- Give each child a pair of shoes. Encourage the children to put on the shoes over their own shoes.
- Tell the children to walk around.
- Let each child describe what the shoes feel like.

ASK: What is it like to wear someone else's shoes? Have you ever heard of the phrase, "walk in someone else's shoes?" What does it mean?

SAY: Some of the Bible characters' actions might be hard to understand, but if we put ourselves in their shoes, it is easier to understand.

- Have the children trace the outline of their shoe on a piece of paper.
- Encourage the children to write down one new thing they learned about the Bible story inside the shoe.

PRAY: God of all, help us to try and understand one another even when it is hard. Amen.

Older Elementary – What Do You Think?

Supplies: none

- Have the children stand in the middle of the room. When you ask a question the children will move right, left, or stand still depending on their answer. Right means no, left means yes, and standing still means unsure.
- Ask questions like: Was the father forgiving? Was the older brother forgiving? Should the younger son have left his family? Should the younger son have stayed away? Should the older son have left with his brother? Should the father not have given the inheritance to the younger son?
- Encourage children to move based on their own personal answers. There are no right or wrong answers. Encourage conversation around each question.

SAY: Forgiveness can be hard to understand, but God always welcomes us home and offers us love and forgiveness.

PRAY: God of forgiveness, help me to see and accept your forgiveness. Amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Forgiveness Prayers

SAY: Sometimes we all do wrong.

ASK: What do you do when you have done something wrong? Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive?

- Divide the participants into small groups.
- Invite the groups to write a prayer of forgiveness, asking God for forgiveness, as well as a heart open to forgiving others.
- After a few minutes, gather everyone together and invite groups to share if they are willing.

PRAY: God, we ask you for forgiveness. Help us know your love and grace. Amen.

God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. (Mark 10:14b)

The Widow's Coins – Luke 21:1-4

Prepare to Lead

Activities At-a-Glance

The Widow's Coins (Counting)
Offering Box (Craft)
Giving (Journaling)
The Widow and Her Coins (Coloring Page)
G.I.V.E. (Mission Activity)
Peaceful Place (Response Activities)
Pass the Coin (Game)
Looking to Give (Craft)
Giving Back (Activity)
Giving Together (Prayer Activity)

Supplies At-a-Glance

<i>crayons</i>	<i>jar</i>
<i>colored pencils</i>	<i>drawing paper</i>
<i>markers</i>	<i>paper circles</i>
<i>scissors</i>	<i>basket</i>
<i>play coins</i>	<i>music</i>
<i>card stock</i>	<i>music player</i>
<i>pencils</i>	<i>paper craft rolls</i>
<i>posterboard or butcher paper</i>	<i>duct tape</i>
<i>stickers</i>	<i>construction paper</i>
<i>yarn (optional)</i>	<i>glue</i>
	<i>clipboards</i>

Suggested Book

Give and Take by Chris Raschka

Tips for the Leader

- Reflect on what you have learned about God's kingdom during this month's sessions.
- As you talk about giving money, be sure to be sensitive to different socioeconomic backgrounds of the children in your group.
- The giving of intangible things can be hard for younger children to understand. It is OK if they can't immediately think of ways to give that don't involve money.
- This is the last session of this quarter. As you look ahead to next week, be sure to remember to prepare all of the resources you will need from the Class Pack for the spring quarter.

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: KINGDOM

In this story, Jesus is addressing the attitude of giving. When the widow gave all that she had to live on, the widow demonstrated her trust in God. Giving can be hard, especially if you feel you do not have much to give. Jesus draws attention to the widow in the temple not because she gave so much, but because she gave all that she had. Jesus highlights the contrast between the rich people, carelessly throwing their gifts in, and the poor widow, who brought her two coins that were not worth much at all.

This story reminds us to be like the widow. When reading this story, you can reflect on your thoughts and feeling behind giving what you have. Sometimes we give too much; other times we do not give enough. This is not always financially possible, so giving back can take on many different forms. Giving back can include giving our time, our energy, or even our efforts.

As you prepare this week's lesson, use it as an opportunity to examine your attitude about giving. As you reflect on this topic, remember that our gifts to God are not only financial. We also give of our time, our talents, our presence, and our witness. Teaching children about God's love is definitely a gift of time, talent, presence, and witness! Thank you for the offering you give each week.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

This week we are talking about giving, which can be a hard topic for you and for children. Giving is often equated with money and possessions but giving can be so many things. Just by teaching the children, you are giving. One way to give is by acknowledging the ways others give around you. Take time to thank people who give to you, give to others, and give to the world. Showing appreciation is a great gift to give.

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, an offering plate or box*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21). Place the offering plate inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster, and invite the children to wonder about what the word *kingdom* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we have been learning about God's kingdom.

ASK: What does it mean to give back?

- We recommend reading a story each week from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary child to read, "The Widow's Coins" (pp. 238–239), from the storybook Bible or read Luke 21:1-4 from a CEB Bible.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for teaching us what is most important in the kingdom of God. Amen.

The Widow's Coins – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, play coins (optional)*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "The Widow's Coins" (Reproducible 13A) for each preschooler.*

- Hand out a copy of "The Widow's Coins" to each preschooler.

SAY: The widow gave her coins to the collection box at the temple.

ASK: How many coins did the widow give? How high can you count?

- Invite the preschoolers to count the coins. You may also have preschoolers place the play coins on the pictures of the coins to help them count.
- Encourage the preschoolers to color the page.

Offering Box – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons, scissors, card stock

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Offering Box" (Reproducible 13B) on card stock for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Offering Box" to each child.
- Invite the children to decorate their box. Then have the children cut out and follow the directions to fold and assemble their box.

SAY: The widow gave her coins at the temple. Where do you give?

Giving – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils, markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Giving" (Reproducible 13C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Giving" to each older elementary child.

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus pointed out that the widow in the story gave all that she had.

ASK: What gifts can you give?

- Invite the children to write or draw about ways that they can give what they have.
- Invite willing volunteers to share.

SAY: No gift is too small for God.

The Widow and Her Coins – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "The Widow and Her Coins" (Reproducible 13E) for each child.

- Invite the children to color the page.
- Encourage older children to draw their own image of the story.

ASK: What do you think it would feel like to give all you had?

Wonder Time

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 13 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

WONDER: What was Jesus trying to teach?

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy today's Take-Home Pages from the Reproducible Kids' Book, 13F–13G. Display the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 9 & 16).

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time. Invite children to act out the story if they are comfortable.

WONDER: What do you think made the widow want to give all that she had?

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Unit 3 Wonder Story Mat (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 18). Locate and cut out the Unit 3 story figures (Class Pack—p. 3) if you haven't already.

SAY: Today's faith word is *kingdom*.

ASK: What is God's kingdom like?

- Show the children the Unit 3 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 21).
- Read the definition of the word *kingdom* from the Faith Word Poster.

ASK: What is important in God's kingdom? What can you give to God's kingdom?

- Have a child place the widow and her coins on the Wonder Mat.

WONDER together:

- ☐ What is a widow?
- ☐ What questions do you have about this story?
- ☐ What kinds of coins were there during Bible times?
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the offering plate.

SAY: This is something we use to collect money at church, but you don't just have to give money to serve God.

ASK: What are other ways you can serve God or serve your church?

Experience Wonder

G.I.V.E – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, posterboard or large sheet of butcher paper, markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "G.I.V.E." (Reproducible 13D) for each child. Write the letters G, I, V, and E on a large sheet of paper or posterboard.

SAY: In the Bible story, we learned that the widow gave her two coins at the temple.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus pointed out what the widow was doing? What was Jesus trying to teach about giving?

SAY: There are many different ways we can give. Let's look at our papers to get some ideas.

- Hand out a copy of "G.I.V.E." to each child.
- Go over what each of the letters stand for and have children brainstorm their ideas.
- Encourage children to write or draw their own ideas on their paper.
- As a group, compile your ideas together on the larger paper.
- Hang the paper in your space as a reminder to give back.

WONDER: How can we start doing some of these things today?

Examine the Bible Verse – Early & Older Elementary

SAY: Our Unit 3 Bible verse is Mark 10:14b. Let's find it in our Bibles.

ASK: Is Mark in the Old or New Testament? (New). Where is the Book of Mark located in the New Testament? (second book) In what chapter of Mark is our verse located? (10) What is the verse number? (14)

SAY: The Bible story is found in the Book of Mark, which is one of the Gospels.

- Gather the kids around the Unit 3 Bible Verse Poster. Read it together.

ASK: What have you learned about God's kingdom?

Peaceful Place – Preschool & Early Elementary

Supplies: copies of the Unit 3 Faith Word (Reproducible Kids' Book 10F); Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook; Give and Take, by Chris Raschka; paper; crayons or markers; jar; play coins (optional)

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page (Reproducible 10F) for each child.

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the children write down ways they can give and place them in the jar. Children can also play with the coins and the jar.
- Encourage the children to color the Unit 3 Faith Word Coloring Page.
- Encourage children to illustrate what they have learned about God's kingdom.

Tip: All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring God's Kingdom Through Community

Supplies: paper circles, pencils, basket

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. This month we are going to practice ways that we can be encouraging members of God's community.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice.

SAY: There are many ways we can give. In church, you might see people placing an offering in a plate or basket. Today, we are going to place suggestions for ways we can give in our basket as symbols of what we want to give to God.

- Have each child write or draw one way they can give on a circle.
- Invite each child to place their circle in the basket.
- After the children have placed their giving circles in the basket, hold the basket up high and say a prayer.

PRAY: Dear God, we hope we can give what we can to you. Amen.

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—p. 128

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Family Celebration Letter" (p. 128) for each child.

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 13F–13G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice with you. Look for ways that you and your family can give back this week!

- Send a copy of the Take-Home Pages and a copy of the Family Celebration Letter home with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschool – Pass the Coin

Supplies: larger play coins, music player, music

SAY: Today we heard a Bible story about a widow and her coins.

ASK: How many coins did the widow give?

SAY: Let's play a game to remind us of the Bible story.

- Gather the children in a circle.
- Start by holding a coin. When the music starts, pass the coin to your right or left. Encourage the children to keep passing the coin around the circle.
- Stop the music. Whoever is holding the coin then has to sit in the middle of the circle.
- Repeat until all children are in the middle. Say a chant together: "We can all give to God!"
- As a variation, start more than one coin around the circle.

Tip: If you do not have play coins, you can use any large circular object to represent a coin.

Early Elementary – Looking to Give

Supplies: paper craft rolls, duct tape, stickers, construction paper, scissors, glue, hole punch (optional), yarn (optional)

ASK: Is it easy to give? How can we find ways to give?

SAY: Let's make binoculars that can help us look for ways to give.

- Give each child two paper craft rolls.
- Show the children how to use the duct tape to attach the craft rolls together to make binoculars. Add glue if needed.

- Encourage children to decorate their binoculars.
- If you would like, punch two holes on each end of the binoculars and attach a piece of string to wear your binoculars around your neck.

ASK: What are some ways we can give back that might be in this room? Let's look!

- Encourage the children to take their binoculars home to look for ways to give back.

Older Elementary – Giving Back

Supplies: paper, pens, clipboards (optional)

SAY: In the Bible story, Jesus teaches us what is important about giving.

- Give each child a piece of paper on a clipboard. Have the children find a quiet spot in the room.
- Have the children write down five or more things that are important to them. Have the children place them in order of most important to least important.

ASK: Is there anything on your list you could give up? Why or why not? What is first on your list? What can you do with that to give back?

SAY: You are not required to give it up. God just wants you to give back.

ASK: What is the difference in giving up and giving back?

PRAY: Dear God, help me look for ways I can give back to you and to others. Amen.

Intergenerational Activity – Giving Together

SAY: Sometimes it is easier to give together than to try and do it alone.

ASK: What are things we can do together to give?

- Divide the participants into small groups.
- Have each group use a device to look up ways to give in your community. Groups might also think of ways to give at your church.
- Have the groups share their ideas.
- After all the groups have shared, encourage the groups to make a plan to work together to give back together.
- Consider scheduling a service day, a collection, or a donation drive.

CELEBRATE WONDER® Family Celebration Letter

Celebrating Our Ways to Connect with God

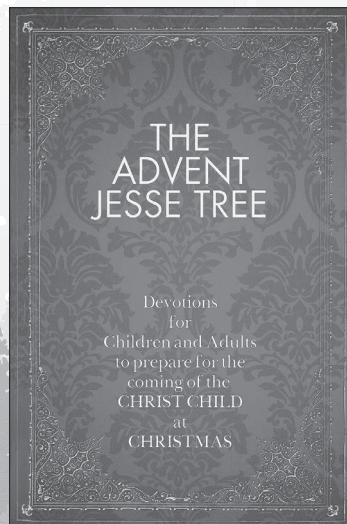
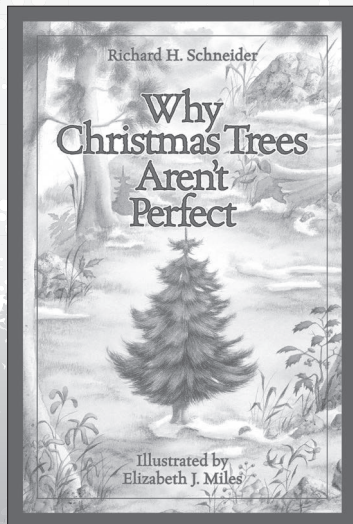
It can be hard to feel connected to God sometimes, even for adults. It can be particularly difficult for children to do this because they often understand the world best through things they can see and touch. Not being able to see and touch God means that children, like adults, need additional tools for connecting with God.

This quarter, help your child connect with God by experiencing the wonder and awe of Advent. Advent is a special time to explore the hope and anticipation we feel as followers of Jesus. Light candles at home together and enjoy the peace and stillness during a usually busy season. Another way to help children connect to God is to encourage them to wonder about and vocalize their beliefs. Ask them the question: "What do you know about God?" Encourage children to spend time with God through prayer, meditation, and journaling to help them think about their beliefs. Children can also connect with God by finding their place in God's community. Encourage children to play an active role in your faith traditions, and encourage children to include others.

Place this chart on your refrigerator, kitchen table, or in an easy-to-access place. Throughout the week, have your child mark or color a space each time they complete an item on the chart. Celebrate your faith together!

<i>I shared with someone.</i>	<i>I prayed.</i>	<i>I listened to music.</i>	<i>I wrote down my thoughts and feelings.</i>	<i>I stood up for myself.</i>
<i>I paid attention to God.</i>	<i>I overcame something hard.</i>	<i>I wondered about something.</i>	<i>I was a good friend.</i>	<i>I included someone.</i>
<i>I worshiped God in a special place.</i>	<i>I spent time with people who are important to me.</i>	<i>I spoke up about my beliefs.</i>	<i>I waited patiently.</i>	<i>I gave back to my community.</i>

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Celebrate Wonder All Ages

CELEBRATE WONDER ALL AGES is flexible Christian faith formation for children and their families. Working with children's ministry leaders from all over the US, we revised our resources to make it easier for you to adapt them to your specific setting.

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