



Cooperative Baptist  
Fellowship North Carolina

# FAITH FAMILY TALKS

CBFNC is offering this resource from the CBF Children's Ministry Network, to our state fellowship to provide families weekly spiritual conversation starters. Our hope is that this resource empowers parents to have more faith-filled conversations at home.

*Listen. Talk. Go.*

The December devotional schedule is written for Advent, which begins November 27 and runs through December 18.

December 2022

*Written by Erin Silver  
First Baptist Church, Fredericksburg, VA*



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## FEATURED RESOURCES: FAITH FAMILY TALKS

### Scripture: Luke 1:26-55

The season of Advent is all about waiting and preparing! Each week we will read a few verses from Luke to help us prepare for the coming of Jesus. Waiting can be hard, but each week we will discover a new part of the story that will help us get ready for the best part: Christmas. Waiting on Christmas is a little bit like baking cookies. You prepare the ingredients, mix them, plop them onto a pan, put them in the oven, and then wait while they cook. Even in the waiting, we begin to feel the excitement—watching the cookies take shape through the glass in the oven door, the sweet smell that fills the kitchen, waiting to hear the timer go off and tell us the cookies are done. It takes some time, but the end result is warm, delicious cookies! Let us take the time to prepare our hearts for what is coming: the story of how God came to be with us on Earth. As we wait, may the season of hope, peace, joy, and love delight our senses and get us excited about what is coming...

### Advent Family Activity

Bake cookies together and play a game while you wait for them to bake.

## WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27 (*Week 1: Hope*)

### Listen.

Open your Bible and read Luke 1:26-29 with your family.

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.*

We have begun a journey called Advent. It is a journey because it is not something that happens quickly; it takes some time and attention. Advent is a season in the Church year that helps us get ready for the birth of Jesus. Advent is a time of waiting, a time of preparing, and a time of hoping for things. The Bible is a book filled with hope and a book that tells us about a faithful God who sent Jesus to provide hope to all people. During Advent, we wait and prepare to welcome Jesus and look



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### WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27, *cont'd.*

forward to the hope that he brings. Today's scripture passage tells us about when the angel Gabriel came to Mary. The Bible says that Gabriel was sent to Mary and that he greeted her by calling her "favored one," which means God was pleased or happy with Mary. We read today that God sent Gabriel to Mary to tell her about some important work. You see, God had already chosen Mary to do the work of God, the work of hope. I believe God also created each of us to do important work. I wonder what God might be asking each of us to do. Our scripture says that Mary was perplexed or confused and pondered what this surprising greeting could mean. To ponder something means to think about it really carefully.

Perhaps the Advent season might be a chance for us to ponder, or think carefully, about how we can offer hope to the people around us or maybe even those we do not know. Perhaps the season of Advent might be a chance for us to ponder or think carefully about our choices and if they make God happy or pleased with us. Perhaps this season might be our chance to say "yes" to the important work God has chosen us for!

#### Talk.

- What do you hope for this Advent season?
- What family traditions help you prepare for this season?

*Creator God, we thank you for this journey of HOPE. Please help us to listen for your voice and to say yes to the important work you have for us.*

#### Go.

Gather around the table with paper and pens or crayons and have each person draw a picture of something they might do to offer hope this Advent season. Share your pictures with one another and then hang them in a place in your home where you will see them often and be reminded of opportunities to provide hope. When you accomplish something in your picture, move it to another location in your home. Try to move all pictures by Christmas!



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## FEATURED RESOURCES: FAITH FAMILY TALKS

### WEEK OF DECEMBER 4 (*Week 2: Peace*)

#### Listen.

Open your Bible and read Luke 1:30-38 as a family.

*The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.*

When I think about peace, I think about places that make me feel safe and feelings of being calm. I find peace at the beach when I hear the sound of the ocean or when I feel the sunshine on my face. I feel calm when I am with people who love me and when I see people being kind to one another. Are there people or places that make you feel calm and at peace? Our scripture today continues the story of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. This time we read about Gabriel telling Mary that she would have a baby who was God's Son. I imagine that would have been a little scary; in fact, Gabriel used the words, "do not be afraid," which makes me feel certain that Mary felt scared. When things get scary, what do we do to find peace again? In this story, Gabriel comforted Mary with his words of love. That does not mean everything felt fine, but it did help Mary know that she was not alone, that God was with her and cheering her on and choosing her to do some really hard but really wonderful work. Gabriel also tells Mary about her cousin Elizabeth who would also have a son. This was particularly surprising because Elizabeth was so old, but Gabriel tells us that nothing is impossible with God!

In this part of the story, Mary gives Gabriel an answer. Mary says "yes" to God's work. Mary made a bold choice that day to trust that God would give her the courage to do hard things. Even though we do not see God the way we see our friends and family, we know that God is with us because God gives us people to help us when life feels challenging or difficult. I imagine Mary felt a sense of peace when she also found out that Elizabeth was having a baby. Elizabeth was there to comfort her and celebrate the good news with her! God was with Mary always, and God is with you, too.

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### WEEK OF DECEMBER 4, *cont'd.*

#### Talk

- Who helps you find peace when something is difficult?
- What might have happened next if Mary said, "no"?

*Loving God, we thank you for this journey of PEACE. Please help us know that when things do not feel calm or peaceful, you are still with us, helping us be brave and bold.*

#### Go.

Take at least 10 minutes to be outside this week. Take a few deep breaths and notice how your body relaxes as you exhale. Look for peaceful images in nature and thank God for your favorite part of creation.



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### WEEK OF DECEMBER 11 (*Week 3: Joy*)

#### Listen.

Open your Bible and read Luke 1:39-45 with your family.

*In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."*

What brings you the most joy in the whole world? What makes your face light up and your cheeks hurt because you are smiling so big? Sometimes joy surprises us and sneaks in when we least expect it. I imagine Elizabeth was not expecting the joy of a baby, and yet that is exactly what happened. Earlier in Luke chapter one, we hear about the angel Gabriel appearing to Elizabeth's husband Zechariah and telling him that Elizabeth would have a son and to name him John. This story is similar to what we know about the angel appearing to Mary, but Zechariah did not believe what the angel said could be true. Zechariah told Gabriel that he and Elizabeth were much too old to have a baby and because Zechariah did not believe, Gabriel made it so that Zechariah could no longer speak.

After reading our scripture, we know that Elizabeth became pregnant with a son and that her son leapt with joy inside her tummy when he heard Mary's voice! Wow, what joy Elizabeth must have felt. Both Mary and Elizabeth found joy in the unexpected news of a baby. Elizabeth and Mary both made a bold choice to be a part of Jesus' story and were brave enough to trust in God's plan for all people. Sometimes we find the most joy in making choices that are good for lots of people, not just ourselves. I think Mary and Elizabeth did just that; they chose to walk with God so that all people would come to know the story of Jesus! Also, once John was born, Zechariah was able to speak again. Imagine what joy he felt when that happened!



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### WEEK OF DECEMBER 11, *cont'd.*

#### Talk.

- How do the choices you make affect others?
- What gives you courage to make good choices?
- What brings you great joy?

*Holy God, we thank you for this journey of JOY. Help us to seek joy not just for ourselves but for all people.*

#### Go.

Think about an action that would positively impact someone else, and then do it! Perhaps you could try writing an encouraging note to a teacher, helping a parent with dinner, picking up trash, or serving a community meal...the options are endless



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## FEATURED RESOURCES: FAITH FAMILY TALKS

### WEEK OF DECEMBER 18 (Week 4: Love)

#### Listen.

Open your Bible and read Luke 1:46-55 as a family.

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

Each of us was created in God's image, which means we carry God's spirit within us wherever we go. Remembering that God is in each of us helps us to look at others, especially those who may be different from us, and see God in them. Looking through a magnifying glass gives you a different way to see the world, one that makes images bigger and more defined. Seeing the world through God's eyes also helps us see things differently. Over the last few weeks, our scripture told us about the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and telling her that she would have a baby, God's Son. We also read about Mary saying "yes" to this important work of God and about Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth who was also going to have a baby. These two women can see God in each other, and Mary is overcome with joy and gratitude and sings a song of praise to God. Mary sings, "my soul magnifies the Lord." Magnify can mean making things bigger and clearer, but it can also mean worship and praise. When we worship God, we open our hearts and our minds to seeing our neighbors more clearly as the people God created them to be. We see them through the eyes of love and compassion. When we spend time in the worship and praise of God, we become more aware of God's majesty and greatness and more connected with our faith communities. God's love for us is so great that nothing can ever separate us from it, and when we worship, we show God our love in return!

#### Talk

- Name three people that make you feel loved!
- What is your favorite worship song?
- What images make you think of God?



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### WEEK OF DECEMBER 18, *cont'd.*

*Majestic God, we thank you for this journey of LOVE. May our worship of you help us see your image in everyone we meet.*

#### **Go.**

This week, ask a parent to help you listen to the song "Breath of Heaven" by Amy Grant. This song tells the nativity story from Mary's perspective. You can find this video on YouTube.

*Erin Silver is the minister to preschoolers and children at Fredericksburg Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, VA. She began serving this congregation in 2011 after working as a child life specialist in the pediatric ICU. She graduated from Duke Divinity School in 2015 and enjoys creating ministry events that involve the whole family and sometimes even the whole congregation! She enjoys being outside, trying new recipes, being with friends, and playing with her two sons in her free time.*



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