

December 23

Lesson 4 (NIV)

## LOVE GOD FOR THE GIFT OF JESUS

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** [Isaiah 49:1-7](#)

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** [Luke 1:26-31](#); [2:21-35](#)

### LUKE 1:26-31

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup>Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

### LUKE 2:22, 25-35

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of

Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup>"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and the glory of your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

<sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup>so that the

**thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

### KEY VERSES

*My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations.*—**Luke 2:30, 31**

## OUR LOVE FOR GOD

### Unit I: God Is Worthy of Our Love

LESSONS 1-5

### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Tell the story of how Mary learned of her miraculous pregnancy.
2. Explain why Simeon was emotionally moved when he encountered baby Jesus.
3. Share with another person how meeting Jesus changes lives.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### Introduction

- A. Introduction to the Church
- B. Lesson Context: Nazareth in Galilee
- C. Lesson Context: Jerusalem in Judea

- I. The Angel Announces (LUKE 1:26-31)
  - A. Visit from Gabriel (vv. 26, 27)
  - B. Favor with God (vv. 28-31)  
*An Exciting Announcement*
- II. The Spirit Reveals (LUKE 2:22, 25-35)
  - A. Baby Is Presented (v. 22)
  - B. Wait Is Over (vv. 25-27)
  - C. Salvation Is Seen (vv. 28-32)  
*The Doctor and the Baby*
  - D. Thoughts Are Revealed (vv. 33-35)

#### Conclusion

- A. Encountering Jesus
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

### HOW TO SAY IT

Annunciation	Uh- <i>nun</i> -see- <b>ay</b> -shun.
Gabriel	Gay-bree-ul.
Galilean	Gal-uh-lee-un.
Galilee	Gal-uh-lee.
medieval	mee- <i>dee</i> -vul or mee-dee- <i>ee</i> -vul.
Naphtali	Naf-tuh-lye.
Nazareth	Naz-uh-reth.
Nunc Dimittis	Nuhnk Dih- <i>mit</i> -us.
Samaritan	Suh- <i>mare</i> -uh-tun.
Simeon	Sim-ee-un.
Zebulon	Zeb-you-lun.

### Introduction

## **A. Introduction to the Church**

A church tradition from years past involved the happy fuss made over a baby's first Sunday in church. Usually a week or two after birth, the proud mother and father would carefully pack up their new child (along with a diaper bag) and present their bundle of joy to the women who staffed the church nursery department. The child might even be enrolled in the "cradle roll," with the parents receiving a certificate and a photograph to mark the event.

Later, the minister might ask the new parents to bring their infant to the main worship service where he would announce to the church that a new little person was in their midst. The biggest fuss would come after the service, when the people of the church would surround the proud parents in the foyer to get a peek at the baby and congratulate the mom and dad. For various reasons, that practice of decades gone by will not be so easy for the year 2019 in many cases!

Even so, this integration is important. While a baby may not be a "member" of the church in the sense of a regularly attending and faithfully giving adult, these little ones must find a welcome home among the people of God. They should not need to wait until their teenage or adult years to garner acceptance. Today's lesson points us to one

who underwent a mixture: one who was to live his short life both accepted and rejected, in both infancy and adulthood.

## **B. Lesson Context: Nazareth in Galilee**

First-century Palestine consisted of three provinces: Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Jesus ministered in all these areas, but began in Galilee. This was the "land of Zebulun, and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles" ([Matthew 4:15](#)). This was hill country, receiving enough rain to sustain successful farming rather than just grazing; therefore, it was primarily rural in character. Galilee was geographically separated from the main Jewish area surrounding Jerusalem by Samaritan territory.

Luke locates the home of Mary in the Galilean village of Nazareth ([Luke 1:26](#); see [Mark 1:9](#)). The insignificance of tiny Nazareth, its distance from Jerusalem, and its location in a less-than-pure Jewish area make Nazareth an unlikely home for the woman chosen to be the mother of the promised Messiah of Israel. On the reputation of Nazareth, see [John 1:46](#).

## **C. Lesson Context: Jerusalem in Judea**

The Jewish people understood the need for incorporation of babies into the

people of God. Backdrops for today's lesson are the things Jesus' parents did in accordance with Jewish custom. They have him circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21; see Leviticus 12:3; compare Philippians 3:5), officially marking him as a son of the covenant. This would have been a time of celebration for the little family, attended by friends and relatives as available. It was also at this time that the baby was formally named Jesus.

The circumcision and naming happened while the parents were still residing in Bethlehem, a two- or three-hour walk from the temple in Jerusalem. Luke indicates they stayed in David's city until Mary was ready to undergo purification at the temple (Luke 2:22). That was 33 days after the baby's circumcision, so 40 days after his birth (Leviticus 12:4).

## I. The Angel Announces (LUKE 1:26-31)

### A. Visit from Gabriel (vv. 26, 27)

1:26. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

While angels are mentioned over 300 times in the Bible, only two of these servants of God are named: *Gabriel* and *Michael* (see Daniel 9:21; 12:1). While *Michael* appears in the role of a heavenly combatant (Revelation 12:7), *Gabriel*

appears in the Bible as a messenger of the Lord sent with specific information for chosen people.

This verse introduces *Gabriel* in this messenger role, being *sent from God in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy to Nazareth*. This is a reference to the two-thirds point of the pregnancy of Mary's relative *Elizabeth*, the mother of *John the Baptist* (see Luke 1:19, 24). *Nazareth*, generously referred to by Luke as a *town*, is a village of perhaps 400-500 people.

**27. to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.**

Before telling us what *Gabriel's* message is, Luke introduces *Mary*, the soon-to-be mother of Jesus. The fact that she is a *virgin* is entirely consistent with the fact that she is unmarried in a small Jewish village in the first century. She is young, just reaching the age where marriage would be both expected and acceptable.

To be *pledged to be married* is somewhat equivalent to our engagement practices leading to marriage, with some important differences. Being pledged means that *Joseph* has struck a deal with *Mary's* father, and she is his wife in every way except living and sleeping with him.

The fact that *Joseph* is a *descendant of David* means that *King David* is a distant

ancestor. This cherished fact undoubtedly has been preserved in his family records for many generations (see [Luke 2:4; 3:23, 31](#)). It is important for us because being an heir of David is a prophetic prerequisite for the Messiah (see [2 Samuel 7:16, 17; Psalm 132:11](#)).

### **B. Favor with God (vv. 28–31)**

**28. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

This event is known in church tradition as the Annunciation, the announcement of God’s messenger to Mary of her status as the chosen mother of the Messiah. Luke’s description of *the angel coming to her* is an indication that Mary is indoors when Gabriel arrives. Artistic presentations often depict Mary in a lavish, spacious home with stone columns and carpets, but this is unlikely. Nazareth has few homes like this (if any), and later details in Luke indicate the poverty of Mary and Joseph.

The salutation in context is both simple and revealing. *Greetings* is an opening word like “hi” or “hello” or “hola.” To follow this by saying that the unsuspecting young woman is *highly favored by the Lord* is intended to be good news.

**29. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.**

Rather than comforting Mary, the greeting does the opposite. It sets her mind spinning in an effort to bring meaning to the angel’s words.

Mary cannot dismiss this experience as some sort of mind trick, for she sees the angel as well as hears him. Despite this inner turmoil, she waits for more information, not challenging the angel or his purpose (contrast [Luke 1:18](#)).

#### ***What Do You Think?***

What will you do the next time you are “troubled” by something in God’s Word?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

Under what circumstances, if any, is it a good idea to keep your concerns to yourself? Why?

**30, 31. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”**

The fuller explanation comes quickly; the *favor with God* is revealed: Mary will *conceive and give birth to a son and call him Jesus*. But no father is mentioned. Mary is as good as married to Joseph, an honorable villager. But they have not come together in an intimate way, for Luke has made it clear she is still a virgin. Joseph will not be the father.

If we read a little further, we find that

Mary's questions are answered. The baby in her womb will come from an act of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Mary's response to this troubling situation rings throughout history as an example of faith: "I am the Lord's servant, ... May your word to me be fulfilled" (1:38).

### **AN EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT**

When my husband and I found out we were expecting our first child, we debated about waiting to tell family and friends. We decided to tell them right away; it was too exciting to keep secret.

I had been working on a family tree, so I printed out a version of it for each parent. Instead of placing my name and my husband's name as the latest generation of our families, we wrote "Baby" and the baby's anticipated due date.

We took the family tree with us to a family get-together. As we were chatting, I told my mom I'd been making a family tree and wanted her to see it. I handed her the rolled-up paper and watched her unroll it. She surveyed each generation, and then her eyes fell on the last one. She looked up in disbelief. "Does this say 'Baby'? Does that mean what I think it means?" she asked. We nodded. She jumped up and hugged us. What an announcement! Her first grandchild was on the way!

The announcement to Mary must

have sparked an intense mix of emotions. Luke, the author, does not dwell on these at this point, merely summing them up with the phrase "Mary was greatly troubled." We see an implication of fear in the angel's encouraging "do not be afraid." Much more emotion is evident in Mary's Song of Luke 1:46-55. Is it even possible to consider the Christ Child anew this Christmas season and *not* share Mary's emotions on some level?

—L. M. W.

#### ***What Do You Think?***

How can you make progress in learning not to fear those things you should not?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

Can the discoveries and principles of secular psychology help us in this, or should we stick to Scripture as our only guide? Why?

## **II. The Spirit Reveals (LUKE 2:22, 25-35)**

### **A. Baby Is Presented (v. 22)**

**2:22. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.**

Today's lesson does not include the well-known Christmas stories of the trip to Bethlehem, the birth in a stable, and



the story of the shepherds (Luke 2:1-20). Our focus is on events following Jesus' birth. The trip to the temple in *Jerusalem* serves for Mary's ritual *purification rites* and for the presentation of the baby Jesus.

The purification process includes a waiting period in which the mother is considered unclean. This is likened to a woman's period of "uncleanness" for a week each month due to her menstrual cycle (Leviticus 12:1, 2). The blood involved is associated with ritual impurity (see 15:25).

The standard sacrificial animals for a mother's purification is a lamb and a bird, but the law allows for substitution of two birds in cases of hardship (Leviticus 12:6-8). The offering of two birds for Mary (Luke 2:24, not in today's text) reveals the humble financial situation of the new parents. The fact that Joseph brings Jesus for presentation at the temple indicates he has embraced the role of father and considers Jesus to be his legitimate son.

#### **What Do You Think?**

What are ways the church can support men serving as fathers to children who are not their biological offspring?

#### **Digging Deeper**

What Scripture passages, if any, inform your answer?

## **B. Wait Is Over (vv. 25-27)**

**25. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.**

Public venues often have regular visitors who are well-known to the community. Luke tells us of two such characters at the Jerusalem temple: Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:36-38) and Simeon (Luke 2:25-35). Our lesson looks at the second.

Five things about *Simeon* are disclosed. First, he is a resident of *Jerusalem*. Our impression is not that he is necessarily a lifelong resident of the city, but that he has come there in his old age to await the Messiah. Second, he is *righteous and devout*. To be righteous means he cares about right living and justice in his community. To be devout implies he is a man of prayer and faith, and that he participates in the worship activities associated with the temple.

Third, he waits *for the consolation of Israel*. This refers to a new era, a promised time when the Lord will move to console or comfort the distressed Jewish people (see Isaiah 49:13; 57:18; 61:2, 3). Fourth, Simeon has *the Holy Spirit resting on him*. The Holy Spirit is a comforting and revealing presence in human lives, and we see both elements here. The

presence of the Holy Spirit is a strong theme in both Luke and Acts (also written by Luke). The power of the Holy Spirit gives Simeon both strength and understanding.

**26. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.**

Fifth, the Holy Spirit has granted Simeon supernatural insight into God's plan for comforting Israel: it centers on the coming of *the Lord's Messiah*. The Greek word *Christ* and the Hebrew word *Messiah* both mean "the anointed one," the one commissioned to redeem Israel. Simeon understands his role in the unfolding of God's plans, for he has been promised that the Messiah would be born before his *death*. Further, Simeon believes he will meet this individual personally.

**27. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,**

All of this comes together when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus enter the *temple courts*. Simeon is there by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is there to fulfill the obligation of his parents as prescribed in *the Law* of Moses, the consecration of the firstborn son ([Exodus 13:2](#); [Luke 2:23, 24](#)).

### C. Salvation Is Seen (vv. 28–32)

**28. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:**

Much is unsaid in this verse, including why a new mother would allow a stranger to take her baby *in his arms*. Simeon either has a recognized role in the temple precincts or his demeanor suggests trustworthiness (perhaps encouraged by the Holy Spirit). He holds the baby for the blessing rather than simply placing a hand on his head, an intimate and beautiful act. Simeon's praise of God springs from his heart spontaneously on this long-awaited occasion.

#### ***What Do You Think?***

What more can your church do to surround infants with the love of the larger body of members of the congregation?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

What reasonable (and perhaps additional) safeguards should be in place while doing so?

**29. "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.**

The content of Simeon's praise begins here and goes through the three verses that follow. All this is presented to us as poetry, sometimes called the Song of Simeon (also known by the Latin *Nunc*



*Dimittis*). It is likely these words were used as a praise song in the early church, so when Luke's first readers come to them, they are already familiar with the words and appreciate understanding them in their original setting.

First, Simeon acknowledges to the Lord that with the promise having been kept (*as you have promised*), he is now ready to die (*dismiss your servant in peace*). The reason why is given next.

**30, 31. "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:**

Seeing the Messiah is what Simeon has been waiting for, what he has been living for. For him to say he has *seen* the Lord's *salvation* does not mean that he believes all of God's saving activity is now accomplished. Simeon condenses this salvation to a person, a baby whom the Holy Spirit has revealed as the Savior *in the sight of all nations*. To see the baby on this day is possible for anyone in the temple courtyard. But to know this is the Savior requires supernatural insight from the Spirit.

**What Do You Think?**

Accomplishing what additional things of God would make you ready to finish life "in peace"?

**Digging Deeper**

Which individual listed in [Hebrews 11](#) most inspires you in this regard?

Why? How does [2 Timothy 4:6-8](#) influence your answer?

**THE DOCTOR AND THE BABY**

The doctor who delivered our youngest child spent the hours prior to her birth shuffling between the maternity floor and the floor where his mother-in-law lay dying. She had lived a long, full life. She looked forward to seeing loved ones again in Heaven. Her family gathered around her, showing their love for her and for each other.

After examining our daughter shortly after her birth, the nurse put a little knit hat on her head and wrapped her in a pink blanket. The newborn fell asleep as my husband and I took turns holding her. Then the doctor came back, fresh from a visit to his mother-in-law's bedside. He asked if he could hold the baby. My husband handed our hour-old daughter to him.

He held her quietly, looking intently at her at length. Finally he said, "It's so amazing. Upstairs one life is fading, and here one is just beginning."

The doctor was feeling the impermanence of life, the fleeting nature of our days. He realized that the infant's potential would someday be "in the books," just as his mother-in-law's now was.

We cannot see the future of an indi-

We cannot see the future of an individual as Simeon was enabled. But we can see potential. What remaining potential do you see in the Lord's servant whose image you behold every time you look in a mirror?

—L. M. W.

**32. “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”**

Simeon understands at some level that God's Savior will benefit both *Gentiles* and God's *people Israel* (Jews). This is a universal application, because everyone falls into one of those two categories. Jesus will bring *light* to the nations as prophesied ([Isaiah 9:1, 2](#); [Matthew 4:13-16](#)). The revealing of the Messiah to the world is a *glory* for Israel; it culminates their purpose to be a light to all nations ([Isaiah 49:6](#)).

#### **D. Thoughts Are Revealed (vv. 33-35)**

**33. The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.**

*Joseph* and *Mary* must feel they have embarked on a journey that continues to amaze them. What they are hearing is astonishing pieces of a larger puzzle. This larger picture includes the words of the angel and the report of the shepherds ([Luke 2:16-18](#)). Luke's language may indicate an interview with *Mary* herself in

his process of writing, for he earlier tells us that she has treasured and pondered these things ([Luke 2:19](#)).

**34, 35. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

Having blessed God, *Simeon* blesses the little family. He then offers prophetic words, in four parts, concerning *this child*.

First, the child will *cause* both *the falling and rising of many* of his people. This may be a reference to prophecies of the Messiah as a “stone.” This may be a stumbling block ([Isaiah 8:14](#); [Romans 9:33](#)), or it may be a cornerstone ([Psalm 118:22](#); [Acts 4:11](#)) upon which the new people of God will be built. Second, Jesus will be a *sign* that causes opposition (see [Luke 11:30](#)).

In addition, through Jesus *the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed*. Hypocrisy will be unmasked as part of Jesus' ministry (see [Luke 12:1, 56](#)). Finally, *Mary* will suffer great sorrow on account of her son, likened unto a *sword* piercing her *soul*. She has already been through a lot (surprise pregnancy, relocation to Bethlehem away from her family, humble birth in a stable), but more pain is to come.

The sum of these four is that Jesus' ministry will not bring joy to all. Many will feel threatened by him (John 11:48); his rejection will be particularly painful for his mother.



Visual for Lesson 4. *Have this visual on display as you ask, "In what ways can we 'see' the Christ Child anew this Christmas season?"*

## Conclusion

### A. Encountering Jesus

Simeon's encounter with Jesus is remarkable when we consider the Messiah was still a baby. It is wrong to portray Jesus as we see him in some medieval art: sitting on his mother's lap, back straight as a tent pole, hand in a teaching posture, and with a look of adult wisdom on his face. Simeon saw a baby. It was the Holy Spirit who revealed the significance of this infant to him, not his appearance or his words.

We encounter Jesus in different ways

yet today. We may experience him in a powerful way by reading what the Bible says about him. We may understand him better when we hear other believers give a testimony. We may grow in our relationship through prayer and a quiet time with him. There is no greater thing than knowing Jesus.

### B. Prayer

Father, may the Holy Spirit prod our hearts to learn more of your Son so that we may be more like him in word and deed. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Encountering Jesus changes lives.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible](#)  
Student

## Into the Lesson

Ask learners to think of a time when they were truly surprised, good or bad. Then ask volunteers to briefly share their surprise with the class. After no more than three have shared (don't let this drag out), say, "Sometimes we are surprised and it is completely wonderful and welcome. At other times, we may not be sure of the value of the surprise, or we may even find the surprise to be unwelcome."

Ask those who shared their surprises to think about the final outcome. Explore disappointments and extra blessings experienced. Say, "Today we will consider the surprise of two who experienced firsthand the gift of Jesus."

## Into the Word

Have learners read and discuss [Luke 1:26–31](#) in groups of two or three. Inform groups that the goal is to be able to retell to an unbeliever the account of how Mary learned about her miraculous pregnancy. Encourage learners to discuss memorization techniques and parts of the account they need to clarify. Monitor

small-group discussions for progress and misunderstandings. Clarify issues in ensuing whole-class discussion.

*Option.* As a test to see how well class members know the account, distribute copies of the "The Big Announcement" activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have learners complete as indicated individually. Assure them before the activity that you will not collect the results. After no more than one minute, discuss results.

Follow with this story: "A few years ago, a woman and her husband were heading to Tanzania to work with Bible translators. While heading through the airport, the woman sensed a strong urge to purchase an extra pair of reading glasses. When they arrived at the first meeting in Tanzania, their interpreter was wearing a pair of glasses with only one good lens—the other was cracked! Even more amazing, the glasses the woman had purchased in the airport were perfect for the interpreter! When was an occasion you have had a strong feeling that you needed to do something?"

Ask volunteers to share the event, how they did or did not act on the feeling, and what resulted. Then ask how their actions and inactions contrasted with those seen in [Luke 2:22](#). (*Expected response:* the action of the parents was not based on feeling, but on Scripture

[explained in [Luke 2:23, 24](#), not in today's text].)

Next read [Luke 2:25–32](#). Ask about the significance of the following facts about Simeon (hints are in *italics*): being “righteous and devout” [*compare Luke 1:6*], “waiting for the consolation of Israel” [*compare Isaiah 40:1; 51:3; 57:18; 66:11*], and having the Holy Spirit on him [*significance is in the next seven verses, Luke 2:26–32*]. Point to the words “salvation” (v. 30), “prepared” (v. 31) and “all nations” (v. 31) and ask how these point forward to [Luke 3:4–6](#) (quoting [Isaiah 40:3–5](#)).

*Option 1.* The above can be a small-group exercise for which you have prepared handouts.

*Option 2.* Arrange the above Scripture references into an activity in which learners match the Scripture references with the individual verses of [Luke 2:25–32](#).

## Into Life

Make a transition by saying, “Meeting baby Jesus was the highlight of Simeon’s life. Share with a partner how meeting Jesus changes lives today. Give examples.” Encourage sharing in whole-class discussion.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “The Gift of Jesus” activity from the reproducible page. Have learners complete it as indicated in study pairs.

Close the lesson in prayer, remembering to ask for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.