



Say Yes to God

Goal: Help children name ways they can say yes to God.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 1:26–38

It had to have been overwhelming for young Mary to be visited by the angel Gabriel and be told she would “bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (v. 31). Jesus will be “the Son of the Most High” (v. 32) who will “reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (v. 33). That had to have been a lot of news to take in.

Naturally, Mary wondered how this could happen, given the impossibility of her circumstances—she was a virgin and unmarried. Astounding! The angel answered her question. So Mary responded in obedience: “Let it be with me according to your word” (v. 38). Mary said yes to God.

God graciously chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus the Messiah. She acknowledged that grace by saying yes to God, in obedience to God’s word. Mary is a model for us. We can respond to God’s grace by saying yes. As Mary did, we express God’s great goodness to us with praise and gratefully obey God’s word and will for our lives. We say, with Mary, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord” (v. 38).

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

This story is most likely not in your children’s experience; however, they may have been asked to do a great task and had uncertainty. Much like Jeremiah, the young prophet, who questioned his abilities and how he would accomplish the task, Mary wonders what this announcement means and how it can come to be. God reassures. The angel Gabriel gives her an answer: God will be with you.

Mary said yes to God. She also said yes to God with her commitment to being the mother of the one to be called Son of the Most High, God’s Son. Like Mary, the children you are leading will be able to see the myriad ways they can respond to God when they are surrounded at home and in the faith community with people who both challenge them and support them.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Encourage each child to name one way he or she can say yes to God. Notice the gifts that are evident in the children’s lives, gifts that may be used to live in response to God’s grace. One child might be a good helper. Another might ask good questions. Another might be a good older sister or brother. Be particularly aware of those who live with special needs—physical, mental, or social. Some of the children may have no problem naming ways they can say yes to God. Others may not have that kind of confidence.

Dear God, help me say yes to you by serving your children in graceful and grateful ways. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 2, 16

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

Advent wreath, four
battery-operated
candles

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: age-
appropriate nativity set

choice 2: items a baby
needs, such as a bottle,
blanket, small toy or
rattle, diaper, onesie,
pacifier, and so forth;
items a baby does not
need, such as a fork,
large coat, can of soup,
keys, pen, mug, and so
forth

Exploring

choice 3: **SCM 22**

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the children arrive, prepare two boxes: one labeled “Yes!” and one labeled “No!” Obtain an Advent wreath and four candles to use in “Loving and Serving God” for this and the next two sessions.

Welcoming and Guided Play

B MS D VI T

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and joy to you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers whom you do not know. Be sure they know who will be caring for their children. Explain to the parents/caregivers that their children will hear a story about God’s grace through the angel’s message to Mary.

Introduce children to your helper or helpers. Invite them to look at the guided-play activities and encourage them to participate:

1. **Nativity Play**—Invite the children to play with an age-appropriate nativity set. Wonder together who the different characters are in the set.
2. **What a Baby Needs**—Place items on a table and invite children to sort the items into the labeled boxes. Explain that they are to decide which items a baby needs and which items a baby does not need. Engage in conversation with the children about their choices. This activity can be done with pictures or with toys. If you are using toys, gather a baby doll and some items that babies need, such as a bottle, toy, onesie, blanket, diaper, and so forth. Also gather some items that babies do not need, such as a key, fork, large coat, can of soup or vegetables, and so forth.
3. **Yes!**—Provide paper, markers, and crayons. Write the word “YES!” in large letters on a couple of sheets of paper and place them on the table. Invite the children to write the word “YES!” on a piece of paper and decorate it as they wish.



T *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing the refrain of “Mary Had a Baby”—**MM 9; SCM 16**. Encourage the children to sing along, repeating words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Let’s Get Ready

Remind the children what season it is (*Advent*) and that we are getting ready for Christmas. Chant the phrase “Let’s get ready, let’s get ready, Jesus is coming.” Clap or use a rhythm instrument to keep the beat. Invite the children to chant with you. Repeat the chant several times, starting soft and getting louder.

God’s Family

MS

Invite the children to follow the motions as you sing to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

God has a big family (*move arms in a wide circle*)
from Abraham to you and me. (*point out, then at self*)
All belong to God above. (*point up*)
All are joined by gracious love. (*hug self*)
Just like you and just like me, (*point out, then at self*)
God has a family. (*move arms in a wide circle*)



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

D M

Open the Bible to Luke 1 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a young woman named Mary. Mary had a visit from the angel Gabriel, who brought her a very special message.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Ask the children what Mary’s response to the angel’s message was. Read the story again, inviting the children to say, “Yes!” whenever they hear the name *Mary*.



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Yes or No? LD

Remind the children that Mary had a decision to make when the angel told her his news. She could say yes or no to God's question. Play a game where the children decide whether to say yes or no. Provide each child with a sheet of white paper and crayons. Write "YES" in large letters on a sheet of newsprint and invite the children to write "YES" on their papers. Then write "NO" on the newsprint. Have the children turn over their papers and write "NO" on the other side. Assist with writing as needed.

Tell the children that you will ask them questions, and they can decide if their answer is yes or no and hold up or turn over the side of the paper with their answer. Ask a series of questions such as:

- ▼ Are we at Sunday school?
- ▼ Is there a floor in this room?
- ▼ Do you like cookies?
- ▼ Do fish ride bicycles?
- ▼ Do you know how to fly?
- ▼ Do you go to school?
- ▼ Are you 10 feet tall?
- ▼ Do you want to help God?

Invite the children to come up with their own yes-and-no questions to ask the group.

2. Saying Yes! MS A T

Tell the children that they are going to play a game. Invite them to sit in a circle on the floor. Explain that you will call a name. When they hear their name called, they say "YES!" and you will ask them to run, jump, wiggle, clap, dance, or any other action you think of. They are to do that action while changing places with you. Play the game until everyone has said "YES!" If time permits, let the children take turns leading the game.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, "After this we will be listening to music," allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



3. Saying Yes to God

MS A

Play “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 22**. Invite the children to listen to the song and think about how they can say yes to God with a happy and loving heart. Play it again, inviting the children to join in singing. Ask about specific things they can do with their families or at their school so they can be God’s helpers with a happy and loving heart. Affirm that their actions are saying yes to God.

Sing the song again.

Invite the children to look around to see something they could do to help in their room. The children may see blocks that need to be straightened or books or art supplies that need to be put away. You could point out shelves that need dusting or tables that need wiping.

Play the song as the children carry out their ideas for helping in the room. Commend the children for helping and let them know that helping is one of the ways they can say yes to God.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did the angel think of the news he had to deliver?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Mary feel when the angel appeared?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How did Mary feel when she heard what the angel told her?”

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Encourage each child to put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time.

Wonder if the children remember what this time of the church year is called (*Advent*). Display the Advent wreath with four candles. Count the candles. Ask the children how many Sundays are in Advent (*four*). Turn on the first and second candles. Remind the children that Advent is a time of preparing and waiting for the birthday of Jesus.

Say the litany on the next page, and ask the children to respond with “Thank you, God”:



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

Thank you, God, for all the good things that you have given us.

Thank you, God.

Thank you, God, for Mary and her willingness to say, "Yes!"

Thank you, God.

Thank you, God, for letting us be your helpers in this world too.

Thank you, God.

Amen.

As the children leave, bless each one: "(Name), say yes to God. Look for ways to thank God by helping your family and friends. The grace of God is with you."

Turn off the candles and save the Advent wreath for the next three sessions.

Say Yes to God



Mary says, "Yes!" to the message the angel delivered from God.

