

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



GOD WITH US

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
- www.behindthename.com/names/usage/english/2
- 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

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

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
- ➔ *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
- ➔ *#Super Easy Paper#PhotoFrame#craftidea for kids #DIY Paper photo frames#PictureFrame#art&craft* – by Mana creative corner
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

- 💬 **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.



GOD WITH US

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

FOR ME



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.

TOGETHER



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



Song for the week

'God is with us' by UpStreet

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)

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!

