

4

Proclaim Hope

LUKE 2:1-20



GOAL

By hearing the story of the birth of Jesus as a proclamation of hope, children envision ways they can proclaim hope in their own lives, inside the church and out into the world.

- 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

Loving God, open my heart this day. Through your guidance, let me experience the wonder of children and the wonder of the story of the birth of your son, Jesus Christ, into the world anew. Let me be an example of proclaiming your hope this day. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This final session in the *Hope* unit utilizes the children's newfound understanding of hope: waiting faithfully as God fulfills God's promises to us through Jesus Christ. Instead of just keeping this hope to ourselves, it is one of our most important callings as people of God to proclaim this hope to the world, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ as the angels and shepherds did long ago.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 2 is the familiar story of the birth of Jesus Christ: the angels visit the shepherds, and the shepherds visit Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. This story includes three major proclamations of hope: the angels' announcement of the birth to the shepherds, the shepherds sharing their experiences with Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds' praising God for the incredible experience they had.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children are great at sharing good news! Can't you see in your mind a child bursting with good news that they just have to share with someone else? Jesus Christ, the hope we have in God embodied, is another piece of good news for children to share. This session will help them use their gifts to proclaim hope into the world.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Hope Is the Rope" (p. 32): Use rope from sessions 1-3, long enough that everyone in the group can hold onto it.

Depending on the options you choose:
- "Messages of Hope in the Community" (p. 34): Obtain smooth river rocks or stones.



GETTING STARTED

GOOD NEWS



As the children arrive, invite them to think about a time when they got some good news. Maybe a family member was coming to visit from far away, maybe a friend who was sick started feeling better. One by one, invite the children to show you how the good news felt inside of their body. Repeat back the body movements as a group to the leader.

□ Rope

HOPE IS THE ROPE

Gather the children together and invite everyone to hold onto a piece of rope. Wonder together how holding onto this rope unites your group as a community.

Lead the litany below and invite the children to respond with the lines in bold. You could cue the children to say “hope is the rope” whenever you hold out a hand.

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.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

PROCLAMATION STATION



Wonder together what it means to *proclaim* something or to make a *proclamation*. Explain, if necessary, that *proclaiming* is publicly announcing or sharing something important. Ask the children when they may have heard or seen this before in real life, in a television show, or in a movie.

Form small groups and have them brainstorm something that they could proclaim. Circulate around the room and re-emphasize what proclaiming or a proclamation is. Tell them they may be serious or silly.

Gather the groups together. Before each proclamation, invite the children to make a trumpet announcement noise (“do do do dooo”). Have

the small groups take turns making their proclamation. For example: “Today is my dog’s birthday!” or “Everyone will share their food at lunch so that no one goes hungry!”

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

REFLECTING AND CONNECTING

C


Tell the children that today’s story is probably one they have heard before. Comment that sometimes it can be difficult to listen to something familiar. Challenge the children to pretend they have never heard this story before or to listen for something they have never noticed. Encourage them to especially listen for times when someone proclaimed something.

Hand out Bibles and have the children follow along as you read Luke 2:1–20, have volunteers take turns reading, or use Resource Page 1. Pause and discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases. Encourage the children to be like Mary and hold onto the details of this story in their hearts.

Reflect on the passage with the children. Use the following questions to help spur some conversation about the story. Give time for the children to respond to the open-ended questions. Encourage them to wonder by wondering with them.

- What part of this familiar story felt new to you?
- What part do you want to remember?
- How do you think the shepherds felt when the angels came to visit them?
- How would you have felt if you were a shepherd?
- Why do you think God wanted the angels to go see baby Jesus first?
- What do you think the shepherds did when they got back to their fields?
- What would you have done?

Bibles or Resource Page 1

 The *Common English Bible* is a good one to use with children because of its readability; however, you will need to help children read and understand some words and concepts regardless of the Bible you use.

FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Proclaiming the hope we have in Jesus Christ can be boisterous through song, or it can be quiet through persistent offerings of hope and companionship. These activities give children two very different ways to experience proclaiming hope through a familiar tune and a familiar activity.

Choose one or both options.

JOY TO THE WORLD!

M AM T

“Joy to the World” is a very recognizable Christmas carol. Wonder with the children about what they already know about this song using the following questions:

- Is it sung loudly or softly?
- What is the joy to the world?
- Where does the joy come from?
- How is this song about hope?

Glory to God hymnals or hymnals with “Joy to the World,” or an internet-connected device

Sing together “Joy to the World” (*Glory to God*, #134). Proclaim hope together through song! Encourage the children to move their bodies in a way that proclaims hope as you listen and sing together. If the children like to move and dance, show the YouTube video “Joy to the World” (bit.ly/FMJoyDance, 2:25) and invite them to sing and follow the actions of the leaders in the video.

When you finish, discuss with the children how it felt to proclaim hope through singing. Wonder together how it feels in their bodies, their minds, and their hearts.

-
- Newsprint
 - Paper
 - Crayons, markers, colored pencils
 - Stickers

CARDS OF HOPE



Wonder together when you, or someone you know, has had a time when you, or they, needed to be reminded of hope in God. Tell the children that one of the ways that we can proclaim hope is by sharing hope and love with people who might be sad or lonely or just need some extra hope.

Invite the children to make cards of hope for persons in your community (members who are homebound, recipients of a feeding ministry, family members, neighbors). Brainstorm messages that might be on such cards and write them on a sheet of newsprint. Some ideas might be:

- God loves you.
- Jesus is with you always.
- I love you.
- God’s love lasts forever.
- Nothing can keep you from God’s love.

Gather the cards that you can deliver to the appropriate people or encourage the children to give their cards to the person they have chosen.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

The angels proclaimed the good news of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, and the shepherds proclaimed the hope they had through Jesus as they returned to their fields. These shepherds were some of the first evangelists—the spreaders of hope. One of the greatest gifts we can give other people is to point them to Jesus Christ as the basis for hope. These practices offer simple opportunities for the children to share hope with others.

Choose one or both options.

-
- Smooth river rocks/stones
 - Acrylic paints and painting supplies or paint pens

MESSAGES OF HOPE IN THE COMMUNITY



Share with the children that people all throughout your community need messages of hope. Sometimes, it can be obvious when people need to experience hope through Jesus, and sometimes it is not obvious. Encourage them to share their hope through Jesus as much as they can.

Invite the children to paint words of hope on a rock to put in places around the community for people to find. Brainstorm some words or phrases that may be expressions of hope for the rocks and write them on newsprint. Some ideas might be: hope, love, joy, Jesus, God loves you, and peace. As the rocks dry, discuss how it might feel to receive this message of hope. Have the children take their rock and encourage them to put it

somewhere others can see it. Alternatively, go as a group to place the rocks around your church, inside and out, for members, visitors, and community people to see and be reminded of the hope that is shared in Jesus.

STARS OF HOPE



Tell the children that, throughout this unit on hope, they have heard about different ways to think about hope—ropes and light, for example. Suggest that another way that people think about hope, especially in today's story, is through the star that lit the way to Bethlehem.

Invite the children to decorate stars that they can hang on their windows at home to remember and proclaim the hope they have in Jesus. Provide copies of Resource Page 2 and art supplies. Have them cut out the stars, punch a hole in them, and tie a yarn loop. Assist with cutting and tying as necessary.

As the children work, circulate the room and wonder with the children about how people might feel seeing their stars. If children would like to make more than one star, encourage them to do so! Perhaps they would like to give one or more stars away or hang a number of stars in their home.

- Card-stock copies of Resource Page 2
- Art supplies, such as crayons, markers, paints and painting supplies (include gold, silver, and iridescent paints, if possible)
- Scissors
- Single-hole punch
- Yarn



FOLLOWING JESUS

Reflect on the good work of proclaiming hope through Jesus Christ you all have done today and bless the work of the children. Encourage the children to think about how they can proclaim their hope through Jesus Christ every day.

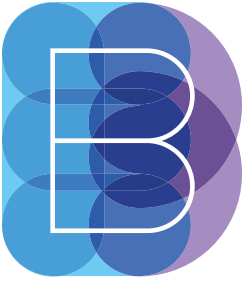
Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, thank you for giving us hope. /

Jesus, thank you for being our hope. /

Holy Spirit, thank you for reminding us to have hope. /

Amen. /



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 2:1–20

Caesar Augustus, the emperor of Rome, decided that everyone in the Roman Empire needed to be counted, so that they could pay taxes. The first big counting happened when Mary was pregnant. Everyone had to go to their hometown to be counted. So, Mary and Joseph had to go from Nazareth, where they were living, to Bethlehem, because that is where Joseph's family was from. It was a long way for them to travel, and Mary was going to have her baby soon.

In Bethlehem, it was very crowded because of all the people being counted. It was time for Mary to have her baby, but they could not find a room in a guest house. Instead, she gave birth to the baby where the animals slept. She wrapped him up tight and put him in a manger, where the animals ate.

Close by, shepherds were in the fields with their sheep, doing their nighttime work. Suddenly, an angel stood before them, and the light of God was everywhere. It really scared the shepherds! So the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have great news for you and your people! A baby is born today in Bethlehem. He is Christ the Lord. Go and look for him there in Bethlehem. You'll find a newborn baby wrapped up tight and lying in a manger."

Then, even *more* angels showed up in the shepherds' field. They all sang praises to God, "Glory to God in heaven! And on earth peace to all God's people!"

Then the angels went back to heaven, and the shepherds looked around at one another. They said, "Well, let's hurry and go to Bethlehem! We'll see what's happened, what the angels have told us!"

And so they did. They found Mary and Joseph, and the baby in the manger. They told Mary and Joseph about their angel visitors and what the angels told them about the baby. Mary listened quietly and carefully, and she remembered in her mind and in her heart everything the shepherds told her.

The shepherds went back to their fields praising God because everything the angels told them was true. What good news!

