

3

Share Hope

LUKE 2:1-7



GOAL

The children experience what it means to wait in hope through the story of Mary and Joseph, the practice of *Las Posadas*, and the waiting in hope that they do in their own lives.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of hope, give me patience as I wait in expectation for things I do not control. Help me to share the hope I have with the children and others I encounter. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session focuses on the hope that is shared with us by the birth of Jesus, God-with-us, and the hope that we can share with others. The story of *Las Posadas*, a tradition brought from Spain and found in many Spanish-speaking countries and communities, is the pilgrimage of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and their hope of finding a place to stay. The children will have an opportunity to act out Mary and Joseph's journey to the inns (*posadas*).

THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible story continues in Luke 2:1-7. In these few verses, Mary and Joseph travel at a critical time as they expect their child. We await the sharing of hope that will happen with the birth of Jesus.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children can identify with waiting for a hope that is shared with them. They don't often have a say about when and what they eat or do. So they may have hopes about what will happen in their daily lives that they are dependent upon others to bring about. This mirrors the dependency that Mary and Joseph experienced in hoping that someone would notice their needs and meet them.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Festive Treats" (p. 28): Obtain sugar cookies, frosting, and decorative items for cookies. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.
- "Seeds of Hope" (p. 28): If paperwhite bulbs were planted in the first session, obtain them for the children to observe. You will keep these for session 4.
- "Hope Is the Rope" (p. 28): Use rope from session 1, long enough that everyone in the group can hold onto it. Save for session 4.
- "Sharing Hope on a Journey" (p. 29): Use your donkey puppet from session 2 and gather the HOPE ornaments from session 2. For children who were not present at sessions 1 or 2, provide, as needed, red yarn rope (p. 10), twine, and ornament cut from a card-stock copy of session 1's Resource Page 1 (p. 12).

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Learning about *Las Posadas*" (p. 30): Obtain *The Night of Las Posadas* by Tomie dePaola or use the YouTube video "The Night of Las Posadas—Tomie dePaola (read aloud)" (bit.ly/FMLasPosadasBook, 10:56) or "Las Posadas' in Ojo Caliente, New Mexico" (bit.ly/FMLasPosadas, 4:46).



GETTING STARTED

- Sugar cookies, frosting, and decorating items
- Dinner or plastic knives
- Small paper plates, markers

FESTIVE TREATS

F X

Greet the children as they arrive and ask them to wash their hands. Then invite them to decorate a sugar cookie for a special treat later. Have them put their name on the plate with their cookie. Talk together about other times the children have decorated cookies or prepared sweet treats to enjoy.



Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

- Paperwhite bulbs planted in session 1, magnifying glass, tape measure

SEEDS OF HOPE

NS

If you planted the bulbs in water in the first session, take some time to study the bulbs for any changes. Have the children use a magnifying glass and/or a tape measure to see their growth. If the bulbs need some water, this is a good time to make sure a quarter of the bottom of the bulb is moist.

In the next session, session 4, you will transfer the bulbs to pots to send home with the children. You will need pots, potting soil, and spoons.

- Rope

HOPE IS THE ROPE

AM QC

When everyone has arrived, gather the children and read the following litany that is in each session of this unit, inviting the children to repeat the bolded lines as they come to know it. Invite the children to grab hold of the rope and raise it up as the line “hope is the rope” is spoken.

When we feel lost,
hope is the rope
 helping us find our way home.

When things are beyond our control,
hope is the rope
 keeping us secure.

In the darkness of the night,
hope is the rope
 giving us something to hold on to.

When we feel alone,
hope is the rope,
 with strands that bind us together,
 helping us comfort and strengthen one another.
Thank God for the gift of hope.

- Bowl of water

BAPTISM HOPE

AM

Place a bowl of water in the center of the group. Tell the children that, when people are baptized, whether they are young or old, that is a sign of hope in God’s promises. Together have people dip their fingers in the water and make a cross mark on the back of their other hand. Say to the group, “Through the waters of baptism, God claims you as God’s own beloved child. This is God’s promise.”



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

SHARING LEADERSHIP GAME



Invite the children to sit on the floor in a circle. Tell the children that today they are going to look at different ways they share things. Wonder together what kinds of things people share.

Tell the children that they are going to play a game to share being the leader. Use the following directions to play the game:

- Have one person be the *guesser*. Tell them to hide their eyes while you point to someone to be the *leader*. Tell everyone to be quiet and not say who the leader is. The guesser may open their eyes.
- Tell the children that the leader will start making a motion, such as clapping hands, stomping a foot, or tapping a finger. When they see the leader doing this, everyone should follow their motions, but the leader will try to be sneaky and not let the guesser see them start the action.
- The leader may change motions whenever they like, and everyone else has to follow them and change as well.
- The guesser has three chances to guess the leader.

After three guesses, reveal who was the leader, if they were not guessed. Have the child who was the leader be the next one to hide their eyes. Have the child who guessed choose the next leader. Be sure everyone has a turn to be a leader and a guesser, as they wish.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

SHARING HOPE ON A JOURNEY



Introduce the character of Abe, the donkey, to the children by holding up your donkey puppet. Ask children who were there last session whose donkey Abe was. Invite the children to recall and tell the story of Abe, Mary, and Elizabeth. Prompt them as necessary.

Read the adapted Bible story from Luke 2:1–7 on Resource Page 1. Note that Abe makes another appearance in this story as it is told from his perspective again. Each time Abe is mentioned, have the children pass the donkey puppet to the next person. If Abe speaks while a child is holding the puppet, have them “hee haw” like a donkey.

After the story is read, wonder together who was leading and who was following. Invite them to tell where they heard hope shared in the story.

Have the children get their HOPE ornaments. Give them a strip of fabric to add to the third hole in the ornament to remind them of Jesus, the hope of the world, wrapped in bands of cloth. Then have the children hang their ornaments in the room again.

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- Resource Page 1
 - Your donkey puppet from session 2
 - HOPE ornaments from sessions 1 and 2
 - Thin strips of torn cloth, about 1/2" x 8"
 - Additional ornaments cut from card-stock copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 12), crayons, red yarn rope, twine, clear contact paper, and single-hole punch, as needed



If children were not present at the last session, have them add the twine to their ornament. If they were not present at the last two sessions, give them an ornament to color. Find a few moments to help them attach a red yarn rope and twine to their ornament. Be sure they put their name on the back of their ornament.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Biblical costumes (optional)
- Sugar cookies prepared in “Festive Treats” (p. 28)
- Juice or water, cups

ACTING OUT LAS POSADAS

D

Many Spanish-speaking countries and communities celebrate this journey of Mary and Joseph through a practice of hope called *Las Posadas*. Originally, this practice was celebrated for nine nights leading up to Christmas Eve. Each night, two children or youth dress as Mary and Joseph and carry nativity figures of Mary and Joseph. They go from door to door in their neighborhood or at a celebration, singing a song and asking to be let in. No one lets them in on the first eight nights, but on the ninth night they are welcomed in and have a party.

Invite the children to reenact this celebration in the space you have. Some children can be Mary and Joseph, while others can be the innkeepers who turn them away. Do this several times, so that children have the opportunity to be Mary, Joseph, or an innkeeper, as they choose. On the last round, have the last innkeeper welcome Mary and Joseph in and celebrate.

Enjoy the sugar cookies that the children decorated, along with some juice or water.

While the children are eating, engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What did it feel like to be turned away when you were Mary and Joseph?
- What did it feel like to be an innkeeper telling Mary and Joseph you had no room for them?
- Who shared hope in this celebration?

- The Night of Las Posadas* by Tomie dePaola (Puffin Books, 2001) (optional)
- Internet-connected device

LEARNING ABOUT LAS POSADAS

T

If you choose not to reenact *Las Posadas* or your space doesn't lend itself to that, explain what *Las Posadas* is by summarizing the first paragraph in “Acting Out *Las Posadas*” above. Then learn about the celebration by reading a book and/or watching a video together. Choose one or both of the following options:

- Read *The Night of Las Posadas* by Tomie dePaola or show the YouTube video “The Night of Las Posadas—Tomie dePaola (read aloud)” (bit.ly/FMLasPosadasBook, 10:56).
- Show the YouTube video “Las Posadas’ in Ojo Caliente, New Mexico” (bit.ly/FMLasPosadas, 4:46). This video shows a traditional celebration. You may want to provide a voiceover of the English translation of the words to the songs the people are singing.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

SHARING HOPE WITH BIRD FRIENDS

NS

Remind the children how Mary cared for her donkey Abe. Tell the children that they can share hope with creatures in God’s creation by making bird feeders. Invite them to sit at a table where they can make their bird feeders.

Give each child four pipe cleaners and a paper bowl. Use the following directions to make the bird feeder.

- Punch four holes in the rim of the paper bowl in the clock positions 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00. (You may want to draw a clock on a piece of paper with 12, 3, 6, and 9 written in large numbers to show the children the positions. Assist with hole punching as needed.)
- Poke a pipe cleaner through each hole and bend the end around the rim to keep it in place. The bowl should have four pipe cleaners sticking up from the bowl.
- Place o-shaped cereal on each pipe cleaner, filling it to about an inch from the top. Curl the top of the pipe cleaners to make a little circle, and twist the end around the stem of the pipe cleaner to hold the circle in place. (Assist with twisting as needed.)
- Thread a piece of string or yarn through each of the circles at the end of the pipe cleaners and knot the ends together.

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- Pipe cleaners, four per child
 - Paper bowls
 - O-shaped cereal
 - String or yarn
 - Scissors
 - Sandwich-sized ziplock plastic bags
 - Birdseed
 - Cups

Give each child a ziplock plastic bag and have them put a cup or two of birdseed (depending on the quantity of birdseed and the number of children you have) in the bag and close it. Tell the children that they can hang their bird feeder on a tree limb and fill the bowl with birdseed. The birds and other animals will enjoy the seeds and cereal they have provided, as well as the hope for full tummies!

SHARING MARY’S AND JOSEPH’S HOPE

A

Invite the children to make simple figures of Mary and Joseph from air-dry clay. Have the children use these figures to tell the story and celebrate *Las Posadas* with their family and friends.

When the children have finished making their figures, put them in paper lunch bags with a copy of Resource Page 2, which explains the celebration.

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- Air-dry clay in several colors
 - Copies of Resource Page 2
 - Paper lunch bags

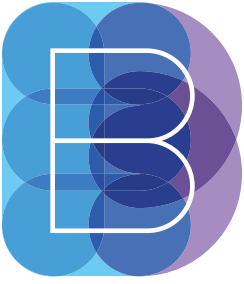


FOLLOWING JESUS

Invite the children to stand in a circle, holding the long rope from the opening ritual. Ask them to each say one thing that they are hoping for this week and one hope that they can share with someone else this week.

Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you pray:

God of hope, /
 we are thankful for hope shared with us. (*move outstretched arms in toward self*) /
 May we share hope with others (*move right arm outward from self*) /
 who need hope this week. (*move left arm outward from self*) /
 Amen. /



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 2:1-7

Hello! It's Abe again. Remember me? I'm Mary's donkey. We had an angel visit us, and then we went to see Mary's cousin Elizabeth. But there's more to the story!

Let me catch you up. The angel told Mary she was going to have a baby. Mary told Joseph, who she was engaged to, and both of us thought he was going to stomp right out of the stable and never see her again. But he didn't. He told Mary that he had a dream, and an angel told him about the baby named Jesus too!

Mary and Joseph got married, and we moved into Joseph's house. He was a carpenter, so sometimes he put boards and nails and tools in my pack, and we went to do a job somewhere.

It got close for that little baby to be born. Mary was walking a bit slower, and Joseph was definitely getting a bit more nervous. Then Joseph and Mary got an official message from the Roman government saying that everyone had to go to the village that their ancestors called home. For Joseph, this was Bethlehem. It was a journey that would take several days from our home in Nazareth. I was excited to go on a trip, but I was worried about Mary. I would have to be very careful with my footing as we traveled.

After many days' journey, we finally reached the city of Bethlehem. I was looking forward to a good long rest and some grasses and straw to eat and to lie in, but it seemed we were having trouble finding a place to stay. Each place that we stopped had no rooms for them. There were so many people who had journeyed to this hometown that all the guest rooms were full.

Then one kindly innkeeper looked at Mary and saw how tired she was, and how near to having a baby she was, and shared some hope with them.

"It is not a guest room, but you may stay in my stable," said the innkeeper. "I'm sure the animals would be happy to share their home with you."

So Mary and Joseph went to the stable, and it turned out to be just in time, because baby Jesus was born and wrapped in bands of cloth, so that he would be warm in his manger bed. I was glad to see that birth and the hope that this one small baby named Jesus would bring to the world.

Las Posadas (in Spanish, this means “The Inns”)

Many Spanish-speaking countries and communities celebrate this journey of Mary and Joseph through a practice of hope called *Las Posadas*. Originally, this practice was celebrated for nine nights leading up to Christmas Eve. Each night, two children or youth dress as Mary and Joseph and carry nativity figures of Mary and Joseph. They go from door to door in their neighborhood or at a celebration, singing a song and asking to be let in. No one lets them in on the first eight nights, but on the ninth night, Christmas Eve, when they knock on the door, someone will say yes and invite all who are part of the procession to come in and place the Mary and Joseph figures in the stable and the baby Jesus in the manger.

Then they will have a *fiesta*, a party. In some houses, they will break a *piñata* full of candy, fruit, and toys. In other houses, they will have cookies and hot chocolate to celebrate the baby Jesus being born in a safe and warm place.

➔ How will you celebrate this special time?

Explore the tradition of *Las Posadas* with your child.

- Read *The Night of Las Posadas* by Tomie dePaola or show the YouTube video “The Night of Las Posadas—Tomie dePaola (read aloud)” (bit.ly/FMLasPosadasBook, 10:56).
 - Show the YouTube video “Las Posadas’ in Ojo Caliente, New Mexico” (bit.ly/FMLasPosadas, 4:46). This video shows a traditional celebration. You may want to provide a voiceover of the English translation of the words to the songs the people are singing.
- ➔ What traditions does your family have to celebrate the hope that Jesus brings?



