

READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

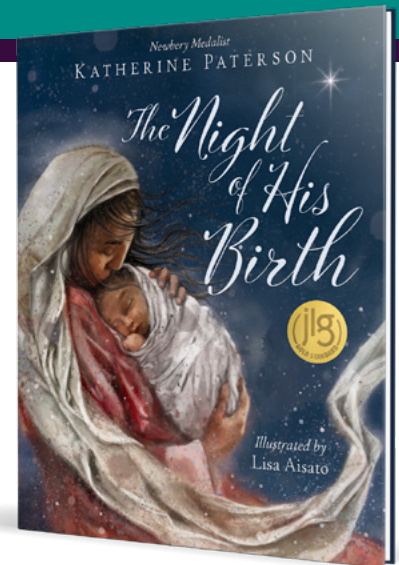
A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

The Night of His Birth

By Katherine Paterson & Lisa Aisato

The preamble phrase and last words in *The Night of His Birth* echo Mary's song of praise soon after she learned of her role in God's story: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices" (Luke 1:46-47). In both word and picture, this book is not only about the wonder of a baby's birth, an infant who has been revealed to Mary as God made flesh, but also about the feelings of this young mother.

Mary poignantly relays her parents' and Joseph's feelings about her unexpected pregnancy. This may bring up a conversation about pregnancy and/or miracles (see "Dig Deeper"). While a story of Jesus' birth is for all ages, this book touches on subjects that may be more appropriate for older children. If you are not familiar with the biblical story of Jesus' birth, read together Luke 2:1-20 from your Bible or a children's Bible storybook.



★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- What words and pictures are your favorite in this story and why?
- What feelings do you hear Mary experiencing in this story? When have you had feelings like her?
- How does hearing the story from Mary's perspective make you feel about the story of Jesus' birth? What does it tell you about Jesus as a baby?
- *With older children:* Twice Mary says, "He is God's." What do you think she means by this?
- *With older children:* In the story, Mary mentions Isaiah. Read Isaiah 9:6 together. Given the list of names that Isaiah provides and knowing that the people of Mary's time would have been familiar with this list, what do you think their expectations were of Jesus' birth?

★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- Consider different perspectives of the story of Jesus' birth such as Joseph, the shepherds, Jesus, and others you imagine. Talk together or act out what they heard, saw, felt, and thought about what happened.
- Draw a picture of a scene of Jesus' first days as a baby. Where do you put the light in the picture?
- Read the story of Jesus' birth from children's books or children's Bible storybooks. What is similar and what is different in these stories and this one?
- In this story, Mary has many different feelings. Do an image internet search for "feeling wheel for children" and choose an age-appropriate wheel. Talk together about how different emotions feel and when you and your child may have these feelings.

PRAY

God of miracles, thank you for the gift of Jesus, and for Mary and Joseph who loved and cared for him. Thank you for the people in our lives who love and care for us. May we shine the light of your love in all that we do. Amen.



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The story of Jesus' birth begins with something unexpected: miracles and sex. These are two subjects that may feel overwhelming for a parent.

When it comes to miracles, sometimes the best answer is that we don't know the answer. Faith "is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). It is by faith that we trust that God acts in ways we hope for but may not see or understand. When Mary questions the miracle of being pregnant, the angel Gabriel says, "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). Sometimes the answer is a mystery.

The simple question Mary asks the angel Gabriel when she is told that she will have a baby, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34), has made parents and Sunday school teachers squirm. Although you may feel uncomfortable talking about where babies come from—which is often the topic of curiosity before the mechanics of sexual activity—it does several important things for your child:

1. Helps you talk together about difficult subjects in age-appropriate ways.
2. Shows that you are open and willing to talk, particularly when they wonder about their body.
3. Encourages them to have healthy feelings about their body, sexual activity, and relationships as they grow up.

Start by teaching young children the names of the parts of their bodies. As they begin interacting with other children, teach them about respecting other people and their feelings. Simple answers to questions asked is important. Not all information needs to be given at one time. Build upon conversations as a child ages. Do an internet search for "how to talk with children about sex" to find helpful steps you can take.

MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

- [*Home by Another Way*](#), by Barbara Brown Taylor & Melanie Cataldo
- [*The Worst Christmas Ever*](#), by Kathleen Long Bostrom & Guy Porfirio
- [*Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*](#), edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell & Carol A. Wehrheim
- [*Baptism Promises*](#), by Carol A. Wehrheim & Roz Fulcher
- [*Dedication Promises*](#), by Carol A. Wehrheim & Roz Fulcher
- [*Psalms of Wonder: Poems from the Book of Songs*](#), by Carey Wallace & Khoa Le - [Also Available in Spanish](#)

Guide written by Meg Elliot Rift and created in partnership with PC(USA)'s initiative "[Around the Table](#)" (pcusa.org/aroundthetable).



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