

Paperless Christmas

The Adventures of Mary and Joseph – The Road Movie

Episode 2: Mary visits her cousin

Introduction

The following lesson outline offers you a way to work through the story in the video with your class group. There are a variety of possible activities. There are also links to other related videos and to further web resources and books available from Barnabas.

Preparation

Download the episode and any associated videos in advance (www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/) so that these are easily accessible to use on a whiteboard during the session. Print off a copy of the Bible story as well as the discussion starters and activity suggestions to be used with small groups.

Development

1. First Impressions – [Mary visits her cousin](#)

Play this second episode to the class. It tells the story of Mary's journey south from Nazareth to spend time with her cousin Elizabeth, who is also expecting a baby. This encounter is traditionally known as 'The Visitation'.

Ask the class:

- What did you like best about this episode?
- What made you smile?
- What did you find surprising?
- What didn't seem to make sense?
- What would you say was happening in this episode?
- Why do you think Mary chose to visit her cousin Elizabeth?
- What do you think they said to each other when they met?
- Which part of this story made the biggest impression on you?

2. Group work – what makes a true friend?

Hand out the following discussion starters to small groups.

- Who would you choose to go to and spend time with, if you wanted to get away for a while? Why?
- What qualities make someone a true friend?
- Where do you go when you need time out to think things through?
- What are the tests of a true friendship?
- What sorts of things cause a friendship to break down?
- Are there limits on what you would do for a friend?

Allow ten minutes for this and then ask one child per group to report back on what they talked about and what ideas they came up with.

Play the video [Mary travels to Bethlehem](#), which is part of Mary's imagined mobile phone conversation with Elizabeth as she travels by donkey to visit her.

3. The Story in the Bible

Read the Bible story for episode 2. You will find this below in the Contemporary English Version (CEV). There is also an easy-to-read retelling of this story in [The Barnabas Schools' Bible](#), story 243.

Luke 1:39-45

Mary visits Elizabeth

A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth. Then in a loud voice she said to Mary:

God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.

Here is a [word search](#) based on this reading.

Talk about the Bible story:

- What is in the Bible story that is not in the video? What is in the video that is not in the Bible story? Does the video help you understand the Bible story better? Which parts of the Bible story do you find puzzling?
- I wonder what it felt like to be Mary travelling alone and being away from home after all the strange things that had happened? I wonder what it felt like for Elizabeth to have her young cousin visit with such an incredible story to tell? I wonder what they talked about as they made their way to Elizabeth's home?

4. A Carousel of Group Activities

- The story of the miraculous birth of Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist, is sometimes missing from the telling of the Christmas story. However, in the Bible the two stories are interwoven. Read the story from Luke 1:1-25 and 39-80.

List the similarities and differences between the two supernatural births. What does each add to the other's story?

- 'God has blessed you...' (Luke 1:42-45). What a reassuring greeting Elizabeth gave her cousin, and even Elizabeth's baby inside was glad to see Mary (Luke 1:41). Our opening words of welcome to people can be so important.

Talk about how you greet others when you meet them: when you arrive at school, meeting people back from holiday, coming home, or just bumping into others at the shops.

What makes a good welcome?

- Mary feels so relaxed and safe with Elizabeth that she soon bursts into song! Read what she sings about (Luke 1:46-55).

Can you put the main points of the song into your own words and then illustrate this for a display?

- It seems that Mary spent at least three months with Elizabeth. In what ways do think this was a very important time for her?

Decide what they would have talked about; how they would have spent their time; what shopping would they have done; what trips out might they have made.

- Maybe they read the Bible (Old Testament) together, and possibly the story of Hannah and her miracle baby would have been a favourite. Find this story in 1 Samuel 1:1-28. There is a easy to read retelling of this story in [The Barnabas Schools' Bible](#), stories 107-8.

What similarities and differences can you find between this and Elizabeth and Mary's story?

- The Gospel writer Luke is claiming that both Mary's and Elizabeth's pregnancies were 'unnatural' for different reasons.

In your view, does this make the Christmas story easier or harder to believe?

What would you say to people who think these stories of 'miracle babies' just get in the way of the fun of Christmas?

5. Classroom Drama Ideas

Play the video for episode 2 again. Use this as an introduction to prompt some drama exercises:

- Put various unseen characters in the [hot seat](#) and hear their take on the events in this part of the story. Include:

the man who sold Mary the coach ticket; the coach driver; the neighbours back in Nazareth who saw Mary leave; a passer-by who saw Elizabeth meet Mary off the coach; Elizabeth's best friend in Jerusalem who has come over to meet Mary for the first time

- In the video we see them tune in to **BRF FM** on the radio. Imagine you are phoning this radio station to put in a music request to cheer Mary and Elizabeth up as they drive home. What would you say and what music would you ask for? Give your reasons. Maybe you could develop this into a telephone role play between yourself and someone playing the part of the radio show host.

6. Final reflection questions looking back on the session

- Who can you rely on to stick with you 'all the way'?
- How do you cope when others are putting on you and you feel like running away?
- Have you ever had to travel to somewhere alone, not sure what it is going to be like?
- What makes you feel safe and 'at home' again when you are somewhere new?
- Have you ever tried putting your deepest feelings into the words of a song or poem, like Mary did?

7. Further web links and useful Barnabas books

- [Assembly on Friendship](#)
- [Classroom activity ideas on the life of Mary, including discussion starters, project work and a simple rhyming version of Mary's song \(The Magnificat\)](#)

Useful Barnabas books

[Silent Night](#)

[Who's Hiding?](#)

[Countdown to Christmas with Timothy Bear](#)

[Joseph's Story of Christmas](#)

[Our Christmas Play](#)

[Emmanuel... assemblies for Christmas](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays 1](#)

[Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#)

[Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays Volume 2](#)

[Getting Ready for Christmas](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Puppets](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Cards & Crib](#)

[Christmas Make & Do](#)

[Have you seen Christmas?](#)

[The Road to Christmas Day](#)

[The Christmas Journey](#)

8. **Play Episode 2 again to finish off the lesson and as a taster to the next session**