

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

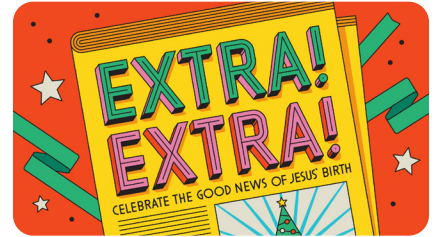
1. Bible Story Review: Journey to Jesus
2. Application Activity: Celebrate Jesus All Year Long
3. Memory Verse Activity: Catch the Verse
4. Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

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

The Wise Men Visit Jesus Matthew 2:1-12

Bottom Line

Celebrate Jesus all year long.

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
- ☐ "Large Star" Activity Page
- ☐ Tape-looped "gifts" from the "Gift Box" Activity Page
- ☐ Blindfold

Inclusive Supplies

- ☐ Soft eye cover, like a sleeping mask



Inclusive Pro Tips

Provide a soft eye cover, like a sleeping mask, as a blindfold.

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 them! Think about how you celebrate and honor Jesus every day. Ask God to help kids know that celebrating Jesus isn't just something we do at Christmas, we can celebrate Him every day because we live in His great love and in His great rescue every day! Pray that the Holy Spirit would help the kids see how they can honor and follow Jesus all year long. Ask God to give you creative ways to help kids remember who Jesus is and why He's worth celebrating!

1. Greet each kid by name with a fist bump, high-five, smile, or wave as they arrive!
2. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
3. Ask the kids about their favorite part of Christmas break so far.
4. Tape the large star cutout from the "Large Star" Activity Page to the wall (make sure it's at kid-level height).
5. Instruct the kids to line up about 10 feet away.
6. Blindfold the first player (or have them close their eyes).
7. Spin them gently in a circle, hand them a taped gift cutout from the "Gift Box" Activity Page, and challenge them to place the paper "gift" under the star.
8. Instruct the rest of the group to cheer and help guide them by calling out directions like "a little higher!" or "move to the left!"
9. Continue until everyone gets a turn.

Continued on the next page. →

SOCIAL

Opening Activity

What You Need

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- ☐ "Large Star" Activity Page
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- ☐ Blindfold

Inclusive Supplies

- ☐ Soft eye cover, like a sleeping mask



② What You Say

"Nice work, everyone! Just like you were trying to get your gift under the star, the Wise Men followed a real star to find Jesus. They didn't give up, even when the journey was long and difficult. And when they found Jesus, they celebrated Him with gifts and worship.

"The Wise Men remind us that Jesus is worth looking for, following, and celebrating, not just at Christmas, but always. We can celebrate Jesus every day because we live in His great rescue and His great love every day! **[Transition]** Today, we'll hear more about how the Wise Men found Jesus, celebrated Him, and how we can celebrate Him beyond Christmas too!"

Transition → Lead your group to the Large Group area.

Inclusive Pro Tips

Provide a soft eye cover, like a sleeping mask, as a blindfold.

GROUPS 1/4

Journey to Jesus



Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bible marked at Matthew 2:1-12
- ☐ "Journey to Jesus" Activity Page
- ☐ Tape

① What You Do

1. Before kids arrive, tape the four pictures from the "Journey to Jesus" Activity Page spaced around your group area to mark the story "stations."
2. Gather the kids and explain that you'll walk through the story by moving from picture to picture, just like the Wise Men traveled.
3. Lead the kids to each picture station in the order below.
4. While you are at each picture station, read a short part of the story from Matthew 2:1-12 (using the marked Bible) and invite the kids to answer a question.

Star Appears (*Star picture*)

1. Read Matthew 2:1-2 (NIRV): Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. This happened while Herod was king of Judea. After Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose. Now we have come to worship him."
2. Ask: What do you think the Wise Men felt when they saw the star?

Jerusalem (*Crown picture*)

1. Read Matthew 2:3-8 (NIRV): When King Herod heard about it, he was very upset. Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled too. So Herod called together all the chief priests of the people. He also called the teachers of the law. He asked them where the Messiah was going to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied. "This is what the prophet has written. He said,

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are certainly not the least important among
the towns of Judah.

A ruler will come out of you.

He will rule my people Israel like a shepherd."

Then Herod secretly called for the Wise Men. He found out from them exactly when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem. He said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report it to me. Then I can go and worship him too."

2. Ask: Was Herod happy or worried about this news? Why?

Continued on the next page. →

GROUPS 1/4

Journey to Jesus



Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

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What You Need

- ☐ Bible marked at Matthew 2:1-12
- ☐ "Journey to Jesus" Activity Page
- ☐ Tape

Bethlehem (*House picture*)

1. Read Matthew 2:9-10 (NIRV): After the Wise Men had listened to the king, they went on their way. The star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.
2. Ask: How do you think the Wise Men felt when they finally found Jesus?

Gifts for Jesus (*Gift picture*)

1. Read Matthew 2:11-12 (NIRV): The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they returned to their country on a different road.
2. Ask: The Wise Men gave Jesus their very best gifts. What are some ways YOU can give something to Jesus today—not something you buy, but something from your heart?

② What You Say

"Awesome job walking through the story today! The Wise Men followed the star because they knew God had done something amazing. When they found Jesus, they celebrated Him and gave Jesus their best gifts.

"We can celebrate Jesus too! We may not bring gold, frankincense, or myrrh, but we can give Jesus our life, our time, our love, and our choices. Think about what you can give Jesus. When we give Jesus something, that's one way we can worship Him. We can worship and celebrate Jesus not just at Christmas, but every single day! He loves us every single day, and we live in the rescue He won for us every single day! Remember, we can **[Bottom Line]** celebrate Jesus all year long!"

GROUPS 2/4

Celebrate Jesus All Year Long*

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Celebrate Jesus All Year Long" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils, markers, or crayons



Inclusive Pro Tips

Encourage kids to draw pictures or provide stickers to place on the calendar.

① What You Do

1. Give each kid a page from the "Celebrate Jesus All Year Long" Activity Page.
2. Set out the pencils, markers, or crayons.
3. Say: "Today we're going to create our very own calendar! But instead of writing in sports games or school events, we're going to think of ways we can **[Bottom Line]** celebrate Jesus all year long."
4. Point out the twelve boxes labeled January–December.
5. Explain that in each box, they will write or draw how they can celebrate Jesus that month.
6. Example: "Sing about Him in January," "Make a Valentine telling Him I love Him in February," "Be kind to someone on my swim team in June," "Serve in September," "Thank Him every day for a blessing in November," "Give toys in a toy drive in December."
7. Walk around as the kids work and give suggestions if kids get stuck.
8. Afterward, invite kids to share one of their favorite things they wrote down with the group.
9. Remind the kids to take the calendar home and put it somewhere they'll see it often, so they remember to celebrate Jesus all year long.

Continued on the next page. →

GROUPS 2/4

Celebrate Jesus All Year Long*

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Celebrate Jesus All Year Long" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils, markers, or crayons



Inclusive Pro Tips



Encourage kids to draw pictures or provide stickers to place on the calendar.

② What You Say

"Christmas is one of the biggest times we celebrate Jesus. But the good news is, we don't have to stop celebrating when Christmas is over! Jesus is the greatest gift ever, and because we live in His great rescue and big love every day, we can celebrate Him every single day of the year.

"Think about your calendar. Each headline you wrote is like a promise to yourself: I can celebrate Jesus in January by singing about Him. I can celebrate Jesus in September by serving others. I can celebrate Jesus in November by thanking Him for the blessings He has given me.

"The Wise Men didn't come to see Jesus that Christmas night. In fact, Jesus was around two years old when they visited Him. They celebrated Jesus long after He was born. We can do that too! In fact, we can celebrate Jesus any day of the year!

"So when you look at your calendar at home, remember: you can celebrate Jesus every month, every week, every day. He is the greatest gift, and that's something worth celebrating ALL year long! Remember, you can **[Bottom Line]** celebrate Jesus all year long!"

GROUPS 3/4

Catch the Verse



Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked at Luke 2:11
- ☐ Soft ball (beach ball, foam ball, or crumpled piece of paper)

Inclusive Supplies

- ☐ EveryChild curriculum ASL verse

Inclusive Pro Tips



Say the verse together as a group using ASL provided in EveryChild.

① What You Do

1. Before starting the game, invite kids to open their Bibles to Luke 2:11.

*Finding verses with 2nd-3rd graders

- ① Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. *Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.*
- ② When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find the name of the book in the list.
- ③ When they find the book, lead them to look at the page number beside it. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find that book. Help the kids find the page.
- ④ When they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find the correct chapter.
- ⑤ Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find the correct verse in that chapter.

2. Practice saying the verse together a few times, first reading it slowly, then trying to say it without looking.
3. Explain that now you'll play a game called "Catch the Verse."
4. Instruct the kids to join you, standing in a circle with their closed, marked Bibles between their feet.
5. Toss the ball to one kid and encourage them to say the first part of the verse.
6. Instruct the kid holding the ball to say the next phrase of the verse before tossing the ball to someone else.
7. Continue until the group completes the verse.
8. If anyone forgets the next part, pause, encourage the kid to open their marked Bible, and practice the verse before resuming.
9. Keep playing until the kids can say the whole verse with confidence.

② What You Say

"Great job, everyone! You did an awesome job working together to learn this verse. This is part of the good news that the angel told the shepherds: a Savior had been born. That Savior is Jesus! Just like the shepherds couldn't keep the good news to themselves, we can't either. Every time we say this verse, it reminds us that Jesus came for YOU, for me, and for the whole world. This is the best news ever, and it's worth celebrating and sharing!"

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

No supplies needed

① What You Do

1. Gather the kids together in a circle.
2. Say: "The Wise Men celebrated Jesus by bowing down to worship Him and giving Him gifts. The Bible shows us many ways we can worship Jesus too. We can sing songs to Him. We can pray and thank Him. We can read the Bible and learn more about Him. We can even give our time and attention to Him—He wants us to be His close friends. Worship isn't just something we do at church, and it's not just singing. It's something we can do every day!"
3. Invite kids to close their eyes and think of one way they can worship Jesus this week (examples: sing a song of praise telling Him how wonderful He is, pray and thank Him for any blessing they experience, spend time reading the Bible, talk to Him during the day).
4. Give the kids a quiet moment to decide, then ask if a few would like to share aloud.
5. Close in prayer.

② What You Say

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus, the greatest gift. Just like the Wise Men worshiped Jesus with their gifts, we want to worship Jesus with our lives. Help us to sing, pray, thank, learn about, and stay close to Jesus this week. Remind us that every day, not just at Christmas, we can worship Jesus because every day, He loves us, every day, we live in the rescue He won for us, and every day He is our King. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Transition → As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to share: "One way I can worship Jesus is by ____." Remind families that worship doesn't stop with Christmas; we **[Bottom Line]** celebrate Jesus all year long because He loves us all year long.

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 #2.

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 "Large Star" Activity Page on 11 × 17-inch paper and cut out, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "Gift Box" Activity Page on paper and cut apart, one cutout for every kid
- ☐ Tape, one roll for each Small Group
- ☐ Blindfold, one for each Small Group

Before group time:

- ☐ Put tape loops on each gift cutout from the "Gift Box" Activity Page.

Groups

1. Journey to Jesus

- ☐ Bible marked at Matthew 2:1-12, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "Journey to Jesus" Activity Page on paper, one set for each Small Group
- ☐ Tape, one roll for each Small Group

2. Celebrate Jesus All Year Long*

- ☐ Print "Celebrate Jesus All Year Long" Activity Page on paper, one for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, markers, or crayons; enough for each Small Group to share

Inclusive Supplies:

- ☐ Stickers

3. Catch the Verse

- ☐ Bibles marked at Luke 2:11, one for every kid
- ☐ Soft ball (beach ball, foam ball, or crumpled piece of paper), one for each Small Group

Inclusive Supplies:

- ☐ EveryChild curriculum ASL verse

4. Pray and Dismiss

No supplies needed