

Small Group Leader Guide

Today's Suggested Schedule

Prelude: Setting the tone for the experience

See the Getting Ready pages at the end of this document for a detailed description of what you'll need for today. In the Prelude folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare.

Small Group (15 minutes)

Social: Providing time for fun interaction

1. Opening Activity

Large Group (35 minutes)

Worship: Inviting people to respond to God

Story: Communicating God's truth in engaging ways

- Opener
- Worship
- Bible Story
(sections about God's Big Story are listed as optional)
- Prayer

Small Group (25 minutes)

Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

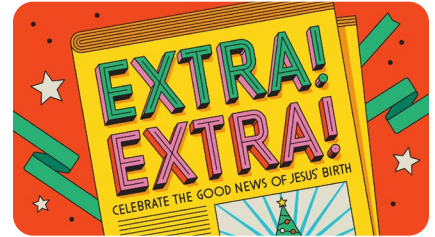
1. Bible Story Review: Unbox the Greatest Gift
2. Application Activity: God's Plan
3. Memory Verse Activity: Verse Postcard
4. Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

Home: Prompting action beyond the experience

- Devotionals for Kids
- Parent Cue Card (print or email)
- [Parent Cue App](#) and [ParentCue.org](#)

✦ Need activities for a K-5th group? Use this 2nd-3rd grade guide!

THIS MONTH



Today's Bible Story

Gabriel Visits Mary Luke 1:5-66

Bottom Line

God always had a plan to send Jesus.

Memory Verse

**"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord."
Luke 2:11 NIV**



Inclusive Pro Tips

This leader guide is created with inclusion in mind. It supports children with learning differences, disabilities, or special needs as they participate alongside their peers. Look for the highlighted sections for extra tips to help welcome and include every child. For more resources, check out our free *A Place at the Table* course with Kim Botto and EveryChild Curriculum. joinamazing.com/everychild

SOCIAL

Opening Activity



What You Need

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Page

Inclusive Supplies

- ☐ Extra "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Pages



Inclusive Pro Tips

If the kids work better in smaller groups, provide extra "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Pages, divide the kids into smaller groups, and give each group a puzzle to work on.

① What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive → Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Thank God for His perfect plan and for choosing Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary to be part of His big story. Ask God to help every kid learn to see that God is good and He loves us so much that He worked for years and years and years on His plan to send Jesus because He wants to be close to us. Ask God to help kids see His great love even more clearly this Christmas.

1. Before kids arrive, mix up the "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Pages and hide/place them around the group space.
2. Greet each kid by name with a fist bump, high-five, smile, or wave as they arrive!
3. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
4. Invite the kids to work to put the puzzle together.
5. Once the puzzle is complete, read the headline aloud together.
6. Gather the kids to discuss.

② What You Say

"Great job putting the pieces together, friends! This puzzle reminds us of what we're discovering all month long. **[Bottom Line]** God always had a plan to send Jesus! Even though God worked for years and years on that plan, He always had one. Lots of pieces, over years and years, came together to be a part of it because He loves us so much. **[Transition]** In our true story from the Bible today, we'll look at one part of that plan, when an angel visited a woman named Mary to share some INCREDIBLE news with her about Jesus. Let's go find out more!"

Transition → Lead your group to the Large Group area.

GROUPS 1/4

Unbox the Greatest Gift



Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Prepared gift-wrapped box with the cards from the "Clue Cards" Activity Page wrapped in the layers

① What You Do

1. Gather kids in a circle.
2. Explain that you're going to unwrap a gift that will help tell today's Bible Story.
3. Pass the wrapped gift around and let each kid unwrap one layer.
→ NOTE: If you have more than 7 kids in your group, let them partner up to help each other unwrap a layer.
4. Display the picture and read the recap statement on each card from the "Clue Cards" that the kids unwrap.
5. Continue until the final layer reveals the promise—the Greatest Gift, Jesus!

② What You Say

"Amazing job helping to recap today's Bible Story, friends! Every time we took off a layer, we got closer to seeing the promise inside. God's promise to send Jesus was the GREATEST gift ever, and just like this present, His plan was revealed step-by-step until the day Jesus was born.

"God sent His angel, Gabriel, to tell Mary she would be the mother of Jesus, God's very own Son! A Savior coming to rescue us was part of a promise God made a long time ago. We were under a curse of sin and needed to be rescued so we could be close friends with God again! So God worked on His great rescue plan step after step after step. And every step of the story that we read about today—Zechariah and Elizabeth, John being born, Mary's visit—was a part of that plan. It was all part of the plan to send Jesus. **[Bottom Line]** God always had a plan to send Jesus! And because God was faithful to carry out every step of that great rescue plan, today, anyone who chooses to follow Jesus starts a friendship with God that lasts forever!"

GROUPS 2/4

God's Plan



Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Brown or gray construction paper
- ☐ Prepared gift bag

Inclusive Pro Tips



Allow kids to "walk the path" in creative ways: crawling, rolling a ball across, or moving a toy figure step by step.

① What You Do

1. Before you begin, place the pieces of construction paper across your group area in a winding "path" and place the gift bag at the end of the "path."
2. One at a time, let the kids take turns hopping, walking, or tiptoeing across the path to get to the gift bag.
3. NOTE: Adjust the difficulty of the path and challenge the kids not to touch the floor!
4. Once all of the kids have reached the gift bag, gather the kids and explain that God's plan for Jesus was like a path ... every step mattered, but it led to a great gift, the gift of Jesus!
5. Encourage a kid to remove the tissue paper, and distribute the candy/small toys.
6. [Make It Personal] (Share an age-appropriate time when you had to remind yourself that God is good and was working toward goodness in your life when something felt confusing or hard. Share a brief story with the group!)

② What You Say

"Great job following the paths, friends! God had a perfect plan to send Jesus, and He made sure every step happened at just the right time. When Gabriel told Mary she would be Jesus' mother, that was part of the plan! And when Mary said yes, she trusted God's plan even though she didn't know all the details. Mary was able to trust God's plan because she trusted God! Even though she didn't know exactly how the plan would turn out, she knew that God was good and therefore His plan would be good too.

"There are going to be a lot of times in your life when you don't know where you're headed. But you can do what Mary did—you can trust God because He is good. Over years and years and years, God was working on His good plan to rescue you. **[Bottom Line]** God always had a plan to send Jesus. What He was working on was good, good, good, and He is always working toward goodness in your life too!"

GROUPS 3/4

Verse Postcards*

Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Postcard" Activity Page
- ☐ Coloring supplies
- ☐ Writing materials
- ☐ Bible marked at Luke 2:11



① What You Do

1. Give each kid a postcard from the "Postcard" Activity Page.
2. Read the Memory Verse, Luke 2:11, aloud to the group.
3. Set out the coloring supplies, the writing materials, and the opened Bible where the kids can refer to it.
4. On the front, read the phrase: "God always had a plan to send Jesus!"
5. Instruct the kids to decorate the front of their postcard.
6. On the back of the postcard, encourage each kid to write out Luke 2:11.
7. Invite the kids to think of someone they'd like to give the postcard to, and write their name in the blanks.

② What You Say

"Your postcards look amazing! By writing out Luke 2:11, you've shared the exact good news the angel told the shepherds: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (**Luke 2:11 NIV**).

"Instead of mailing this postcard, think of someone you can give it to to share the good news with them, like the angel shared with the shepherds. God loves that person so much that Jesus Himself came to pay for sin so that person could choose to be close with God again! **[Bottom Line]** God always had a plan to send Jesus."

GROUPS 4/4

Pray and Dismiss

Prayer Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

☐ Optional: Toy microphone


① What You Do

1. Gather the kids in a circle.
2. Explain that today they get to imagine they're being interviewed for the "Good News Network."
3. Hold your hand like a pretend microphone (or optionally, use a toy one) in front of each kid and ask:
 - "If you could thank God for one thing today, what would it be?"
 - "What's one thing you're glad God planned in your life?"
4. After every kid answers, say a short prayer thanking God for what they shared.
5. Close the activity by praying for the group as a whole, thanking God for always having a plan to send Jesus.

② What You Say

"God, thank You that You love us so much that You worked for years and years to send Jesus to rescue us so we could be close friends with You again. Thank You that You always had a plan to send Jesus. Help us to share that good news all throughout this Christmas season and beyond—that You love everyone so much that You sent Jesus. We love You, God! We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen!"

Transition → As adults arrive to pick up, invite the kids to show off their Memory Verse postcards. Challenge the kids to recite Luke 2:11 to their grown-ups!

Inclusive Pro Tips



If they prefer, allow kids to whisper their answer to you, and you can "report" it for them.

Allow kids to pass if they're not ready to share. Circle back at the end in case they change their mind.

Getting Ready

Social

Welcome the kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Use this time to create space for them to connect with you and with each other by playing age-appropriate games, asking fun questions, and encouraging friendly interactions. This is a great moment to help kids feel seen, known, and ready to experience today's story.

Groups

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 #3.

Home

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

Social

Opening Activity

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Print "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group

Inclusive Supplies:

- ☐ Extra "Puzzle Pieces" Activity Pages

Getting Ready

Social

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Groups

1. Unbox the Greatest Gift

- ☐ Christmas-themed wrapping paper, one roll for each Small Group
- ☐ Small or medium-sized box (a box from an old package works!); one for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "Clue Cards" Activity Page on 11 × 17-inch paper and cut apart, one set for each Small Group

Before group time:

- ☐ Wrap a box in several layers of Christmas-themed wrapping paper. As you wrap, place a "Clue Card" between each layer.
- ☐ Make sure the final "Greatest Gift" card is inside the last layer, closest to the box.

2. God's Plan

- ☐ Brown or gray pieces of construction paper, 20-25 for each Small Group
- ☐ Individually-wrapped Christmas candies or small toys, one for every kid
- ☐ Christmas-themed gift bag that's large enough to hold the candies/toys
- ☐ Tissue paper

Before group time:

- ☐ Place the candies/small toys in the gift bag.
- ☐ Cover the candies/toys with tissue paper.

3. Verse Postcards*

- ☐ Print "Postcard" Activity Page double-sided on cardstock and cut apart, one for every kid
- ☐ Coloring supplies, enough for each Small Group to share
- ☐ Writing materials, enough for each Small Group to share
- ☐ Bible marked at Luke 2:11, one for each Small Group

4. Pray and Dismiss

- ☐ Optional: Toy microphone, one for each Small Group