

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

Early Arriver
Opening Activity

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: Pass the Parcel
Application Activity: Peace Be with You
Memory Verse Activity: Put a Bow on It Verse
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

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. Pass the Parcel

[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: Wrapped box filled with treats

What You Do:

- Gather the kids to sit in a circle.
- Instruct the kids to listen as you retell the Bible story and pass the gift around the circle according to your directions in the story.
 - For example, if you say, “left,” the kids pass the gift to the left and continue passing to the left until you give a new direction.
 - If you say, “right,” the kids pass the box to the right and continue passing the box to the right until you give a new direction.
 - Before getting started, explain how to tell your left from your right for those who may not have learned that yet.
- Begin by directing the kids to pass the gift to the **LEFT**.
- Read the “Gabriel Appears to Mary” story below to the kids, emphasizing **LEFT** and **RIGHT** and pausing to allow time for the kids to follow the instructions.
- When you get to the end of the story, direct the kid holding the box to open it and give out the treats inside.

Gabriel Appears to Mary

A long time ago, God made a promise to The Israelites. God promised to send a Rescuer at just the **RIGHT** time.

There was a young woman named Mary who lived in the town of Nazareth. One day, when Mary was **LEFT** alone, an angel name Gabriel visited her. Mary was scared but the angel Gabriel said, “Do not be afraid. God is very pleased with you.”

Gabriel told Mary she was chosen to be **RIGHT** in the middle of God’s rescue plan! He told Mary she would have a Son and she would call Him Jesus. Mary was **LEFT** with so many questions! But she trusted God’s plan and said, “I serve the Lord. May it happen to me just as you said it would.”

Mary was so excited that she traveled **RIGHT** away to see her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also going to have a baby. Before Mary could share the good news, Elizabeth said, “God has blessed you! You have believed that the Lord would keep his promises to you!”

Mary praised God, saying, “My soul gives glory to the Lord...He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important...He has done it just as he promised to our people of long ago.” Then after three months, she **LEFT** to return home.

Mary didn’t know the whole story yet, but she knew and trusted God. And because of that, she could have peace **RIGHT** in the middle of something unexpected. That’s true for us, too. **[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.** The end.

What You Say:

“Great listening and passing, friends! Though Mary wasn’t sure how things would work out, she could have peace knowing that God had a plan. God’s plan was to send Jesus to rescue us. Jesus is God’s gift to the whole world! That means that even when hard things happen, even when we have a bad day or we’re sad or scared or worried or unsure, we can still have peace because God is in control, and God has a plan. Remember, **[Bottom Line]** you can have peace because God has a plan.”

[Make It Personal] (Tell the kids about a time you were worried or unsure about something as a kid. Talk about how you first learned that God had a plan—not just for the whole world but for you. How did it bring you peace, knowing that God was in control and had a plan for you?)

*2. Peace Be with You

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: “Peace Be with You Scenarios” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Gather your kids to sit in the circle.
- Stack the “Peace Be with You Scenarios” Activity Page cards face down in front of you.
- Read the scenario aloud (or allow a volunteer to read if you have a strong reader) and talk about how you can have peace in that situation.
 - Be prepared to lead this discussion with your few using the suggestions below.
- Continue until you’ve read through and discussed all the scenarios.
- Possible Answers:
 - Scenario One: You can remember that God is with you. You aren’t alone.
 - Scenario Two: You can ask your teacher for help and ask God to remind you that you can keep going, keep working hard.
 - Scenario Three: God has a plan for you. You can trust God even when things don’t go your way. God has promised to take care of your needs.
 - Scenario Four: You can remember what God says about treating others the way you want to be treated and also ask a teacher for help. You can ask God to help you pray for that person, that they would know how much God loves them.
 - Scenario Five: You can remember the people who love you and that more than anyone else, GOD loves you. God sent Jesus to show how much.
 - Scenario Six: We can trust God even when we hear thunder outside.

What You Say:

“Sometimes when we’re scared, frustrated, worried, or unsure, we just think about the thing we’re worried or scared or frustrated about! Instead, God wants us to remind ourselves that God loves us and God has a plan! God sent Jesus, God’s only Son, to be our Savior to rescue us and make a way for us to have a relationship with God forever. When we face something that’s hard, we can still have peace because God is in charge and we can trust God no matter what.

“When you hear the word ‘peace,’ what do you think about? (*Pause for responses.*) You might think it’s about getting along with others when we get angry and are unkind. And that is true! But the peace we’re talking about today is the peace that God can give us on the inside. It means that no matter what happens around us, we can have a deep-down peace that everything will be okay. The gift of Jesus is proof that **[Bottom Line] you can have peace because God has a plan.**”

3. Put a Bow on It Verse

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need: Bible marked at Isaiah 9:6

What You Do:

- Select a volunteer to open the marked Bible to Isaiah 9:6.
- Read the verse out loud.
- Write each word of the verse on a dry erase board.
 - “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given*” Isaiah 9:6, ESV
- Read the verse from the gift bows together.
- Start removing one word at a time and recite the verse together. Keep going and see if they can say it when the entire verse has been erased.

What You Say:

“This verse reminds us that God had a plan to send a rescuer—Jesus! And hundreds of years later, Jesus was born just as God had promised. At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus, God’s greatest gift. We can put all our trust in God knowing that God is in control. **[Bottom Line] You can have peace because God has a plan.**”

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 Say:

"Dear God, You are an awesome God. Thank You for Your plan to send a rescuer to us. Christmas is a time for us to celebrate how You sent Jesus, the greatest gift! When we start to feel unsure or worried or scared, help us remember Your BIG plan so that we can have peace. We love You. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to show off their peace ornaments, including the bottom line on the back as they talk about how **[Bottom Line] you can have peace because God has a plan.**

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 #2.*

1. Pass the Parcel

[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:

- Medium box, one for each Small Group
- Wrapping supplies (paper, scissors, and tape)
- Treats or individually wrapped candy, one for each kid
 - Before group time, put the treats inside the box and wrap the box like a gift.

***2. Peace Be with You**

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Print "Peace Be with You Scenarios" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one for each Small Group

3. Put a Bow on It Verse

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Bible marked at Isaiah 9:6

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:

- No supplies

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**