

Focus: Spreading the Good News

Materials:

- American's 25 Favorite
- Bible: Children's Everyday Bible
- Book: Mary, Mother of Jesus
- Ping Pong Ball

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: *Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week was Christmas. What is special about Christmas? (Jesus in Born) This week we will hear a story about some of the first visitors Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph, had after he was born and what they did after they saw Jesus.*

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: *Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.*

Let us pray. Thank you, God, for giving us the example of Mary, the mother of your son. Help us be like her and believe all that you say. Through Jesus we pray. Amen.

Song/Movement

I Will Call Upon the Lord, track:17, from America's 25 Favorite

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc. Have children sit on their carpet squares when finished.

Part A:
I will call upon the Lord
Who is worthy to be praised
So shall I be saved from my enemies
Part B:
(Encourage kids to be the echo)
I will call upon the Lord (I will call upon the Lord)
Who is worthy to be praised (Who is worthy to be praised)
So shall I be saved from my enemies
(So shall I be saved from my enemies)

Chorus:
(All sing together)
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock
And let the God of my salvation be exalted
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock
And let the God of my salvation be exalted
Repeat Part B:
Repeat Chorus (2x)

Alternate Creative Movement

Have kids form two equal lines facing each other, or a big circle. To the beat of the music have them take four steps toward each other and clap the hands of the child facing them (or their own), then take four steps back and clap their hands together. Repeat.

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

Mary treasured their words in her heart.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *In the Gospel story today tells us that Mary kept the kind words of the shepherds that came to visit Jesus in her heart. She always remembered that Jesus was special and would do great things for God's Kingdom. We are all called to do great things in God's name.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: Children's Everyday Bible, pp. pp. 213-214, *The Shepherds Visit Jesus, The Shepherds Praise God*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *Why were the shepherds so excited?*
- *Why did they run to Bethlehem?*
- *Do you think they thought they really were going to see Jesus?*
- *What did the shepherds tell Mary and Joseph?*
- *What did Mary think about this news?*
- *What did the shepherds do when they left Mary, Joseph and Jesus?*

Reflection on Reading:

After the shepherds receive the good news from the angel, they follow the sign to find the savior. They tell everyone they meet, including Joseph and Mary, that this child is indeed special, the Son of God and Savior of the world. People have a hard time

understanding what all this means; even Mary can't fully grasp all that the shepherds say. We do know that she keeps the words of the shepherds in her heart. Sometimes words cannot describe how excited, happy or sad we feel. Mary had no words to say when she heard what the shepherds said, but she had feelings that she kept in her heart. They are words that she will reflect on throughout her life.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Read the book: *Mary, Mother of Jesus*
Discuss ways they can show love to one another.

Activity 2:

Hot Potato Praise

Use any song on the CD for the opening and closing song.

Ping Pong Ball (for the potato)

Have the children sit in a circle, passing the "hot potato" as quickly as possible while the music plays. When the music stops, the player holding the "hot potato" must tell one thing about that Jesus did (Born in a stable, Mary is his mother, shepherds came, he made people feel better, he took care of the sick and hungry, he loves us no matter what) Then everyone else shouts: PRAISE GOD! No one is "out" or has to leave the circle. Play continues as time permits.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who brings us love and peace?*
Do you believe in Jesus, who is our Savior and was born of Mary?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who filled Mary with God's life that she became the mother of Jesus, the Son of God?

Sending Forth

Say: *We know lots of stories about Jesus. When you get home share your favorite story with your family. You can tell them, act it out or read it from a bible if you have one.*

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*Change My Heart O' God*" track 23 from America's 25 Favorite while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.