

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Who’s Center Stage?” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for December 4, 2016. The lesson is found on page 7 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.



The first candle of Advent was lit in a lovely little moment in the service, in which a child and his father lit the candle together. But as the service continued, the candle, being literally fanned into flame by the whirring ceiling fans above, began to sink rather quickly down to its holder, which was beautifully surrounded by all kinds of greenery and ribbons—all very conveniently flammable.

Luckily someone noticed the descending flame and extinguished the fire before it could do any real damage. Yet at about that same time, many miles south of this scene, fires raged in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, destroying homes and businesses, and even lives. That fire too was once just a small flame, flickering in a breeze.

At Christmastime, perhaps more than other times of the year, we all have our little worries. There is stress in the shopping and wrapping and picking and choosing and spending and saving. If we let these little worries take up too much of our air, if we let the fires eat up the oxygen, we'll find it is rather hard to breathe. The trick is to not let those fires get out of control—to not let the worries cause real damage in our lives and the lives of anyone in our path. But we can't fight this fire alone—we need someone looking out for us, someone with the power to extinguish far greater flames.

I am watching that Advent candle in my mind today, and praying God's protection and comfort for all those who are fighting fires—either the real ones, or the ones just consuming our thoughts.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

Fill in this blank. Christmastime makes me feel _____. Explain your answer.

What do you think are the top three sources of stress for families at Christmastime?

Do you ever feel like your worries are being fanned into a flame that is threatening to do damage in your life? What do you do when you feel like that?

December is a busy month for people and is sometimes full of pressures to please everyone and make things perfect. Joseph and Mary had their own pressures when Jesus was born. Let's see what those pressures were, and how Mary and Joseph overcame those obstacles.