

WEEK 2

LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Jesus calms our fears.

BIBLE

An Angel Appears to Mary:
Luke 1:26–38, 46b–55; Isaiah 35:1–4

LARGE GROUP TIME

Hey, everyone! Welcome back to *City of Angels*!

This month, we're hearing some remarkable messages that angels shared with God's people. Their messages all have one thing in common: They're all about Jesus! Let's see what the angels are telling us today.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Angels We Have Hidden on High

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Get an angel tree topper (something [like this](#)) that you'll use every week this month like "Elf on the Shelf." Hide the angel in plain sight next to a calming jar (like [this one](#)). Have kids silently search the room and once they find the angel, have them return to their seats and make a "halo" by making a circle with their hands above their heads. Remind kids not to shout out the answer or point conspicuously so everyone can have the joy of finding it themselves!
- Okay, now that all of you have located the angel, **did anyone notice what the item closest to it is?** It's a calming jar! You just need to shake it up, then watch all the glitter settle again.
- **Why do think this jar helps calm us down?**
- Being able to calm down is an important life skill because there will be many moments when we get worried, stressed out, or afraid. If we let those emotions run around unchecked, we'll be so miserable.
- Let's find out what calming has to do with today's story in just a few shakes!
- **Speaking of shakes, who wants to try out this calming jar?**

ACTIVITY | Uncover the Art

- On these angel wings, there's a secret message we can find once we color them.
- When you've discovered the message, don't tell anyone! We want to give everyone a chance to find the message on their own. Once everyone is finished, let's all shout out the angel's message together!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a copy of the printable printed on white cardstock paper on which you've already written the hidden message with white crayon. This week's message is "Don't be afraid." If you have a large group, invite older kids to write the message themselves, or have them help you prep the printables beforehand. Set up watercolor stations so kids can paint over the wings to reveal the hidden message. Use colored pencils if watercolor isn't available.

- What was the angel's message?
- Hmm . . . I wonder what the message "Don't be afraid" has to do with angels!

POLL | Would You Rather?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask kids "Would You Rather" questions and designate opposite sides of the room to represent each answer choice. Have kids "fly" with their arms outstretched to the side of the room that corresponds with their response.
 - **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Show [this video](#), which is a simplified explanation of fear from the movie, "Inside Out." Talk with kids about the kinds of things that bring out this emotion in them.
- I'm going to ask you a series of questions and you get to fly – like an angel! – to the side of the room that represents your answer.
 - It's nighttime in the city and you're walking home. **Would you rather take the long way that would take you half an hour or cut through a dark alleyway and get home in ten minutes?**
 - You're traveling through the city using public transportation when it breaks down. **Would you rather be stuck on an underground subway train or on a bus in the middle of the highway?**
 - You're in a skyscraper in the city when something terrifying happens. **Would you rather it be a minor earthquake that lasts twenty seconds or would you rather be trapped in the elevator for twenty minutes?**
- You all probably chose the answers you did because you picked the one that you were less afraid of.
- **What would you do if any of these things happened to you?**
- **What would you do to calm yourself down?**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

LESSON | Luke 1:26–38, 46b–55 (An Angel Appears to Mary)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read aloud the Bible passage. Then, tell this week's Bible story from Luke 1:26–38, 46b–55 as a storyteller sharing history with young people in their town – assume a name or occupation that's familiar to your town (like an ice cream vendor, street performer, or a friendly elderly person like an "abuela."). Ask another volunteer to play the angel, Gabriel. You may choose to record this segment beforehand and show them as videos.
- Hi, again! (Introduce yourself as the storyteller character of your choosing.) Gather around! Let me tell you about another story I heard back when I was a kid growing up in these streets. And because we're in the City of Angels, we might even hear it directly from an angel!
 - **Gabriel:** What's up, y'all?
- Aha! Here's our angel friend now! Hey, Gabriel! I was just about to tell our friends the story of the time when you paid Mary a visit.
 - **Gabriel:** Oh, that's a good story! Let me tell it. So, a short while after I met with Zechariah, God sent me on another messenger errand. This time, it was to Zechariah's wife Elizabeth's cousin. Cousin Mary.
- And you probably scared her, too, didn't you?
 - **Gabriel:** I didn't mean to, I promise! Okay, I may have arrived unannounced again, but it's because it was a really important message and I wanted to deliver it super quick. So, yeah . . . Mary was terrified, just like Zechariah was. My bad.
- Well, how did you get her to calm down?
 - **Gabriel:** I told her not to be afraid because God saw greatness in her and because of that she was going to give birth to a baby boy!
- Is your entire job just telling people they're about to have a baby?
 - **Gabriel:** Hey, this wasn't just any baby. It was the baby. The son of God, baby! Mary was going to be the mother of Jesus.
- That's incredible! But wait, at the time you gave her the news, wasn't she engaged or something?
 - **Gabriel:** Yeah, she was, to a really nice guy named Joseph. Mary was probably scared about taking on this huge responsibility and also about what people would say about her if they found out she was going to have a baby that wasn't Joseph's.

- But as I recall, that didn't stop her from obeying God, right?
 - **Gabriel:** Oh, yeah, hundred percent. She said she wanted whatever God wanted for her, and right then, I knew God picked the right person for the job. Once she got over the initial fear, she was filled with so much joy, she even sang a song to show how blessed she was that God had chosen her to bring someone as important as Jesus into the world.
- Wow, what a woman and what a story! Thanks for dropping by to share it with us!
 - **Gabriel:** You bet! See you later!
- Mary was afraid when she first heard God wanted her to be the mother of Jesus. It's easy to feel scared when God chooses us to be a part of something big. But when that something involves Jesus, we have nothing to fear!

BIG IDEA | Jesus calms our fears.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a large piece of bulletin board paper, write this week's Big Idea somewhere on it, and then roll up the paper. You'll be adding to this wall art every week, so conserve space when writing the Big Idea. You might want to recruit a volunteer to write it using [mural lettering](#) or graffiti art (or look up tutorials like [this one](#) to do it yourself). The fourth week, you'll invite kids to add their names and other art to this "wall" and put it up somewhere in your space.*
- *[Unroll bulletin board paper to reveal what it says.]*
- **Jesus calms our fears!**
- Even though Jesus wasn't born yet, just the thought of being a part of God's plan to bring Jesus into the world made Mary glad. Her joy was greater than any fear she had.
- We all have fears . . . it's part of being human! But we aren't meant to live fearfully. We know we can go to Jesus to calm our fears.

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 2:10 (NIV)

- "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people!'"
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Kids will play a game of hopscotch to remember the scripture. Have kids line up behind the pre-made hopscotch squares. Have them toss a small rock inside one of the squares. Instruct them to jump inside the squares to reach the rock, reciting the words of the scripture in the squares as they go. You may want to demonstrate using one or two feet as you go. Divide the group into teams if you decide to make more than one hopscotch grid.*

Wednesday Night Material...

Recap Lesson (above) for those that weren't there on Sunday.

VIDEO | City of Angels, Episode 2

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

STORY | When I Was Afraid

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a story about a time you were afraid, but focus more on the ways you tried to cope with the fear and how you finally calmed yourself down because God brought you comfort.*
 - **PRETEEN HACK:** *Invite preteens who are willing to share to tell their stories but in addition, talk with them about their coping mechanisms. What do they do when they are confronted with those fears? What can they do to overcome some of their fears?*
- Being afraid of something doesn't make us weak or weird, it's completely normal to feel afraid sometimes. But I know I can always depend on God to help me feel better when I'm afraid.
- God is all-powerful and loves us so much, we don't have to stay afraid of anything. God sent **Jesus to calm our fears.**

OBJECT LESSON | Making Fears Go Away

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Using chalk or white crayons on black construction paper, have the kids draw or write something they are afraid of. Then, instruct them to write or draw those same things on a white piece of paper. Of course, when they write it on the white paper, it won't show up.*
 - **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Have kids write down their fears (this may require assistance from volunteers) on [dissolve paper](#). After writing down their fears, ask open-ended questions about how they think God will help them combat those fears, and offer up some suggestions, too. Then have everyone dissolve their paper together as a group.*
- Whenever we're afraid, we can turn to Jesus, and **Jesus calms our fears**.
- That doesn't mean our fears disappear completely, just like how when we write on the white paper, we can still kind of see what we drew. But it's not as powerful an image as it was on the black paper.
- Even in the face of our fears, we can gain courage knowing Jesus takes care of us and gives us people who will walk with us whenever we're afraid.
- When that happens, your fears might exist, but they no longer have any power over you!

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 35:1–4

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Isaiah 35:1–4.*
- Long before Gabriel gave God's message to Mary, God was working through a human messenger, a prophet named Isaiah.
- The message Isaiah had in this passage was for the people who had remained faithful to God because, during Isaiah's time, a lot of people had forgotten about God. Isaiah is telling everyone that one day, God will bring all the wonderful things like joy, beauty, strength, and glory where there once was weakness and fear.
- Human news, angel news, all of the news work together to help people know **Jesus calms our fears**. When we know that God is in control and will do something great, we can put our fears on hold and instead, hold on to Jesus.
- And guess what? You can be a part of that news, too. You can be a good news messenger just like Isaiah and Gabriel.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | One Word Project

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass out blank Christmas cards or postcards and have kids write one word that will help them remember today's Bible story. Encourage them to decorate the card and make it colorful.*
 - **PRETEEN HACK:** *This might be a good opportunity to talk with preteens to help them categorize their fears and understand that while some fears should be faced head-on, other types of fears are appropriate signals to help them avoid danger. You can in your discussion legitimize some of the latter and be prepared to talk with someone in the leadership team if you feel anything that was shared needs further attention from another adult.*
- Gabriel's message to Mary, while a little frightening in the beginning, ended up being a joyful one. Jesus was coming to Earth and Mary was going to play a big part in making that happen.
- **What one word will help you remember this week's Bible story?**
- Keep this word with you throughout the week to remember the angel's message and what it meant for the whole world.

ACTIVITY | Angel Tag

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *This is a modified version of Link Tag. Choose two kids to be angels and link arms — they're the first taggers. All other kids scatter from the angels as best as they can and have them act afraid. When an angel tags someone, they link arms with the angels and are no longer afraid! Keep playing until everyone is linking arms. Play as many times as time and interest allow.*
- Just like how when you got tagged by an "angel," you went from afraid to unafraid status, the messages the angels brought people in our Bible stories helped them go from being fearful to fearless!

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PRAYER

- God, thank you for giving us Jesus, who calms our fears. Just like Mary did when she knew Jesus would be coming soon, help us to turn our fears into joy by trusting in you. Because of Jesus, we know we can stay calm when we get scared. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- How did Mary react when she saw the angel, Gabriel?
- What reason did the angel give to Mary about why she was chosen to be Jesus' mother?
- What did the angel say Jesus would be like?
- Read Luke 1:38. What do you think it means to be a servant of God?
- Why do you think Mary stopped being afraid about the message the angel brought her?
- What is one way you normally handle fear?
- In what ways does Jesus calm our fears?

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Calming Jar

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Gather jars with lids, glitter, glitter glue, and food coloring for kids to make their own calming jars (learn how to make one [here](#)).
- Today's Big Idea reminds us that **Jesus calms our fears**. Let's make our own calming jars to help us remember this Big Idea throughout the week.
- Whenever life shakes you up and causes you to be afraid, remember Jesus is there with you. Turn your attention to Jesus instead of your fear, allowing Jesus to calm you down and give you peace and comfort.