

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, Isaiah 7:14-15*

Today's Key Question: What are you hoping for?

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.

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 (Communicator Script)

Key Question

Prayer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot

Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions

Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You

Prayer Activity: Make it Personal with Prayer

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. Take a Snapshot

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding

What You Need: Gift boxes, permanent markers, music player, Christmas music

What You Do:

- Divide your group into teams of two or three.
- Give each team a wrapped gift box and a permanent marker.
- Invite kids to think of things that come to mind when they think about Christmas.
- Instruct the kids to write their thoughts on the box.
- Participate with each group by adding your own ideas to each box as well as some words that connect with today's story content such as hope, promises fulfilled, Savior, Prince of Peace, etc.
- Direct the kids to sit in a circle while holding the boxes.
- Start the music.
- Instruct the kids to pass the boxes around the circle to one another while the music plays.
- Pause the music.
- When you pause the music, ask the kids holding the boxes to read whatever is written on the box nearest to their right thumb.
- Invite the group to share what that word or phrase brings to mind about Christmas.
- Repeat for several rounds until the song ends or all of the Christmas words on the boxes have been read.

2. Bible Story Extension

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: Plastic cups, “God’s Promises” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Create teams of two or three kids.
- Give each team 10 red and 10 green cups stacked together in no particular color order.
- Instruct the kids to listen for the promises God made in the Old Testament long before Jesus was born.
- Read aloud the passages from today’s stories using the “God’s Promises” Activity Page.
- For each promise they hear, direct the kids to remove a cup from the original stack and begin a new stack—one cup for each promise they hear.
- Emphasize the word “will” as you read the verses from the activity page.
- Clue kids to listen for the word WILL as an indication that a promise follows.
 - The promises are bolded on the activity page.
- Invite kids to share other promises God has made or ways God shows faithfulness to us in order to move over any cups remaining in the original stack.
- Challenge teams to work together to stack all of their cups to form a Christmas tree shape.
 - The kids can begin with a circular base, pyramid design, or any stacking method they choose.
- When finished, instruct the kids to leave the cups in place.
- Ask:
 - How has God kept each of the promises found in the verses we read?
 - In what ways do these promises give you hope?
 - How do these promises show God’s faithfulness?
 - Why do you think some people didn’t understand or believe Jesus was the One these promises were all about?
- Instruct each kid to remove a cup from the bottom of their “trees” to knock them over.

What You Say:

“Unlike these cups that fell over when we removed one from the base, we know that when we trust God, our base remains standing strong. We can have hope because we know that God is faithful and keeps promises.”

3. Discussion Questions

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

Ask:

- Why do you think it's important to have hope?
- What keeps us from having hope?
- Why is Jesus our best source of hope?
- How would you explain hope to someone?
- Aside from gifts, what are you hoping for this Christmas?

4. Verses to Take with You

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need: Bibles

What You Do:

- Give each kid a Bible.
- Together, look up Isaiah 9:6 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

Finding verses with 4th-5th graders: Our verse is from Isaiah. Ask kids to tell you whether that's in the Old Testament or the New Testament. (*Old*) So we know it's toward the middle of the Bible. When they find Isaiah, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Tell them to find chapter 9. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell them to find verse 6 in chapter 9.

- Choose a kid to read the verse aloud to the group.
- Say the verse together to help kids memorize it.
- Ask:
 - Many of God's people would have been familiar with Isaiah 9:6. Based on this verse, what do you think they expected Jesus to be like?
 - In what ways is Jesus a Wonderful Adviser? (or Wonderful Counselor in the NIV)
 - Why can Jesus be called Mighty God and a Prince Who Brings Peace? (or a Prince of Peace in the NIV)
 - How do these descriptions of Jesus give you hope?

5. Make It Personal with Prayer

[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?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

What You Need: Bible

What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Review the words from Isaiah 9:6 that describe God's promised Savior. The four words are:
 - Wonderful Counselor
 - Mighty God
 - Everlasting Father
 - Prince of Peace
- Pray together as a group by praising God for keeping all of God's promises.
- As kids are willing, ask them to take turns choosing one of the descriptions of Jesus and praying aloud as the others pray silently.
- Close your group time in prayer.

What You Say:

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our Wonderful Adviser who gives us what we need to make wise choices. Thank You for the hope we have in our Mighty God because there is nothing too hard for You. Thank You for sending us the Prince Who Brings Peace who made a way for us to have a friendship with You. Thank You for always keeping Your promises and for the hope we have through the Father Who Lives Forever. We can find hope this Christmas season because You have shown us that You keep Your promises. Amen."

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.)

Story Exploration – No Supplies

1. Take a Snapshot

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding

What You Need:

- Gift boxes, one for every two or three kids
- Permanent markers, one for each kid
- Music player
- Christmas music

2. Bible Story Extension

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need:

- Print “God’s Promises” Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Red plastic cups, 10 for every two or three kids
- Green plastic cups, 10 for every two or three kids

3. Discussion Questions

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

4. Verses to Take with You

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Bibles

5. Make it Personal with Prayer

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need:

Bible