

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



HOW CAN I SHARE JOY WITH MY COMMUNITY THIS CHRISTMAS?

Luke 2:8-20 The shepherds and the angels

Each child will need:

- Colouring pens/pencils and paper
- The Nativity scene they have been making, specifically a shepherd figure
- Instruments, or other items, to make a loud joyful noise!
- You could ask everyone to come dressed as a shepherd

Start It

Ask the group members to go around their house and collect three items that start with the letters J, O and Y (one item for each letter). The first person back with all three items wins.

Ask any child who wishes, to share a funny joke or short story with the group.

Ask: Can you tell me about one piece of good news you have heard this week/month and how did you find out about it?

Allow time for response and discussion.

● **Say:** In this session we are going to read about another visit of an angel. We have talked about Mary and Joseph, who both received messages about the birth of Jesus through an angel. Who else do you know in the Christmas story who heard the good news about Jesus from an angel?

Allow time for response.

● **Say:** Yes, that's right - the shepherds. Let's read the story now...

Tell It

Read Luke 2:8-20.

You can also watch either of the following short videos that illustrate the story.

The Story of Christmas (Jesus and the Shepherds)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJIC57EvYFo>

The Shepherds meet the Angels (Illustrated)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdJE-B0h9_k

● **Say:** One minute the shepherds were terrified, the next they were full of joy! Can you show me those emotions?

Ask the group to show you the actions for being terrified or frightened, and then for being full of joy - loud cheering would be good! Practise these a few times.

Then quickly retell the story and ask the group to do the actions at the appropriate times.

🗨️ **Say:**

- ➔ The shepherds were watching their sheep.
- ➔ Suddenly an angel appeared to them and they were terrified. (*Frightened action*)
- ➔ The angel said, 'Don't be afraid. I've got some good news that will make you very happy! Today your Saviour was born.' (*Joy action / loud cheering*)
- ➔ Suddenly loads more angels appeared, praising God. (*Frightened action*)
- ➔ The shepherds hurried off and found the baby Jesus, just as the angel said they would. (*Loud cheering*)
- ➔ Although the shepherds were terrified (*frightened action*) at first, their fear turned to joy (*joy action / loud cheering*) as the angels announced Jesus' birth.
- ➔ First the shepherds ran to see the baby, then they spread the word.
- ➔ They had discovered a joy so wonderful that they couldn't help sharing it with everyone they met! (*Joy action / loud cheering*)

Ask: But - what was this news that was said to bring great joy?

Allow time for response.

🗨️ **Say:** Remember the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people' (Luke 2:10).

🗨️ **Say:** The good news was the news that Jesus was born. Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Saviour. The Jews had waited a long time for this news and for their saviour to come.

Choose from the following activities.

- ➔ Ask the children to say the angel's message in a way that we would speak today. For example - in the second video it says, 'Chill out - I've got a special message that I need you to share!' Have everyone in the group take it in turns to say their sentence.
- ➔ Get a message conversation going between the shepherds. Ask the children to type in messages using the chat function, as if they were one of the shepherds messaging each other. What would they be saying to each other?
- ➔ Write the angel's message in emojis.
- ➔ Use the colouring sheet Good News for Great Joy for the children to create their own poster.
<http://www.fabnfree.com/2012/12/12/free-nativity-coloring-page-coloring-activity-placemat>

🗨️ **Say:** The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people.' This verse sums up the message of the Christmas story - it's not just about a manger, some angels, shepherds and wise men - it's much, much bigger than that. It's when God sent his son as saviour to the world. This tiny helpless baby lived an amazing life; he died for us, went into Heaven and will come back to this earth as the King of kings. This is something to fill us with great joy!

Make up actions for the key words of Luke 2:10: 'afraid', 'good news', 'great joy' and 'all the people'. Then repeat the verse several times with the actions. You could try doing this with different parts of the group doing different actions to make it more of a challenge!

Sing It

Does your group know any funny versions of the carol 'While shepherds watched'? Have some fun singing them to each other!

Here are some examples:

'While shepherds washed their socks by night, while watching BBC, the angel of the Lord came down, and switched to ITV.'

'While shepherds washed their socks by night, all seated round the tub, the angel of the Lord came down and gave their socks a scrub.

And when their socks were squeaky clean and sparkling like a gem, the shepherds put them on again and walked to Bethlehem.

And when they got to Bethlehem all looking nice and neat, the Christ child said, "You've got nice socks, but next time wash your feet!"

For a fun worship song about the shepherds' amazing experience sing:

'Oh, What a Glorious Night' by Sidewalk Prophets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WTgFKHiZN4>

Action It

Part One

Allow the children some time to colour in the shepherd figure from the Nativity. As they colour you can discuss, or allow time for reflection, the following questions:

🗨 **Say:** Let's think about what it would have been like to have been one of those shepherds...

- ➔ If you had been a shepherd, would you have been frightened by the angel's message?
- ➔ Why do you think the angels sang?
- ➔ Why do you think the shepherds were selected to visit Jesus?
- ➔ How important are the shepherds to the story?
- ➔ If you were a shepherd, would you visit the baby Jesus?

Ask the children to place their shepherd figure in their Nativity scene.

Part Two

🗨 **Say:** The shepherds spread the joy of the good news to everyone they met. As it says in the lyrics of the song that we sang, 'The shepherds wondered; they couldn't hide it. Told everyone in sight. All were amazed when they heard how God came down on the glorious night.'

Ask: How do you feel when you think about God sending his son to earth? Does this make you feel happy, excited and joyful, just like the shepherds?

Allow time for response and discussion.

🗨 **Say:** God wants his good news message to go out to all people and for everyone to experience the real joy of Christmas. At the first Christmas it was the job of the angels and shepherds to tell people about Jesus... Whose job is it now? Ours!

Brainstorm some small practical ways that you could share joy in your community this Christmas. Maybe make a list together on the whiteboard. Here are some examples:

- ➔ When you are out walking or exercising, try to make eye contact and smile at everyone who you pass. Keep a count of how many people smile back and report back to the group next time.
- ➔ Paint some stones with joyful colours or messages, and then leave them around your community or in other people's gardens to make others smile.
- ➔ Create a window display for your house to spread joy to all those who walk past - for example with posters, toys, flowers, positive words/phrases. You could use sticky notes to spell out 'JOY'!
- ➔ Make a fun film to share on your social media (is there a community Facebook page you could share it on?). How about creating one of those group films where everyone passes around a paper ball, or dances to the same tune?
- ➔ Donate to a charity that is collecting items to give away to others at Christmas.
- ➔ Make and deliver 'joy bags' filled with Christmas treats.
- ➔ Sing some carols for your neighbours.

- ➔ Create a treasure hunt for your community. This could be a virtual treasure hunt using photos of Christmassy things in your area, or you could work with local shops to plan a treasure hunt for other children to take part in - for example, finding different pictures in shop windows.
- ➔ Could you come up with an idea that you could do together as a group?

Challenge group members to pick one of your ideas to put into practice over the next couple of weeks.

Pray It

- **Say:** 'Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others - the armies of heaven - praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."' (Luke 2:13-14 *NLT*)
- **Say:** It is unlikely that the 'armies of heaven' celebrated quietly... this was a celebration that would have been loud and proud - it scared the shepherds half to death!
- **Say:** Psalm 98 says 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise!' (Psalm 98:4 *KJV*)

Share screen Psalm 98:4-8 and read out loud all together and with as much noise as possible! Shout, clap, bang things, stamp your feet, play your trumpet - make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

'Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Burst into songs and praise.
Make music to the Lord with harps, with harps and the sound of singing.
Blow the trumpets and the sheep's horns.
Shout for joy to the Lord the King.
Let the sea and everything in it shout.
Let the world and everyone on it sing.
Let the rivers clap their hands.
Let the mountains sing together for joy.'
 (Psalm 98:4-8 *ICB*)

Explore It

Remember to send home the Explore It (For Me) and Explore It (Together) ideas for children and families.