

Here We Come!

Have an assortment of stuffed or toy lambs available so each child can pick one. How should the lambs be handled? Why? Look at the lambs together. How are they alike and different? What characteristic helps you tell one from the other? Name each one by a recognizable characteristic (the bell lamb, the pink ribbon lamb, the lamb with flowers). Place each lamb in a sack. Pass the sacks around the group several times. Without showing anyone else which lamb is in the bag, children peek in to see the identifying feature of the lamb they are holding. Children can take turns asking others for a specific lamb. "Keena, do you have the bell lamb?" If the answer is no, the child continues asking until that lamb is found. Then repeat the shuffle and activity.

Scripture Words and Worship

Sometimes we identify things by naming something they remind us of. Use some examples the children can experience (hard as a rock, cold as ice, soft as cotton). Whenever we see a lamb, we think about words like soft, gentle, or loving. Jesus is sometimes called the Lamb of God. Share the words of John when he looked up and saw Jesus (John 1:36).

Up and at `Em

Play a game of family visiting. Joseph and Mary can take baby Jesus to visit Elizabeth and Zechariah and baby John.

Hear My Cry

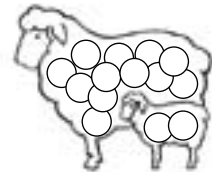
You can tell others about Jesus.

Scripture Words

Look, here is the Lamb of God!—John 1:36

Sense-ations

Use the sheep picture in the pattern section, page 43 to create a texture experience for the children. Dip cotton balls in craft glue and stick onto sheep.



Story Talking

People in Jesus' time were looking for someone special to come. They learned about this special person from their parents and grandparents. But while they were waiting, they did other things. Sometimes they got so busy with the other things that they forgot to be excited about the special person who would come. It was hard to wait and not know when something would finally happen.

Use this concept of "It's almost time" in a variety of activities to give the children the experience of anticipation and waiting. For example, set out snacks, but tell the children no one is to eat until you say it's time. Use phrases such as, "It's almost time. Get ready. It will be any minute now. Just a little longer. Wait." Observe the frustration and talk about it when they finally get to eat the snack.

Live and Learn

God sent Jesus to live on the earth. But not everyone knew how special he was. His parents, Joseph and Mary, knew. The shepherds who were at Bethlehem the night he was born knew. But when Jesus was growing up in Nazareth, people didn't realize he was the expected Messiah.

When he was about thirty, the time came for Jesus to begin his ministry. He would be telling people and showing people what God wanted. But he would need friends to help him in this work. After his baptism, he began to collect disciples. Share the story of his cousin John who took on the job of telling people to get ready, because Jesus was coming. Read about John in the first parts of Matthew and Luke. The text for the story comes from John 1:29–40.

Ask about brothers and sisters or other family members. Children may not understand the relationship of cousins, but they can talk about relatives who come to visit.

- Mary and Elizabeth were relatives, but they didn't live in the same place. They were both expecting new babies about the same time. When Mary's baby was born, he was named Jesus. When Elizabeth's baby was born, he was named John.
- Mary knew Jesus was God's special child. She knew he would grow up and do an important work for God.
- Elizabeth knew John was a special child to God too. She knew he would grow up and do an important work to help God.
- People came to visit baby John when he was born. People were a little surprised because John's parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, were old. They were old enough to be grandparents instead of parents to a newborn. But they loved John.
- Zechariah was a priest for God. He loved God very much. God told Zechariah about the things John would do when he grew up.
- "John will be called a prophet. He will tell people my special son is coming. He will let them know how wonderful it will be when Jesus gets here. John will prepare the way for Jesus."

Let the children tell about times when someone special was expected. Who did they tell? Why were they excited? Talk about the things John did to prepare the way for Jesus.

- John grew up and lived in the desert. He walked up and down the land, telling people that Jesus was coming.
- John baptized people with water when they came to him and asked. But he made sure to tell them someone special was coming along.
- One day it happened! John was down at the river baptizing people, and along came Jesus. Jesus asked John to baptize him. John did. God let John know how very special this was.
- The next day John was standing with two of the people who followed him. "Look," John said. "There is the one I've been telling you about!"
- The followers were excited too. They took off immediately to go to Jesus.
- Jesus saw them coming. "What are you looking for?" he asked the men.
- "Where are you staying?" they wanted to know.
- "Come and see," Jesus said, smiling. And they became his followers from that day on.

Moving Music

- "I Hear Jesus Calling Me" (page 40)
- "God is so Good"
- "This Little Light of Mine" (page 40)

There We Go

Some people were so happy when Jesus came they followed him everywhere. Others didn't know how special he was until after he was gone. Encourage the children to share what they have learned with family and friends. They can ask, "Did you know...?" and then finish the sentence with things they know about Jesus.

