

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: Take a Snapshot
2. Application Activity: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions
3. Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You
4. Prayer Activity: Make It Personal with Prayer

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? Check out the 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.

Conversation Starter

What are your plans this Christmas?

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
- ☐ "Headline Strips" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Coloring supplies

① What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive → Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Ask God to remind you **(and your group)** that God is good and that He is always working for good. Pray for any visitors that they would find a safe place in your group to wonder and ask questions. Thank God for inviting ordinary people like Mary into His extraordinary rescue plan. Ask the Holy Spirit to help preteens recognize that God's great love for them led Him to work for years and years so they could be close friends with Him again! And because He loves them so much, He is always working for good in their lives, and they can trust Him!

1. Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a high-five, fist bump, or a wave.
2. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
3. Spread the "Headline Strips" Activity Pages out on the floor or on a table.
4. As the kids arrive, explain to them that a headline is like a chapter or a story's title.
5. Set out the pencils.
6. Instruct each kid to pick a headline from the "Headline Strips" Activity Page and guess what happens next in the story (or fill in the blank) by writing their answers on the paper under the headline.
7. Encourage the kids to get creative.
8. Gather the kids together and let them share their headline strips and guesses with the group.

Continued on the next page. →

Inclusive Pro Tips



If it works better for your group, let them work with a partner to come up with a news headline!

SOCIAL

Opening Activity

**What You Need**

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ "Headline Strips" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Coloring supplies

Inclusive Pro Tips

If it works better for your group, let them work with a partner to come up with a news headline!

② What You Say

"You all came up with some creative Christmas stories, friends! We might not always know what's next, but we can know that God is always working toward something good! God is always working on writing a good story! Today, we'll look at a true story that He worked on for years and years because He loves us—His amazing plan to send Jesus to rescue us so we could be close to Him again!

[Transition] "In today's true story from the Bible, we'll discover how an angel visited Mary, Jesus' mother, to tell her that she would be giving birth to the Savior of the WORLD! It's a pretty epic story, and it was all a part of God's BIG plan that God had been working and working on throughout history. Let's go find out more!"

Transition → Lead your group to the Large Group area.

GROUPS 1/5

Take a Snapshot



Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Markers and large crayons
- ☐ Device for playing worship music

① What You Do

1. Before you begin, tape the butcher paper on a wall or across the floor.
2. Tell kids this is the "Jesus Graffiti Wall."
3. Play the worship music softly.
4. Invite the kids to write or draw words, doodles, or symbols of truths they know about Jesus.
 - For example, Jesus came for everyone, Jesus is God's Son, I can trust God because He is good, I can say "yes!" to God like Mary did, etc.
5. As they work, ask them questions like:
 - If you were making a headline about Jesus—a big, bold statement hitting the main point you want to make for the whole world to see—what would it say?

Inclusive Pro Tips



If kids in your group need more personal space, consider using more than one piece of butcher paper to spread them out.

GROUPS 2/5

Bible Story Extension

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Butcher paper with a news desk drawn on it
- ☐ "Emoji News Cards" Activity Page
- ☐ Bible marked at Luke 1:5-66
- ☐ Tape

Inclusive Pro Tips



Consider playing this game in pairs or groups of three if it works better for the kids in your group to play with a supportive friend.

To accommodate your group's mobility, play this activity from a seated position. Kids can raise their cards in the air instead of 'delivering' them.

① What You Do

1. Before you begin, tape the butcher paper with a news desk drawn on it to a wall in your group area (or place it on the floor).
2. Gather the kids on the opposite end of your group area.
3. Give each kid one of the "Emoji News Cards" and a piece of tape.
4. Show them how to loop a piece of tape double-sided and place it on the back of their card.
5. Explain how to play:
 - Show the kids the butcher paper "news desk."
 - Explain that you will read the Bible Story aloud in short sections.
 - When part of the Bible Story matches their card, that kid will quickly run to the "news desk" to deliver it.
6. Read through the Bible, pausing to make sure the appropriate card is put on the news desk at the appropriate time. (The cards are numbered, so that should help keep things in order!)
7. Continue until all the cards have been taped in story order.
 - If you have more than 10 kids in your group, assign multiple kids to one of the "Emoji News Cards." If you have fewer than 10 kids in your group, a kid can have more than one card from the "Emoji News Cards" Activity Page. Just make sure all of the "Emoji News Cards" are assigned.

Make It Personal → Share your plans that you have this Christmas with family and friends. Do you serve or give gifts to others to remind them of Jesus' love for them?

Story Matches

1. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:5-7
2. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:8-20
3. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:23-25
(The last emoji represents the tablet Zechariah likely wrote on.)
4. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:26-29
5. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:30-33
6. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:34-37
7. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:38
8. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:39-45
9. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:46-55
10. 🙏👉🙏👉 Luke 1:57-66

GROUPS 3/5

Discussion Questions

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

No supplies needed



① What You Do

1. What are your plans this Christmas?
2. Since God worked on His great rescue plan for years and years to pay for sin so He could be your close friend, how does that show He feels about you?
3. Why is Jesus the best news we could share?
4. If you could tell one friend or family member the good news about Jesus, what would you want them to know first?

Inclusive Pro Tips



Be sensitive to kids who may need extra time to process their thoughts and respond. Be patient and create a safe space where everyone has a chance to share when they're ready.

Frequently check for understanding during discussion by asking questions like, "Can someone share in their own words what we're talking about?"

GROUPS 4/5

Verses to Take with You

Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Dry-erase board and marker

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Move

① What You Do

1. Before you begin, write Luke 2:11 on the dry-erase board and erase several words. The kids will identify the missing words during this activity.
2. Give every kid a Bible and invite them to look up Luke 2:11.

*Finding verses with 4th-5th graders

- ① 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.
- ② When they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers.
- ③ Once they find the chapter, explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

3. Repeat the verse together several times.
4. Review any words that might be unfamiliar to the kids, like 'Messiah.' If you have a lot of returning kids from week 1, ask them what 'Messiah' means. If not, use this recap to share:
 - "Messiah" is a special title that means: "Anointed One" or "Chosen One."
 - A long time before Jesus was born, God promised His people that He would send someone to rescue them, to make things right, so they could be close to God again. That person would be the Messiah!
 - This verse that we shared today is part of the message the angel delivered to the shepherds that Jesus is the Messiah! The angel was saying: "This is the One God promised! He's the Rescuer, the forever King, the One we've all been waiting for to make us right with God again!"
5. Put the Bibles away.
6. Gather the kids together in front of the dry-erase board.
7. Let them take turns guessing the missing words from the verse.
8. Continue changing the missing words and calling on various kids to guess them.
9. Ask:
10. The verse says a Savior has been born "to you." How does it feel knowing Jesus came for YOU personally?
11. If you had to share this verse with a friend in your own words, what would you say?

GROUPS 5/5

Make It Personal with Prayer

Prayer Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils



① What You Do

1. Give every kid an index card and a pencil.
2. Invite them to reflect on today's [Bottom Line] God always had a plan to send Jesus.
3. Lead a salvation conversation with the kids.
 - Say: "God always had a plan to send Jesus. That plan wasn't just for Mary or the shepherds or the people living back then. It was for YOU too! God's plan has always been to make a way for us to be close to Him, and that's why He sent Jesus."
 - "The truth is, we all mess up (that's called sin). Sin keeps us from being close to God. BUT God's plan was to send Jesus to take the punishment for our sin so we could be close friends with God again! When you believe in Jesus, you're saying, 'I know You died for me, and I want to follow You.' That's the BEST news you could ever accept. If you've never told Jesus you believe in Him and want to follow Him, you can do that anytime, even right now, as you pray."
4. Encourage the kids to take a quiet moment to talk to God.
 - Say: "Take a quiet moment. You might want to thank God for sending Jesus. You might want to write a prayer telling Jesus you believe in Him and want to follow Him! Or you might just want to tell God what you're feeling right now."
5. Instruct the kids to use the index card and a pencil to write a prayer to God.
6. Spend some time in quiet prayer.

Inclusive Pro Tips



Give kids the option to doodle to God if writing is difficult for them.

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.

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 "Headline Strips" Activity Page on paper and cut apart, one card for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, one for every kid
- ☐ Coloring supplies, enough for each Small Group to share

Groups

1. Take a Snapshot

- ☐ Butcher paper, one large piece for each Small Group
- ☐ Markers and large crayons, enough for each Small Group to share
- ☐ Device for playing worship music, one for each Small Group

2. Bible Story Extension

- ☐ Butcher paper, one large piece for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "Emoji News Cards" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one card for every kid
- ☐ Bible marked at Luke 1:5-66, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Tape, one roll for each Small Group

Before group time:

- ☐ Draw a shape resembling a "news desk" on the piece of butcher paper. You will tape this on the wall or lay it on the floor in your group area.

3. Discussion Questions

No supplies needed

4. Verses to Take with You

- ☐ Bibles, one for every kid
- ☐ Dry-erase board and marker, one for each Small Group

5. Make It Personal with Prayer

- ☐ Index cards, one for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, one for every kid

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**