



CAMP BIBLE

The Journey

JOURNEY WITH MARY & JOSEPH

Supplies Needed: Copies of the prayers, pictures from a vacation or trip, bibles

For the Leader...

The word for “inn” in the Greek is kataluma. This can refer to a public building like that described below, or a guest room in a private home. If the Holy Family stayed in a private home, they would have been staying in a room in the house where the animals were brought in at night to keep them safe. You can explain as much of this as you think the children can follow, or omit it entirely.

In today’s scripture we are journeying with Mary and Joseph towards the birth of Christ. Mary, a young, probably frightened teenager, and Joseph were on a journey; we too are often scared, confused or unsure as we seek to move towards Christ. Their expectations for their lives had been upended by the angel’s announcement, by Mary’s pregnancy and by the need to go to Bethlehem, a journey of 70 miles or more, when Mary was close to giving birth. These days especially our lives feel upended; by COVID, by politics, by racial tensions built on centuries of injustice. At the end of Mary’s and Joseph’s journey was the incarnation: God’s love made flesh among us in the form of a tiny baby. As we continue our own journeys, we know that God’s love is with us too.

OPENING/CENTERING PRAYER

led by Student | Supplies: copy of the prayer | Suggested Time - 5 min

Before you begin, pick a child to read the leader’s section of the prayer. Have it ready to copy into the chat. Explain that it is important to quiet our minds and bodies in order to feel God among us, and this exercise will help them do this.

Have the children put their hands on their stomachs. Have them take a deep breath and exhale. Repeat. Now ask them to take a deep breath and exhale very quietly through their nose. Repeat. When the children are quiet, tell them to continue the deep breath and quiet exhales as you count backwards from 10.

Ask the leader to read the prayer, and ask all to say the words “May you guide us.”

Actual Prayer:

Dear Lord,
As we gather today
May you guide us
As we study your word
May you guide us.
At home and at school
May you guide us.
When we are happy and when we are sad
May you guide us.
In all things, Lord, help us to
follow you.

Amen

ACTIVITY FOR INTRODUCTIONS & RE-INTRODUCTIONS

Supplies: photographs from a trip printed on paper or shared on screen | Suggested Time - 5 min

Say to the children (tweaking according to where the trip was to):

These pictures are from a trip I took to (XXXX). It was chilly/warm/rainy (etc.) there so I took a jacket/sandals/an umbrella (etc.). I want you to imagine a trip you'd like to go on, or one you've been on, and go find one piece of clothing you would take with you. Talk about why you chose the clothing you chose. What is your destination? Do you like travelling? What is the best trip you've ever taken? Why was it the best? Did you think it was the best at the time? Why or why not?

For the Leader...

Make sure that the children understand the more difficult words in the passage: census, register, manger, pledged to be married.

SCRIPTURE LESSON & DISCUSSION

Suggested Time - 15 min

Our scripture today comes from the book of Luke. Luke and Matthew are the two gospels that tell stories of Jesus' birth, but their stories are different. In Luke there are shepherds and angels, but no wise men. Mary and Joseph have a long journey to Bethlehem in Luke, and the Wise Men have an even longer journey to Bethlehem in Matthew. Our scripture today begins after the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she is going to have a baby. At the beginning of the scripture, the Emperor of Rome had just ordered that a census be held. Do you know what a census is? (Wait for responses.) The emperor wanted everyone to be counted, probably so he knew how many people he had that he could tax. Joseph went to Bethlehem to be counted because that was where his family was from.

Bethlehem is about 70 miles away from Nazareth, probably longer by the route they took, and the trip would have taken from several days to a week or more. Mary went with Joseph, and while they were there, baby Jesus was born. So many people were in town for the census that there wasn't room for them in the inn. How many of you have stayed in a hotel or motel? (Wait for responses.) In those days, inns weren't like hotels today with a lot of individual rooms. One type of inn was a big building with a large platform along the walls where people could sleep, and a big open area in the center for their animals. There wasn't any room on the platform, so Mary and Joseph would have stayed in the center with the animals. When Jesus was born, his parents wrapped him in cloth and put him in the manger—where they put the animal food.

Scripture (NIV)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

JOURNEY WITH MARY & JOSEPH

- Why do you think the emperor wanted to tax the people?
 - How do you think Mary and Joseph felt on their trip to Bethlehem? Do you think they were scared? Tired? Happy? Sad?
 - How do you think they felt about staying with the animals when Jesus was born?
 - Mary and Joseph were obedient to the emperor's decree but also to God. How were they obedient? Which was most important?
 - Some people compare life to a journey. They think of life as having a beginning, a middle and an end, and believe that we are moving towards a destination, just as we would on an actual journey. What do you think of this idea?
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HANDS ON ACTIVITY/GAME

Suggested Time - 15 min

Packing for a Journey Scavenger Hunt – Give the children 5 minutes to search their houses for things that they would take on a long, long trip to a distant deserted island. They'll be gone for weeks, maybe months. Provide this list and see how many of the items they can find. When they come back together, discuss the items they found.

List of items:

- Sunglasses
- Silly hat
- Favorite book
- Game
- Something so important to you that you can't be without it for a long time

Let the children share their finds with the group after the 5 minutes are up. Ask if there are other things they would take that weren't on the list.

ALTERNATE HANDS ON ACTIVITY/GAME

Supplies: Pieces of paper with the pairs of words written on them, one labeled UP and one labeled DOWN.

Suggested Time - 5-10 min

This game lets you choose between two alternatives. If you like the choice labeled UP, stand up. If you like the choice labeled DOWN, stay sitting down. You must make a choice, though. No one gets to stay in the middle; even if you like both choices the same, you must choose.

Pie / Cake

Cars / Motorcycles

Breakfast / Lunch

Christmas / your birthday

Skates / Skateboards

Cats / Dogs

Visit grandparents / visit a new place

Skittles / M&Ms

Sponge Bob / Spiderman

Online school / In person school

CLOSING THOUGHT OR SUMMATION FOR LESSON

Closing Prayer/Benediction – led by Adult | Suggested Time - 5 min

Have the repeat the centering breath exercise from the earlier prayer. When they have settled, remind them that our lives are a journey towards God, and that God is with us on that journey.

Actual Prayer:

God, as we journey towards a greater understanding of you, help us to rely on you as both travelling companion and guide. Help us remember that the birth of Jesus was the end of Mary and Joseph's journey, but the beginning of Jesus' ministry and of your promise to always be with us. We know your love is with us always. Amen