

Today's Suggested Schedule—December 2023, Week 2

Today's Bible Story: Our King of Peace (Gabriel Appears to Mary) • Luke 1:26-56

Today's Bottom Line: You can have peace because God has a plan.

Monthly Memory Verse: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon[d] his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

Monthly Virtue: Christmas—Celebrating Jesus, God's greatest gift

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Thank God that even when we are uncertain about something, God has a plan for us. Pray that today you will be able to encourage kids that peace is possible even when they feel sad or scared because God has a plan for us. Pray for help in trusting God's perfect plan for your life and the life of your kids.

Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZi> for a visual on some of the activities.

SMALL GROUP (15 minutes)

SOCIAL: Providing Time for Fun Interaction

Just for Fun

LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)

STORY: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

WORSHIP: Inviting People to Respond to God

Hang Time

Welcome/Opener

Worship

Bible Story

Bottom Line

Prayer

Closer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Bible Story Review: Story Sequence

Application Activity: Plan to Bring Peace

Memory Verse Activity: Jesus Is

Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)

Devotionals for Kids

Parent Cue App

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Use this if kids have questions about following Jesus.

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

If a child has expressed interest in following Jesus, please let the parents know so they can be a part of the conversation that their child is having about faith.

What Now?

If you put your trust in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the One who forgives your sins and makes it possible for you to know God, we are so proud of you! There is no greater single decision that you could make.

We believe that baptism is an important next step for you. Baptism is your way of telling your friends and family, “Hey, I'm a follower of Jesus!” If you're interested in learning more or participating in baptism, talk to a staff member about the next steps you should take.

SOCIAL: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (15 minutes)

1. Just For Fun (if have time)

Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Offering container

What You Do:

- Greet kids by name as they arrive.
- Invite kids who brought an offering to put it in the offering container.
- One at a time, read the following “Would you rather” questions.
- As you read the scenarios, point to the side of the room kids should go to demonstrate their preference.
- Would you rather:
 - Have a Christmas tree or Christmas cookies?
 - Have one fantastic gift or ten okay gifts?
 - Get up early on Christmas Day or stay up late on Christmas Eve?
 - Eat peppermint candy canes or different flavored candy canes?
 - Decorate with colored lights or white lights?
 - Sing “Jingle Bells” or “Silent Night”?
 - Travel for Christmas or stay home?
 - Have a white Christmas or no snow?
 - Put up the Christmas tree before Thanksgiving or wait until December?
 - Receive wrapped gifts or gifts in bags?
 - Eat a turkey or ham dinner?
 - Have sweet potatoes or regular potatoes?
 - Open gifts on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Story Exploration

After the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and predicted the birth of John—the forerunner of the Messiah—he appeared to Mary and predicted that she too would have a baby. This baby would be named Jesus, and He would be God’s Son. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High ... His kingdom will have no end,” Gabriel said. (See Luke 1:32-33.) Mary visited Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John. Inside the womb, John leaped for joy in the presence of Mary’s unborn baby.

Mary’s response to Gabriel reflects deep faith and obedience to God’s plan. Discuss the significance of her willingness to accept God’s will despite not knowing exactly how it would happen.

Reflect on Mary’s humility in recognizing her lowly status and her immediate response in praising God. Discuss the importance of humility in the Christian life. (Ecclesiastes 7:20, Psalm 51:5, 1 John 1:8)

Encourage kids to reflect on Mary’s faith and willingness to surrender to God’s plan. Discuss ways to have such faith in their own lives. (Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:10)

Challenge kids to embrace humility to God and others. Discuss practical ways to demonstrate humility in daily life. (Proverbs 22:4, Proverbs 15:33, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6)

Mary’s peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a deep sense of assurance in the midst of life-altering circumstances. Her faith in God and her willingness to be an instrument in His divine plan contribute to her inner peace. Mary’s recognition of her lowly state and her gratitude for God’s favor demonstrate a humble heart. Humility often precedes and accompanies true peace, as it acknowledges dependence on God. Mary’s peace is rooted in her trust in God’s faithfulness. She believes that what God has promised will come to pass. (Isaiah 26:3, John 14:27, Colossians 3:15)

And we also see God’s plan to rescue people from their sin start. This is why we remember this every year. God gave us the greatest gift in Jesus. He was fully God and fully man. And because of this, He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. As you celebrate Christmas, remember why Jesus came to earth. Every time you open a present, remember the gift that God gave to you. Remember what God did and rejoice and praise God for it!

1. Story Sequence

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Play: an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: “Story Ornaments” Activity Page inside Christmas gift bags and painter’s tape

What You Do:

- Divide your group into two teams.
- Tape a start and finish line for each team.
- Instruct the teams to line up behind their start lines.
- Place a gift bag of “Story Ornaments” Activity Page at each team’s finish line.
- Instruct the first kid on each team to run to the finish line, pick an ornament from the bag, and place it on the floor.
- When done, direct them to run back to their team’s line.
- Once they cross the start line, the next kid in line can either:
 - Run to their team’s bag, pick an ornament, and place it on the floor to start building the story in the correct sequence.
 - Or run to their opponent’s side and place one of the ornaments on the floor back into that team’s bag.
- The first team to empty their bag and build the story in the correct sequence, wins.
- Set the ornaments aside for “Pray and Dismiss.”

What You Say:

“What made this game difficult? (*Invite responses.*) There was no way of knowing what the opposing teammates planned to do. The same thing is true about life. A lot of unplanned things happen in life. Life would be so much easier if things went according to our plan, wouldn’t it?”

“How do you think Mary first felt when the angel told her about God’s plan for her life? (*Invite responses—surprised, scared, upset, confused, etc.*) Why do you think Mary was willing to follow God’s plan? (*Invite responses—she trusted God, she knew that God keeps promises, she knew that God’s plan was better than hers, she had experienced God’s faithfulness, etc.*)

“God chose Mary to be the way Jesus would come into the world to bring peace between God and us. Because of what Jesus did, our sins no longer separate us. Jesus is God’s plan to rescue us! One of the most powerful emotions Mary felt was peace! She had peace in the middle of an unexpected situation because she knew God was with her, no matter what happened, and had a perfect plan. Do you know God has a perfect plan for your life, too? Even when unexpected things happen in your life, **[Bottom Line]** you can have peace because God has a plan for you.”

[Make It Personal] (*Share an example of a time something didn’t go your way and you prayed and asked God to help you get through it. How did it turn out? How did remembering that God always has a plan give you peace in the middle of the situation?*)

*2. Plan to Bring Peace

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: “Object Cards” and “Scenario” Activity Pages, butcher paper or dry erase board, markers or dry erase markers, and timer

What You Do:

- Shuffle the “Object Cards” Activity Page cards.
- Stack the cards and place them face down.
- Gather the kids around the butcher paper or dry erase board.
- Invite a kid to take a card and silently read it without letting the group see it.
- Set a timer for 30 seconds.
- Instruct the kid to draw what is listed on the card on the butcher paper or board while the rest of the group tries to guess the object.
- Once a kid correctly identifies the object or the time is up, read the corresponding situation on the “Scenario” Activity Page.
- Encourage the group to give examples of how they could bring peace to that situation before moving to the next kid to draw the next card.

What You Say:

“In all of these scenarios, you had a choice to make. You could either choose to push to have things go your way or you could decide that it was more important to find a way to be at peace with others and yourself. Every day, we face situations that require us to either push against a situation or be at peace with how things happen.

“Even though Mary was scared and didn’t know the whole story yet, she had peace in the middle of something completely unexpected because she trusted God. Mary trusted that God had a plan for her life. Just like Mary, we can have peace when unexpected things happen because God has a perfect plan for us.

“When you face a situation this week where you want to push to get your own way or be right, or you just want to put up a fight, think about the peace you can have because God has a perfect plan in every situation for you. **[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.**”

3. Jesus Is

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need: Bibles

What You Do:

- Make sure each kid has a Bible.
- Together, look up Isaiah 9:6 using the Bible navigation tips below.

Finding verses with 2nd and 3rd graders: Guide kids to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like. When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find “Isaiah” in the list under “Old Testament.” When the kids find Isaiah, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Isaiah. Help the kids find the page. When they find Isaiah, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 9. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 6 in chapter 9.

- Read the entire verse a few times together.
- Invite the kids to think of a word that describes them to put before their name.
 - For example, Happy Silas, Creative Brielle, etc.
- Share an adjective that you know applies to each kid if they get stuck.
- Ask the kids to take turns sharing what they thought about by saying an adjective that describes them and their name.
- Play multiple rounds so kids can share a few words that describe them.
- When done, read the entire verse a few times.
- Ask the kids to share the different adjectives from the verse that describe Jesus.

What You Say:

“Who did Isaiah say was coming? (*Invite responses.*) That’s right, Jesus was coming. When Isaiah said that Jesus was coming, no one knew exactly who He was or how long it would be before He came to Earth. But Isaiah used words like Wonderful, Mighty, Everlasting, and Prince of Peace to describe Jesus so everyone knew He was going to be amazing and powerful.

“What does WONDERFUL mean? (*Invite responses.*) Wonderful means that Jesus is very, very good. Isaiah also said that Jesus is Mighty. What does mighty mean? (*Invite responses.*) Mighty means powerful and strong. This verse also says that Jesus is the Everlasting Father. What does everlasting mean? (*Invite responses.*) It means that He has no beginning and no end. Jesus will live forever! Isaiah also told God’s people that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. What does that mean? (*Invite responses.*) It means that Jesus is the ruler of peace who brings peace to His people. Because Jesus is all of these adjectives, God’s plan to send Jesus is worth celebrating! **[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.**”

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Say:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- How does this story help me love others?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

What You Need: "Advent Ornament" Activity Page that kids started Week 1 (extras for kids not present in Week 1); and markers or colored pencils

What You Do:

- Direct the kids to form a circle.
- Set out the markers.
- Give kids their "Advent Ornament" Activity Page that they worked on the previous week.
- Give any kids who did not start an ornament on Week 1 a blank "Advent Ornament" Activity Page and encourage them to write their names on the back of the triangle.
- Draw the group's attention to the stocking.
- Invite the kids to recite the Bottom Line with you a few times, putting extra emphasis on "peace."
[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.
- Inform the group that they will color a different word on the ornament each week. They will have the opportunity to assemble the ornament and take it home later in the month.
- Discuss what "peace" means and instruct the kids to color the word "peace" and the section with the stocking as you talk.
 - For example—Peace can mean showing you care more about each other than winning an argument. To show peace, you can listen to understand and say things like, "I can see why you feel that way, and I care about our friendship more than being right." Or "Instead of arguing, let's find a solution that we both like." Peace can also be a calm feeling because we have a reason to trust that something will work out. God made peace with us by sending Jesus. We can have PEACE because God always has a plan—even when we're scared or sad or uncertain about something.
- When done, recite last week's Bottom Line. **[Bottom Line] You can have hope because God is faithful.**
- If time allows, encourage kids who did not start an ornament during Week 1 to color the word "Hope" on the Christmas tree.
- Collect the ornaments and store them for future weeks.
- Close your group time in prayer.

What You Say:

"The fact that God had a plan to rescue everyone and that the promise was fulfilled is worth far more than anything else you could ever do or that anyone else could ever do for you. We can trust that God's plan for our lives is perfect. **[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.** That is something to be thankful for! Let's pray."

“Dear God, thank You for reminding us today that just like You had a perfect plan for Mary, You have a perfect plan for our lives. Help us remember that You promise to make everything that is wrong and confusing right. We want to trust You with the plan You have for our lives and come to You with our concerns, worries, and disappointments so we can have peace in all our situations. Thank You that ***[Bottom Line]* [we] can have peace because God has a plan.** Amen.”

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to take home one of the “Story Ornament” cards and use it to share today’s story with adults.

GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

SOCIAL: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (15 Minutes)

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today's story.

(Choose one or both of these activities.)

1. Just For Fun

Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need:

- No supplies

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

(Choose as many of these activities as you like.)

**If you don't have time to do all these activities, be sure to do activity #2.*

Story Exploration – No supplies

1. Story Sequence

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Play: an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need:

- Print "Story Ornaments" Activity Page on red and green cardstock and cut out, one set of each color for each Small Group
- Christmas gift bags, two for each Small Group
 - Place each "Story Ornaments" set inside a gift bag.
- Painter's tape

***2. Plan to Bring Peace**

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need:

- Print "Object Cards" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- Print "Scenario" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Large butcher paper or dry erase board, one for each Small Group
- Markers or dry erase markers, one for each Small Group
- Timer, one for each Small Group

3. Jesus Is

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need:

- Bibles

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need:

- Print “Advent Ornament” Activity Page on cardstock and cut out, one for each kid plus extras
 - Make sure you leave the tabs attached when cutting out the triangles.
- “Advent Ornaments” Activity Page that the kids started in Week 1
- Markers or colored pencils

Note: Kids will be working on this project for the next few weeks. Have a plan to collect and save their ornaments for future weeks. Assembly directions will be provided in Week 4. Make extra copies for others who attend the group in the following weeks.

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Print on cardstock or email this week’s devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app**