



Say Yes to God

Goal: To name ways to 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, 15, 17

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

purple cloth

Advent wreath, candles

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Responding

Celebrating

internet-connected
device

Offering

copies of **GN 2**

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

B MS A

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

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the word “YES!” in a festive way.

Tell the children that this is the second Sunday of Advent. Invite the children to say what they know about the season of Advent. Remind them that Advent means *coming*. During Advent, we remember that Jesus came long ago and promised to come again.

Invite the children to transform the meeting space into a place for worship and to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and their pictures. Add an Advent wreath with candles. Follow the tradition of your congregation in selecting the number and color of the candles. You will turn on the candles at the end of the session.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing

MS

Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7**; **SCM 17**—celebrating God’s love and our response. If some of the children want to dance and move to music, they should feel free to do so. Then sit quietly for a moment, breathing deeply, inviting the children to do the same.

Praying

C LD

Invite the children to join an echo prayer. Perhaps a confident reader could lead the prayer today.

Holy God, /
you are good and great. /
You came to the world, /
full of grace and truth. /
We look forward to when you will come again. /
Amen. /



A *Adapt any activity to suit your children's needs. Ask yourself, "How can I change this activity so this child can do it?"*

Preparing to Hear the Story

B C MS

Tell the children that *grace* means that God accepts us and loves us just as we are. Suggest that one way we thank God for grace is by saying yes to God.

Wonder together some ways to say yes when God asks us to help. Invite the children to make a cheer, sing a song, shout "yes," quietly say a prayer, do a jumping jack, or use other ideas to respond.

Hearing the Story

B M

Open the Bible to Luke 1 so children know that the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, expressions, and gestures. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite two children to act out the story as you read **SCM 2** again or listen to the story audio. When Gabriel says that nothing is impossible for God, encourage the rest of the children to take a "YES!" picture from the worship space, hold it up, and cheer Mary on as she says yes to God.



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.

Reflecting on God's Grace

Tell the children that Mary told Gabriel she was willing to help God. She had not planned to be Jesus' mother, but she said, "I am ready to do whatever God wants me to do," meaning "Yes, I will help." Wonder together what it might mean that Mary said yes to God.

Singing

Sing "Listen to the Word That God Has Spoken"—**MM 5; SCM 15**. Repeat several times to become familiar with the words and tune. Then form two groups and sing the song as a round.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to one or more children to model and encourage appropriate responses.*



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Remind the children that Mary said yes to God when she was asked to do something that seemed pretty impossible. Wonder together what kinds of things God asks us to do that seem hard. Some suggestions might be to stand up for what we believe in, to be kind to someone who is not nice to us, to help others in need when it is inconvenient to us, and so forth. Form groups of two to four children, or work as a whole group. Invite each group to create a skit with a situation in which an angel, a messenger from God, comes with a request from God and their response. Allow some time for skit development. Then invite each group to share their skits with the rest of the children.



Celebrating God's Grace



Celebrate yes by recognizing that God is always there helping us to do whatever we are asked to do. Watch the YouTube video "Nothing Is Impossible Worship Dance m/v" (bit.ly/NothingIsImpossibleDance) one time to hear the song and see the dance. The chorus, verse, and bridge repeat. Play the video, pausing at 1:07 to learn the lyrics. Help the children learn the lyrics and dance moves by repeating each phrase. Continue playing as the lyrics and dance moves repeat. Encourage the children to sing and dance along with the video.

Wonder together how this song makes us feel when we believe God is with us. Ask the children if this song will help them say yes to God.

TD *Children with visual impairments may include those with poor vision and those who are blind. If you choose to show a video, describe actions with as much detail as possible. Use words such as straight, forward, left, and so forth in relation to the child's body orientation. Be as specific as possible with directions, avoiding vague descriptions such as "over there," "here," "this," and others.*

Offering God's Grace



Remind the children that Mary said yes to God. Tell them that they can say yes in many ways that please God. Suggest that saying yes to a parent or caregiver when asked to help is a way of honoring their parents and caregivers, or saying yes to being kind to someone who is difficult is a way of saying yes to God's call to love and care for others.

Hand out copies of GN 2 and invite the children to color and decorate the "Yes!" cards. Tell the children that they will make a "Yes!" coupon book to use and say yes. As they are working, explain that when a parent or caregiver asks them to do something, they can

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



take out their “Yes!” coupon book, tear out a card, and say, “Yes!” Ask the children for some examples of what they might be asked to do. Suggestions might be: take out the trash, play with a younger sibling, pick up their toys, and so forth.

Tell the children that they can also use their “Yes!” book as a way of making a commitment to follow God’s ways of living by tearing out a “Yes!” card and saying, “Yes! Today I will be kind,” or “Yes! Today I will tell the truth.” Ask the children for some other examples of how they can say yes to God.

After the children have decorated their cards, have them cut apart their cards and staple them together to make their “Yes!” coupon book.

GN 3 Solution:

Gabriel
Mary said yes to God.

Extra Activity



Hand out copies of **GN 3**. Give the children time to do the dot-to-dot puzzle.

Invite the children to use the key to find the name of the angel who brought Mary an important message from God.

Ask the children how Mary responded to the message. Have them use the key to find the answer. Discuss how they might answer God.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to clean the space and then gather in a circle. Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7; SCM 17**.

Remind the children that today is the second Sunday of Advent. For each week until Christmas, you will light one more candle that helps us prepare for Jesus.

- ▼ Turn on the first Advent candle and say, “The first candle of Advent reminds us of Isaiah, who imagined a peaceful world.”
- ▼ Turn on the second candle and say, “The second candle of Advent reminds us of Mary, who said yes to God.”

Invite the children to think of and name one way they can say yes to God this week.

Pray:

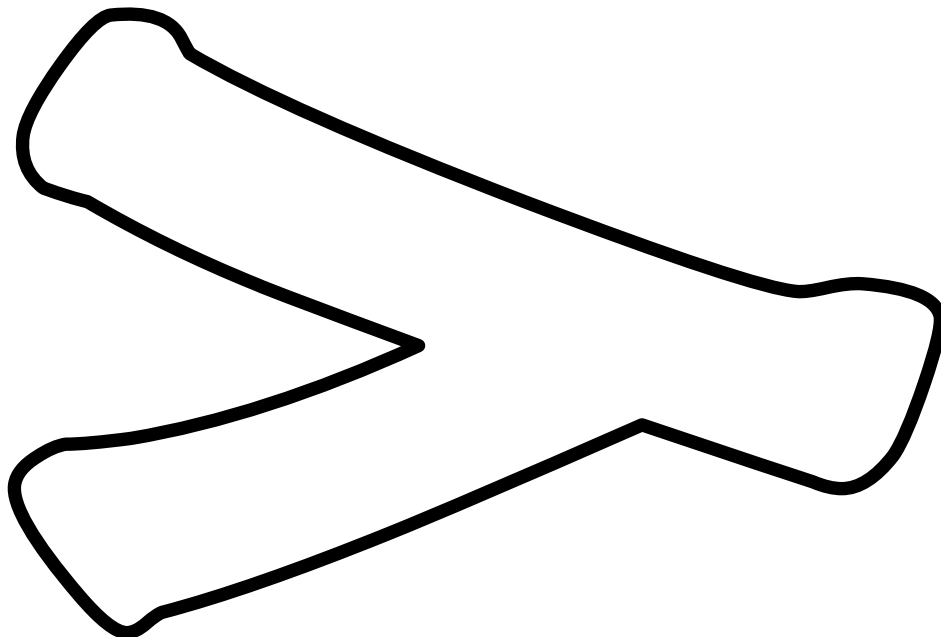
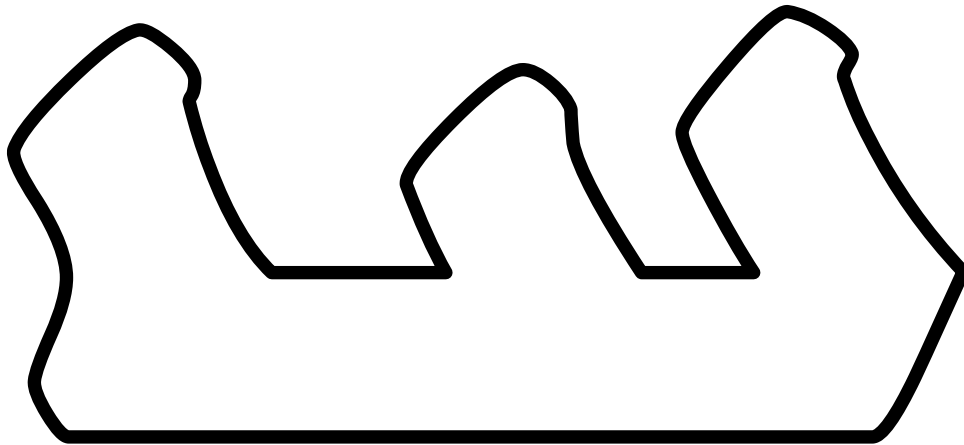
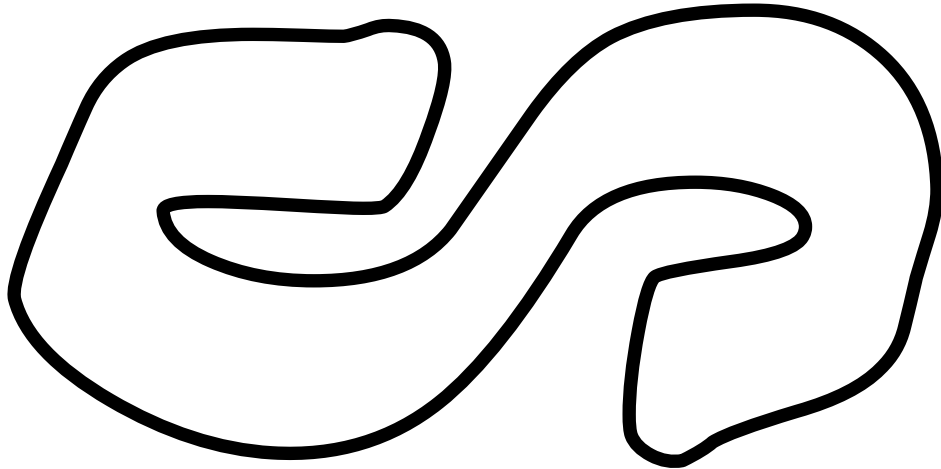
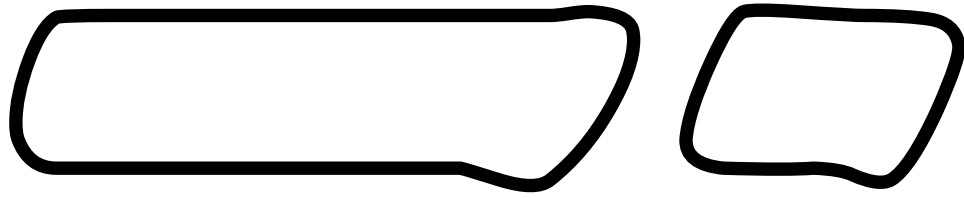
Dear God, give us the courage to say yes like Mary, even when we don’t know what that *yes* might mean. We know that you will be with us every step of the way. Amen.

Turn off the candles.

Send each child with a blessing, saying, “(Name), go in God’s grace and say yes!”



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).



YES!

YES!

YES!

YES!

YES!

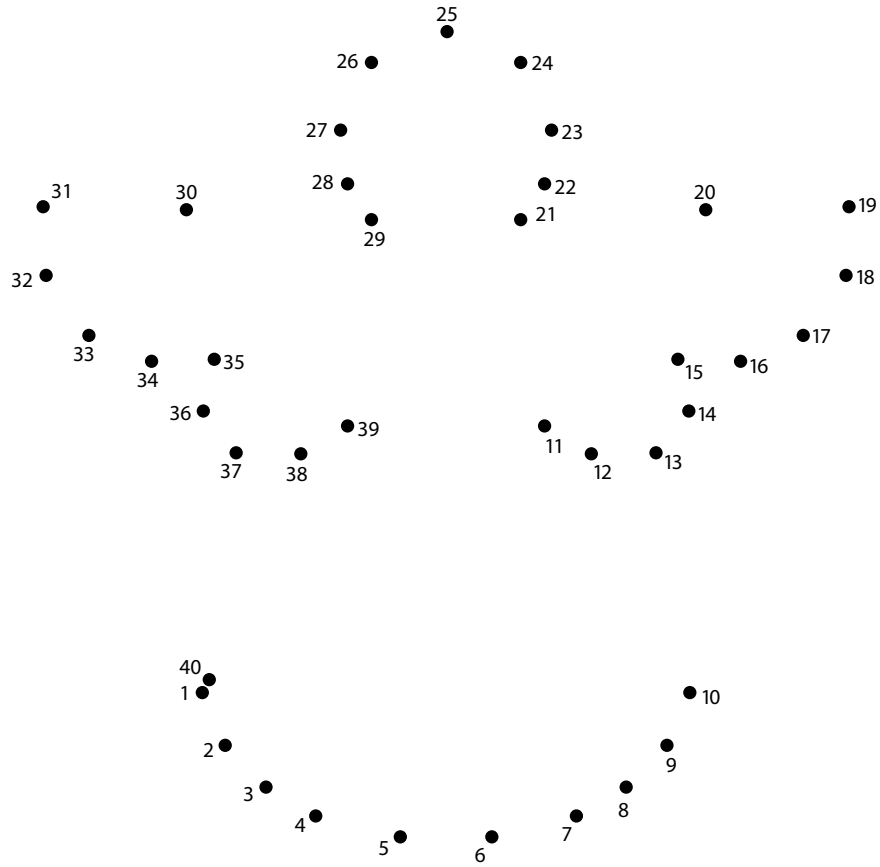
YES!

YES!















YES!

YES!

YES!



key

						
A	B	D	E	G	I	K
						
L	M	O	R	S	T	Y

