

Session 43

Trusting Mary

Mary trusted God completely, even though she was probably only 14 years old – not that much older than the children in your group. Help our 8 to 11s understand that they are not too young for God to ask them to do things, and that they can trust him completely.

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Starting, Into the Bible* and *Living the life* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Options to start your session...

Xstream

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to find out about angels – God’s messengers

You will need: copies of the *Xstream* sheet from page 305

- 1 Ask the children how God gave people messages in Bible times. (By word of mouth or through prophets or angels.) Say that sometimes God spoke directly to people, as he did with Moses.
- 2 Give out copies of the *Xstream* sheet from page 305.
- 3 Explain that prophets were people who spoke God’s words, and angels are also called God’s messengers. Sometimes they appear as angels, but not always – they can appear in human form.
- 4 Read the story on the sheet to the children, or encourage them to read it for themselves. Discuss together the questions at the bottom of the sheet.

Trust game

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to trust other people

You will need: some eggs, some cream crackers, a blindfold

- 1 Place the eggs on the floor (keeping the cream crackers out of sight).
- 2 Ask for a volunteer who is willing to be blindfolded. Explain that they must trust you to lead them through the eggs without breaking any.
- 3 After the volunteer has been blindfolded, indicate to everyone not to give the game away and replace the eggs with cream crackers.
- 4 Lead the blindfolded volunteer through the ‘eggs’. When they tread on a cream cracker – which they think is an egg – remind them that they can trust you.
- 5 Remove the blindfold. Show the unbroken eggs.
- 6 Explain it isn’t always easy to trust God, but he never lets us down.

Aim

To trust our promise-keeping God

Bible passage

Luke 1:26–38

READY TO USE activity

Role play

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to think about being asked to do an important job

- 1 Ask the children to get into groups of two or three. Give each group one of the following jobs:
You have been chosen to carry the Olympic torch.
You have been invited to give a speech to the whole school.
You have been asked to represent your school at a dinner with the prime minister.
- 2 Invite the groups to act out what they might say when they find out which job they have been given.
- 3 Encourage each group to show everyone what they have done. Talk about the different reactions to the jobs.

Tip for Leaders: Think about the children in your group and choose varied activities that you think will best suit their learning styles and ages.

Into the Bible – options to explore the Bible passage...

READY TO USE
activity

Bible exploration

Activity time: 15–25 minutes

Aim: to trust our promise-keeping God

1 Set the scene

Talk with the children about the sorts of promises they make. Ask them whether they keep them.

Invite the children to get into pairs or threes and give each group a Bible. Ask whether they think God keeps the promises he makes. Challenge them to prove it by reading the last sentence of the sixth verse of Psalm 146 (preferably from the Good News Bible).

Give each group one of the following references and get leaders to help them find it: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 11:1–3; Isaiah 49:1; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 52:9,10. (You may like to write each reference on a sticky note so that each group can mark the place in their Bibles when they have found it.)

When they have found their Bible references, ask the children to work out who is making the promise (*God*) and who the promise is about (*Jesus*).

Explain that, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God had promised to send someone to save his people – a Saviour. Display the *Bible Timeline* and ask the children to find the name of the prophet through whom God made this promise (*Isaiah*) and the picture where God has kept his promise (*'God becomes human'*).

2 Read the Bible verses

Invite a confident reader to read Luke 1:26–38 to the group, as clearly and dramatically as possible. If appropriate, the children could follow the verses in their Bible. Give each small group one of the following questions to answer from the Bible verses they have just heard:

Who was the messenger?

What was the message?

Who was the message for?

3 Respond

Talk about how Mary was probably a very ordinary girl, aged about 13 or 14. At first, she was confused and frightened, but then she trusted God completely for what must have seemed a very scary task. Ask the children what they might need to trust God for – something that seems impossible or, at the very least, scary? Encourage them to remember Mary and how she trusted God, who always keeps his promises.

Encourage the children to look at the Bible verses and tell you what Mary said to show that she was ready to trust God and do what he wanted (verse 38). Challenge them to think about whether they are ready to trust God and do what he wants. Read verses 37 and 38 all together. Follow this with a short time of silence so that everyone can reflect on what they have learned and pray about anything they need to trust God for.

4 Act out the story

If you have time, ask them in their groups to act out the story, with one child taking the part of Gabriel and the other, Mary. They could use their Bibles to read their lines. If there are groups of three, the third child could be the narrator. Allow time for the groups to show the others what they have done.



Story with visual aid

Activity time: 20 minutes

Aim: to trust our promise-keeping God

You will need: split pins

1 Make the story strips

In advance, cut out five strips of paper or card for each child, about 3cm wide and 15cm long.

Give each child their set of strips and show them how to join them up, end to end, using four split pins to make one long strip with five sections. Challenge the children to bend their strips into as many letters of the alphabet as they can.

2 Tell the story together

Make sure the children know how to make the story strip into the following letters: 'G', 'M', 'J', 'L', 'S'. (The letter 'M' can be made by holding the strips diagonally and folding one end of a strip back behind another, or leaving them straight, with one side of the 'M' longer than the other.) Explain that the letters the children make with their story strip represent different names in the Bible, as follows:

G = God, Gabriel

M = Mary

J = Joseph, Jesus

L = Lord

S = Son, servant

Invite the children to sit in a large circle. Read Luke 1:26–38 to them (from the Good News Bible, if possible). Encourage them to listen very carefully. Each time one of the names is mentioned, pause and encourage everyone to make their story strip into the appropriate letter. You may want to read the verses twice.

Then ask the children to get into pairs or threes and challenge them to remember the story and tell it to each other, using their story strips.

3 Respond

Talk with the children about Mary's reaction to the news the angel gave her. At first, she was confused, but then she responded by saying that she was God's servant and she would do what he wanted. Encourage the children to tell you what they think about that.

Ask the children: 'What did the angel say to Mary when she was feeling scared?' (Verses 28,30–33.)

Challenge the children to think of times when they need to remember that too. Ask: 'Who did Mary trust? Who can you trust?'

Invite the children to write the words, 'The Lord is with you!' on one side of their story strip – one word on each individual strip. Then, if they wish and feel they are ready to do so, invite them to write, 'I am the Lord's servant' on the other side of the story strip, again writing one word on each strip. Challenge the children to sign it with their name if they really mean it, but make sure no one feels pressured to make a response they are not ready to make. Allow time for the children to pray and respond to what they have learned.

Invite the children to take their story strips home as a reminder that God is with them and wants them to trust him and be his servants, just like Mary. Encourage them to use their story strips to retell the story to their families.

4 What next?

Display the *Bible Timeline* with a gap between the Old and New Testament sections. Explain that there was a space of several hundred years of Bible history before the angel came to Mary. Invite the children to look at the *New Testament* section and see the first event shown: 'God becomes human'. Say that what the angel said came true, and they will be finding out more about that during the next few sessions. Point out that, as a historical event, the birth of Jesus was so significant that our calendars are based on it. (As calendars have been adjusted to be more accurate, over hundreds of years, the date of Jesus' birth is not exactly year 0.)

More on this theme

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

Session 41 Of royal descent, Matthew 1:18–25; Isaiah 7:14

Session 42 Royal visit, Matthew 2:1–12; Isaiah 60:1–3

Session 44 The praising shepherds, Luke 2:1–20

Session 45 Happy Christmas! Luke 2:1–20; Matthew 2:1–12

Living the life – options to help live God’s way...

Craft activity

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to respond to what we have learned about God

You will need: a large sheet or roll of paper, a Bible concordance (optional)

- 1 Challenge the children to think of as many words as they can to describe God. For example: Almighty, Healer, just, compassionate, Creator, promise-keeping, Redeemer, sight-giving, storm-stopping, water-walking, crowd-feeding...
- 2 Write ‘Trust God!’ in large letters in the centre of a large sheet or roll of paper. Encourage the children to create a poster in the style of a graffiti wall, using some of the descriptions they have already thought of. They could add comments of their own about trusting God.
- 3 Encourage your older children (with the help of other leaders) to find the word ‘trust’ in a concordance and choose some Bible verses to add to the ‘wall’.

Creative praise

Activity time: 15 minutes

Aim: to praise God for his faithfulness

You will need: praise template from page 306

- 1 Explain that Mary sang a song of praise to God when she learned that she was to be the mother of his Son. Read it together from Luke 1:46–55.
- 2 Give a copy of the praise template from page 306 to each child. If appropriate, invite them to work in groups of up to four.
- 3 Allow several minutes for the children to use the blank templates to create their own psalm of praise. Those children who may be struggling with writing could draw pictures instead. Make sure leaders are available to help the children if necessary.
- 4 Spend some time reading each psalm and praising God together.

READY TO USE
activity

Prayer activity

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to ask God to help us trust him

You will need: copies of the *Xstream* sheet from page 307

- 1 Give each child a copy of the *Xstream* sheet from page 307. Ask them to look at the list, which suggests different times when we might need to trust God.
- 2 Allow a few minutes for the children to tick those that are appropriate to them, and to add their own ideas on the blank sheet.
- 3 Invite them to tell you their ideas and combine their suggestions, with some of those listed on the *Xstream* sheet, into a response prayer. Begin with: ‘Please, God, when we are...’ and then mention an idea from the children or the sheet before responding together: ‘Help us to trust in you.’

Extra ideas for the session and beyond...

Show a clip of Gabriel’s visit to Mary from a DVD of the Christmas story.

Interview a church member about their own experience of trusting God. If possible, choose someone who is known to the children in your group.

Find ideas for Advent Sunday in the SU book *All Resource Christmas*.

Snow angel?



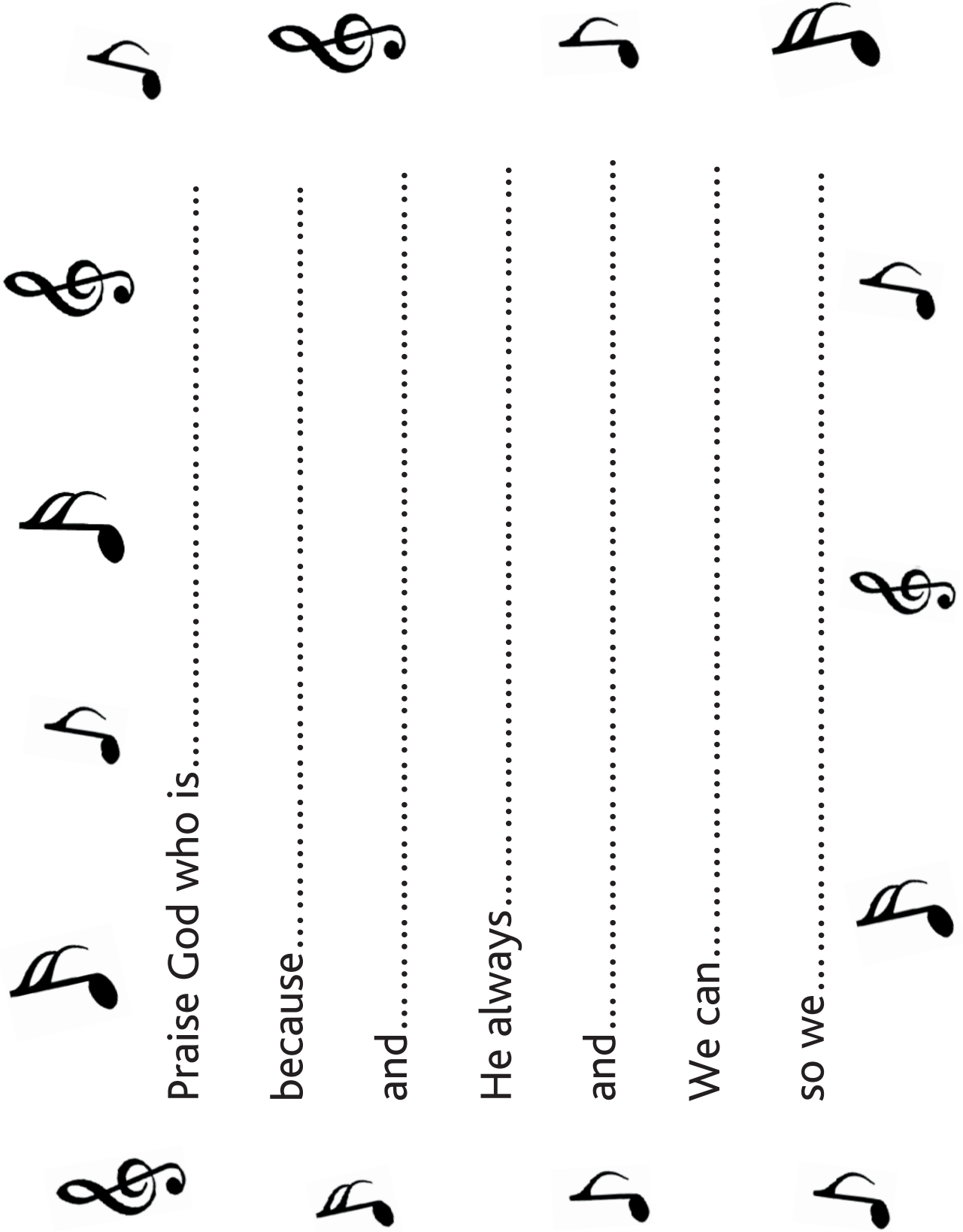
Emily was driving up a steep hill into town in heavy snow. The traffic was going slower and slower, until it eventually stopped. She couldn't turn around as there were cars coming the other way, and every time she tried to move forwards the car tyres wouldn't grip the road and the car slid backwards.

Emily realised that if she could just turn into a side road she could drive downhill, back home and be safe. But the car wouldn't turn. Suddenly, a man appeared and asked if she would like him to push the car. He pushed and helped the car to turn, and Emily was safe, pointing downhill on a nice empty road. She looked in her mirror to wave a "thank you", but there was no one there.

What do you think?

Did the man walk away really quickly in the slippery snow?
Or was the man an angel?

Talk to some friends to find out what they think.



Praise God who is.....

because.....

and.....

He always.....

and.....

We can.....

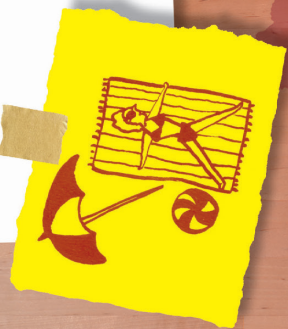
so we.....

How do you trust?

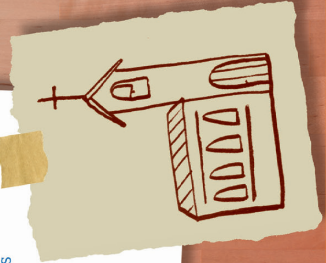


A sheet of white lined paper with a rainbow illustration at the bottom right, taped to the top right of the page.

- I'm watching TV
- I'm on the computer
- I'm in the bath
- I'm having a shower
- I'm eating a meal
- I'm in the car
- I'm on the bus
- I'm riding my bike
- I'm listening to my mp3 player
- I'm on my mobile
- I'm on holiday
- I'm not on holiday



- Someone I know is lonely
- Someone I know is worried
- Someone I know is frightened
- Someone I know is upset
- I'm nervous
- I'm very nervous
- I'm not sure what is going on
- I don't know what to do
- I'm awake
- I'm fast asleep
- I'm half-asleep
- I'm at home
- I'm with my friends
- I'm at school
- I'm at church



I can trust God when...

- I can't trust anyone else
- I trust others (I can trust him too)
- I'm lonely
- I'm worried
- I'm frightened
- I'm excited
- I'm sad
- I'm happy
- I'm impatient
- I'm well
- I'm upset
- I'm ill
- Someone I know is ill