



Say Yes to God

Goal: To name ways to say yes to God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 1:26-38

It had to have been overwhelming for young Mary to be visited by the angel Gabriel and be told she would “bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (v. 31). Jesus will be “the Son of the Most High” (v. 32) who will “reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (v. 33). That had to have been a lot of news to take in.

Naturally, Mary wondered how this could happen, given the impossibility of her circumstances—she was a virgin and unmarried. Astounding! The angel answered her question. So Mary responded in obedience: “Let it be with me according to your word” (v. 38). Mary said yes to God.

God graciously chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus the Messiah. She acknowledged that grace by saying yes to God, in obedience to God’s word. Mary is a model for us. We can respond to God’s grace by saying yes. As Mary did, we express God’s great goodness to us with praise and gratefully obey God’s word and will for our lives. We say, with Mary, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord” (v. 38).

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

This story is most likely not in your children’s experience; however, they may have been asked to do a great task and had uncertainty. Much like Jeremiah, the young prophet, who questioned his abilities and how he would accomplish the task, Mary wonders what this announcement means and how it can come to be. God reassures. The angel Gabriel gives her an answer: God will be with you.

Mary said yes to God. She also said yes to God with her commitment to being the mother of the one to be called Son of the Most High, God’s Son. Like Mary, the children you are leading will be able to see the myriad ways they can respond to God when they are surrounded at home and in the faith community with people who both challenge them and support them.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Encourage each child to name one way he or she can say yes to God. Notice the gifts that are evident in the children’s lives, gifts that may be used to live in response to God’s grace. One child might be a good helper. Another might ask good questions. Another might be a good older sister or brother. Be particularly aware of those who live with special needs—physical, mental, or social. Some of the children may have no problem naming ways they can say yes to God. Others may not have that kind of confidence.

Dear God, help me say yes to you by serving your children in graceful and grateful ways. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2020-2021

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 1, 15, 17

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

e-book or story audio
(see p. vii)

purple cloth

Advent wreath, candles

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

The Night of His Birth
by Katherine Paterson
(Flyaway Books, 2019)

Responding

Celebrating

internet-connected
device

Praying

shoebox lid, sand

Offering

copies of GN 2

Extra

copies of GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Praying God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

B MS

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and joy be with you.” Prompt them to respond with the same words.

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the word “YES!” in a festive way.

Tell the children that this is the second Sunday of Advent. Invite the children to say what they know about the season of Advent. Remind them that Advent means *coming*. During Advent, we remember that Jesus came long ago and promised to come again.

Invite the children to transform the meeting space into a place for worship. Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and their pictures. Add an Advent wreath with candles. Follow the tradition of your congregation in selecting the number and color of the candles. You will turn on the candles at the end of the session.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a couple of volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today’s reading.

Singing

Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7**; **SCM 17**—celebrating God’s love and our response. If some of the children want to dance and move to music, they should feel free to do so. Then sit quietly for a moment, breathing deeply, inviting the children to do the same.

Praying

C LD

Invite the children to join an echo prayer. Perhaps a confident reader could lead the prayer today.

Some SCMs are used throughout the quarter. It is a good idea to keep them in an envelope or folder for further use.

Holy God, /
you are good and great. /
You came to the world, /
full of grace and truth. /
We look forward to when you will come again. /
Amen. /



- B** *Providing opportunities for children to act in front of others can be a fun way to learn from one another and can build children’s confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

Tell the children that *grace* means that God accepts us and loves us just as we are. Suggest that one way we thank God for grace is by saying yes to God.

Wonder together some ways to say yes when God asks us to help. Invite the children to make a cheer, sing a song, shout “yes,” quietly say a prayer, do a jumping jack, or use other ideas to respond.

Hearing the Story

B M

Invite a child to find Luke 1 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Have volunteers read Luke 1:26–38. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Invite two children to act out the story as you read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. When Gabriel says that nothing is impossible for God, encourage the rest of the children to take a “YES!” picture from the worship space, hold it up, and cheer Mary on as she says yes to God.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

Tell the children that Mary told Gabriel she was willing to help God. She had not planned to be Jesus’ mother, but she said, “I am ready to do whatever God wants me to do,” meaning “Yes, I will help.” Wonder together what it might mean that Mary said yes to God.

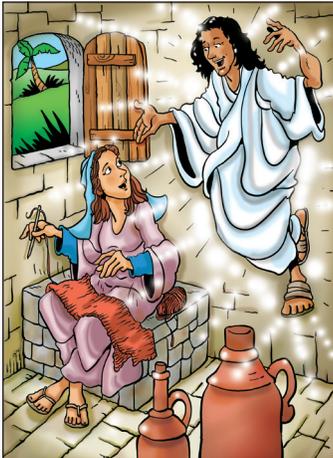
Comment that we know that Mary’s *yes* meant she would have a baby, Jesus. Read *The Night of His Birth* by Katherine Paterson. Engage the children in conversation about Mary’s story, using the following questions:

- ▼ What emotions or feelings are shown for Mary in this story?
- ▼ Do you think Mary’s *yes* to God was a good thing for her to do? Why or why not?

Singing

Sing “Listen to the Word That God Has Spoken”—**MM 5; SCM 15**. Repeat several times to become familiar with the words and tune. Then form two groups and sing the song as a round.

- T** *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to one or more children to model and encourage appropriate responses.*



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace

B C MS

Remind the children that Mary said yes to God when she was asked to do something that seemed pretty impossible. Wonder together what kinds of things God asks us to do that seem hard. Some suggestions might be to stand up for what we believe in, to be kind to someone who is not nice to us, to help others in need when it is inconvenient to us, and so forth. Form groups of two to four children, or work as a whole group. Invite each group to create a skit with a situation in which an angel, a messenger from God, comes with a request from God and their response. Allow some time for skit development. Then invite each group to share their skits with the rest of the children.



Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.

Celebrating God's Grace

MS A

Celebrate yes by recognizing that God is always there helping us to do whatever we are asked to do. Watch the YouTube video "Nothing Is Impossible worship dance m/v" (bit.ly/NothingIsImpossibleDance) one time to hear the song and see the dance. There is a chorus, a verse, and a bridge that repeat. Play the video, pausing at 1:07 to learn the lyrics. Help the children learn the lyrics and dance moves by repeating each phrase. Continue playing as the lyrics and dance moves repeat. Encourage the children to sing and dance along with the video.

Wonder together how this song makes us feel when we believe God is with us. Ask the children how this song may help them say yes to God.

TD *For some children who have tactile sensitivities, stimulations such as sand, cotton balls, and felt may be a trigger. Extreme reactions that may be interpreted as bad behaviors may result. If the activity seems to be overwhelming or difficult for a child, provide an alternative or allow him or her to walk away from the activity.*



Praying God's Grace

TD LD

Give each child a shoebox lid and place some sand in it, enough to cover the surface. Tell the children that they will spend some prayer time saying yes to God by writing it in the sand. Explain that you will lead a prayer with prompts for their answers. They may write their yes big or small, depending on how they feel about their response. They may not be ready to say yes and can make a question mark. After each prayer prompt, they can smooth out their sand for the next one. Pray:



Dear God,
 Saying yes isn't always easy, but I will try.
 In quiet times, will I listen for you?
 On days that are hard, will I trust you?
 When I'm angry, will I calm myself first?
 When someone helps me, will I say, "Thank you"?
 When someone hurts my feelings, will I forgive them?
 When someone asks for help, will I help?
 When I see someone being bullied, will I stand up for them?
 When I'm in an argument, will I listen to the other person?
 When I'm asked what I believe, will I tell about you?
 On good days, will I remember to thank you?
 Saying yes isn't always easy, but will I try?
 Amen.

Offering God's Grace

LG

Remind the children that Mary said yes to God. Tell them that they can say yes in many ways that please God. Suggest that saying yes to a parent or caregiver when asked to help is a way of honoring their parents or caregivers, or saying yes to being kind to someone who is difficult is a way of saying yes to God's call to love and care for others.

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to color and decorate the "Yes!" cards. Tell the children that they will make a "Yes!" coupon book to use and say yes. As they are working, explain that when a parent or caregiver asks them to do something, they can take out their "Yes!" coupon book, tear out a card, and say, "Yes!" Ask the children for some examples of what they might be asked to do. Suggestions might be: take out the trash, play with a younger sibling, pick up their toys, and so forth.

Tell the children that they can also use their "Yes!" book as a way of making commitment to follow God's ways of living by tearing out a "Yes!" card and saying, "Yes! Today I will be kind," or "Yes! Today I will tell the truth." Ask the children for some other examples of how they can say yes to God.

After the children have decorated their cards, have them cut apart their cards and staple them together to make their "Yes!" coupon book.

GN 3 Solution:

Gabriel
 Mary said yes to God.

Extra Activity

LD

Hand out copies of **GN 3**. Give the children time to do the dot-to-dot puzzle.

Invite the children to use the key to find the name of the angel who brought Mary an important message from God.

Ask the children how Mary responded to the message. Have them use the key to find the answer. Discuss how they might answer God.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to clean the space and then gather in a circle. Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7; SCM 17**.

Remind the children that today is the second Sunday of Advent. For each week until Christmas, you will light one candle preparing for Jesus.

- ▼ Turn on the first Advent candle and say, “The first candle of Advent reminds us of Isaiah, who imagined a peaceful world.”
- ▼ Turn on the second candle and say, “The second candle of Advent reminds us of Mary, who said yes to God.”

Invite the children to think of and name one way they can say yes to God this week.

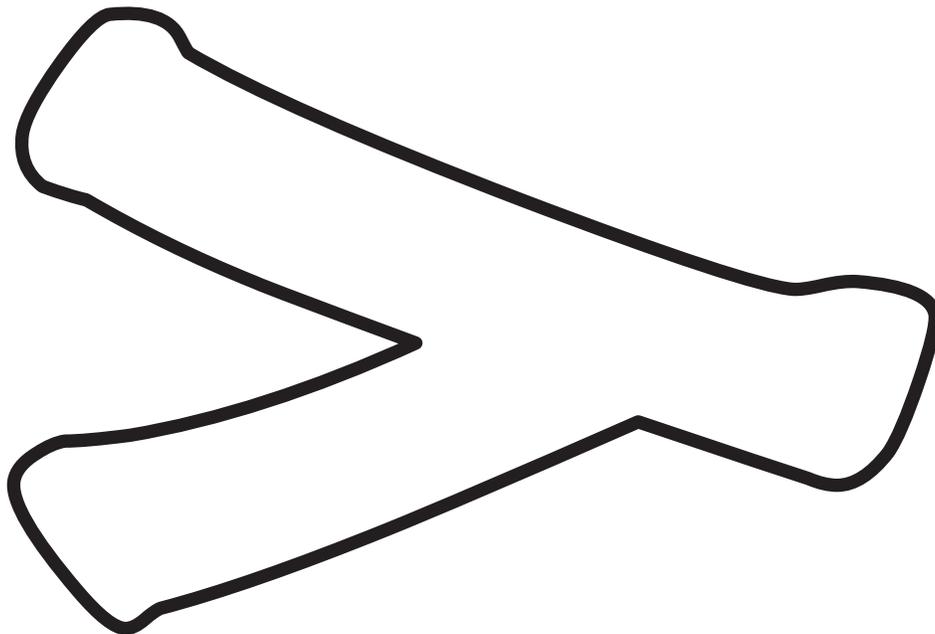
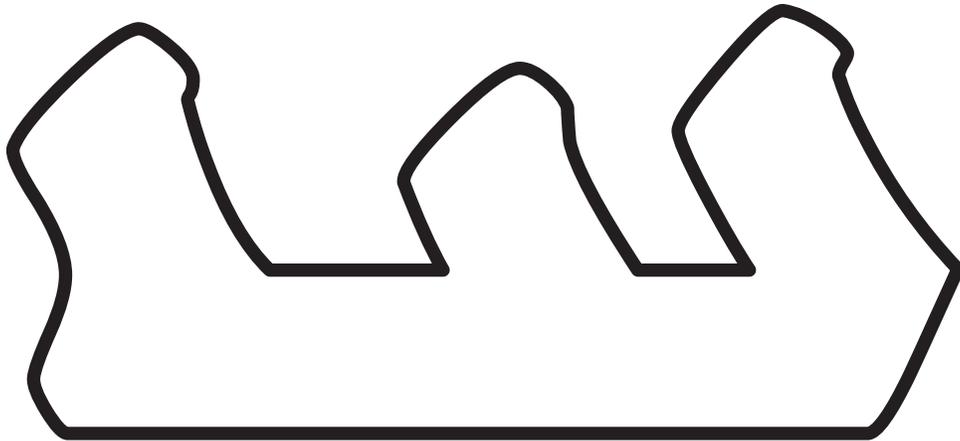
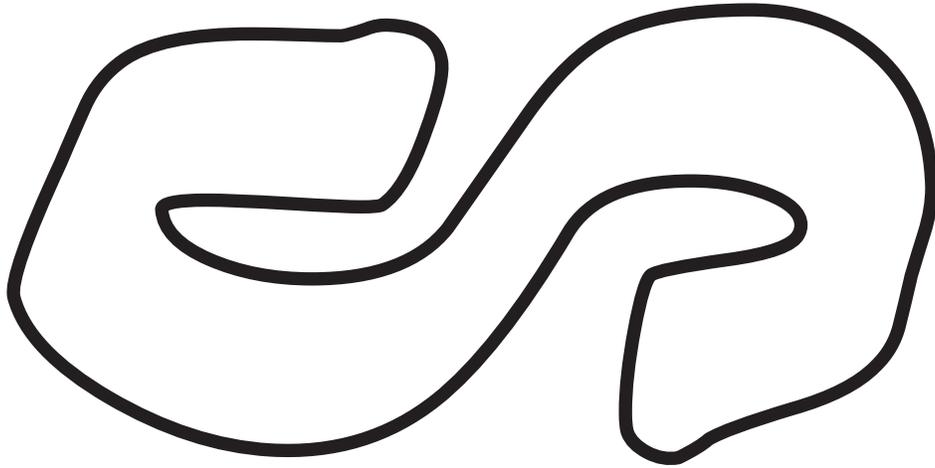
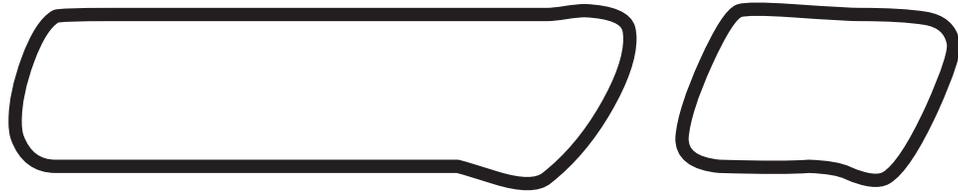
Pray:

Dear God, give us the courage to say yes like Mary, even when we don’t know what that *yes* might mean. We know that you will be with us every step of the way. Amen.

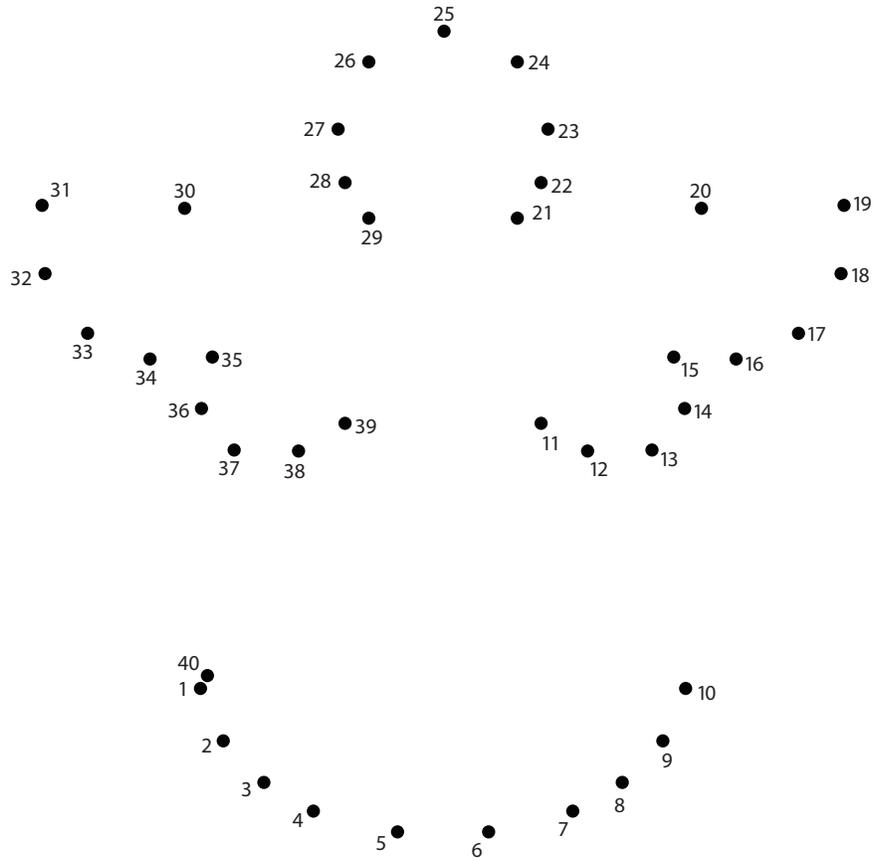
Send each child with a blessing, saying, “(Name), go in God’s grace and say yes!”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).



YES!



key

						
A	B	D	E	G	I	K
						
L	M	O	R	S	T	Y

