

**Say Yes to God**

(based on Luke 1:26–38)

In a small town called Nazareth lived a young woman named Mary. She was to be married to a man named Joseph. One day, God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary. Gabriel had a very special message to deliver.

The angel appeared in the room where Mary was and said, “Be glad, Mary! God is with you. You are very special to God.”

Mary was very surprised, and a bit afraid, to see an angel. She was also quite confused by Gabriel’s words.

“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” Gabriel said right away. “God has chosen you. You are going to have a special baby boy. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and called Son of the Most High.”

Now Mary was even more surprised. “How can I have a baby?” she asked. “I’m not even married yet.”

“God will make it happen. God’s Spirit will be with you. Your baby will be holy and called the Son of God,” replied Gabriel.

Then Gabriel asked Mary, “Did you know your cousin Elizabeth is going to have a baby?”

This news came as a big surprise to Mary. Elizabeth was much older, far too old to have a baby. No one expected her to have a baby now.

“Do you understand, Mary?” Gabriel asked. “God can do anything. Nothing is impossible for God.”

Mary knew what to say, even though her heart was pounding. “Yes,” Mary said. “Here I am. I am ready to do whatever God wants me to do.”

Then the angel left her and Mary decided to go visit Elizabeth.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read the Bible story, and light two purple candles on your Advent wreath.
- Invite everyone to pretend to be the angel Gabriel, planning how to tell Mary the surprising news. Imagine how to stand or sit and what to say. Take turns delivering the message to Mary as good news.
- After hearing the message, Mary was surprised and confused, yet willing to do what God asked her to do. Invite everyone to make their best surprised, confused, and excited faces.
- Mary praised God, saying that her soul was glad. Identify and name things in your life that make your soul glad.



Responding to God's Grace

- Mary's response to Gabriel was to say yes to God. Watch and listen for messages that God may be sending to you this week: to help someone, to be kind to someone, to tell someone good news. Pray that you have ears to hear and eyes to see.
- Give everyone in your family three blank index cards. Invite them to label each card: time, talent, treasure. Encourage each person to write or draw on each card one thing that he or she commits to doing this week: one action that takes some time, one way to use a talent, and one treasure to share or give away. Help your family practice saying yes to God by doing what they think God is calling them to do this week.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- In gratitude for God's message through Gabriel to Mary, bake angel cookies to take to a shelter this week.
- Label an empty jar: "Messengers of Good News." When anyone sees or hears someone sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through words or actions, put a coin in the jar in celebration. When the jar is full of coins, donate them to your church or an organization that helps people who are hungry and poor.
- Go to www.youtube.com and watch several different versions of "Go, Tell It on the Mountain." Hear how different people sing this song of celebration. Sing along, sharing the good news that Jesus came into the world through Mary.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:
Dear God, help us celebrate with joy your presence in the world. Amen.