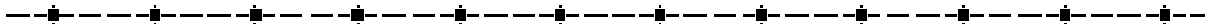


GOD'S BIG PLAN

The Silence is Broken Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:1-25

Supporting Scriptures: Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-6; Malachi 1-4



Lesson Goals: To see that God keeps His promises.
To see that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

Scripture Memory She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21 (NIRV)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as “He said. . . She said” or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let’s review what we have learned so far about God’s Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

After the temple and wall were rebuilt at Jerusalem, do you think the people remembered God and always obeyed Him? They should have. They had seen God do some amazing things. Unfortunately though, they went back to their old ways. The teachers in the temple didn’t honor God. The people were not giving God their best, they were bringing God gifts that were used, stolen, or messed up. God was not pleased with them. To top it all off, the people were robbing God. They were not stealing from the temple, but they were not giving gifts to God as they should. God wanted them to give a small part of what He had blessed them with as a way of saying “thank you” to Him. Even as sinful as they were, God encouraged them. One day He would send the One He had promised. God reminded them to remember what He had told them - to remember His Story.

But by now, it had been a long time since God had talked to His people. From the time that the last prophet of God had spoken until now, more than four hundred years had passed. Some people had remembered God’s story and were waiting for the Promised One from God. Others forgot about God. They lived their own way. They didn’t give good gifts to God. But even in their disobedience, God was ready to give them His very best Gift!

READ: Luke 1:26 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

Nazareth. What in the world could God want with the small, farming village of Nazareth? And why would He be sending His chief messenger, the angel Gabriel, there? Well, God had promised that the people would be blessed “by way of Galilee!” What kind of blessing or gift did God have in mind?

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to Galilee to a virgin girl, named Mary. Mary was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. They were not married yet, but they were promised to each other; so they didn’t date other people. They didn’t live together yet, either. The angel Gabriel came in and said, “Hello! The Lord is with you and wants to bless you. Do not be afraid. God wants to do something amazing for you and through you. You are going to have a baby! You will name him Jesus. He will be the forever king promised to your ancestor King David so long ago.”

But Mary wasn't sure how all of this could happen. "How can I have a baby," she asked Gabriel, "if I'm still a virgin?" Gabriel explained that God's Holy Spirit would form a baby inside of her body. The baby would be God's son. "Nothing is impossible with God," Gabriel added. Mary would need to remember those words.

No virgin had ever become pregnant before, so when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was upset. Joseph must have thought that Mary had been seeing someone else. Joseph was a good man, though. He no longer wanted to marry Mary, but he didn't want to embarrass her either, even though the law said he could. Joseph planned to send Mary away secretly. God had other plans, though. God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream. The angel told Joseph, "Don't be afraid to marry Mary. The Child that is growing inside of her is from God. She is going to have a Son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins." When Joseph woke up, he did exactly what the angel of God told him to do. Joseph married Mary.

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

God's story tells us that all of this happened to fulfill, or complete, a promise that God made. God had already said that one day a virgin would get pregnant. She would have a son and the son would be called Immanuel. But weren't Mary and Joseph supposed to name their son Jesus? (Yes, they were.) But the name Immanuel means "God with us." Do you remember our very first story? Who was in the beginning? (God.) Who was with God? Who was the same as God? John 1:1 tells us that Jesus was in the beginning with God. It also tells us that Jesus is God. That is why Jesus can also be called Immanuel. Jesus would be "God with us."

Who can tell me why Mary and Joseph were to call the Child Jesus? (Because He would save his people from their sins.) The name Jesus means "God Saves." What could we possibly need to be saved from? No one is chasing me. You are not drowning. What could it be, then? It's all a part of God's big plan. Because Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, you and I are born as sinners. Sinning is what we do and all of us do it! Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin up and take care of it on their own with fig leaves; that wasn't acceptable to the perfect, holy God who created them. But sin deserves the punishment of death. Animals died so that Adam and Eve could be clothed, but Adam and Eve began the process of dying. Our sin, like theirs, deserves to be punished by death. But God's big plan is that Jesus save us from those sins that we deserve to die for. When we accept this very good gift from God, He takes our sin away from us and clothes us, not with animal skins but with His perfect attitude and actions. If you have never trusted in Jesus, the One who can save you, will you do that right now? Talk with me.

If you have trusted Jesus and you follow Him, have you found that the perfect attitudes and actions God "clothed" you with are a little stained and torn? That's because even after we come to know Jesus, we get to choose whether or not we will obey Him. Disobedience "stains" us. But God offers forgiveness. He would like to take your sins away. Just tell Him what you have done; He already knows anyway. And God will clean you up like new!

**Planning for Next Week
Lesson 27 • John is Born
Luke 1:1-25, 57-80**

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: "O, How I Love Jesus"

SHARE: After the temple and the wall were repaired God continued to talk to His people. But one day, God stopped sending messages by his messengers, the prophets. Four hundred years passed without a word. Can you imagine even going four days without talking to someone like your mom or dad?

God ended the silence by sending an angel. The angel's name was Gabriel. God sent him to Galilee to a girl named Mary. Mary was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. They were not married yet, but they were promised to each other, so they didn't date other people. But they didn't live together yet, either.

The angel Gabriel came in and said, "Hello! God is with you. Do not be afraid. God wants to do something amazing. You are going to have a baby! You will name him Jesus. He will be the forever king promised to King David so long ago. God's Holy Spirit will form a baby inside of your body. The baby will be God's son. Nothing is impossible with God."

When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was upset. Joseph must have thought that Mary had been seeing someone else. Joseph was a good man, though. He didn't want to marry Mary anymore, but he didn't want to embarrass her either, even though the law said he could. Joseph planned to send Mary away secretly.

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God was ready to give us His very best Gift!

PRAY: Thank you, God, for giving good gifts!

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Cover small boxes (like a tissue box or smaller) with Christmas wrapping paper. Write a word or phrase from the memory verse on each box. Scramble the boxes together and practice the verse with your students as you order the boxes.
- Make paper plate angels.
- Make word puzzles from words like Nazareth, Galilee.
- Make word puzzles or activity pages using names and their meanings.
Jesus = God Saves
Immanuel = God with us
- God had promised King David that someone from his family would be king forever. God was talking about Jesus. Use the genealogical information from Matthew 1:1-17 and create a family tree for Jesus.
- Sing Christmas carols.
- Play Bible Promises Bingo. Prepare Bingo Cards by placing pictures where numbers usually are. The pictures should represent stories from the Old Testament that point to Jesus. Examples include a fruit tree and snake for the first promise, a crown for King David, a ram for Abraham and Isaac, etc.
- For adults or older students: Take another look at the Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled at the announcement of Jesus' birth, particularly Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:1-6.