

DECEMBER THEME



BIBLE STORY

Luke 1:26-56

Joyful, Joyful | Gabriel Appears to Mary
Spark Story Bible, pg. 196-201 + 202-207
Angels Visit + Mary Visits Elizabeth

BOTTOM LINE

You can have JOY because God has a
plan for you

MEMORY VERSE

"Today in the town of David a Savior has
been born to you. He is the Messiah,
the Lord."
Luke 2:11 (NIRV)

LIFE APP

Christmas | Celebrating Jesus, God's
greatest gift

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what

•• THEME OVERVIEW

Key Question: What are your plans for Christmas? December can be a busy time of year. We start with this simple question to get us thinking about how we can respond when life doesn't go according to our plans. Mary's own plans for her life changed when the angel appeared to her and told her she'd be having a baby. She responded with joy. We pray we will discover how we can find joy, no matter what is happening, because God's plans are always better than our own.

In week two, we head to **Luke 1:26-56** and discover more about when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would be Jesus' mother. This must have come as quite a surprise. After all, Mary wasn't married yet, and she had a different plan for her life. Gabriel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. She could have been overwhelmed by this startling news, but she chose to respond with a song of joy.

Bottom Line: You can have joy because God has a plan for you. As we look over the past year, most of us could say that our plans changed a bit. Maybe we missed a vacation. Maybe we had to work from home. Maybe we even got sick. When our plans are thrown up in the air, we can still find joy. Nothing takes God by surprise. We can trust that God has an ultimate plan for our lives. We pray we would discover the joy that comes from believing in Jesus and God's plan for us.

•• WOW @home

What You Do: Watch this week's WOW @home in the comfort of your family's @home prayer + worship spot. The video can be found on popmn.org/youtube or facebook.com/popchildrens. Then use this Family Guide, GodTime & ParentCue cards, and FAITH5 daily devos as personal devotionals and to keep the conversation going...

•• MAKING PLANS [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Connect | An activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding

What You Need: Bible and/or Spark Story Bible

What You Do:

- Ask some of the Christmas-themed "would you rather" questions below.
- Would you rather...
- Have a snowball fight or snuggle up by a roaring fire in the fireplace?
 - Eat only Christmas cookies or only candy canes this Christmas season?
 - Wear Santa boots or pointy Elf shoes to gym class?
 - Eat a huge bowl of figgy pudding or a giant slice of fruit cake?
 - Have candy cane legs or gumdrop eyes?

- Get one big amazing Christmas gift or ten smaller gifts?
- Build a snowman or a snow fort?
- Wash your hair with cranberry sauce or gravy?
- String a mile-long popcorn garland or wrap 100 Christmas presents?
- Eat a gingerbread house or live in a gingerbread house?
- Have a partridge in a pear tree or six geese a laying?
- [Challenge your family to make up and answer other Christmas-related “would you rather” questions]

What You Say: “It’s fun to make our own Christmas plans by answering these silly questions. Most of the time, we like being in charge of deciding what we want to do. Today’s Bible story tells us about a young woman named Mary who probably had some of her own plans about what she wanted her life to be like, but then got a big surprise that really changed those plans! Let’s read the story again and pay close attention to how Mary responded to the change in her plans.”

What You Do:

- Read the story about Gabriel’s announcement to Mary in either Luke 1:26-56, or the Spark Story Bible stories “Angels Visit” and “Mary Visits Elizabeth.” Then, review the story by having your family act it out as you read the summary printed below...

What You Say: “Mary was an ordinary girl from an ordinary town. She grew up learning the Jewish scriptures and was engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. She probably had a plan or an idea of how her life would go, but one day, all of that changed. Gabriel, an angel sent from God, appeared to Mary with a VERY special message. God had a big plan for Mary. What was that plan? Mary would have a baby. But not just any baby. Gabriel told her she would have a son named Jesus. He would be great; the Son of the Most-High God.

“The angel also told Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth, would have a baby even though she was old. All these things seemed impossible to Mary, but still she said, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May it be so.’ Mary visited Elizabeth and stayed with her for many weeks. Mary was full of joy because God had chosen her to be a part of God’s BIG plan!

“If you had been Mary, how would you have felt if an ANGEL suddenly appeared to you with a special message? Show me the face you might make if an angel appeared right in front of you! I would probably be frightened at first. (*Show frightened face.*) But then, I would have LOTS of questions. And Mary DID ask questions, but then she said something amazing. Mary said, ‘I serve the Lord. May it happen just as you have said.’

“Mary knew that God’s plans were bigger and better than any plan she may have come up with on her own. And she was right! God made Mary for a purpose, and God made you and me for a purpose. Just like God had a plan for Mary, God has a plan for you! **[Bottom Line] You can have joy because God has a plan for you.**”

[Make it Personal] (*Tell your family about a time when God showed you God’s plan for your life. Maybe you moved to a new city or chose a different college or career because God led you there. Talk about how you found joy by following God’s plan for you.*)

•• **JOY STEALERS** [Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine | An activity that promotes empathy and facilitates concrete application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: Throw pillow, paper, marker, and masking tape

What You Do:

- Write the word “JOY” on a piece of paper and tape it to a throw pillow.
- Instruct your family to sit in a tight circle on the floor.
- Place the “JOY” pillow in the center of the circle.

- Read the scenarios below. Each scenario represents a situation where it might be easy to lose our joy.
- After listening to the first scenario, family members should rush to the center of the circle to “steal” the JOY pillow. Once stolen, ask the person holding the pillow to share how they could turn the scenario around to find joy anyway. *(Some ideas are listed beside each scenario in case anyone gets stumped for an answer.)*
- Place the pillow back into the center of the circle and repeat with the remaining scenarios.

Scenarios...

- Your dad forgot to get the cookies for your holiday party at school. *(You remind him in the car on the way to school, so he makes a quick stop at the store to buy your favorite frosted cookies.)*
- Your mom bought you a different bike than the one you actually wanted. *(You realize the bike is cooler than the one you picked out online.)*
- You dropped and broke the gift you made for your mom at school. *(You ask your teacher if she can help you fix it, and she does.)*
- You forgot to get a gift for your sister for Christmas. *(You decide to make her something this year.)*
- Your little brother ate the rest of the gumdrops, and now you can’t finish the roof on your gingerbread house. *(You decide to use cereal to cover the rest.)*
- You built a snowman in the front yard. The next day, the snow melted, and your frosty friend is gone. *(You splash in the puddles left by the melted snow.)*
- Your sister ate the last homemade Christmas cookie. *(You convince your mom to let you help make a new batch of cookies.)*
- Your parents tell you that the roads are too slippery to drive to your grandparents’ house this Christmas. *(You could video chat with your grandparents on Christmas Day and/or make plans to see them at Easter time instead.)*
- Your dog jumps up to catch a treat and knocks over the Christmas tree. *(You get to decorate your tree twice this year!)*
- When you try to use the remote-controlled car you got for Christmas, it won’t work. *(Your dad calls the company, and they ship you a new one. Or, you take it apart, figure out the problem, and fix it yourself!)*

What You Say: “Every day, we face situations that could steal our joy. But real joy isn’t about things going our way. Joy is about remembering that God loves us and that God’s plans for us are good. Because God loves us, God put a plan in place to send Jesus to the world. God promised to send a Savior, and God did! **[Bottom Line] You can have joy because God has a plan for you!**”

•• CANDY CANE VERSE [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Bible and candy canes *(one per person)*

What You Do:

- Open a Bible to Luke 2:11 and read it aloud to your family.
- Talk about the second phrase found in the verse: A Savior has been born to you.
- Ask...
 - Who is the Savior? *(Jesus)*
 - Do you know what the word “Savior” means? *(A person who saves someone or something. God sent Jesus to save us! At Christmas we celebrate the gift of Jesus...at Easter we celebrate that Jesus died on the cross so our sins would be forgiven and we would know how much we are loved.)*
- Have your family sit in a circle.
- Hold up a candy cane so that it makes a “J” and point out how “JOY” starts with a “J.”
- Repeat the words of the verse together as you pass the candy cane around the circle.

- When you get to the reference (*Luke 2:11*), whoever holds the candy cane gets to keep it and steps out of the circle.
- Repeat, passing a new candy cane around the circle.
- Continue until everyone has gotten a candy cane to keep.
- EnJOY eating your candy canes together!

What You Say: “The angel told Mary she would have a baby. Mary wasn’t sure how everything would work out, but she chose to trust God’s plan. God sent Jesus as our Savior because God loves us. That’s a huge reason to have JOY. Every time you see a candy cane this Christmas, turn it around so you see the ‘J’ and remember that **[Bottom Line] you can have joy because God has a plan for you!**”

•• **PRAY** [Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect | An activity that creates space for personal processing and application

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Say: “We can have joy when things don’t go our way. We can have real joy, joy that’s bigger than happiness, when we remember that God has a plan for each one of us. Let’s thank God today that **[Bottom Line] you can have joy because God has a plan for you!**”

“Let’s pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the plan you had for Mary. Thank you for sending Jesus to save us. Thank you for the joy we can ALWAYS have when we remember that you have a plan for us. We know that your plan is the best plan ever. We love you. Thank you for loving us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

•• **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Looking for a devo for your kids? Looking for a personal devotional? Want to keep the conversation going? Check out the following resources at popmn.org/cm. Use them this week to continue the conversation around our **[Bottom Line]: You can have joy because God has a plan for you.**

GodTime Card | A 4-day devotional for elementary-aged kids based on the weekly theme kicked off on WOW @home

ParentCue | A tool for parents based on the weekly theme. Also available as an app, it sends alerts and encouragement specific to the age of your children (parentcue.org)

FAITH5 | A 6-day family devotional written based on Faith Inkubators’ FAITH5

•• **WHAT’S NEXT**

Set a reminder to join us for WOW @home on Wednesday 12/16 at 6:00 pm live at facebook.com/popchildrens or anytime after that at popmn.org/youtube for a time of worship centered around the **[Bottom Line]: God loved us so much that God gave us a Savior.**