

# Explore It

## FOR LEADERS



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### AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

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#### Luke 1:5-20 Zechariah and Elizabeth

In today's story we start to discover God's amazing answer to Elizabeth and Zechariah's prayer. They desperately wanted a child and God promised they would give birth to a boy who would play a special part in the life of Jesus. We will also start to learn our memory verse for this month, found way back in the Old Testament in the book of Isaiah. God made a promise to his people that he would send a Messiah, and today we start discovering more about how that promise was fulfilled.

Each child will need:

- Memory verse wristbands
- Memory verse picture
- Pens/pencils and paper

You will need:

- Christmas Charades clues folded up and placed in a container – see Start It section
- Large copy of the memory verse to display

## Start It

● **Say:** In our Bible story today the main character is silenced by God – more on that later! So, we are going to play a game where you are not allowed to speak. We are going to play Christmas Charades.

Divide the group into two teams and let the children take turns acting out the Christmas clue for the rest of the team to guess. Keep a tally of the scores and see which team can guess the most Christmas words. You could either swap between teams each time or give them a certain amount of time to complete as many clues as possible.

Write a selection of Christmas-themed clues (examples below) prior to the session, fold them up and put them in a container.

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| → Baby Jesus                     | → The Nightmare Before Christmas  |
| → Angel Gabriel                  | → Hark! the Herald Angels Sing    |
| → Three Wise Men Shepherd        | → All I want for Christmas is you |
| → Father Christmas               | → Ebenezer Scrooge                |
| → Elves                          | → How the Grinch Stole Christmas  |
| → Frosty the Snowman             | → Arthur Christmas                |
| → Silent Night                   | → Polar Express                   |
| → Deck the Halls                 | → Home Alone                      |
| → Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer |                                   |

## Sing It

● **Say:** Our memory verse for this month comes from the Old Testament. It lets us know that the people had been waiting a long time for Jesus to be born.

Display the memory verse in the room where you meet, so that the children can regularly refer to it as they learn the words. Give each member of the group a memory verse wrist band.

**Read:**

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

🗨️ **Say:** Over the coming months we will aim to learn Isaiah 9:6 from memory. Today's song will help you get started.

'Isaiah 9:6' memory verse song by Quest-Nairobi Chapel (1 min 10 secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ2HS5zElo4>

## Tell It

🗨️ **Say:** In Isaiah 9:6 we discover that the people had been waiting a very long time for their Messiah to arrive. The Christmas story tells of the birth of Jesus and how God answered the prayers of his people. We usually start telling the Christmas story by hearing about the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, but today we are going to go a bit further back and meet some people who played an important part in the story of Jesus. Their names are Zechariah and Elizabeth.

**Ask:** What do you already know about Zechariah and Elizabeth?

## Video

🗨️ **Say:** Let's watch a clip which sums up the story, and then we will look at the first part of the story in more detail.

*Zechariah and Elizabeth* by Faith Kids Video (1 min 42 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFHOiI6Vf0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFHOiI6Vf0)

🗨️ **Say:** Now that we have an overview of the story, let's look in the book of Luke in the New Testament, to find out more.

**Read:**

**'During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. Zechariah's wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby and both of them were very old.'**

— (Luke 1:5-7 *ICB*)

**Ask:**

- ➔ What do we find out about Zechariah in these first few verses?
- ➔ Zechariah and Elizabeth were very old. What do you think the chances were of them being able to have a baby?

**Read:**

**'Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. According to the custom of the priests, he was chosen to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. There were a great many people outside praying at the time the incense was offered. Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. When he saw the angel, Zechariah was confused and frightened.'**

— (Luke 5:8-12 *ICB*)

🗨️ **Say:** There were around 18,000 priests in Jerusalem at the time and only 14 were chosen each year to burn incense in the Temple.

**Ask:** How do you think Zechariah felt about being chosen to burn incense in the Temple?

🗨️ **Say:** This would have been a very special day for Zechariah. He had been looking forward to it since he became a priest.

**Ask:** Do you understand Zechariah's reaction to seeing the angel? If so, why?

How do you think you would have reacted if you had been there?

**Read:**

**'But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. He himself will go first before the Lord. John will be powerful in spirit like Elijah. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those who are not obeying God back to the right way of thinking. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord."'**

— (Luke 5:13-17 *ICB*)

🗨️ **Say:** The angel told Zechariah that his prayers had finally been answered and that his wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to a son. The angel told Zechariah to name the baby John.

**Ask:** What have we discovered about John so far?

**Read:**

**'Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that what you say is true? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too."'**

**'The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God. God sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. Now, listen! You will not be able to talk until the day these things happen. You will lose your speech because you did not believe what I told you. But these things will really happen."'**

— (Luke 1:18-20 *ICB*)

**Ask:**

➔ Why did God remove Zechariah's ability to speak?

➔ Why do we sometimes find it difficult to believe that God can answer our prayers?

🗨️ **Say:** The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth reminds us that God answers prayer.

## Action It

🗨️ **Say:** Just as God promised Zechariah that he and his wife would have a son, so our Bible verse for this month reminds us of God's promise to his people.

Let's read the memory verse together.

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

## Memory verse picture

Give each child a copy of the memory verse handout for this month. Discuss with the children what the verse means and clarify any words they are unsure about.

Explain to the children that they are going to create pictures around the text to help them remember the memory verse. They need to use their imagination and lots of colour as this will help them to remember each part of the verse. If you have time within the session, you may also choose to create some actions to go with the verse to help the children to remember it.

Once the children have created their picture of the verse, read the verse together. Encourage the children to try and remember the verse without looking at the sheet.

## Pray It

● **Say:** Zechariah had a lot of time to be quiet and listen to God's voice. Sometimes it is important for us to take time to be quiet, especially when we live in such a noisy world.

### Ask:

→ Do you ever feel like you need peace and quiet?

→ How do you find it?

● **Say:** Finding time to be quiet and spend time with God is really important if we want to have a close relationship with him. Rather than punishing Zechariah, God was giving him time to listen and be quiet.

● **Say:** We are going to have a time of peace and quiet together, where we can pray to God and listen to what he has to say to us. Find a space in the room and make yourself comfortable. As the gentle music plays, spend time with your eyes closed, relaxing in God's presence.

## Listen

'What child is this' (piano & electric cello) by The Piano Guys (3 mins)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ\\_o85Byb-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_o85Byb-g)

When the music is finished, bring the quiet prayer time to a close with a prayer for the whole group.

## Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

# Explore It

## IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT  
SESSION 01

### AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

 Luke 1:5-20 Zechariah and Elizabeth

## FOR ME

## TOGETHER



### Remember

Our memory verse for this month reminds us of the promise God made to the people way back in the Old Testament. Read through the memory verse out loud. Perhaps you can add some actions as you read. Have a look at the memory pictures you created in this week's session and start learning the verse for this month.



### Share

There may be children at your school who don't know the real story of Christmas. Share this clip with them and let them know what Christmas is all about. It's not about presents, Father Christmas, or gifts under the tree. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus.

*The Mystery of Christmas* by Hillsong Kids  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz4TYe0NYv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz4TYe0NYv4)



### Song for the week

'Isaiah 9:6' memory verse song by Quest-Nairobi Chapel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ2HS5zEIo4>



### Memory verse

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

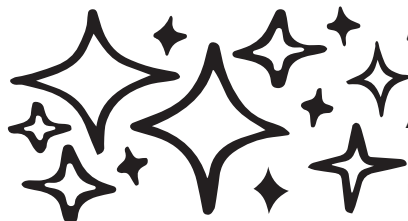
— (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

### KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

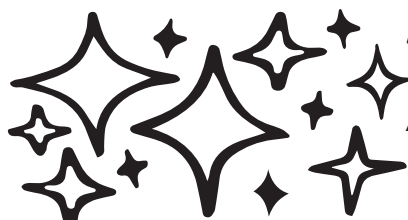
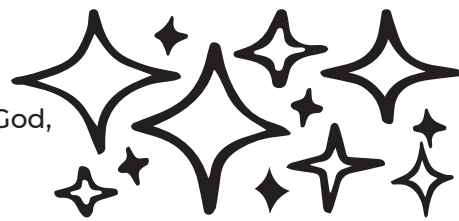
<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

*Kids Alive!* The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!

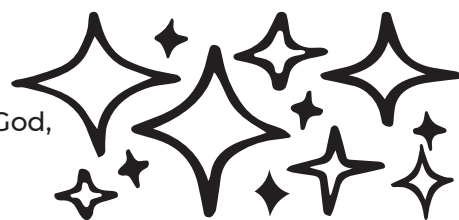




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to us a son is given,  
and the government will  
be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.'

Isaiah 9:6



# Explore It

## FOR LEADERS



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### GOD CAN DO EVERYTHING

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**📖 Luke 1:26-38; Luke 1:57-66 The virgin Mary**

In today's session we meet the angel Gabriel again as he visits Mary and shares the good news that she is going to give birth to Jesus, the son of God. When Mary questions how this could happen, the angel says, 'God can do everything!' (v37). We will also follow the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth and see how their obedience to God prepared the way for Jesus.

Each child will need:

➔ Paper plate, craft items to decorate, scissors, Christmas wrapping ribbon, sticky tape, glue, pens/pencils – see Action It section

You will need:

➔ Headphones (not ear buds), something to play music on, a playlist or CD of familiar Christmas songs – see Start It section

## Start It

Play a game of Guess the Christmas Song. One child wears the headphones and listens to a Christmas song. They then hum the tune out loud for the rest of the group to guess. Once the song is guessed, a different child wears the headphones for another song.

This video might help you with the playlist. There are 21 song snippets – though they are very short!

*Christmas song quiz* by Love to Sing (4 mins 22 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eaP\\_p\\_Gspk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eaP_p_Gspk)

## Sing It

● **Say:** In today's story the angel Gabriel visits Mary and says, 'God can do everything!' Our song for today talks about God's ability to do anything. At the start of the clip there's a chance to learn the actions, and you will need a partner.

'God can do anything' (including how-to actions) by Duggie Dug Dug (3 mins 20 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwYJ-HHa3AO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwYJ-HHa3AO)

## Tell It

● **Say:** Last week we met two important characters who struggled to believe that God could answer their prayer.

**Ask:** What were their names and what do you remember about them?

● **Say:** Elizabeth and Zechariah had prayed for a baby for a very long time. When Zechariah was burning incense in the Temple, an angel appeared and told him that Elizabeth would give birth to a son. Zechariah struggled to believe it could ever happen.

**Ask:** What happened next?

- 🗨️ **Say:** Zechariah spent the whole of Elizabeth's pregnancy in silence, as he could not say a word.
- 🗨️ **Say:** Today we will find out what happened when the same angel came to visit a young girl named Mary. The angel shared the good news about Elizabeth's baby, but he also had some news for Mary.

## Video

*Gabriel visits Mary* by Superbook (1 min 8 secs)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1OLLwtCqtM>

### Ask:

- ➔ What was the angel's news for Mary?
- ➔ What did we discover about Jesus from the angel Gabriel?

- 🗨️ **Say:** Mary responded to the angel saying, 'I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!' (v38)

**Ask:** Do you think Mary's willingness to follow God's plan was brave? If so, why?

- 🗨️ **Say:** Mary was willing to say yes to God and follow his plan for her life. As we continue through the story in the book of Luke, we find out that Elizabeth and Zechariah also carefully followed what God asked them to do.

### Read:

**'When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth, she had a boy. Her neighbours and relatives heard how good the Lord was to her, and they rejoiced.**

**'When the baby was eight days old, they came to circumcise him. They wanted to name him Zechariah because this was his father's name. But his mother said, "No! He will be named John."**

**'The people said to Elizabeth, "But no one in your family has this name!" Then they made signs to his father, "What would you like to name him?"**

**'Zechariah asked for something to write on. Then he wrote, "His name is John."**

**'Everyone was surprised. Then Zechariah could talk again. He began to praise God. And all their neighbours became alarmed. In all the mountains of Judea people continued talking about all these things. The people who heard about these things wondered about them. They thought, "What will this child be?" They said this because the Lord was with him.'**

— (Luke 1:57-66 *ICB*)

**Ask:** At what point was Zechariah able to start talking again?

- 🗨️ **Say:** Elizabeth and Zechariah followed what God had asked them to do and named their baby boy John. Let's find out more about John and the special role he had in the life of Jesus.

## Video

*God's Story: John the Baptist* by Crossroads Kids' Club (4 mins 4 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NMHOLPWeTM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NMHOLPWeTM)

- 🗨️ **Say:** John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus and let people know that the Messiah was coming. At the start of the clip, we saw the prophet Isaiah sharing good news about a coming Messiah. Our memory verse reminds us of that good news. See if you can remember the memory verse and let's say it together.

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

**And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

## Action It

● **Say:** The angel Gabriel came to visit Zechariah and Mary and promised them that something amazing was going to happen.

### Paper plate angel

● **Say:** Today we are going to make a Christmas angel decoration for you to hang up at home as a reminder that 'God can do everything!' (Luke 1:37)

Demonstrate how to make an angel out of a paper plate. Here is one method:

*Paper plate angel* (crafts for kids) by Variety of Ruth Roongtawan (1 min 17 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_pX8iFJcyQA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pX8iFJcyQA)

On the angel write 'God can do everything!' Children may also wish to decorate with more craft supplies and add a loop on the back from Christmas wrapping ribbon, so they can hang it up.

● **Say:** Mary, Zechariah and Elizabeth followed God's lead and believed that he could do amazing things in their lives. Every time you see the angel, let it remind you that God can do amazing things in your life as well.

## Pray It

● **Say:** Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for a baby and eventually their prayer was answered. It took a long time for the answer to come, and it was understandable that Zechariah was so surprised when it did.

### Ask:

- ➔ When you pray, do you believe that God will answer?
- ➔ Is there anything that you have been praying for, for a long time? If you feel comfortable, then share it with the group.

Give the children an opportunity to share their prayer requests. Encourage them to pray for each other during the next week and, after you have reminded them of the message on their paper plate angels, bring the time of prayer to a close.

## Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

# Explore It

## IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT  
SESSION 02

### GOD CAN DO EVERYTHING

 Luke 1:26-38; Luke 1:57-66 The virgin Mary

## FOR ME

## TOGETHER



### Pray

In this week's session we shared some of the things we are currently praying for. Think carefully about the different members of your group and jot down their prayer requests. Spend time asking God to do amazing things in the lives of your friends. Read the verse on your paper plate angel and remember that 'God can do everything!' (Luke 1:37)



### Share

This week's song talked about God's ability to do anything at all. During the session you tried out the actions and had a go at learning the song. To do this you needed a partner!

Find someone at home to watch the video with you and see if you can learn the song together.



### Song for the week

'God can do anything' (including how-to actions) by Duggie Dug Dug  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwYJ-HHa3A0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwYJ-HHa3A0)



### Memory verse

'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
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And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'  
— (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

### KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

*Kids Alive!* The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!



# Explore It

## FOR LEADERS



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### GOD WITH US

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#### Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25 The birth of Jesus

Joseph was uncertain about what the future would hold, but then the angel Gabriel came to visit him. He reassured Joseph that Mary's pregnancy was all part of God's plan. A baby boy would be born, and Joseph was to name him Immanuel which means 'God with us'. In today's session we will spend time discovering more about the Christmas story and rest in the knowledge that God is with us.

Each child will need:

- Resources to research the meaning of their own name – see Start It section
- Sticky notes and pens/pencils
- Resources to make and decorate a photo frame – see Action It section

You will need:

- To know the meaning and origin of your first name and tools to research the meaning of each child's name (optional) – see Start It section

## Start It

Be sensitive when discussing names and events from early childhood in case anyone is distressed with this topic.

#### **Ask:**

- Do you know how you got your name?
- Who chose it for you?
- Are you named after anyone?

Explain to the children where your name came from and anything special about your name. Discuss how names often have special meanings and tell them what your name means.

Give the group an opportunity to find out what their name means. If you have a group that meets regularly, then you may want to find out the meaning of their names in advance. If not, this could be done within the session. You may have a baby name book or you can use these links:

- [www.bounty.com/pregnancy-and-birth/baby-names](http://www.bounty.com/pregnancy-and-birth/baby-names)
- [www.behindthename.com/names/usage/english/2](http://www.behindthename.com/names/usage/english/2)
- [www.meaningofthename.com](http://www.meaningofthename.com)

Once the children know the meaning of their name, give them a sticky label and ask them to write their name and decorate the label in a way that reflects its meaning.

- 🗨 **Say:** Today we will continue our journey through the Christmas story and find out the special meaning of the name Immanuel, given to Jesus at his birth.

## Sing It

🗨️ **Say:** Today's story reminds us that God is always with us no matter what we face. Our song for today follows the same theme.

'God is with us' by UpStreet (3 mins 14 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=peaU-FiyJhA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peaU-FiyJhA)

## Tell It

🗨️ **Say:** In the last two sessions we met Elizabeth and Zechariah, an elderly couple who were blessed by God when the angel Gabriel told them they were going to have a baby boy.

### Ask:

- ➔ What was the name of their baby boy?
- ➔ Why was he so special?

🗨️ **Say:** John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus. Elizabeth and Zechariah were very excited about the news.

**Ask:** Who else did the angel Gabriel visit?

🗨️ **Say:** When the angel Gabriel told Mary she was going to have a baby, she was confused. She was engaged to Joseph and didn't understand how it could happen.

**Ask:** What did the angel say to her? We sang about it in last week's session.

🗨️ **Say:** The angel said that 'God can do everything!' (Luke 1:37)

🗨️ **Say:** Mary wasn't the only one unsure about what was going to happen. In Matthew 1:19-25 we discover that Mary's fiancé, Joseph, was also unsure about the future.

### Read:

**'Mary's husband [to be], Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to [break the engagement] to her secretly.'**

**'While Joseph thought about this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. You will name the son Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins."**

**'All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel." This name means "God is with us".'**

**'When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph married Mary.'**

— (Matthew 1:19-24 ICB)

### Ask:

- ➔ The angel told Joseph to name the baby Immanuel. What does the name Immanuel mean?
- ➔ Why was this the perfect name for the baby?
- ➔ What do you think happens next in the story?

🗨️ **Say:** Let's turn to the Gospel of Luke and find out if you're right.

### Read:

**'At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. This was the first registration taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.'**

— (Luke 2:1-3 ICB)

🗨️ **Say:** The Roman Government was very powerful, and if they told you to do something, then it was probably a good idea to do it.

## Video

🗣️ **Say:** Let's find out more about what it meant to take part in a Roman census.

*The Roman census* by Drive Thru History (stop the clip at 48 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlqWLTzH4Ik](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlqWLTzH4Ik)

**Ask:** What was the main reason that Rome gathered people together for a census?

🗣️ **Say:** Rome wasn't bothered if you were sick, old, very young or heavily pregnant like Mary. If they called a census, then everyone had to turn up.

**Read:**

**'So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.'**

— (Luke 2:4-7 *ICB*)

**Ask:**

➔ Why was it so difficult for Mary and Joseph to find somewhere to stay?

➔ Do you think that Mary and Joseph knew that God was with them as they cradled the baby Jesus? Explain your answer.

🗣️ **Say:** Try to imagine Mary looking down at her gorgeous new-born baby boy. All God's promises were wrapped up in her arms. God's promise from Isaiah 9:6 probably came to mind as she rocked the baby Jesus to sleep. Let's share it together.

Encourage the group to share the memory verse together.

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

## Action It

🗣️ **Say:** The Christmas story reminds us that God is with us all the time.

**Ask:**

➔ Can you think of a time when you have felt God with you or your family? If you feel comfortable, then share it with the rest of the group.

➔ Has there ever been a time where you felt that God wasn't with you?

🗣️ **Say:** It can sometimes feel like God is not with us, especially when we are going through a difficult time. Matthew 1:23 reminds us that even though we may feel like we are on our own, we can't always trust our feelings. God is always with us, no matter what the circumstances.

## Photo frame

Today we are going to make a photo frame to remind us of God's presence. One of your activities to complete at home is to find a picture to put in the frame. The picture could be of your friends, your family, or even just a picture of you. Each time you look at it you will be reminded that God is with you. You could even give your photo frame as a gift to someone this Christmas.

Provide resources for the children to make and decorate a photo frame. Suggestions for making the frame are listed below, but the decoration needs to include the words of Matthew 1:23, 'God is with us'.

- ➔ Purchase a 'frame' from [www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk)
- ➔ *Easy DIY photo frame making with popsicle or ice cream sticks photo frame* by Aloha crafts  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPS6KxHukSk>
- ➔ *DIY mini paper photo frame / how to make easy paper photo frame / paper crafts easy / paper craft* by World of Art and Craft  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4gi-DaoW0E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4gi-DaoW0E)
- ➔ *#Super Easy Paper#PhotoFrame#craftidea for kids #DIY Paper photo frames#PictureFrame#art&craft* – by Mana creative corner  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOKAqrTsRnw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOKAqrTsRnw)

## Pray It

- 🗨 **Say:** We face lots of challenges in our world today and sometimes it can all feel a little overwhelming. The Christmas story reminds us that God sent his only son to earth to be with us.

### Video

- 🗨 **Say:** We're going to listen to some music and watch a clip that tells us of the hope we find in Jesus.

'For God is with us' by For King + Country (3 mins 19 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MpafMvws\\_0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MpafMvws_0)

- 🗨 **Say:**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for showing your love for us by sending your son. Today you have reminded us that even though the world may seem a scary place at times, you are always with us. We can always find our hope in you. Help us to remember you are with us, not just at Christmas, but always.

Amen.

## Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.



# Explore It

## IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT  
SESSION 03

GOD WITH US

 Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25 The birth of Jesus

## FOR ME

## TOGETHER



### Create

Find, or take a picture, to put in your 'God with us' photo frame. Display it at home or decide who you are going to give it to as a Christmas gift.



### Watch

Snuggle up on the settee with someone at home and enjoy the Christmas story retold by children.

*Christmas according to kids* by Southland Christian Church

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA)



### Song for the week

'God is with us' by UpStreet

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=peaU-FiyJhA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peaU-FiyJhA)



### Memory verse

'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

— (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

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# Explore It

## FOR LEADERS



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### SPECIAL VISITORS

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#### Luke 2:8-20 Some shepherds hear about Jesus

Today's session is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. As well as exploring the story of the special visitors invited to meet Jesus, there will be an opportunity for the children to get into the party spirit. You may want to turn the whole session into a Christmas celebration. We are all invited to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Each child will need:

→ Pens/pencils and paper

You will need:

→ Party decorations, party food, resources for party games (optional) – see Action It section

## Start It

● **Say:** Imagine you were asked to organise a special Christmas celebration.

Questions are provided below, but the main aim of the activity is to get the children to imagine the Christmas celebration they would create if they had the chance.

### Discuss:

→ Who would you invite?

→ What would the party invitations look like?

→ Where would it be?

→ What would you eat?

→ What kind of event would it be?

→ Celebrity parties often have a VIP section for very important guests. If your celebration had one of these, then who would you allow in there?

● **Say:** Christmas is a time of celebration, and this was exactly the same on the very first Christmas. Later we'll find out who got the first invitation to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

## Sing It

● **Say:** You'll probably know our song for this week, so sing along as we join the celebration!

'Come and join the celebration' by Scampton church (1 min 53 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqG5M76tFE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqG5M76tFE)

## Tell It

**Ask:** In our last session we looked at the meaning of the name Immanuel. What did it mean?

● **Say:** The message 'God with us' carries on into the next part of our story. God sent Jesus for everyone, not just the very important people in this world. He showed his love for everyone by inviting some very special people to meet Jesus.

## Video

*The story of Christmas (Jesus and the shepherds)* by Saddleback Kids (2 mins 25 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJIC57EvYFo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJIC57EvYFo)

**Ask:** Who were the first special visitors who came to see Jesus?

🗨 **Say:** You may have thought that the birth of such a special baby boy would have brought the VIPs in the area to visit. But instead, the angels called on the shepherds to visit Jesus.

**Ask:**

- ➔ It says in the Bible that the angels sang to the shepherds. If you were in charge of the angel choir, then what song would you ask them to sing to the shepherds?
- ➔ Can you think of a well-known Christmas carol that is all about the angels singing to the shepherds?

## Video

🗨 **Say:** As we get ready to celebrate together, we can dance and sing along to the song 'Hark! the herald angels sing'.

You can use this music to transition the children to the celebration part of the session.

'Hark! the herald (Sing out loud)' by The Spirituals Choir (5 mins 55 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmtKIOB-0-I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmtKIOB-0-I)

## Action It

Spend time as a group celebrating the birth of Jesus. Here are some ideas:

- ➔ Do a Christmas Praise Dance Party!  
*Dance party – Christmas themed* by TGIF Dance Party (9 mins 40 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXOg3UDX9C4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXOg3UDX9C4)
- ➔ Play some Christmas games. (Game number four, Nighty Night Sheep, fits with today's theme.)  
[www.biblegamescentral.com/the-story-of-christmas-minute-to-win-it-games](http://www.biblegamescentral.com/the-story-of-christmas-minute-to-win-it-games)
- ➔ Make some sheep cupcakes. You can bake from scratch or use plain shop-bought ones to decorate and to eat at the party. You may wish to add a bit of Christmas cheer to the decorations.  
[www.preppykitchen.com/sheep-cupcakes](http://www.preppykitchen.com/sheep-cupcakes)

## Video

To bring the time of celebration to a close, and to prepare the children for the prayer time, watch the clip that reminds us that God chose the humble shepherds to meet Jesus.

'He chose the shepherds' by Friends and Heroes (3 mins 25 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=McaMIYMXOyE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McaMIYMXOyE)

## Pray It

- 🗨 **Say:** At the end of the clip we saw Jesus as a grown man meeting the disciples after his resurrection. Jesus may have come to us as a baby boy, but he grew to be a man who showed his love to all people. God chose the shepherds as the first people to meet Jesus in order to show us that God's love is for everyone.
- 🗨 **Say:** To bring our time of celebration to a close, we are going to share our memory verse together. With big loud voices we are going to celebrate the special gift of Jesus.

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**  
— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

## *Explore It*

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

# Explore It

## IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT  
SESSION 04

### SPECIAL VISITORS

 Luke 2:8-20 Some shepherds hear about Jesus

## FOR ME

## TOGETHER



### Sing

Listen to this song all about the Christmas Story and see if you can either learn the words or make up some actions to go along with the song.

*The very first Christmas* by LifeKids

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p6XEj9ITNk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p6XEj9ITNk)



### Rest

Christmas is often a very busy time where there are lots of distractions. It is important that during this time of celebration we take a moment to be with God and thank him for the gift of Jesus. Take some time over the Christmas season to listen to the song based around your memory verse and thank God for the gift of Jesus.

'Isaiah 9:6-7' (Lyric Video) by The Corner Room  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iniM-81Rfg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iniM-81Rfg)



### Song for the week

'Come and join the celebration' by Scampton church

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqG5M76tFE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMqG5M76tFE)



### Memory verse

'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

— (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

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# Explore It

## FOR LEADERS



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### A SPECIAL DAY FOR SIMEON AND ANNA

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#### Luke 2:25-38 Simeon sees Jesus

When Jesus was born, there was much celebration. Mary and Joseph went to the Temple to say thank you to God for the precious gift of their son. What they didn't realise was that there were two people waiting at the Temple desperate to meet Jesus. Simeon and Anna had waited for their special day to arrive for so long, and now it was here. In today's session, we join Simeon and Anna and give thanks for the gift of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Each child will need:

- A clean jam jar with a lid, pens/pencils, a sticky label or paper to make a label and sticky-backed plastic to fix it to the jar, craft resources or colourful stickers to decorate and small slips of paper – see Action It section
- Thank you prayer sheet

### Start It

- **Say:** At Christmas time lots of people gather to play games or try out a family quiz. To get your brains working today, we're going to have a go at the Beano Christmas Quiz.  
[www.beano.com/posts/the-ultimate-christmas-trivia-quiz](http://www.beano.com/posts/the-ultimate-christmas-trivia-quiz)

There are 30 questions, so you may like the group to work as a team to get as many right as they can.

### Sing It

- **Say:** In this session we are saying a big thank you to God for all the blessings we have in our lives. Today's song should get you thinking about all the things you can thank God for.

'I want to say thank you' by Orange Kids Music (3 mins 16 secs)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zs4A9UfT0Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zs4A9UfT0Q)

### Tell It

- **Say:** For many years God had promised his people that he would send a Messiah to save them. Way back in the book of Isaiah God promised that a baby boy would be born to save the people.

**Ask:** Can you remember where in the Bible this promise was made?

- **Say:** We read about the promise of Jesus in Isaiah 9:6. We have been learning this verse for the past month, so let's see if we can share it together.

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

— (Isaiah 9:6 *NIV*)

🗨️ **Say:** In our Bible story this week, we discover more about two people who had waited a really long time to meet Jesus, their Messiah.

## Video

*God's Story: Anna and Simeon* by Crossroads Kids' Club (3 mins 56 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=leN-xNrjbo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leN-xNrjbo)

## Discuss:

- ➔ What did the Holy Spirit tell Simeon?
- ➔ How do you think Simeon felt when he discovered he was going to meet Jesus?
- ➔ Why was this such a big deal?
- ➔ Simeon couldn't find out from the internet that Jesus had been born! So who told him?
- ➔ Where did Simeon go to meet Jesus?
- ➔ How do you think he felt when he saw Mary and Joseph arrive with Jesus?

🗨️ **Say:** Simeon was so excited to meet Jesus and was grateful to God for answering his prayer. He said:

**'Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant,  
die in peace as you said.  
I have seen your Salvation with my own eyes.  
You prepared him before all people.  
He is a light for the non-Jewish people to see.  
He will bring honour to your people, the Israelites.'**

— (Luke 2:29-32 *ICB*)

## Ask:

- ➔ Why do you think Simeon described Jesus as a light?
- ➔ Where have you heard Jesus described like this before?

🗨️ **Say:** Anna stayed at the Temple worshipping God and loved him with all her heart.

**Ask:** What did Anna do when she met Jesus?

🗨️ **Say:** Simeon and Anna were both filled with joy when they met Jesus. They realised they had so much to be thankful for.

## Action It

🗨️ **Say:** Think about everything that has happened over the past month. You may have had Christmas parties at school, or celebrations with friends and family. You may have even been privileged to receive some gifts this Christmas.

**Ask:** As you think of all these things, what are you thankful for?

🗨️ **Say:** Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to say thank you for their precious baby boy. Simeon and Anna waited in the Temple to see Jesus. Imagine how thankful they were when God answered their prayer.

## Ask:

- ➔ Are you good at remembering to say thank you?
- ➔ How about saying thank you to God?

## Thank you jar

● **Say:** Today we are going to create a thank you jar for you to use throughout 2023. Each time you have something to be thankful for, you can write it on a slip of paper and put it in the jar. At the end of the year you will be able to see how faithful God has been throughout 2023.

Ask the children to make a label to stick on the jar saying '(their name's) Thank You Jar 2023'. They could use a sticky label or sticky-backed plastic to fix their label to the jar. Provide the children with craft resources or colourful stickers to decorate their jar.

When the children have finished decorating their jar they could write some 'thank you's' on small slips of paper to pop into their jar.

● **Say:** We have so much to thank our Heavenly Father for. Let's make an effort during 2023 to remember to say thank you to God for all his blessings.

## Pray It

● **Say:** Today we have spent time giving thanks for the gift of Jesus, the Light of the World. We are going to bring our time together with a special prayer based around the words 'thank you'.

Give each child a copy of the 'thank you' prayer. Children may wish to colour in the first letter of each line, to highlight the words 'thank you'.

### Read:

**This Christmas we thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ.**

**Help us to share his message with the people we meet.**

**At home, school, or church, help us to remember to give thanks to you.**

**Never let us forget the precious gift you gave to each one of us.**

**Knowing how much you love us, let us show that love to others.**

**You are a faithful, loving God.**

**Our Explore It group will always remember to sing your praises.**

**Uncertainty is all around us, Lord, but we know that we are safe with you.**

**Amen.**

## Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.



# Explore It

## IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

ADVENT  
SESSION 05

### A SPECIAL DAY FOR SIMEON AND ANNA

 Luke 2:25-38 Simeon sees Jesus

## FOR ME

## TOGETHER



### Pray

In today's session you were given a copy of a prayer based around the words 'Thank you'. Choose your own word linked to Jesus and see if you can write your own acrostic prayer.



### Share

Show the people at home your 'Thank You' jar.

Is this something that you could do as a family? If the answer is yes, then start writing your 'thank you's' to God and fill up the jar throughout 2023.



### Song for the week

'I want to say thank you' by Orange Kids Music (3 mins 16 secs)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zs4A9Uft0Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zs4A9Uft0Q)



### Memory verse

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
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Help us to share his message with the people we meet.

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Uncertainty is all around us, Lord, but we know that we are safe with you.

Amen.

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