



## Session Overview

### Upper Primary (Xstream)

Tuesday 04 October 2011

### Angels' praise

Series: Christmas praise

Bible passage: Luke 2:8–20

Session aim: To celebrate that God became human

**Preparation for you: This Advent we prepare by joining in the songs of praise surrounding Jesus' entry into the world. Familiarity can easily blind us to the radical nature of the words we shall be reading. Although Mary's was earlier, we read Zechariah's song first to start with John the Baptist and then move on to Jesus. In Zechariah's song look for what he says about the character of God and the nature of God's promise. How is that promise about to be fulfilled?**

Mary's song touches on similar themes. Look for the way she majors on the character of God. What emerge as the major themes? But Mary has also grasped the upside down nature of what God is going to do in Jesus. He is good news for the lowly, the hungry and the dependent. But what does she say about the rich, the well-fed and those in positions of authority? What are the implications for us? Her song demonstrates her own faith and willingness to go with God's plan, however costly at a personal level. How do we face up to a similar challenge? The angels celebrate the goodness of God as they see the wonder of what he is doing. How might we recapture this joyful praise of the angels, this wonder at the birth of Jesus that we cover in a broad overview in the fourth week? Finally, Simeon's song shares with the others the ideas of promise and salvation. But Simeon has seen something else – Jesus is not just for Israel, but for all people. How can we recapture that vision of the great love and inclusive grace of God? How can we ensure that our churches and our groups are this open?

**Preparation for your group:** Our 8 to 11s may feel that they already know the Christmas story too well, so this series will challenge them to think about the meaning behind the story.

In Session 9, the children are challenged to get themselves ready for Jesus and to think about how they can help others to do the same.

Accepting what others want and doing it willingly is not always something that 8 to 11s are keen on, so they may be challenged by some of the activities in Session 10. At this age, they are starting to think more clearly about who to trust, so the words of Mary will encourage them to see how God has kept his promises and therefore, is trustworthy.

The children are given the opportunity to look at the real significance of Jesus' birth as they explore why the angels talk of 'a saviour' and why that is 'good news'.

Session 12 is a stand-alone session designed to be used across the 3 to 11 age range. If your church is in need of a 'Christmas special', then this is the one to use. Conversely, if you're not meeting on 27 December and need a session to miss out – then this is the one!

Our 8 to 11s will probably be thinking a lot about what they can get for Christmas so there is a challenge to think about the real gift of Christmas – Jesus coming for everyone! There is the opportunity to look beyond themselves, and pray for the world.

**Downloads summary:** Xstream 11 (pdf), Template for 'God became man' (pdf), Xstream 11 (pdf)

## Activities

### Good news!

**Why:** to think about good news

**With:** *Xstream 11*

**Duration:** 5 minutes

**Description:** 1 Give out *Xstream 11* and ask the children to find pages 2 and 3, which show things that could be considered good news.

2 Invite the children to work in pairs and decide how good the news on each card is, on a scale of 1 to 10. Encourage them to write the score in the box provided.

3 Bring the group together and compare the scores! Talk about what they would think the best news in the world would be.

4 Explain that today they're going to find out the best news ever.

**Resources:** *Xstream 11* (pdf)

**Themes:** Here with me, Becomes human, Jesus to be born

# Bible with Xstream

**Why:** to celebrate that God became human

**With:** *Xstream 11*, *SU Bible Timeline*

**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Description:** **1 Definitions**

Give out *Xstream 11* and invite the children to look at page 4. Challenge the children to work in pairs to work out the anagrams and match them to the definitions. Allow two or three minutes for this and then make sure that they have the right answers (answers are upside down at the bottom of the page)! Challenge the children to listen out for when these words appear in today's story.

## **2 Timeline**

Ask the children to find a partner and look at the *Bible Timeline*. Challenge them to see how many times they can find where people received good news (for instance, when Abraham was told he was going to have a baby, when Daniel wasn't eaten by the lions). See which pair can come up with the most ideas in two minutes. Ask the children how they think people might have celebrated on these occasions.

## **3 Read the Bible**

If the children have Bibles, help them to find Luke 2:8–20. Invite the children to do a 'dramatic reading' with a narrator, a group of shepherds and a group of angels. Alternatively, read the passage to them with as much drama as possible. Ask them to identify when the words 'good news', 'Christ', 'angels' and 'Saviour' appeared. Ask them what the good news was.

## **4 Xstream 11**

Invite the children to turn to page 5 of *Xstream 11*. Explain that they need to create a newspaper report of the visit of the angels to the shepherds. Talk together about what the headline should be, trying to make it as catchy as possible while still conveying the message.

Challenge the children to complete the rest of the page in pairs. Encourage the children to use the Bible as a reference for their newspaper article and not just what they think they know.

**Section 1:** Before they complete the picture, invite them to think about how the shepherds felt when they saw the angel.

**Section 2:** Invite them to put the angel's message in their own words here and then add the angel choir's song.

**Section 3:** Challenge them to imagine that they are interviewers talking to the shepherds. Help them to use the Bible verses to find the shepherds' words. What questions would they have asked the shepherds?

**Section 4:** Encourage the children to think about how Mary and Joseph were feeling (by reading verses 17–19) before they complete the expressions on their faces.

**Section 5:** Encourage the children to think about how they want to sum up this amazing event at the end of their article.

## **5 Chat**

Ask the children why they think a saviour is 'good news'? Why is it good news for the whole world? Look back to the *Bible Timeline* and see that the picture of Jesus being born is the first picture on the third strip. Ask the children what changed after Jesus came?

Ask the children why they think the angels were excited about Jesus being born. Why did they tell the shepherds? Who did the shepherds tell?

Challenge the children about whether they celebrate Jesus being born (rather than just having a good Christmas), and whether they share the good news with other people. Encourage them to think quietly about who they could tell the good news to, and to fill in the space on page 5.

## **6 Response**

Invite the children to read out their 'summing up' paragraphs as words of praise.

**Resources:** Xstream 11 (pdf)

**Themes:** Here with me, Becomes human, Jesus to be born

## God became man

**Why:** to celebrate God becoming human

**With:** template (optional)

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Description:** 1 Either print off the 'man' template at [Web resources](#) or invite the children to fold a sheet of paper in half, draw a man and cut out two identical 'man' shapes.

2 Encourage the children to stick the two men together around the edges, leaving a small gap at the top.

3 On a separate sheet of paper, challenge the children to write down everything they think of, when they say 'God'. For example, his power, his love and things he can do.

4 Ask the children to stuff everything they have written into the shape they made earlier – it won't be easy!

5 Explain that when Jesus became human he was still God, with all the power and characteristics of God still inside him.

**Resources:** [Template for 'God became man' \(pdf\)](#)

**Themes:** Here with me, Becomes human, Jesus to be born

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