

The Certainty of Christmas

In uncertain times it is comforting to hold on to what we can be certain of, especially as we approach Christmas this year. Christmas 2020 might look a little different, we really don't know, but one thing we can hold on to is that December 25th will come regardless.

This is a one-off programme, that explores the certainty of God's love for us at Christmas time. It includes a non-rehearsal nativity play, games to play and some good questions to get conversations going.

This one-off programme explores Christmas alongside the New Zealand curriculum value of :

RESPECT: Manaaki/āwhi

Key themes: Aroha, safety, physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being, hauora

THE CERTAINTY OF CHRISTMAS

We are rolling out a series of resources for Christmas 2020, with adaptations to suit all levels of potential Covid-19 restrictions. Each resource is easy to use and requires minimal set up or materials, perfect for our uncertain times:


- An afterschool one-off programme
- A community Christmas event
- An Intergenerational Christmas church service
- Christmas at home resources

These will all be made available for free at our Scripture Union Breakthrough website:

www.sunzbreakthrough.org.nz



The Certainty of Christmas

Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Christmas carols as the children arrive • Set up your room with Christmas streamers • Have your leaders wearing Christmas hats or decorations!
Games	<p>Choose one of the following games to begin your programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby names: You will need a timer and a bag of Scrabble letters, one for each letter of the alphabet. Put children into pairs or small groups with a pen and paper per group. Explain that they will have one minute to write down as many names as they can think of starting with the letter of the alphabet that gets called out. Which group can come up with the most? Play this a few times. • How many clothes pegs?: You will need a jar and clothes pegs (or other smallish baby-related items). Fill a jar with clothes pegs. Ask each child to guess how many there are in the jar as they arrive at the club. Tell them the answer at the end of the session. Tip: count the items as they go into the jar! • Bobbing for cotton balls: You will need a timer, bag of cotton balls, two bowls and a tablespoon. Fill one of the bowls with cotton balls, choose a child and give them the tablespoon. Blindfold them. Ask them to scoop up as many cotton balls as they can using only the spoon and put them into the empty bowl. Give them ten seconds.
Storytime	<p>Christmas shows us God’s love for us—something we can be certain of. Tell the story of Christmas, using one of these options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poem on pg 4 • From the Lion Bible for Children, pg 218 • Watch Saddleback Kids The Birth of Jesus https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3656G6tWul
Talk Time	<p>Talk with a partner or in a small group (with a leader per group) about how uncertain things have been this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has this made you feel? • What can we be certain of? • How does this make you feel? <p>• Talk together as a whole group about their ideas and add your own.</p>
Explore	<p>What does the Bible have to say about what we can be certain about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory Verse: Romans 8:39: ‘Nothing in all creation can separate us from God’s love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!’ Display this verse so the children can see it (on a large sheet of paper, whiteboard or PowerPoint). Read it together. The children could create actions to go with the verse, or use these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God loves me (point to yourself) • God loves you (point to your neighbour) • God loves all of us (point around the group)
Activity	<p>Choose one of the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will need: scissors, stapler and/or tape, green, red and yellow card, felt pens. • If you want, pre-cut hand shapes from green card, round bauble shapes from red card, and star shapes from yellow card. Have the children write their names on a number of hand shapes. Share them with others. Make a Christmas tree with the hands. Make sure one hand has ‘Jesus’ written on it. Decorate the ‘hand’ tree with red baubles and a yellow star at the top. 
	<p>Finish by talking about what we can be certain of: God’s love for us, our friends and our whānau.</p>

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Nativity without rehearsal

This short nativity play can be used in several different ways.

1. Have a collection of props to go with the story. Sit the children in a circle. Have one leader read the poem. As you come to each person in the story, place that prop in the centre of the circle.

You will need:

- a girl doll for Mary
- a boy doll for Joseph
- two angel figures
- shepherds and sheep
- wise people and presents
- manger
- baby Jesus

2. Use the 'Christmas on the Move' nativity figures to accompany the story. You could cut them out and blue tack them to a board as you read the poem. You can find them here:

<https://www.strandz.org.nz/christmas-on-the-move.html>

3. Choose leaders and children to be actors as you read. They can mime and spontaneously act it out as you read, no rehearsal involved.

4. Plan the telling beforehand and have your leaders dress up as characters in the story, who act it out as it is read.

5. Prerecord yourselves acting out the story beforehand and play the video to the children. You can do this very simply with a cell phone.



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Verse One:

Once there was an angel
 Came down to visit Mary.
 She found Archangel Gabriel
 really rather scary!
 ‘Don’t worry,’ said the angel,
 ‘you’ll have a baby son.
 Call him Jesus, if you please,
 he’ll be God’s chosen one.’

Verse Two:

Quick! Send another angel.
 Put Joseph’s mind at peace!
 It wasn’t hard for him to guess
 the baby wasn’t his.
 ‘Don’t worry,’ said the angel,
 ‘the baby is God’s Son.
 This is the Messiah,
 the prophets said would come.’

Verse Three:

At first it was one angel
 who flew above the hills.
 The shepherds were quite terrified,
 stood frozen – very still.
 ‘Don’t worry,’ said the angel,
 ‘at what I’m going to say.
 Good news I tell you! God’s own Son
 has just been born today.’

Verse Four:

Then many, many angels
 filled the night-time sky.
 ‘Praise God who sends his Son down from
 his heavenly home on high.’
 The shepherds rushed to see the child –
 he was lying in the hay,
 Just like they’d heard the angel say.
 Christ was born today!

Verse Five:

From far away wise people
 Came following a star
 They came to visit Jesus
 Brought precious gifts afar.
 Special, smelly, precious gifts
 Myrrh, frankincense, and gold
 Worthy of a new born King
 God with us, as foretold.

*(adapted from More Christmas Wrapped Up,
 published by Scripture Union 2007)*