

# THE GIFT OF OBEDIENCE

All Activity Sheets

## KEY WORDS

LOVE BELIEVE OBEY PERISH ETERNAL LIFE

## BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38

## LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students desire to obey God

## MEMORY VERSE

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV\*).

## PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

“What gift do you want for Christmas?” is probably the most frequent question we hear during the Christmas season. The lists of gifts that children make seem endless, and every day they seem to add something new.

This lesson is the first of four in which we’ll study about “the gifts” that were given at the first Christmas. With the exception of the gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh) that the wise men of the east brought to Jesus, these gifts are not material, but part of the worship that we must give to the King of kings.

Our world is full of spectacular gifts of all kinds and styles. Materialism absorbs much of many people’s lives. This special time has become an exchange of expensive gifts, but they do not fill the spiritual void in people’s soul. As you prepare these lessons, ask the Lord to help you teach the students the true meaning of Christmas. May everyone understand the importance of valuing the gift of love that God gave to humanity: Jesus, the Savior of the world.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

You've heard the Christmas story so many times that it must seem monotonous and ordinary. But we know that is not so. It is still a spectacular story that reminds us of the suffering and triumph of mankind. Jesus did not come to a perfect family that was expecting a small son, and whose parents expected him to grow up to be the Savior of the world. On the contrary, God chose two common people, two who were not even married yet, to take care of his son here on earth. God chose them, but they still had to accept God's offer. And, their obedience did not come without effort, because they were human, and fear is part of the human condition. These two incidents in the Scriptures show us a pattern that will help us follow God's will.

Read Luke 1:26-38. In Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, she heard a great announcement from God: she would be the mother of the only Son of God. Mary's reaction was a natural reaction of anyone. Not only did she have the opportunity of giving birth to such a "special" child (it filled her with panic), but she also did not understand how it could happen since she was still a virgin.

Gabriel patiently explained how God would do this through the Holy Spirit. He even revealed another miracle that God had recently done: her sterile cousin Elizabeth was also pregnant. Gabriel convinced Mary that God had a good plan in mind and that he was capable of carrying it out. Mary believed in the message and accepted her role in the plan.

Read Matthew 1:18-25. Joseph had the same experience soon after. When Mary's pregnancy was confirmed he wanted to do what was right. For Joseph, that meant breaking off his engagement to Mary because marrying her in such a condition would bring public shame to Mary. Joseph was worried about Mary's reputation, because he was a righteous man. But in dreams, an angel explained how all these things were within God's plan for him, for Mary, and for the whole world. When Joseph got up, he obeyed God by accepting Mary as his wife.

We can see this same pattern in our efforts to obey God. We hear the amazing demand of the gospel, which catches our hearts. Then our natural fears arise - fear of change, fear of the unknown - and it makes us hesitate. Then the Spirit teaches us the truth (John 14:26, 16:13). Our fears become quiet, we obey and follow Christ. Following our salvation, this process is repeated many times as God asks us to take new steps of faith.

Teacher, how can we help children accept this pattern of obedience? In several ways:

We proclaim the wonderful stories of the Gospels in ways that children can understand.

We advise and console the little ones when they suffer and cry.

We remain alert to the Holy Spirit as he speaks to the children.

We help them understand God's desire to save them and guide them for the rest of their lives.

We guide children to be attentive to recognize and accept God's call and make a commitment to follow the Master.

We are collaborators with God in helping children, from an early age, decide to obey the Lord.

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

### Important gifts

For this activity you will need four lined boxes as gifts; each box must have a card inside with one of the following words: Obedience, Savior, Praise, and Worship. In each session of this unit, you will open the box containing the gift that you will study in the session. Gather your students in front of the boxes and ask them: "What do you prefer, to give or receive gifts?" Surely the majority of this age group will respond that they prefer to receive. Explain: The Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In this series of lessons, we'll study about the gifts we can offer Jesus.

Open the box that corresponds to this session and ask them to read aloud what the card says: Obedience.

## TEACH THE LESSON

Gather your students to hear the Bible story and keep your Bible open to Matthew 1:18-25.

### Mary and Joseph's gift

"Time passes very fast," Mary thought. "In just a few months, Joseph and I will get married." Mary was a young woman who loved and obeyed God. She lived in a town called Nazareth. She was the fiancée of a young carpenter named Joseph. One day, Mary was sitting in her house, when suddenly in front of her appeared a man dressed in a shining robe. "Who could it be?" thought Mary. "Is it an angel, a messenger of God?"

It was indeed the angel Gabriel. Mary was paralyzed with fear. "Greetings, Mary," said the angel Gabriel. "Do not be afraid. God loves you very much and is with you." Mary felt very afraid; her eyes widened in amazement and she kept looking at the angel Gabriel who was standing in front of her. "God is pleased with you and sent me to give you Good News." Mary listened attentively to the angel who said, "Very soon, something special will happen to you. You will have a baby! And you must call him Jesus. He will be a great King. He will be King forever and will help many people because he is the Son God."

Mary tried to understand what the angel was saying, but it seemed impossible. "How can this be possible?" Mary asked.

"Mary, the baby will be conceived by the power of God. God can do things that no one else can do. You are going to give birth to the Son of God."

Mary trusted in the power of God, knew that he would fulfill his promise, and was happy to be chosen to be the mother of this special baby. When the angel left, Mary praised and glorified God with all her heart. Then she went to look for Joseph and told him everything that had happened with the angel. But Joseph was not very happy, and although he loved his fiancée very much, he decided that he would not marry her.

However, that night while Joseph was sleeping, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to marry your fiancée Mary. The baby is from the Holy Spirit. She will have a son and you must call him Jesus, because he will save the people from their sins."

When Joseph woke up, he knew what he should do. Instead of breaking his commitment to Mary, he decided to obey God, so he went to see her. "I have also seen the angel of God," said Joseph, "I will marry you." Mary and Joseph did not understand what was happening, but both loved God and wanted to obey him by being the earthly parents of the only Son of God: Jesus. They would be part of God's plans to bring the Savior of the world.

## CONNECT THE LESSON

### The Christmas cube

During the week before this session, make a model of the cube / gift box according to the instructions in Student Activity Sheet #258-A and #258-B. During the session hand out these activity sheets and guide the children to follow the instructions to make the gift box. Give them time to color, complete the missing words and assemble the gift box. As they work, allow them to talk and review what they learned in the Bible story. Comment on the words on the cube.

Encourage the children to take home their cubes and share the lesson with their families and friends.

## PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Make the outline of several gift boxes on thick sheets of paper and color them with colored pencils. Then write the words of the memory verse of the unit. Divide the text into 7 cards, as indicated by the bars [/]: "For God so loved the world/ that he gave / his one and only Son / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal" / (John 3:16).

Hide the cards in the room. Ask the children to look for them and try to arrange them in order when they find them. Help them organize the verse correctly and review it several times using the cards. These cards will serve you for the four sessions of this unit.

## WRAP-UP

### Pray

Lead the group in prayer, thanking God for teaching us to obey him.

### Encourage

Make sure your students pick up the items they used during this session and organize the room before leaving. Say goodbye emphasizing the importance of giving Jesus our daily obedience as a sign of our love for him.

### Invite

Remind the children that in the next session they will study about another gift we can offer God. Encourage them to continue inviting their friends to join the group.