

wonder

Dear Youth Leader,

Crosswalk is grateful for your ministry! This is our Christmas series, and we are working in-step with our teaching team as we dive into what it means to reignite a sense of wonder as we look at the Christmas story. In the busyness of school life, it's easy for Christmas to be a hectic season, not one where we stop and reflect on how the gospel is working in our life. Please share your stories and struggles with open hearts and encourage questions. Let's journey and question together, looking at the Christmas story with an eye on listening for God's direction, hoping through despair, living in praise, and believing in the impossible. Try to put yourself in their shoes (or ask them about it), because it is important for them to make the Christmas story part of their own story.

I am praying for you as you prep your time with your youth group, and can't wait to hear how it went. Please reach out if you have any questions, ideas, or stories! I'm here to support you!

Mark Ricalde

Youth Pastor, Crosswalk Redlands

Series Outline

Week 1 | Luke 1:5-25

zechariah in the temple

Week 2 | Luke 1:26-38

greetings, favored woman!

Week 3 | Luke 1:39-80

mary and zechariah's praise

Week 4 | Luke 2:1-20, 25-40

the messiah is born today

Suggested Format

Belonging | 25 - 30 min

Breakfast / Welcome

Sharing / Activity

Experience | 25 - 30 min

Worship

Message / Discussion

Momentum | 5 - 10 min

Challenge / Application

Announcements / Visioning

CRSWLK

THE WALK

zechariah in the temple

Preparation

Read Luke 1:5-25

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any resonant for your youth

Listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast

also listen to the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with Pastor Jon

Reflect on your experience

find a story in your life when you felt confused and blessed at the same time

Sharing Activity

Activity Idea

- This would be a good week to set some sort of service or giving goal in your youth group. Make a list of people you could help, or projects the group could give to.
- It's important to remember that wonder is not only something we receive, but something we can give.

Possible Projects

- Sponsor a kid for a year as a youth group, do a backpack/school supply drive for the nearest Boys & Girls club, go serve at a soup kitchen together, clean an older church members yard/house.

Discussion Questions

- What does "wonder" mean?
- What situations in life do we experience wonder?
- Is wonder always joyous and surprising? Or is it sometimes confusing and difficult?

Message Main Points

- Read the story together. Ask the group to relate to how Zechariah felt.
- Share a story from your life where you were confused at something, but it led to a sense of wonder. Ask the kids to think of a story from their own life.
- Zechariah and Elizabeth are "righteous" and "careful to obey," but they receive the "punishment" of being unable to conceive. What does this teach us about the way the world is?
- When we get disappointed, do we continue to hope and pray?
- What do we think about making Zechariah mute? Is this a punishment or a blessing? How does this add to the theme of wonder Zechariah is experiencing?

Application

Make a list of promises you feel that God has fulfilled in your life, then make a list of promises that God has yet to fulfil. Spend some time saying thank you to God, and then imagining what God still has in store for you!

Challenge

Like Zechariah's mute months, how can we tune out the noise and listen for what God is trying to do this Christmas season in our lives and hearts?

greetings, favored woman!

Preparation

Read Luke 1:26-38

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any resonant for your youth

Listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast

also listen to the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with Pastor Jon

Reflect on your experience

find a story in your life where God called you to do the impossible

Sharing Activity

Activity Idea

- find some impossible minute to win it games. Have some fun hosting a mini game show where students come to the front and compete while everyone watches and cheers. It will be fun!

Possible Icebreaker Questions

- Why do we get so excited about facing challenging odds?
- Why do we love underdog stories, of people pulling off the impossible?
- Do we still believe that God is a God who pulls off the impossible in our lives?

Message Main Points

- “Favor” in our text could be translated as “greetings, woman who is being pursued by grace.” What does that change for you.
- Mary is rightly confused at Gabriel’s message, and Gabriel explains the work of the Holy Spirit, and sends her to her cousin Elizabeth. What does this teach us about the importance of community? How can we find people who are walking in similar situations as we are?
- Do we believe this statement: The impossible is always possible with God?
- Share your story where God called you to do something you felt was impossible.

Discussion Questions

- Where, when, and how have you seen God’s favour and grace show up in your life?
- Should we have wonder and fear when we talk to God? Honestly, when we pray it might feel difficult to do so with full emotion. How can we improve that?
- What are you most afraid of? What are you most excited for? God is probably just on the other side of that, tugging at our hearts, hoping we have the courage to step forward.

Application

What is God calling you to do that seems impossible? Volunteer at your church? Confront a friend who’s behaviour is hurting them and those around them? Invite a friend to church? Share your story in front of others?

Challenge

Talk to someone about what you feel God is calling you to do (ex. Mary going to Elizabeth). Pray for the courage to answer the call!

mary and zechariah's praise

Preparation

Read Luke 1:39-80

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any resonant for your youth

Listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast

also listen to the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with Pastor Jon

Reflect on your experience

find a story in your life where all you could do was sing and praise God

Sharing Activity

Activity Idea

- If you don't usually do music in your group, the week before Christmas is a great time to sing some Christmas songs together. You can ask someone or a team to plan some songs ahead, or sing along to youtube.

Possible Icebreaker Questions

- What are you most excited for this Christmas?
- Have you seen God at work this Christmas season?
- Do you feel busy and anxious, or is the childlike feeling of cheer and wonder starting to come back?

Message Main Points

- Mary hurries to Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a friend and family, someone who knows a bit about what she is going through, and won't judge her for being pregnant before marriage. She is anxious to not be alone. What can we learn about seeking others to help us in difficult times? What can we learn about being a safe person like Elizabeth? Share a related story.
- Our text has a song of praise from Mary, and a prophetic song of praise from Zechariah. God working the impossible in their lives led them to sing! How can we learn to live like this?

Discussion Questions

- This Christmas story has good outcomes only. What do we do about people this Christmas season who are still "in the waiting?" What do we do about people who are experiencing loss and sorrow this Christmas season?
- After the events of our story, verse 65-66 shows how awe (or wonder) fell on the neighbourhood, and they were reflection on the events and wondering what the future held. Does sharing our stories bring awe, wonder, and reflection to others?

Application

Buy a bunch of Christmas cards and put them out with pens and markers. Have students write a song of praise to God for what he has done in their life this year. The students can share if willing, and then take them home to put on their tree or fireplace this season.

Challenge

May we be filled with wonder this Christmas and choose to praise!

the messiah is born today

Preparation

Read Luke 2:1-20,25-40

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any resonant for your youth

Listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast

also listen to the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with Pastor Jon

Reflect on your experience

think about your favourite Christmas experiences as a teenager

Sharing Activity

Activity Idea

- Go around asking students to share about their Christmas week. Move the conversation away from things and what presents people got. Make sure everyone celebrates what everyone shares by clapping and cheering. Highlight how joy is found in so many different ways in each of our own homes and lives.

Possible Icebreaker Questions

- It could be fun to do a Christmas story quiz from Luke 2. There are many options and formats on the internet.

Lessons From The Christmas Story

- Lesson 1: Believe in the impossible. Verse 8-16.
 - Why did the angels show up to shepherds? How did they react? Did they leave their sheep as they ran for Bethlehem?
 - For us to believe, it often requires a stopping of regular life, and then responding to God's gospel announcement. We find ourselves in surprising situations, praising God!
- Lesson 2: Hold it in your heart, reflect on it often. Verse 17-20.
 - Mary, is not passive in this story. It's easy for the spotlight to shift to the exciting parts. But what Mary does is actively reflect and focus on what God is doing. She is listening for the thread of the gospel, and she is hoping to hold it close to her heart.
- Lesson 3: Wait for God to work, expect it to pierce your heart. Verse 25-35.
 - We believe in the impossible, we reflect on how God is moving, and then we hope Simeon's prophecy comes true of us. We hope that Jesus in our life brings a salvation that pierce's our soul. In other words, we hope that Jesus doesn't work in the grand acts of our life, but he acts in the deepest darkest corners of our hearts. This is difficult, but we can trust Jesus.

Application

Is the wonder of Christmas only for December? What are ways we can take what we learn in the Christmas season and apply it all year?

Challenge

With the new year approaching, ask students to set goals on what they want to hold onto in their heart, and how they can make reflecting on what God has done a habit.

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A Final Note,

Life gets crazy. Sometimes we walk into a room knowing we haven't prepped enough. A high-schooler might walk in with the weight of a hard week on their minds, and the last place they want to be is youth group. The teenage community you are leading will have cliques, crazy couples, and apathetic kids. All this to say that teaching in this scenario will rarely feel like you did a great job. Don't worry, you don't need to. **Jesus shows up.**

If every week you
eat together,
pray together,
worship together,
and study the word together,
then you have faithfully structured the youth time for God to work.

Thank you for your effort and compassionate heart.
I'm a leader in the church because of influencers like you!

Mark Ricalde

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