

## 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 Key Question:** What are your plans this Christmas?

**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.

### **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

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**

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. Bible Story Extension

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

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

#### What You Need: Bible

#### What You Do:

- Ask: “Who were the main characters mentioned in today’s story?” (*Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, Elizabeth*)
- Read a statement below and allow kids to answer using the characters mentioned.
- Possible Bible Story Statements:
  - I’ve gotta go check this out with my cousin, Elizabeth. (*Mary*)
  - I can’t wait to tell Mary that God has an amazing, one-of-a-kind plan for her life. (*Gabriel*)
  - I’m from Nazareth and King David is one of my ancient relatives (*Joseph*)
  - You will have a Son and His name will be Jesus. (*Gabriel*)
  - I nearly lost it when an angel appeared to me out of the blue. (*Mary*)
  - The Lord has blessed you in a special way. He is with you. (*Gabriel*)
  - I am going to have a baby and the baby is God’s Son. (*Mary*)
  - Whoa! I felt my baby jump when you came in. (*Elizabeth*)
  - I trusted the angel when he said that God would be with me. (*Mary*)
  - I’m nervous about what’s next, but I’m going to choose to trust God. (*Joseph, Mary, or Elizabeth*)
- To help the kids connect with the story, ask:
  - What do you think Mary would have been thinking and feeling after the angel Gabriel left?
  - Gabriel gave Mary a lot to think about—one minute she was an ordinary young girl about to marry a guy named Joseph, and the next minute she was going to have a baby who would save the world. That’s terrifying on a lot of levels. Name some fears Mary would have needed to trust God with.
  - Mary’s situation was unique to say the least. Still, fear is fear, but we can have joy even when we’re afraid of what’s next. Why is that true?
- If time allows, read Luke 1:46-49.
- Before you read the verses, say: “These verses are part of the prayer of praise Mary spoke when she went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.”
- As you read, encourage kids to listen for ways Mary’s words reflect peace and confidence in God’s plan for her.
- Pause after you read each verse and ask, “How do these words reflect Mary’s peace and confidence in God’s plan?”
- Encourage kids to remember that Jesus isn’t just *part* of God’s plan—He *IS* God’s plan. Jesus is the only One who can rescue us from sin and bring us into God’s forever family. Because of Jesus, we can have peace—even when our world feels upside down. No matter what happens, we can choose to trust God knowing that God has a plan.

## 2. 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:**

- How would you define peace? What is the opposite of peace?
- What do you believe about God that can help you when you start to feel worried or anxious about something?
- What does it look like for a kid your age to have peace? How does it show up in things you say and do?
- How does the birth of Jesus connect to God's plan to rescue us from sin?
- What do you love most about Christmas?
- Even if Christmas celebrations don't end up being everything we want, why can we still have peace and not feel upset?
- If you could describe Christmas in three words, what would they be?
- What do you think some of God's plans are for you this Christmas?

### 3. Verses to Take with You

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

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

#### What You Need: Bibles

#### What You Do:

- Make sure each kid has a Bible.
- Together, look up Romans 15:13 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

**Finding verses with 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders:** Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for. Once they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. First, have them find the chapter they're looking for. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

- Read the verse together.
- Ask:
  - How would you describe "perfect peace"?
  - Based on this verse, where does peace come from and how do we get it?
  - What are some situations we face that can steal away our peace?
- Read the kids the Memory Verse – Isaiah 9:6 – and ask them which name Isaiah used to describe Jesus that contained the word PEACE. (*"Prince of Peace"*.)
  - Why do you think Jesus is called the Prince of Peace?
  - Why is Jesus the best source of peace?
- Read Romans 15:13 again.
- Work with the kids on memorizing the part of the verse that focuses on the peace we have when we trust Jesus.
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  - ESV: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."
- Challenge kids to use different voices to say the portion of the verse above, or use some of the suggestions below:
  - Sing it to the tune of Jingle Bells.
  - Imagine you're shivering in the cold.
  - Imitate an excited little kid on Christmas morning.
  - Speak with a mouthful of Christmas cookies.
  - Whisper it.
  - Use your squeakiest chipmunk voice.
- Lead the kids to turn to a friend and say, *"May the God who gives hope fill you with great joy. May you have perfect peace as you trust in him."* Then, turn to another friend and say, *"May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope."*
  - Or for the NIV: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

#### 4. 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?

##### What You Need: "Gift Tag Prayer Prompt" Activity Page

##### What You Do:

- Give each kid a tag from the "Gift Tag Prayer Prompt" Activity Page.
- Invite the group to focus a prayer around the two words on their gift tag.
- Encourage any volunteers to pray aloud.
- After a few moments, instruct the kids to exchange tags.
- Invite the kids to pray again based on the two new words on their gift tag.
- Repeat as time allows.
- Close your group time in prayer.

*NOTE: If you use the "Gift Tag Prayer Prompt" with "Salvation" on it, have a conversation with your group about what it means to follow Jesus. Be sensitive to where your group is at, and be sure to include their parents or caregivers in any decisions the kids would like to make about following Jesus.*

##### What You Say:

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus. He came as a baby and was placed in a manger but would one day be the Savior of the world. Jesus made a way for us to be forgiven and have peace in our heart and with You. As we get ready to celebrate Christmas with friends and family, help us to remember that You have a plan and Your plans are always for our good. Whether things go the way we want or not, help us trust You no matter what. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. 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. Bible Story Extension**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Bible

##### **2. 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

##### **3. Verses to Take with You**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Bibles

##### **4. 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:**

- Print and cut out “Gift Tag Prayer Prompt” Activity Page, one card for each kid

### **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**