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Unit 1

Waiting

"Wait and See"

Based on the Book of Isaiah



INTRODUCTION

The Jesus Story program begins by introducing the children to the prophet Isaiah. He urged the people to live good lives and to keep on believing that one day God would send the promised one. The Messiah that God promised is, of course, Jesus.

Waiting is something with which all children are familiar. It is also something they don't like to do. But waiting has its positive side. Many of life's pleasures come from anticipating an event. Much joy would be lost if we did not have a period of time to plan for and look forward to holidays and birthdays. The excitement of anticipation runs especially high in children.

If we want children to eagerly anticipate coming to class, they need to have a sense of belonging to the group. This sense of belonging develops when our attitude toward each child is warm and accepting. Of course the classroom setting also plays a part. Your room needs to be a place where children have fun and where interesting things happen. In such a nurturing and inviting setting, children will be receptive to learning about Jesus and about God's love for them.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- *The Jesus Story* Unit 1 handout, one for each child
- materials for name tags: 3 x 5 index cards, string or yarn (Punch holes on either side of a card and add a string so the name tag can be worn as a pendant.)
- crayons or watercolor markers
- a ball that bounces and is big enough for children to roll easily (See Step 4 in the lesson plan.)
- snacks (optional) Read the material about snacks in the section "Teaching with *The Jesus Story*."
- Check "Other Activities" and gather materials for ideas you want to pursue.
- See the section "Your Room and Your Time" for suggestions on interest centers and other ideas to make your room inviting and functional.

TEACHING THIS UNIT

1. Be at the door to greet the children with a friendly welcome. Remember that adults appear tall to small children, so when greeting them, sit on a low chair or bend down to put yourself at a closer eye level. Have the name tags and colored markers ready and ask parents to print their child's name on a tag. The children wear their name tags around their necks. You and your aide should also wear name tags.

Some children will come to the group eagerly and feel at home right away. For less outgoing children, it may take several class meetings before they are at ease and have a sense of belonging. Be sensitive to individual reactions and make a special effort to help shy and fearful children feel comfortable in their new surroundings. Introduce early arrivers to the interest centers where they can entertain themselves until class begins.

2. Call the children into a circle. If you are using chairs or carpet squares, have them arranged ahead of time. A circle is a good seating arrangement in that it can easily be made larger or smaller and everyone can see.

3. Introduce yourself and your aide. Along with your words, let your tone of voice and smile say to the children that you are happy to be their teacher. Speak briefly about what you will be doing in class: playing games, singing, drawing, having treats, making friends with one another, learning about Jesus.

4. To help the children become acquainted, stay in the circle and play "The Name Game." (See Resource Index for page listing.)

5. Hold up your copy of the Unit 1 handout so that

everyone can see the cover. Talk about what is happening in the picture and read the accompanying words. Encourage the children to talk about things they are waiting for. To get them started, you may have to suggest something you are waiting for: your birthday, a visit from someone, seeing a certain movie or TV program.

Encourage—but never pressure—children to contribute to a discussion. If you ask a child if he or she has something to say and you get silence or a shake of the head, simply go to another child. When children feel secure with themselves and their setting, they will speak up.

6. Read the story "Wait and See." (A good way to let the children see the illustration as you read is to hold two copies, back to back, in front of you.)

Encourage all the children to listen to the story, but if a child resists do not make an issue of it. Permit him or her to play quietly in an interest center.

When you have finished reading ask:

- Which person in the picture is Isaiah?
- What is Isaiah doing?

Do not question the children in detail about the story.

The idea is not to quiz for facts but rather to share our faith story and to let children take from it what they are able at their stage of development. Conclude by saying that each week they will be learning more about Jesus.

(If you have display space, make a mural out of the handouts by adding a new story each week. This creates an impressive display and provides an easy reference for review.)

7. Change the pace by doing something active. This is a good place for the action rhyme "Waiting for the Sun":

Look at the sky.

(Hold hand to shade eyes.)

What do I see?

Big clouds blowing by as fast as can be.

(Make wind sounds and rolling hand motions.)

Look at the sky.

(Hold hand to shade eyes.)

What do I see?

Raindrops are falling all over me.

(Shake fingers overhead for falling rain.)

Run to the house as fast as can be.

(Run in place.)

Then wait for awhile and watch some TV.

(Sit and wait momentarily.)

Look at the sky.

(Hold hand to shade eyes.)

What do I see? The sun has come out and it's shining on me!

(Stand and join hands overhead to form circle.

Smile at one another.) Repeat rhyme.

8. Have a snack. Invite the children to help hand out napkins and pass out the food. Involving the children in

helping increases their sense of belonging. Before eating, ask for silence and say a brief prayer such as, "Thank you, God for the food we eat. Amen."

9. Gather around a table and distribute the handouts. Direct the children's attention to the back cover and the hidden picture activity. Explain that people and things they will be learning about are hiding in the picture. Distribute crayons and ask the children to mark all the hidden pictures they find. When they have finished, have the children share what they found. If time permits, invite the children to add color to the illustration on the inside. (This may always be completed at home.)

10. Teach the lively action song "If You're Happy and You Know It." (See Resource Index for page listing.) Directions for teaching songs are on page 88.

11. Involve all the children in cleanup. It is especially important to do this in the first class so that cleanup is seen as everyone's responsibility. Children will not know what is expected of them so assign specific tasks: "Jenny and Bob, please put the crayons in the box;" "Charles, please put the cars on the shelf." Ask one child to gather the name tags. Save them for use in the next class.

12. If you have a prayer center, gather there. Close with a simple prayer such as, "Thank you, God, for our class. Thank you for (name each of the children). Amen." Say good-bye and let the children know you will be looking forward to the next class. Remind everyone to take their handouts home.

NOTE: The theme of the next unit is "Mothers." If possible, make arrangements to have a mother and her baby visit your classroom during the next session.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Go on a "church walk" to learn about the building. Show the children where the bathrooms and drinking fountains are located. Point out where people come to worship. If your church has a library, point that out too.

2. Introduce the children to the Bible, showing them both an adult's and a child's Bible. Explain that the stories about Jesus come from the Bible.

3. Take a picture of your class. Children like having their picture taken and will enjoy looking at themselves as they were in their first class.

Unit 2

Mothers

"The Mother of Jesus"

Luke 1:26-38

INTRODUCTION

Young children are deeply attached to their mothers. Although in many families fathers play a large part in the physical care and emotional nurturing of children mothers still tend to be the dominant figures in the lives of most young children. In situations where the mother is absent from the home, the young child looks to some other adult for mothering. In the preschool classroom, children often look to the teacher as a mother substitute.

The story for today introduces the children to Mary, the woman who will be the mother of Jesus. Children are better able to appreciate Jesus as a real person when they see that, like themselves, Jesus had a mother. He had someone to love and care for him.

The angel's appearance in the story will not be the extraordinary happening for the child that it might be for adults. Children under age seven do not make much distinction between the real and the imaginary, between an everyday occurrence and the unusual. They are still open and receptive to the idea that God works in strange and wondrous ways.

Some of the children in your class may have younger brothers and sisters. The joy expressed by Mary and Elizabeth concerning their approaching motherhood may remind those children of the excitement felt in their own families when awaiting the birth of a baby.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- *The Jesus Story* Unit 2 handout, one for each child
- name tags from the first class
- snacks (optional)
- See back of the handout and Step 10 of the lesson plan and gather materials for the drawing or the pasting activity.
- Check "Other Activities" and gather materials for ideas you want to pursue.
- Arrange to have a mother with a baby visit the class (optional).

TEACHING THIS UNIT

1. Be at the door to greet the children. Have a friendly welcome for each child as you distribute the name tags. Invite the children to find something in the room to play with until class begins. Have interest centers set up and include playthings that will attract the children's attention and hold their interest. The best playthings are those that lend themselves to creative play—blocks, cars and trucks, housekeeping equipment, puppets, dolls.

2. Call the children into a circle. If you use chairs or carpet squares, have them arranged ahead of time. Speak enthusiastically (and briefly) about what you will be doing in class: singing, playing games, hearing about Jesus.

To help the children learn one another's names, go around the circle and have each child say his or her name.

3. Review briefly what you did in the first session. Refer to the previous session's handout to refresh the children's memories.

- We talked about waiting.
- We read a story about a man named Isaiah.
- We learned that the world was waiting for the special one that God had promised. That special someone is Jesus.

4. Hold up your copy of the Unit 2 handout so that everyone can see the cover. Talk about what is happening in the picture and read the accompanying words.

Discuss what mothers do: have jobs, tuck us in at night, read stories, take us places, cook. Be sensitive to any child who may not have a mother in the home because of death, divorce, or an other cause. Mention that aunts, grandmothers, or other adults sometimes take the place of mothers.

Invite the children to tell the group something that is special about their mothers. If the children are reluctant to respond, get the discussion started by sharing some-

thing about your mother: "My mother can put up wallpaper," or "make me laugh," or "play the guitar."

5. If you arranged to have a mother and her baby visit your room, have her speak to the children now. Some ideas to discuss with the visitor are:

- What do babies need to grow?
- What care do they need?
- How do babies get their names?

6. If the children are restless or appear to be tired from sitting, have them stand in place and do some exercises. Exercises can be worked into the game "Simon Says." (See Resource Index for page listing.) Instead of having children drop out of the game if they fail to follow the direction, acknowledge that they have made a mistake and invite them to keep on playing.

7. Read the story "The Mother of Jesus." Ask the children to identify Mary and Elizabeth in the illustration. Do not quiz the children on the details of the story. Instead, ask questions that focus on their perceptions and feelings about what they have heard:

- How do you think Elizabeth felt when Mary came to her house?
- What do you think Mary and Elizabeth will do to get ready for their babies?

8. Have a snack. Encourage the children to wash their hands if facilities are convenient. If parents are supplying the snacks, invite the child who brought the snacks to help serve them. Involve other children in handing out napkins and doing other jobs that are part of serving food. Before eating, say a brief prayer such as "Thank you, God for all our favorite foods. And thank you, (child's name) for bringing our snack today. Amen."

9. Sing the action song "If You're Happy and You Know It." (See Resource Index for page listing.) Children need

to sing any song a few times before they enter into the singing and actions with enthusiasm.

10. Ask the children to sit around a table, then distribute the handouts. Briefly review the idea of mothers being special people. Direct attention to the last page of the handout. Have the children either draw a picture of their mothers or make a collage of pictures that you have precut. Children will vary widely in their ability to use art materials. Accept all work and never compare one child's work with another.

(If you are making a mural of the Jesus stories, add this unit to the first one.)

11. Involve all children in cleanup. Assign specific jobs to specific children.

12. Close with a brief prayer. Stand in a circle and hold hands as you pray, "Thank you, God, for the chance to come together in our class. We had a happy time. Help us all to have a happy week. Amen."

Let the children wear their name tags home. Remind them to take their handouts with them.

NOTE: The theme of the next unit is "Fathers." If possible, arrange for the father of one of the children to visit your next session.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Make picture boxes or a theme banner as suggested in "Your Room and Your Time," page 6.

2. Add color to the illustration on the inside pages of the handout.

3. Take the class for a short walk to find nature objects—leaves, grasses, seed pods, rocks. Put these objects on display in your nature center.



Unit 3 Fathers

"Joseph the Carpenter"

Matthew 1:18-25



INTRODUCTION

Scripture does not tell us a lot about Joseph, but we use what information is available to introduce the children to the man who will be Jesus' earthly father. What has been written about Joseph presents him as a kind, hardworking, and honest man.

Children's perceptions of God are formed to a large extent by experiences with their parents. Joseph is the kind of parent who would give a child the sense that God is loving and protective.

In dealing with a class of young children, there are likely to be some who come from homes where there is no father. Others may live in situations where there is as much hurt as happiness in the family experience. It is important, therefore, not to force an idealized picture of fathers on children. It is also important to respect the silence of any children who are unwilling to talk about their fathers or their families. If some children mention aunts, uncles, grandparents, or other adults as important in their lives, encourage their contribution to the discussion. Any adult who expresses ongoing concern can help a child grow toward understanding God's love.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- *The Jesus Story* Unit 3 handout, one for each child
- snacks (optional)
- See the back of handout and Step 10 of the lesson plan for the drawing or the pasting activity.
- Check "Other Activities" and gather materials for ideas you want to pursue
- Arrange to have the father of one of the children visit your class (optional).

TEACHING THIS UNIT

1. Be at the door to greet the children. Make a point of addressing each child by name. Personal recognition helps a child feel like an important member of the group.

For the first five to ten minutes of class, encourage free play. Have enough variety in toys, books, and puzzles so that each child can find something interesting to do.

2. Call the children into a circle. If you think the children still need help in learning one another's names, go through introductions again.

3. Invite the children to share information about themselves. To get the discussion started, mention something about your week: perhaps you had a visitor, met a friend for lunch, or had a flat tire. Sharing experiences helps foster a sense of friendship and community in the group.

4. Review briefly what you did last week. (If you are creating a story mural, refer to it to refresh the children's memories.)

- We talked about mothers.
- We read a story about Mary.
- Mary was going to have a baby and so was her cousin Elizabeth.

Hold up your copy of the Unit 3 handout. Talk about what is happening in the picture and read the accompanying words. Talk about fathers as special people.

Discuss what fathers do: have jobs, take us places, care for us, wash dishes.

Invite the children to tell the group about something they like to do with their fathers.

5. If you arranged to have a father visit the classroom, introduce him now. Ask questions such as:

- How did you feel when you first saw your baby?
- How did you decide what to name your baby?
- How do you help take care of your baby?

6. If the children need a break from sitting, have them stand and play "Simon Says." (See Resource Index for page listing.) Include some vigorous exercises such as stretching, running in place, and touching toes.

7. Read the story "Joseph the Carpenter." Talk about what Joseph is doing in the illustration. Then discuss the story with such questions as:

- What do you think Mary and Joseph will do to get ready for the baby?
- How do you think they will make their home a happy place for Jesus to grow up in?
- What do we do at home to be happy together?

8. Teach the following action song that is sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques":

Find a hammer/Find a hammer

(Reach out to the right.)

Find a nail/Find a nail

(Reach out to the left.)

Pound the hammer/Pound the hammer

(Pound one fist on top of the other.)

Build a house/Build a house

(Stand up, still pounding.)

Make a window/Make a window

(Show window outline with hands.)

Make a door/Make a door

(Outline door with hands.)

Go inside/Go inside

(Open and take one step in.)

Go to sleep/Go to sleep

Repeat, growing softer until you nod your head and snore.)

9. Have a snack. Before eating, say a brief prayer such as, "Thank you God for this chance to share food with one another. Amen."

10. Ask the children to sit around a table. Distribute copies of *The Jesus Story* handout. Review the ideas on the cover. If you want the children to draw a picture, have crayons or watercolor markers available. If you want them to make a collage, provide paste and an assortment of precut pictures. Let the children choose the pictures they want to use.

It will take a few meetings with your group before you know how best to approach arts and crafts. Expect a wide range of abilities. Some children will do little more than scribble, while others have a good deal of control. Some will use scissors well, while others may never have held a pair. Demonstrate how to use the materials, but do not do the work for the children. Remember that it is easier for children to press a picture down on paste than to put paste on the picture they want to apply.

Let children who finish their art activity quickly go on to amuse themselves in one of the interest centers.

11. Involve all the children in cleanup. Be politely directive: "All the children wearing red put the blocks away." "Jimmy and Ann, please put the crayons in the box." When the room is in order, comment on the good job the children did.

(If you are making a mural of the stories, add this

story to the others.)

12. Close the session with a brief prayer: "Thank you God for (name each child). We are happy each of you is in our class. Amen." Remind the children to take their handouts home and show them to their parents.

NOTE: The theme of the next unit, "Jesus is Born," focuses on birthdays. If you or a parent are providing snacks, a birthday cake or cupcakes topped with candles would be particularly appropriate.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Add color to the illustration on the inside pages of the handout.

2. Make wooden sculptures. Have an assortment of wood scraps: small pieces from a lumber yard or home workshop, old Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, or other wood-en toy parts, toothpicks, sticks from frozen ice cream treats, tongue depressors. Use white glue to fasten the pieces together.