

Sunday School Lesson: The Joyful News of Jesus' Coming!

Lesson Overview

Scripture: Luke 1:26-56

Theme: The coming of Jesus brings great joy to the world!

Key Verse: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47)

Key Verse: "For no word from God will ever fail." (Luke 1:37). My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, (Luke 1:46-47).

Opening Activity (5-10 minutes)

"Good News Celebration"

Ask students to share the best news they've ever received (a new sibling, a special gift, going on a trip, etc.). How did they react? Did they jump? Shout? Tell everyone?

Say: "Today we're going to learn about the BEST news the world has ever received—and see how people responded with incredible JOY!"

Game (5-10 minutes)

"Impossible Tasks"

Ask students to share something they once thought was impossible but later accomplished (learning to ride a bike, making a new friend, etc.). Discuss how we sometimes face things that seem impossible to us, but with help, they become possible.

Game: Kids will team up and stack solo cups to make a pyramid shape. The one rule is that they have to keep their dominant hand behind their back and take turns stacking. Oh, and they cannot talk to one another.

Have them share how difficult it was to learn to stack the cups as a team with one hand and without talking.

Bible Story Teaching (15-20 minutes)

Part 1: An Angel Brings Joyful News! (verses 26-38)

Tell the Story: Set the scene: A young woman named Mary living an ordinary life in a small town called Nazareth. She was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter, and was probably planning her upcoming wedding like any young bride would.

Then something extraordinary happened. God sent the angel Gabriel with a message that would change not just Mary's life, but all of human history. God had the most wonderful surprise for the whole world, and He chose Mary to hear it first! The angel Gabriel appeared with the most exciting announcement ever made.

Let's watch this short video:

Play Video 1: <https://youtu.be/-CA7nPE07Lg?si=fVZq6vfS1lh9-A8V>

Key Points to Emphasize:

- The angel's greeting: "Greetings, you who are highly favored!" (This was such a special greeting.)
- Mary's initial fear and confusion (verse 29)
- The angel's reassurance: "Do not be afraid"
- The amazing promise: she would be the mother of the Messiah. The joyful promise: A baby is coming who will be the Savior!
- Mary's honest question: "How will this be?" (showing it's okay to ask God questions)
- Mary's humble, trusting response: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

Discussion Question: How do you think Mary felt when the angel appeared? What would you have said? How do you think Mary felt after the angel left? Scared? Excited? Both?

Part 2: Joy Overflows! (verses 39-45)

Tell the Story:

Tell the Story: After the angel left, Mary didn't just sit at home. She was SO filled with joy and excitement that she couldn't keep it to herself! She hurried to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was also experiencing God's miracle—pregnant in her old age with the baby who would become John the Baptist. When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby inside her leapt for joy. Elizabeth blesses and affirms Mary. Mary's response is a beautiful song of praise. Let's watch this second video.

Video 2: <https://youtu.be/x1IxwnddeiA?si=7JCHd7tlnVyvFzY6>

Key Points:

- Mary's immediate action: she "got ready and hurried."(v.39) She couldn't wait to share her news.
- Elizabeth's Spirit-filled recognition of Mary and her unborn child
- The baby John leaping in Elizabeth's womb
- Elizabeth was FILLED with the Holy Spirit
- Elizabeth called Mary "blessed"—happy and favored
- Elizabeth's blessing and affirmation of Mary's faith

Discussion Question: Why do you think Mary went to Elizabeth? What do we learn about the importance of having people who encourage our faith? Count how many joyful reactions happen in these verses! Why do you think everyone was so happy?

Discussion:

Next we see Mary's response: Mary's response is sometimes called "The Magnificat." It's a beautiful song of praise that shows Mary knew the Scriptures and understood what God was doing. Mary was so full of joy that she burst into song! When we're really happy, sometimes we sing, don't we?

Key Themes in Mary's Song:

- Personal praise: God noticed her humble state
- God's character: mighty, holy, merciful
- God's justice: He lifts up the humble and brings down the proud
- God's faithfulness: He keeps His promises

Activity: Have children identify all the happy, praising words in Mary's song

- "My soul GLORIFIES the Lord" (celebrates!)
- "My spirit REJOICES" (is full of joy!)
- "The Mighty One has done GREAT THINGS for me"
- Her song is full of praise and happiness about what God is doing.

Application Points (Discuss 4-5 points)

1. God Can Do the Impossible

Nothing is too hard for God. What seemed impossible—a virgin having a baby who would be the Son of God—God accomplished. What seems impossible in your life?

2. God Values Humble, Willing Hearts

Mary wasn't royalty or famous. She was an ordinary young woman in a small town. But she had a heart willing to serve God. God can use anyone who says "yes" to Him.

3. It's Okay to Have Questions

Mary asked, "How will this be?" God doesn't punish honest questions. He welcomes them and provides answers.

4. Faith Often Requires Courage

Mary's "yes" to God was costly. People would question her character, her engagement to Joseph was at risk, and her life would be forever changed. Faith sometimes asks us to trust God even when it's hard.

5. Community Matters

Mary went to Elizabeth, and they encouraged each other. We need people in our lives who will support and strengthen our faith.

6. Jesus' Coming Is the Best News Ever!

The angel announced that Jesus was coming to save us. This is something to celebrate! Christmas isn't just a nice holiday—it's the most joyful event in history.

7. Joy Is Contagious!

Mary's joy spread to Elizabeth. Elizabeth's baby leaped with joy. When we're excited about Jesus, our joy spreads to others too!

8. Even Before Jesus Was Born, He Brought Joy

Jesus wasn't even born yet, but already people were celebrating! Just knowing He was coming filled people with happiness. We can have that same joy today knowing Jesus is with us.

9. We Can't Keep Good News to Ourselves

Mary hurried to share. Elizabeth shouted with a loud voice. When something makes us really happy, we want to tell everyone! Do we share our joy about Jesus with others?

10. Joy in Hard Times

Mary's situation wasn't easy, but she still rejoiced. Real joy in Jesus isn't based on everything being perfect—it's based on knowing God is good and faithful.

Activities (Choose based on age group and which ones speak to you)

For Younger Children:

- **Joy Jump:** Act out the baby John leaping for joy! Jump every time you hear the word "joy" or "rejoice"
- **Craft:** Make "Joy" bells or shakers to celebrate Jesus coming. PROVIDING Christmas bell Wreath Craft.
- **Action Song:** Create hand motions for "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices!"
- **Drawing:** Draw pictures of Mary and Elizabeth celebrating together

For Older Children/Teens:

- **Journaling:** Write about a time when God asked you to do something difficult or when you saw God do something impossible

- **Discussion:** What are the things in our world today that seem impossible but that we should pray for God to do?
- **Creative:** Rewrite Mary's song in modern language, focusing on what God has done in your own life
- **Joy Journal:** Write about what brings you joy about Jesus
- **Craft:** Make "Joy" bells or shakers to celebrate Jesus' coming. PROVIDING Christmas bell Wreath Craft.

Wrap It Up Questions - Pick 3 or 4 to discuss.

1. What do you think was the hardest part of God's call for Mary?
2. How did Mary show both faith and honesty in her response to the angel?
3. Why was it significant that Elizabeth affirmed Mary's experience?
4. What does Mary's song tell us about God's values and priorities?
5. How can we develop the kind of faith that says "I am the Lord's servant" when God calls us?
6. Why do you think the baby John leaped for joy when he heard Mary's voice?
7. What are some ways Mary showed her joy in this passage?
8. How is the joy of knowing Jesus different from other kinds of happiness?
9. When you think about Jesus coming to earth, what makes you most joyful?
10. How can we share our joy about Jesus with others?

Joyful Closing Activity (pick 1)

"Joy Explosion"

- Give each person a balloon or streamer
- As you read key verses, have everyone wave their items and shout "Joy!"

End with everyone shouting together: "Jesus brings us JOY"

"Create a "Joy Wall" where everyone writes/draws what brings them joy about Jesus!

Take-Home Challenge (Pick 1)

The Impossible: This week, identify one "impossible" situation in your life or in the world. Pray Luke 1:37 over that situation every day: "For no word from God will ever fail." Write down what you're praying for and watch to see how God works.

Optional Memory Verse

"For no word from God will ever fail." - Luke 1:37

Joy Countdown: Each day this week, share one reason Jesus brings you joy with someone else. It could be a family member, friend, or even a stranger. Keep a "Joy List" of all the reasons you think of!

Bonus: Sing or hum a joyful song about Jesus every day!

Memory Verse

"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" - Luke 1:47

Or for younger children: "Be joyful always!" - 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Closing Prayer

"Lord, thank You for the example of Mary, who trusted You even when she didn't understand everything. Help us to have humble, willing hearts like hers. When You call us to do hard things, give us the courage to say 'yes.' Remind us that nothing is impossible with You. We praise You for keeping Your promises and for coming to save us through Jesus.

And, thank You for sending Jesus! Just like Mary, Elizabeth, and even baby John, we are filled with JOY when we think about Jesus coming to save us. Help us to rejoice in You every day. Help us to share this joy with everyone we meet. Thank You that Your joy gives us strength and hope, no matter what we're facing. We celebrate You today! Amen."

Closing Reminder

"Remember: Jesus came to bring JOY to the world—and that includes YOU! Let's celebrate Him today and every day!"