

## Today's Suggested Schedule—December 2023, Week 1

**Today's Bible Story:** Goodness and Light (Jesus Is Promised) • *Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; 7:14-15*

**Today's Bottom Line:** You can have hope because God is faithful.

**Monthly Memory Verse:** *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;* Isaiah 9:6a (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. Start by thanking God for being faithful. Think of a couple of promises you're especially grateful for and praise God for those specific promises. Pray for your few, that they would be ready to celebrate God's greatest gift, Jesus. Pray for patience as you navigate the content of this month. Ask God for wisdom to help your kids grasp the hope they can put in God as you explore the Old Testament verses today.*

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**

Early Arriver  
Opening Activity

### **LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)**

#### **STORY: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways**

#### **WORSHIP: Inviting People to Respond to God**

Welcome/Opener  
Worship  
Bible Story  
Bottom Line  
Prayer  
Closer

### **SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)**

#### **GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect**

Bible Story Review: A Promise Kept Bookmark  
Application Activity: Promise Maker, Promise Keeper  
Memory Verse Activity: Memory Verse in Motion  
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.

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

### **Story Exploration**

The prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would be born of a virgin. (Jesus' mother Mary was a virgin.) Jesus came to earth as a baby in Bethlehem. God is Jesus' Father, but He chose Mary and Joseph to be Jesus' earthly parents. For many years, God had promised to send a Messiah to save people from sin. Jesus was God's plan to bring salvation to the world, and God had been working out His plan all along.

**1. The Promise of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2):**

Micah, a prophet, spoke about the significance of Bethlehem—a seemingly small place. But God, in His divine plan, chose this humble town for the birth of the Savior. Reflect on the idea that God often works in unexpected and humble ways. Discuss how God's plans are perfect, even if they don't always match our expectations.

**2. The Wonderful Names (Isaiah 9:6-7):**

Isaiah gives us a glimpse into the nature of the coming Messiah by describing His names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Discuss each of these names and what they reveal about the character of Jesus. Emphasize how Jesus fulfills each role in our lives, providing guidance, strength, everlasting love, and peace.

**3. The Sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14-15):**

The prophecy of Immanuel ("God with us") is a powerful sign of God's presence among His people. Reflect on the concept that God entered into humanity, becoming one of us. Discuss how Jesus' birth was a miraculous sign of God's love and His desire to have a relationship with us.

The Old Testament prophets also said that Jesus would be the Son of God. Jesus did not use His status as God to make His life on earth easier. Jesus gave up His position in heaven, came to earth, and took on the form of a man.

Jesus did not stop being God the Son when He came to earth. Is Jesus God or a human? As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Jesus had earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but His true Father is God. Through Jesus, God kept His promises to Abraham and David. Jesus saves people from their sins and adopts them into God's family.

- What does it mean to be adopted into God's family?  
*Lead kids to recognize that adoption describes our new relationship with God. We gain all of the responsibilities and privileges of being a child of God. God gives His Spirit to lead His children. We live for Him, and we will live with Him forever.*
  - (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gal. 4:6-7.)
- How does the idea of "Immanuel"—God with us—impact your daily life?  
Help kids to reflect on how much their relationship with God affects their life. Does their relationship with God change how they treat others? How they respond to different situations? How does it make you feel that God desires to be with us?
  - (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 1:4-5.)

- How is Jesus different than other people?  
Emphasize that as the Son of God, Jesus is both fully *God and fully human. Unlike other people, Jesus never sinned.*
  - (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 4:15.)

## **\*1. A Promise Kept Bookmark**

### **[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

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

**What You Need:** “Bible Bookmarks” Activity Page, Bible, sticky notes, and markers

### **What You Do:**

- Place a sticky note in the Bible at Isaiah 9:6-7, Micah 5:2, and Luke 2.
- Hold up the Bible.
- Tell kids that the Bible is made up of separate books that tell one BIG story, God’s story.
- Review some key parts of the Bible story.
  - God created the whole world, including people. But people turned away from God, so God made a promise.
  - Ask kids what the promise was that God made.
  - Ask who God promised to send.
- Invite a kid to open the Bible to the first sticky note in Isaiah 9:6-7.
- Read the verses aloud.
- Keep the sticky note in its spot.
- Tell kids that God sent prophets as special messengers who shared God’s words. Isaiah was one of these prophets. He had a special message of hope that God would send a rescuer or Savior to make everything right.
- Quickly review who Isaiah said this rescuer would be.
  - Wonderful Advisor: able to help us make wise choices
  - Mighty God: there is no limit to God’s power and authority
  - Father Who Lives Forever: the BEST father, who always loves and protects
  - Prince Who Brings Peace: a rescuer who brings peace between people and between us and God
- Invite another kid to open the Bible to the second sticky note in Micah 5:2.
- Read this verse aloud.
- Keep the sticky note in its spot.
- Tell kids that God sent another prophet named Micah, who lived around the same time as Isaiah, with a special message. Micah said that our rescuer would come from the town of Bethlehem.
- Ask kids if they have heard of Bethlehem. *(It was a very small town. But hundreds of years later, Jesus the Savior would be born there!)*
- Invite another kid to open to the Bible to the third sticky note in Luke 2.
- Tell kids that God DID send a rescuer just like He promised! We celebrate the gift of Jesus at Christmas, but God made these promises in the Old Testament, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.
- Explain that the Old Testament (point to the first half of the Bible) is all about how Jesus is coming and the New Testament (point to the second half of the Bible) is about how Jesus is here!
- Point out that we can read about Jesus’ birth in Luke 2, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> sticky note.
- Hold up the Bible to show the first two sticky notes, then point out the third sticky note.
- Emphasize that we can see in our Bibles that God told us about Jesus a long time before He came! God told us about Jesus in the Old Testament, long before He came in the New Testament!

- Give each kid a bookmark from the “Bible Bookmarks” Activity Page.
- Set out the markers.
- Read the memory verse out loud.
- Invite the kids to decorate their bookmarks.
- Encourage your group to take the bookmarks home to place in their Bible as a reminder that we can have hope because God is faithful and keeps promises to us.

### **What You Say:**

“God had a plan all along and made promises to help people trust and have hope. God kept every single promise! God promised to send a Savior, a rescuer. Did God keep that promise? (Yes!) Who did God send? (*Pause.*) Jesus! That’s right. We celebrate Christmas because God kept the promise to send Jesus! We can have hope, even on our hardest days, because God is faithful. That means we can trust that God will always do what God has said.

“Remember, **[Bottom Line]** you can have hope because God is faithful. Each time you open your Bible and see this bookmark, remember that God loves you and you can have hope because God is faithful to us.”

***[Make It Personal]*** (Share why these promises in Isaiah and Micah are important to you. How does knowing that God kept promises in the past help you trust God with the future?)

## 2. Promise Maker, Promise Keeper

### [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:** Index cards, markers, and butcher paper

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid a paper scrap or an index card and marker.
- Encourage the kids to think of a promise someone made to them or to someone else.
- Instruct the kids to draw a picture to represent that promise on their paper.
  - Invite kids to draw on more than one card if they have multiple examples.
- As they work, write “HOPE” in large block letters across the butcher paper.
- Collect the cards.
- Lay the cards out on the floor in front of you.
- Instruct the kids to raise their hand if the promise they shared was a promise that was kept.
- Explain that sometimes, we make promises that we don’t keep—we forget, we mess up and don’t follow through, we get busy or distracted, or we just don’t feel like keeping the promise we made.
- Emphasize that God isn’t like us—God is faithful which means we can trust God will always do what God said. God isn’t just a promise maker, God is a promise keeper.
- Point out “HOPE” on the banner and read it aloud.
- Place the index cards along the “HOPE” outline on the butcher paper and use blank cards to fill it in if needed.
- Share some ways God is faithful as you place the index cards.
  - God is with us.
  - God will take care of us.
  - God hears us when we pray.
  - God loves us.
  - God sent Jesus.
  - God never changes.
  - God cares for us.
  - God knows what we’re worried about.
  - God will help us.
  - God will protect us.
  - God will give us peace.
  - God will give us strength.
  - God is trustworthy.
- Tell kids that because God is faithful and keeps promises, we can put our HOPE and trust in God.
- Explain that HOPE is believing something good can come out of something bad.
- Encourage the kids to think of something hard they might be going through, maybe with a brother or sister or friend.
- Ask them how knowing that God is faithful can help them have hope even in this hard situation?
- **[Make It Personal] (Give your own example of a tough thing you’re facing. How does knowing God is faithful to keep promises help you have HOPE today? Remember to keep all examples age-appropriate.)**

**What You Say:**

“The Bible is FULL of God’s promises. Some are promises already kept—like God’s promise to send Jesus! And some are promises God is STILL keeping, like the promise to guide, help, and love us, no matter what.

“I’m so glad that God isn’t like us. God never makes a promise that God is too busy or distracted to keep. God always, ALWAYS keeps promises. Because of God’s faithfulness, we can have hope. We can have hope on sunny days when everything is going our way. And we can have hope on days when nothing is going the way we wanted it to go. **[Bottom Line] You can have hope because God is faithful.**”



### 3. Memory Verse in Motion

#### [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

*Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery*

**What You Need:** Bible marked at Isaiah 9:6

#### **What You Do:**

- Invite a volunteer to open the Bible to Isaiah 9:6.
- Remind kids how to find the verse by using the tips below.

***Finding verses with kindergartners:*** Guide kids to open the Bibles to the marked page. Point to “Isaiah” at the top of the page as you say, “Isaiah.” Then guide kids to find the big number 9 on the page. Explain that this is the chapter number. Finally, guide them to look under the big 9 for the little 6; this is the verse number. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read the verse aloud. Then lead everyone to say the verse together.

***Finding verses with 1<sup>st</sup> 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.” You can help by telling them that Isaiah starts with the letters I-S. 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 out loud to the group.
- Explain that Isaiah spoke these words from God long before Jesus was born and God made a promise and kept it because God is faithful!
- Tell kids that this month, we’ll work on memorizing the first two sentences of the verse.
- Re-read the first two lines out loud.
  - “A child is born to us. A son will be given to us.” Isaiah 9:6a (*NIRV*)
  - “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” Isaiah 9:6a (*NIV*)
- Invite the kids to work together to create motions for the verse.
- Be available with suggestions like those below if kids get stuck.
  - “A child is born to us” or “For to us a child is born”—rock a baby (*a child*), thumbs to chest (*to us*)
  - “A son will be given to us” or “To us a son is given”—rock a baby (*a son*), palms out to accept a gift (*will be given/is given*), thumbs to chest (*to us*)
  - “Isaiah 9:6”—open hands like a book

#### **What You Say:**

“This month is Christmas—celebrating Jesus, God’s greatest gift! God made a promise to send us Jesus! Did God keep that promise? (Yes!) Isaiah spoke these words hundreds of years before the promise came true! And now we celebrate Jesus—the greatest gift—because God did what was promised. God is faithful! Remember **[Bottom Line] you can have hope because God is faithful.**”

#### 4. Pray and Dismiss

##### [Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

##### 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:** "Bottom Line Label" Activity Page on label paper, decorated ornaments from "Early Arriver," permanent marker, string or yarn, scissors, and hole punch; *Optional: supplies from "Early Arriver" if you did not make ornaments*

##### What You Do:

- NOTE: If you did not decorate ornaments during "Early Arriver," give each kid an ornament, set out markers, and give kids a few moments to decorate them.
- Use a permanent marker to write "HOPE" in block letters on the center of each kid's ornament.
- Give each kid a "Bottom Line Label" to stick on the back of their ornament.
- If using the paper ornaments, punch a hole in the top of each ornament.
- Cut a piece of string or yarn for each kid.
- Help the kids run their string through the top of the ornament and knot it for hanging.
- As the kids hold their ornaments, close your group time in prayer.

##### What You Say:

"I want you to take these ornaments home and hang them on your Christmas tree as a reminder that **[Bottom Line] you can have hope because God is faithful.** Let's pray.

"Dear God, we love You. Thanks for never making a promise You don't keep! We love Christmas because we celebrate Jesus, the greatest gift! Thank You for keeping Your promise to send us Jesus. We know we can have hope because You are faithful, always. Help us trust You more and more. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to show off their hope ornaments, including the Bottom Line on the back as they talk about how **[Bottom Line] you can have hope because God is faithful.**

## GETTING READY

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

### **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 #1.*

## Story Exploration: No supplies

### **\*1. A Promise Kept Bookmark**

**[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

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

**What You Need:**

- Print "Bible Bookmarks" Activity Page double-sided on cardstock so that each side shows the memory verse and cut out, one bookmark for each kid
- Bible
- Sticky notes, three for each Small Group
- Markers

### **2. Promise Maker, Promise Keeper**

**[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:**

- index cards, two or three for each kid plus extra
- Markers
- Butcher paper
  - Cut a piece long enough to write "HOPE" in large letters.

### **3. Memory Verse in Motion**

**[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]**

*Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands-on experimentation and discovery*

**What You Need:**

- Bible marked at Isaiah 9:6 (from "A Promise Kept Bookmark" activity if desired)

### **4. Pray and Dismiss**

**[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]**

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

**What You Need:**

- Print "Ornament Template Week 1" Activity Page on cardstock and cut out, one ornament for each kid
- Washable markers
- Print "Bottom Line Label" Activity Page on Avery® #5160 labels or equivalent, one for each kid
- Permanent marker, one for each Small Group
- String or yarn, one piece for each kid

- Scissors, one for each Small Group
- Single hole punch, one for each Small Group

**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**