

Let every living thing praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! (Psalm 150:6)

Mary's Song – Luke 1:46-55

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: PRAISE

The gospel of Luke begins with the announcements of two upcoming births. The first announcement is to Elizabeth and Zechariah. The second birth announcement in Luke is the story of Gabriel telling Mary she will give birth to God's son. Gabriel also tells Mary her cousin Elizabeth is expecting a baby. The two story lines merge when Mary goes to visit Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, her child leapt in her womb. Elizabeth tells Mary the baby jumped for joy in the presence of the Lord. There is no indication Elizabeth knew of Mary's pregnancy prior to her visit. When her baby jumped for joy, Elizabeth takes this as a sign. Elizabeth's baby, who grows up to become John the Baptist, identifies Jesus as Lord even when they are both still in the womb.

Upon seeing Mary, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and makes several pronouncements. She tells Mary God has blessed her and the child she carries. Elizabeth also questions why she has been given the honor of the Lord visiting her. Even though an angel had told Mary she was pregnant with God's son, it must have been reassuring to receive this affirmation from Elizabeth. Following Elizabeth's greeting, Mary makes a joyful response of her own, praising God with a song that has become known as the Magnificat. Mary recalled God's actions in the past and trusted in God to continue to be at work in her life. God is at work in each of our lives as well. Remembering God is at work in our lives helps us respond with joy.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

Find some time to praise God through poetry. You could read a psalm, a poem by a favorite poet, or listen to a song or a poetry podcast, like Poetry Unbound. Mary's Magnificat is a poem. How is God speaking to you in the poem?

Come Together

Come Together

Supplies: *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, green cloth, battery-operated candle, poem*

Prepare Ahead: *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a green cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 2 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4). Place the poem inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *praise* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

SAY: This month we will hear stories about praising God. This week we will read a poem that Mary, Jesus’ mom, sang to praise God.

ASK: What do you like to do when you want to praise God?

- In this curriculum, we recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, “Mary’s Song” (pp. 196–97) from the storybook.

PRAY: Dear God, we are so grateful for you and all of our blessings. Amen.

Mary’s Song – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids’ Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy “Mary’s Song” (Reproducible 8A) for each child.*

- Invite the preschoolers to use crayons to color the picture.

SAY: When Mary, Jesus’ mom, found out she was going to have a baby, she sang a song of praise to God.

ASK: What would you sing about?

What Doesn't Belong? – Younger Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons

Prepare: Photocopy "What Doesn't Belong?" (Reproducible 8B) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "What Doesn't Belong?" to each child.

SAY: When Mary, Jesus' mom, found out she was going to have a baby, she sang a song of praise to God.

ASK: Can you find the things that don't belong?

SAY: Circle them and then color the picture.

- Invite the kids to find and circle the things that don't belong, and then color the picture.

Word Search – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pens or pencils

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Word Search" (Reproducible 8C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of "Word Search" to each child.

SAY: When Mary, Jesus' mom, found out she was going to have a baby, she sang a song of praise to God.

ASK: What would you sing about?

- Invite the kids to circle the words in the puzzle.

Memory Verse Art – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, scissors, glue, construction paper, crayons or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Memory Verse Art" (Reproducible 8D) for each child.

- Hand out copies of "Memory Verse Art" (Reproducible 8D) to each child.
- Give each kids a copy of Reproducible 8D.
- Invite the kids to color the words and then cut them out.
- Give each child a piece of construction paper.
- Encourage them to create art by gluing the memory verse words onto the construction paper. Then, have them decorate their papers with markers.

WONDER: What would it look like for a dog to praise God? Or a tree?

Wonder Time

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Mary's Song" (Reproducible 8F) for each child.

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time.

WONDER: What is your favorite part of Mary's song?

Share a Story

Supplies: Celebrate Wonder DVD, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you and to sit in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 8 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

Wonder with Me

Supplies: Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Lay out the Wonder Story Mat for Unit 2 (Class Pack—pp. 8 & 17).

Cut out the Bible story figures (Class Pack—p. 19).

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 2 Wonder Story Mat.
- Show the children the Unit 2 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 4).

SAY: Today's faith word is *praise*. Praise is one of the many ways we thank God.

- Show the children this week's figure—a poet.

WONDER together:

- What is your favorite poem?
 - What are you thankful for?
 - What is your favorite way to praise God?
 - What has God done in your life?
- Place the figure on the Wonder Story Mat.
 - Open the Wonder Box to reveal the poem.

WONDER: Why do you think a poem is in the Wonder Box this week?

Experience Wonder

Christmas in July

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, construction paper, crayons or markers, scissors, glue sticks*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Christmas in July" (Reproducible 8E) for each child.*

SAY: We usually only hear about Mary at Christmas time when we are preparing for the birth of Jesus. Let's celebrate Christmas in July! Jesus' birth is always worthy of praise.

- Give each child a copy of Reproducible 8E.
- Invite the kids to color the figures.
- Help them cut out the nativity figures.
- Encourage them to arrange and glue their nativity figures on the construction paper.
- Invite them to draw a stable or guestroom to put the figures in.

ASK: What is your favorite Christmas memory?

Examine the Bible Verse

SAY: Our Unit 2 Bible verse is Psalm 150:6. Find it in your Bibles.

ASK: Is Psalms in the Old or New Testament? (*Old*) Where is the Book of Psalms located in the Old Testament? (*nineteenth book, almost exactly in the center of the Bible*) In what chapter of Psalms is our verse located? (*150*) What is the verse number? (*6*)

SAY: Our Bible verse is all about praising God!

ASK: What's your favorite way to praise God?

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 12 & 13).
Read it together.

Peaceful Place

Supplies: *Leader Guide—p. 114, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, book: 'Twas the Evening of Christmas, by Glenys Nellist; nativity play set; paper; crayons or markers*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy the Unit 2 Faith Word coloring sheet (Leader Guide—p. 114) for each child.*

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to explore the nativity.
- Have each child color the Faith Word coloring sheet.

Tip: *All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.*

Go in Peace

Spiritual Practice – Exploring Praise Through Worship.

SAY: A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. A spiritual practice can be anything because you can be with God any time, anywhere, and any way! This month we are going to praise God through gratitude.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:
 - **SAY:** We're going to think about five things we're grateful for. You'll close your eyes and I will say a place. You will think of something you are thankful for at that place.
 - **SAY:** Get comfortable and close your eyes.
 - **SAY:** At home, I am grateful for...
 - **SAY:** At school, I am grateful for...
 - **SAY:** In nature, I am grateful for...
 - **SAY:** At church, I am grateful for...
 - **SAY:** At the park, I am grateful for...

SAY: We can praise God for all of the things we are grateful for.

ASK: Would any of you like to share what you are grateful for?

PRAY: Repeat after me: "God, thank you for our many blessings. Help us always be ready to praise you. Amen."

- Bless the children before they leave. Touch each child on the hand as you say this blessing: "May you feel God's love all around you every day."

Family Spiritual Practice

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book; Leader Guide—pp. 111, 112*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Celebration Chart" (p. 111) and "Family Letter" (p. 112) for each child.*

SAY: Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 8F–8G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual devotion with you. There's an extra activity for you to do sometime this week.

- Send home a copy of the Take-Home Pages, a copy of the Family Letter, and a copy of the Celebration Chart with each child.

Supplemental Activities

Preschoolers – Praise Walk

SAY: Praise is one of the many ways we say thank you to God.

ASK: What is one thing you are thankful for today?

SAY: Let's go on a walk and see what other things we are thankful for.

- Invite the kids to follow you as you walk around the room and encourage the kids to point out things that we can be thankful for.
- If able, repeat this activity around the inside of the church building and outside.

Early Elementary– Praise Chain

Supplies: construction paper, markers, stapler, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Cut the construction paper into 1-inch strips.

SAY: Praise is one of the many ways we say thank you to God. Let's make a praise chain to see how many things we're thankful for.

- Give each kid a few strips.
- Invite the kids to write or draw one thing they are thankful for on each strip.
- Help each kid make a loop with one strip and staple it into a circle.
- Help each kid thread a second strip through the loop and make another loop.
- Encourage them to keep making loops until they have a chain.
- Invite the kids to share their chains with the group.

Older Elementary – Emotions of Praise

Supplies: card stock, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, cups of water

SAY: Praise is one of the many ways we say thank you to God.

WONDER: How does praise feel?

SAY: We're going to paint what praise feels like with watercolors. Your painting doesn't have to be of anything. It can just be the colors that you think the feeling of praise would look like.

- Give each child a piece of card stock and a paintbrush.
- Invite the kids to paint what praise feels like with watercolors.
- Set the painting somewhere to dry.
- Once the paintings are dry, invite the kids to show off their paintings.

Intergenerational Activity – Praise Poem

Supplies: paper, pens or pencils

SAY: Mary praised God through a poetic song. Let's write poetic songs!

- Divide the participants into groups of four.
- Invite the participants to write poems about praise. They can be funny or serious or triumphant, like Mary's poem.
- Encourage the groups to share their poems.

ASK: What is your favorite way to praise God?

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for our blessings. Amen.