

Christmas Surprises

What if the whole world was in danger and it was your job to save everybody? How would you do it?

- Would you ask somebody important—like a president or a prime minister—to help you?
- Would you tell someone at the TV station to warn people?

- Would you call on a superhero?

Those are some good ideas. But that's not how God saved the world. God's way was full of surprises.



A SURPRISING Hero

Since almost the very beginning, our world has needed a Savior. And God promised to send one. But when the time was right, God didn't send an important person like a president. Or a superhero. Or a TV person.

Surprise! God sent a baby. Baby Jesus didn't look like somebody who would save the world. He just looked like an ordinary baby. He couldn't hold up his own head at first. He cried when he was hungry. He slept a lot.

But baby Jesus was also God's Son, the Savior of the world. Our hero!

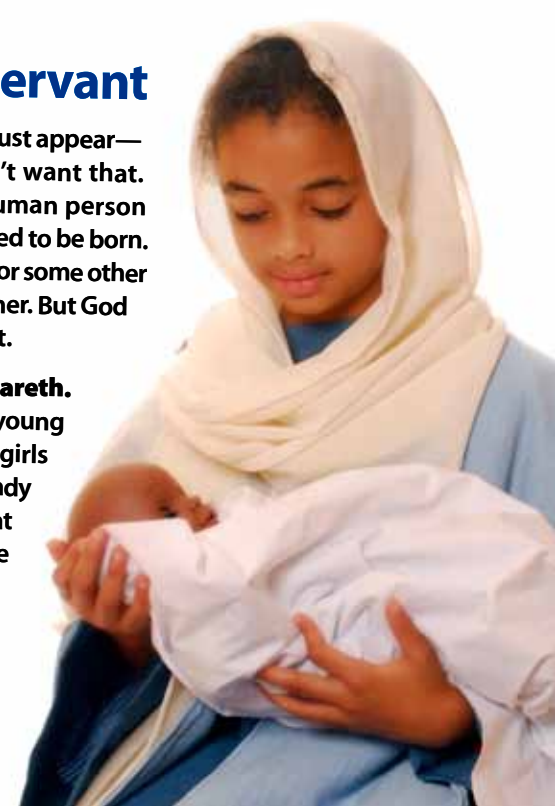


A SURPRISING Servant

God could have made baby Jesus just appear—poof!—like magic. But God didn't want that. God wanted Jesus to be a real human person as well as God's Son. So Jesus needed to be born.

God could have chosen a queen or some other important person to be Jesus' mother. But God didn't choose someone important.

Surprise! God chose Mary of Nazareth. Mary was a Jewish girl, probably a young teenager. In Mary's culture, young girls were unimportant. But Mary was ready to do whatever God asked, and that made her the perfect choice to be Jesus' mother.



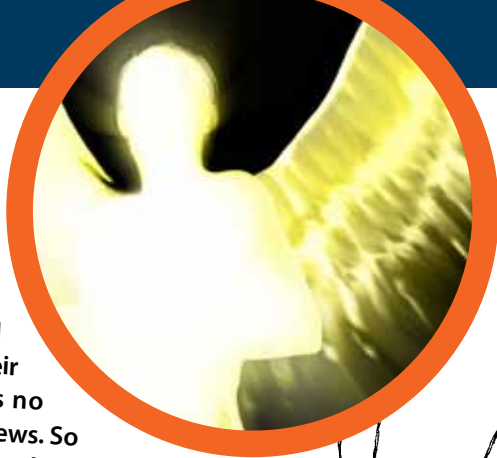
SURPRISING Messengers

After Jesus was born, God needed messengers to tell people the good news that their Savior had come. There was no Internet or TV to spread the news. So how would God share the news about the baby he sent?

Surprise! God chose angels.

Angels don't show up every day, not even in the Bible. Angels show up only when something very special is happening. Can you think of other times in the Bible when angels appeared?

What do you think angels might look like? They probably look surprising, because every time they appear in the Bible they say, "Don't be afraid!" Draw a picture of a surprising-looking angel.



Surprise Christmas Ornaments

What you need:

- Four empty matchboxes or small jewelry boxes
- Tape, if you're using jewelry boxes
- Glue
- Markers
- Decorations like colored paper, sequins, beads, and buttons
- Four 6-inch (18 cm) pieces of yarn

What you do:

- Decorate the outside of the boxes with paper, markers or anything else you like.
- Poke a hole in the top edge of the box and put the yarn through it. Tie a knot in the ends of the yarn so your ornament can hang on a Christmas tree.
- Make tiny pictures of God's four Christmas surprises: baby Jesus, Mary, the angels, and the shepherds. Be sure to make them small enough to fit inside the box.
- Put one picture inside each box.
- Tell someone else the Christmas story by showing them what's inside your four surprise boxes.

A SURPRISING Audience

God had a hero (baby Jesus), a human mother (Mary), and messengers (the angels). But God needed an audience—somebody to hear the good news from the angels.

Surprise! God chose shepherds.

You probably don't know any shepherds. But in Jesus' time there were lots of shepherds. They weren't powerful. They were poor. And people didn't treat them very well.

But God chose shepherds to hear the good news first. In God's eyes, poor people are just as important as powerful people.

Surprise Ball

Here's a fun Christmas gift to make for a friend!

Here's what you need:

- Tiny Christmas ornament or toy
- Yarn
- Ribbon

Here's what you do:

- Wrap the toy tightly with yarn until it's completely covered.
- Keep wrapping until the yarn ball is as big as you'd like it to be. When you're done, tuck the end of the yarn into the ball.
- Decorate the ball with a ribbon or Christmas bow.
- Give the ball to your friend and watch him or her unwind the yarn to discover the surprise!



Sandy Swartzentruber is a school library aide and a freelance writer. She attends Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and she likes surprises.