

4

Proclaim Hope

LUKE 2:8-20



GOAL

The children practice giving and receiving hope through hearing and responding to the Bible story of the shepherds and angels in Luke's Gospel, as well as playing several games that reinforce this concept.

- 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, help me to be attentive to both giving and receiving hope. Let me be open to receiving hope from the children I serve, even as I pass this hope on to them. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This aspect of the practice of hope looks at the exchange of hope that is received as often as it is given. The exchanges between the shepherds and angels and between Mary and Joseph and the shepherds are examples of hope offered and hope received. When we hear the good news about God's love, we receive hope. When we share the good news about Jesus, we are offering hope to others.

THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible story is a familiar one at Christmas time, with the angels appearing to give good news of hope to the shepherds, who then carry that hope both to Mary and Joseph and to the others they tell about the birth of the Christ child.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children grow into the concept of exchange, giving something and receiving something in return. This session can be a good practice for that emerging concept. Again, we rely on the tangible metaphor of rope connected with hope to aid this process.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Hope Is the Rope" (p. 36): Use rope from session 1, long enough that everyone in the group can hold onto it.
- "The Shepherds' and Angels' Story" (p. 37): Obtain leather cording and gold cording. Cut 12" lengths of each. Gather the HOPE ornaments from sessions 1-3. For children who were not present at sessions 1-3, provide, as needed, red yarn rope (p. 10), twine, fabric strips, and ornament cut from a card-stock copy of session 1's Resource Page 1 (p. 12).

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Seeds of Hope" (p. 39): If paperwhite bulbs were planted in the first session, obtain them for the children to observe. You will transfer the bulbs to pots for the children today, so you will need pots, potting soil, and spoons.



GETTING STARTED

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- Green construction paper
 - Cotton balls
 - Glue sticks
 - Dark markers

SHEEP PICTURES

A

As the children arrive, invite them to create a flock of sheep on green construction paper. Provide them with cotton balls and glue sticks, and show them how to make the sheep's body by gluing several cotton balls in a circle or oval shape. After the cotton balls are glued to the paper, show the children how they can use a marker to add heads and legs to the sheep by drawing a small circle or triangular shape for the head and short lines at the bottom of the cotton ball bodies for legs. They may add eyes and ears as well. Tell the children that they will hear a story about some people who took care of sheep long ago and the hope they were offered one night. Set aside for "The Shepherds' and Angels' Story" (p. 37).

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- Rope

HOPE IS THE ROPE

AM QC

When everyone has arrived, gather the children and read the following litany that has been used in each session, 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.

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- 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

ROPE/HOPE PASSING GAME



- 2"-3" piece of rope

Reinforce the link between *rope* and *hope* and the idea of giving and receiving by playing a game. Invite the children to sit in a circle, close enough together that their knees touch and they can easily pass the rope from one to another. Have the children place their left hands on their left knee with the palm facing up (ready to receive the rope). Explain that their right hands will move the rope, picking it up from the child on their right and placing in their own left hand. Tell the children that they keep moving their right hand back and forth, even when they don't have the rope. Practice several times just moving the rope around the group in one coordinated motion.

Then add the song to the game. Practice singing it several times. The song is sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

Pass my rope from me to you.
Give you rope and give you hope.

Sharing hope from me to you.
Sharing my hope with this rope.

Pass my rope from me to you.
Give you rope and give you hope.

Then begin the game by having a volunteer be the guesser and move away from the group and hide their eyes. The group closes the circle so knees are touching again. They begin passing the rope and singing the song. When the guesser hears the song, they return to the circle, stand in the middle, and try to figure out where the rope is in the group as it is being passed. When the song is done, everyone stops passing and the guesser tries to guess who has the rope. Another child becomes the guesser. Continue the play until everyone who would like to be the guesser has had a turn.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

THE SHEPHERDS' AND ANGELS' STORY



Invite the children to gather their sheep pictures from "Sheep Pictures" (p. 36). Invite the children to raise their pictures up in the air and say, "Baaaa," each time they hear the word *shepherd* in the story.

Read the adapted Bible story from Luke 2:8-20 on Resource Page 1. After the story, ask the children to put their sheep pictures on the floor so the sheep may sleep and the children can listen to the questions you ask.

- What type of animal did the shepherds care for?
- Who appeared to the shepherds?
- What did the angels say and do?
- What did the shepherds say and do?

- Sheep pictures from "Sheep Pictures" (p. 36)
- Resource Page 1
- HOPE ornaments from sessions 1-3
- Leather cording, gold cording
- Ornaments cut from card-stock copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 12), crayons, red yarn rope, twine, fabric strips, clear contact paper, and single-hole punch, as needed

- Who gave hope in the story?
- Who received hope in the story?

Wonder together how each of the characters in the story offered and/or received hope.

Have the children get their HOPE ornaments. Give them a piece of leather cording and gold cording to add to the last hole in the ornament to remind them of the angels and the shepherds who offered and received hope.



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 three sessions, give them an ornament to color. Find a few moments to help them attach a red yarn rope, twine, and a fabric strip to their ornament. Be sure they put their name on the back of their ornament.

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- Biblical costumes (optional)

STORY REENACTMENT

D

Invite the children to act out the story of the angels' visit to the shepherds and the shepherds' visit to Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. Provide biblical costumes if the children enjoy wearing them. Encourage the children to tell the story in their own words, but if that seems difficult, provide narration. If the children would like to try out different parts, have them tell the story again.

After the drama, ask the children which character they were playing when they received the most hope and which character they were playing when they gave the most hope.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or more options.

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- HOPE ornaments from "The Shepherds' and Angels' Story" (p. 37)

REMEMBERING OUR HOPE STORIES

C

Invite the children to get their HOPE ornaments and bring them to a central place. Encourage the children to retell the Bible stories they remember connected with each strand on their ornament. They can help each other to remember and you can point them to their strands as a key to the stories. Suggest that they tell these stories to their families when they take home their ornaments.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Bowl of water from "Baptism Hope" (p. 36)
 - Several small objects, such as a penny, an eraser, a pebble, or a small toy

RIPPLES OF HOPE

C T NS

Tell the children they are going to watch a video about people who are giving and receiving kindness. Wonder together how hope is like acts of kindness. Invite the children to see who is giving hope and who is receiving hope in acts of kindness.

Show the YouTube video "Inspirational Video—Pay It Forward" (bit.ly/FMKindness, 5:06). After the video, ask the children what acts of kindness they saw. Talk together about who gave hope and who received hope in the acts of kindness they saw.

Show the children the bowl of water and drop a small object in the water. Ask the children if they saw the ripples the water made. Tell the children that kindness is like those ripples. Acts of kindness can ripple out, offering hope to others. Let the children drop small objects in the water and watch the ripples.

SEEDS OF HOPE

NS

If you planted the bulbs in water in the first session, transfer them to pots for the children to take home. Have the children place a few pebbles in the bottom of their pot, add some potting soil, and then add the bulb. Have them add more soil over the bulb, taking care of any sprouts. Add some spoonfuls of water.

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- Paperwhite bulbs planted in session 1, small pots, potting soil, spoons, water



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

TELEPHONE GOOD NEWS

G

Invite the children to sit or stand in a line where they can whisper to each other. Start each of the following sentences at one end of the line and see what they end up becoming at the end of the line of children, as each whispers the sentence to the next person.

“I have good news for you.”

“A baby has been born in Bethlehem.”

“Go spread this news of great joy to others!”

“Jesus will bring hope to the world.”

“Hope is something we get and something we give.”

GIVING AND RECEIVING HOPE

C A

Talk together about ways the children can give and receive hope. Tell them that hope can be acts of kindness they give or receive. Invite them to choose something they would like to do and draw a picture of them doing it. Write on their picture, “I will spread hope this week by . . .”

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- Paper
 - Crayons, markers, colored pencils



FOLLOWING JESUS

Invite the children to look for opportunities to give hope and pay attention to when they receive hope.

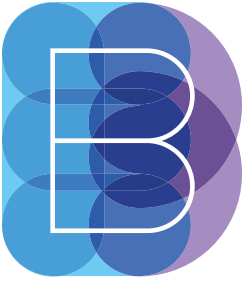
Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you pray:

God of hope, /

we are thankful for hope we have received in Jesus. (*move outstretched arms in toward self and pretend to rock a baby*) /

May we offer hope to others (*move right arm outward from self*) /
who need hope this week. (*move left arm outward from self*) /

Amen. /



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 2:8–20

In a field within a night's walk from the stable where Jesus was born, some shepherds were taking care of their sheep. They had worked hard all day keeping the flock together. They had made sure the sheep had good grass to eat and water to drink. Now it was their turn to build a fire and cook their supper and share the stories of their day. As they talked, the fire seemed to burn brighter, but then it grew so bright they couldn't ignore that this was not just the fire alone, but a heavenly glow that was lighting up the sky.

A figure appeared in this glowing sky, and the shepherds were so scared they started shaking. They had never seen anything like this before.

It was an angel, a messenger from God. The angel spoke and said, "Do not be afraid for I am bringing you good news of great joy to all people. A baby has been born in the city of Bethlehem who has been sent by God to lead the people. You will know it is the right baby, because this child is wrapped in bands of cloth and will be lying in a manger in a stable."

Then the angel was joined by many others. They all said together, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those who are favored by God."

After the angels had left, the shepherds talked to one another, wondering what to do. They decided to go to Bethlehem and see if they could find the baby that the angels had described to them.

They found the stable where Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, and the donkey were staying. They were amazed that it was all true. The shepherds wanted to give Mary and Joseph something for the baby, so they gave the baby some wool from their sheep to keep him warm on a cold night.

Then the shepherds left, praising God for everything they had seen and heard and shared together. The angels had given them hope with their good news. This little baby gave them hope for a new world. Mary, too, received the hope the shepherds shared, and she kept all of this hope in her heart.