

Faithful to God

Snow Quest

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Join us on our Facebook group. Interact with editors and Sunday school teachers. Post pictures of your class. Brag on what God is doing in your class. You teach with us; now interact with us. Check out our group, “Word Aflame Toddler Curriculum Teachers.”



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All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

THE BETTER PLAN

An Angel Visits Mary



CORE SUPPLIES

Excite and Engage

Welcome: Cut 5 balloon shapes from various colors of construction paper. Write letters J-E-S-U-S on the balloons. Attach them to the wall at children’s eye level. Provide cutouts of extra J-E-S-U-S letters so students can add them to the balloons with double-sided tape.

As students arrive, play the song “Happy Birthday, Jesus” on repeat.

Attendance charts (AP) 📌, attendance snowball stickers (TRP)

Activity Paper: Mount the Letters of the Day poster (TRP) and Colors of the Day poster (TRP). (For preserving the posters, read the tip on page 5 under “Wall 1: Teaching Time.”) Add *A* and *B* to the letter poster and white and blue to the color poster.

Activity papers (page 1), crayons, bottles of glue, white feathers (enough for students to cover the letter *A* on their activity papers)

Opening Activity: Stuffed animals, manger or child’s play crib with baby doll, “Oh, What a Special Night” lyric video by Animated Praise

Relate and Receive

Access Prior Experience: Baby dolls, blankets, pacifiers, bottles, rattles, diapers, shallow tub of water, towels, baby powder, baby lotion

Bible Lesson: Mary and Angel stand-up figures (TRP) 📌, Jesus balloons from Welcome, Bible art: Gabriel Visits Mary (TRP) 📌

Apply and Act

Life Application: Cut small oval shapes from light blue construction paper (enough for students to cover the letter *B* on their activity papers).

Activity papers (page 2), letter and color posters (TRP), crayons, bottles of glue

Prayer: No supplies needed

Snack Break: Apple slices, plates, napkins, cups, apple juice, damp cleaning cloths

Home Connection: For each student, copy the unit 1 HC calendar (TRP) 📌 and the lesson 1 HC devotion 📌. Separate the activity paper covers (AP) to send home. Prepare child information forms 📌 for parents to fill out as they drop off or pick up their children.

EXPANDED SUPPLIES

Worship and the Word

Worship: Provide various children’s instruments.

Suggested songs: “Angels Watching over Me” children’s song, “Mary Had a Baby Boy” (words on page 13)

Memory Work: Cardboard tubes of various lengths (1 per student), Bible, unit 1 MW poster (TRP), memory charts (AP) 📌, memory color stickers (TRP)

Reinforce and Review

Option 1: Toy broom, child-sized biblical robes, angel capes and wings, tinsel for halos, *optional:* camera

Option 2: Stuffed animals from Opening Activity; suggested books on page 14

Option 3: Blocks, stand-up figures (TRP) 📌 from Bible Lesson

Option 4: Cut 2-inch circles from construction paper (1 per student).

Per student: Thin paper plate, crayons, sheet of construction paper

Pencil, scissors, stapler, glue, pipe cleaner

Option 5: Various colors of pom-poms (including white and blue)

Unit 1

Better Things

Unit Bible Verse

“I will bless thee” (Hebrews 6:14).

Unit Bible Words

God gives me good things.

Scripture Text

Luke 1:26–38

Hebrews 1

Bible Point

God came as baby Jesus to save us.

Life Application

I am glad Jesus was born.

Looking Ahead

During next week’s Access Prior Experience, students will receive a “phone call.” On your cell phone, record your pastor delivering a short message to your students, preferably introducing himself/herself and telling students he/she loves them, God loves them, God wants to talk to them, and they can always talk to God.

Teacher Devotional

Read Hebrews 1. Prayerfully consider what this passage says:

About God

As the creator of the universe, the almighty God could have been exempt from facing the pain and suffering that life can bring. Even so, He chose to manifest in the flesh and then subjected Himself to the human experience. His love and desire for our salvation was His motivation.

To You as a Teacher

We should approach each day with a thankful spirit, knowing that the God of all creation came to save each of us individually. Our actions and words should reflect a constant rejoicing in this knowledge. Daily displays of thanksgiving are in order toward the King of kings.

To Your Students

Incarnation is a big word, certainly too big for toddlers. However, passages like 1 Timothy 3:16 help keep it simple, so simple even a toddler can understand. “God became human to save us.” What is the mystery? The Incarnation does not have to be mysterious. It is exciting. God loves us and made a plan to be with us. Even the youngest child understands love and appreciates gifts. Help your students learn that God loves them, and Jesus is the best gift of all.

In addition to presenting biblical characters and connections to the Bible story, the activity paper presents something familiar to toddlers: letters and colors. Students are greeted right away with a song they have heard before and will likely be able to sing. Even if they are in a new environment, visiting students can quickly feel at ease. For students who attend each week, this repetitive activity creates a sense of security and stability that toddlers need.

CORE (designed for a teaching period around 45 minutes)

EXCITE AND ENGAGE

Welcome: Balloons for Baby Jesus

As students arrive, collect the offering and let students add a snowball sticker (TRP) to their attendance charts (AP) 📌. Invite students into the newly decorated room and point out the décor changes. **What do you like best?**

Direct students to the J-E-S-U-S balloons and ask them to identify the colors and the letters. **The letters spell God’s name: Jesus.** Allow students to spell the name Jesus by taping extra letters to the matching balloons. Then teach a personalized version of the Bible Point with motions, repeating until students are comfortable with it.

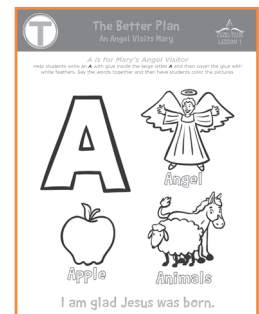
God came (hands up) **as baby Jesus** (cradle arms) **to save me.** (hands over chest)

Activity Paper: Letters and Colors of the Day

Sing the alphabet song with students. Give high fives and verbal praise for a good job of singing. Then introduce the letters of the day followed by the colors of the day. Identify those colors in students’ clothing and in items around the room.

Distribute activity papers. On the front page, show the first letter of the day: **A**. **The letter A is for angel, apple, and animals.** Have students point to the pictures and say the words. **All three of those are in our lesson today. Can you show me three fingers?**

Assist students in using glue to “write” the letter A inside the letter on their papers. Then help students cover their letters in white feathers. Say the words together as students color the pictures. Set papers aside to dry.



Opening Activity: Fun with Furry Friends

On the night baby Jesus was born, He was surrounded by animals. Say, “A is for animals.” The animals wanted to see baby Jesus. Will you help the animals get to baby Jesus? Give each student a stuffed animal. Lead students in a march around the room in a different fashion each time (e.g., galloping, crawling, hopping, and so on).

End with all the animals and students gathered around the manger. Then instruct students to leave the animals around the manger while you play “Oh, What a Special Night.” Have students make animal sounds with the song.

★ Call out the different animals as you say the Bible Point, and have students say it together each time. **The donkey says, “God came as baby Jesus to save us.” The cow says, “God came as baby Jesus to save us.” The lamb says, “God came as baby Jesus to save us.”** Continue until you have named all the animals present.

RELATE AND RECEIVE

Access Prior Experience: **Babies**

Show the baby dolls. Talk with students about babies: how sweet they are, how to prepare for them, and how to take care of them. Let students interact with the baby dolls (e.g., feed them, bathe them, change them, rock them, and so on). Stimulate discussion as students play.

- **What do babies feel like?** Stroke a doll’s arm. **Babies are soft.** Stroke a student’s arm. **You are soft too.**
- **What do babies sound like?** Shake a rattle. **Babies can be loud.** Have students make crying sounds. **You can be loud too.**
- **What do babies smell like?** Show the diaper. **Sometimes babies are stinky.** Show the lotion. **Sometimes babies smell good. Do you want to put on some baby lotion so you can smell good too?**

Bible Lesson: An Angel Visits Mary

God became a baby and His name was Jesus. Baby Jesus was God. So what is God’s name? Point to the balloons and have students say, “Jesus.”

Our story today has an angel in it. Say, “A is for angels.” The angel in our story was named Gabriel. God sent the angel Gabriel with an important message for a girl named Mary. Use the stand-up figures (AP) as you read the story rhyme.

On the table, place the figure of Mary standing.

**Mary was busy doing her chores.
She washed the dishes. She swept the floors.**

Place the angel figure beside her.

**When poof! A visitor came.
He surprised Mary and called her by name.
He did not knock. He did not call.
Poof! He just came, right through the wall.**

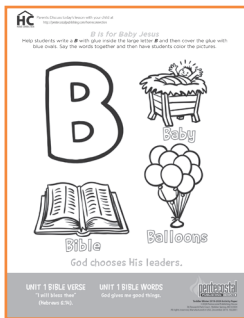
Replace the standing Mary with the kneeling one.

The opening activity presents an opportunity for toddlers to interact with their environment and each other. It helps visiting students become more at ease with new surroundings and new friends. This activity keeps learning fun and exciting, just the way toddlers like it, and it prepares students for the Bible lesson and life application to come.

The figures will be used again in lesson 3.



- Who visited Mary with a message from God? *An angel*
- What did the angel tell Mary? *She was going to have a baby.*
- What did the angel tell Mary to name her baby? *Jesus*
- Did Jesus come to save us? *Yes*
- Was Jesus a gift from God? *Yes*
- Was Jesus God? *Yes*
- What is God's name? *Jesus*



Toddlers enjoy helping. Snack time is a wonderful opportunity to assign each student a special task. Ask helpers to set out plates, napkins, and cups and to distribute snacks, if appropriate. When they finish eating, encourage students to help clean up, giving some damp cloths to wipe the tables and chairs.

**Mary grabbed her heart. She fell on her knees.
She said, “Who are you? Tell me, please.”
The angel said, “Mary, do not fear.
You are special. To God, you are dear.**

**He is going to bless you with a baby boy,
Who is going to bring everyone lots of joy.”
Mary said, “I do not understand.
I really do not know how I can.”**

**The angel said, “It is all in God’s plan.
Your baby is God’s gift to every man.
He is coming to save everyone.
Name Him Jesus. He is God’s Son.”**

Repeat the story, asking student helpers to hold the figures each time.

Choose a few simple questions from the suggestions in the margin to reinforce the Bible story in students’ minds.

APPLY AND ACT

Life Application: I am glad Jesus was born.

Distribute activity papers. On the back page, show the second letter of the day: *B*. **The letter *B* is for *balloons*, *baby*, and *Bible*.** Have students point to the pictures and say the words. **We had all three of those in our lesson today.** Have students hold up three fingers and then one finger each as you say how each word was in the lesson. **We have *balloons* on the wall. We read from the *Bible*. And we talked about *baby* Jesus.**

Assist students in using glue to “write” the letter *B* inside the letter on their papers. Then help students stick blue ovals to their letters. Say the words together as students color the pictures. Set papers aside to dry.

Prayer: Jesus Loves Me and I Love Jesus

Baby Jesus was born to save us. Are you happy Jesus was born? Show me what you do when you are happy. Have students jump, dance, twirl, clap, and then shout: “I am glad Jesus was born.”




Let’s pray and tell Jesus that. Instruct students to bow their heads and fold their hands. Lead in prayer, having students repeat your words.

Jesus, I am happy (students repeat) **You were born** (students repeat).
And I am happy (students repeat) **You love me** (students repeat).
Please help me (students repeat) **love You always** (students repeat).
In Jesus’ name, (students repeat) **amen** (students repeat).

Snack Break: A Is for Apple

Remind students about the letter *A* and the pictures on their activity papers. **What fruit starts with the letter *A*?** Apple. **Say, “*A* is for *apple*.”** Distribute apple slices and pour juice. Talk about foods babies can and cannot eat, including crisp apples. Ask students what kinds of foods they think baby Jesus liked and did not like. Ask what foods they like and dislike.

Home Connection

- For each student, send home a copy of the unit 1 **HC** calendar (TRP)  and the lesson 1 **HC** devotion , or show parents the URL on the back of the activity paper so they can download it themselves.
- Send home the covers of the activity papers. Show parents that it contains the Bible MW posters for the entire quarter.
- Use the child information forms  to get contact information from parents. This will be used to establish a home connection throughout the quarter.
- Encourage parents to ask their little ones about the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary. If you use Option 4, encourage parents to keep the angel their child made on display during December as a reminder that Jesus is the reason for the season.

EXPANDED *(designed to supplement a teaching period over 45 minutes)*

WORSHIP AND THE WORD

Worship

Distribute instruments and allow children to worship exuberantly to “Angels Watching over Me.” Play the short song two or three times. As you collect the instruments, tell each student: **God has angels watching over (student's name).**

Sing “Mary Had a Baby Boy” to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Show students how to fold their arms as if holding and rocking a baby. Do the motions together as you sing.

**Mary had a baby boy, baby boy, baby boy;
Mary had a baby boy. She called His name Jesus.**

Memory Work: Hebrews 6:14

Unit 1 Bible Verse: “I will bless thee” (Hebrews 6:14).


Show students the Bible Verse on the unit 1 MW poster (TRP). Point at each word, including the reference, as you read it and have students repeat after you. Repeat until they can comfortably say it. **Say, “B is for bless.”** Show the letter *B* on your Bible. **Say, “B is for Bible.”**

Distribute cardboard tubes. Show students how to echo the Bible Verse through their tubes. Then say the verse like different animals. **How does a lion say Hebrews 6:14?** (Growl the verse.) **How does a mouse say Hebrews 6:14?** (Squeak the verse.) **How does a bird say Hebrews 6:14?** (Sing the verse.) Continue in this fashion with other animals.

God blessed us with baby Jesus. Say, “Jesus is a blessing.”

Unit 1 Bible Words: God gives me good things.

Show students the Bible Words on the unit 1 MW poster (TRP). Point at each word as you read it and have students repeat after you. (Use the same teaching format as with the Bible Verse, but use the Bible Words.) **God gave us Jesus, and He is very good. Say, “Jesus is good.”**

At the completion of either method, allow participating students to place a memory color sticker (TRP) on their memory charts (AP) .

Retain the tubes for use through lesson 4.

This section offers a collection of lesson-related activity options to drive home the Bible Point and Life Application. Select the ones that best fit with your group and setting.

REINFORCE AND REVIEW

Option 1: Mary and Her Angelic House Guest

Let students choose whether they want to dress up as Mary or the angel. Help them reenact the Bible story. (*Optional:* Take pictures and email them to students' parents.)

Option 2: B Is for Book

Students select a stuffed animal and sit in a circle for story time. Show students the book(s) you will read about Jesus' birth. Remind them of the letters of the day and point out key words in the book(s) that begin with those letters (e.g., angel, animals, baby, boy, born, birth, Bethlehem).

Tell students to listen for God's name, *Jesus*, and every time they hear it, they are to hug their animals and say, **"I am glad Jesus was born."**

Suggested books:

- *The Very Special Baby: The Amazing Story of the Birth of Jesus* by Harvest House Publishers
- *A Night of Great Joy* by Mary Engelbreit
- *Baby Jesus Is Born* by Gloria Truitt

Option 3: Building Mary's House

Prompt students to use the blocks to construct Mary's house, complete with furniture and whatever they can imagine would be inside. As students build, ask the questions in the margin of page 12 to reinforce the Bible story.

★ Using students' newly constructed house as the backdrop, have students use the Mary and Angel stand-up figures (TRP) 🧑 to retell the story.

Option 4: Handy Angels

Give each student a paper plate and a circle cutout. Students color both sides of their plates and draw a face on their circle cutouts. Trace students' hands onto construction paper and cut out the hands.

To make an angel, imagine a triangle on the inside of the plate. Place a pipe cleaner onto the tip of the triangle and then fold the plate to form a cone with the pipe cleaner coming from the cone's tip. Staple the pipe cleaner and flaps in place. Glue the angel face over the staple and glue the hand cutouts to the back of the plate to form angel wings. Shape the pipe cleaner into a halo.

Angels worship Jesus. They bow down before Him. Have students show their angels bowing.

Option 5: The Colorful Sort

Place pom-poms in the middle of the table and have students sort them by color. Review the colors of the day and help students count how many pom-poms are white and how many are blue. Mix up the colors and have students repeat the activity, counting different colors each time.

★ Ask students to imagine what colors Mary's dress, Gabriel's robe, and Jesus' blanket might have been.

