

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. Floating Heart
2. Piece by Piece
3. Sort it with Love!

Large Group (20 minutes)

Worship: Inviting people to respond to God

Story: Communicating God's truth in engaging ways

- Worship
- Bible Story
- Prayer

Small Group (25 minutes)

Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

1. Memory Verse with Motions
2. Angel Message
3. Carry The Message
4. Heart Angel

Home: Prompting action beyond the experience

- Going Home
- Memory Verse Card
- Parent Cue Card (print or email)
- [Parent Cue App](#) and [ParentCue.org](#)

THIS MONTH



Today's Bible Story

The Angel and Mary Luke 1:26-33,38

An angel tells Mary about Jesus.

Key Question

How do we know God loves us?

Bottom Line

God gave us Jesus.

Memory Verse

"God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son."

John 3:16 GNT



Inclusive Pro Tips

This leader guide is designed to be inclusive of children with a special need, learning difference, or disability who attend a group with their peers. See highlighted sections below for additional inclusive pro-tips. Check out the additional Special Needs resources included.

SOCIAL 1/3

Floating Heart



What You Need

- ☐ Mylar heart balloon, one per Small Group
- ☐ Plastic straw



Inclusive Pro Tips

Select moves that are suitable for everyone in the group. Movements can be done sitting if that is best for the group.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Use the straw to inflate the balloon with air.
2. The mylar will self-seal once blown up and the straw is removed.

During the Activity

1. Hit or toss the balloon in the air and encourage children to do a movement before the balloon hits the ground.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, I have a fun game to play with you today! Come over here and spread out."

During the Activity

"What shape is my balloon? **(Pause for responses.)** Yes! It's a heart! Hearts remind us of love. We've got a heart because we're going to be learning about how much God loves us! I'm going to toss the balloon in the air, and before it hits the ground, I want you to do any movement you want. You can jump, run in place, clap, dance, but whatever you do, you have to freeze when the balloon hits the ground. Are you ready to play? **(Toss the balloon. If children are struggling to know what to do, call out a movement for them to do.)** Oh no, hurry, it's almost to the ground, everybody freeze! **(Pause.)** You did it! **(Pick up the balloon and toss it again.)** Do a different movement this time. **(Repeat as desired.)** Friends, that was so fun!"

After the Activity

"Today we're going to hear how much God loves **(hold up the heart balloon)** us in our true story from the Bible. I can't wait to hear all about God's love! Let's go!"

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by following the balloon. Have the leader hold it up high so all children can see it, and the leader could even bob it in the air as they walk.

SOCIAL 2/3

Piece by Piece

What You Need

- ☐ Large heart cutouts in a variety of colors
- ☐ Envelopes
- ☐ Scissors

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ A visual sample of a completed heart



Inclusive Pro Tips

Display a sample heart where everyone can see it clearly.

Have children work in pairs.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Cut each heart into 4 pieces, one set for every two children.
2. Place each set of pieces in an envelope.

During the Activity

1. Group two children together and invite them to choose an envelope and sit at the table.
2. Encourage children to work together to match and assemble the 4 pieces of their heart.
3. Offer assistance as needed.
4. Show the sample heart and guide them to assemble their puzzle to match.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hello friends! Inside these envelopes is a heart that's in pieces."

During the Activity

"Let's work together to put the pieces back together and make a full heart! Pick an envelope and get started! **(Pause.)** Wow! You are doing a great job putting your heart pieces back together! I love seeing so many hearts all over our room because hearts make me think of love!"

After the Activity

"Look at your big, beautiful hearts! In today's true story from the Bible, we're going to hear that God loved us so much He gave us a super special gift! Let's go hear all about it!"

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by making a big heart with your arms over your head.

SOCIAL 3/3

Sort It with Love

What You Need

- ☐ Shape sorter toys
- ☐ Foam hearts
- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Washable markers
- ☐ Masking tape



Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer shapes with easy-grip textures or adaptive tools to pick up the shapes.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Cover the table with butcher paper and draw a circle, rectangle, square, and heart.
2. Adjust shapes based on your shape sorter toys.
3. Place the shape sorter toys on the table, ensuring there's at least one foam heart for each child.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to take turns pulling a shape from the sorter.
2. Ask them to place the shape on the matching large shape on the table.
3. If children's toys do not include a heart shape, allow them to use foam hearts to match to the large heart.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hello friends! Today we're going to play a shape game! We'll match the shapes from this toy to the BIG shapes on the table. Look for circles, rectangles, and don't forget to find the hearts!"

During the Activity

"Let's take turns pulling shapes out of the shape sorter. *[Child's name]*, you go first! **(Pause.)** What shape did you find? **(Pause for response.)** That's right! It's a **[shape]**! Can you match your shape to the one on the table? **(Pause.)** Great job! **(Continue with each child.)** We found so many hearts playing with all these! Hearts remind us of love!"

After the Activity

"Today in our Bible Story, we are going to hear that God loves us so much, He gave us a special gift."

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by making different shapes (*heart, circle, square, etc.*) with your hands.

GROUPS 1/4

Memory Verse with Motions

Memory Verse Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

☐ No Supplies Needed

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ "Memory Verse Hand Motions" PDF
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Scissors

Note

You can find examples of hand motions in the "Memory Verse Hand Motions" PDF and video, included in the Prelude folder and on Pinterest.

Inclusive Pro Tips



Invite children to say it with you or repeat words after you.

Set out the picture cutouts made from the "Memory Verse Hand Motions" PDF for children to hold up or point to as an alternative to saying or repeating the verse out loud.



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Say the Memory Verse and demonstrate the motions for the children.

During the Activity

1. Teach the Memory Verse motions and invite the children to do them with you several times.

After the Activity

Connect the Memory Verse to the Bottom Line.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, come stand with me, and let me tell you our brand-new Memory Verse! Ready to hear it? It goes like this. 'God **(flat hand with thumb to forehead, pull down)** loved the world so much **(cross arms over chest)** that he gave his only Son,' **(rock arms like a baby)** John 3:16." **(Open hands like a book.)**

During the Activity

"Now, let's learn the motions. The first part of our verse says: 'God **(flat hand with thumb to forehead, pull down)** Put one hand up straight in front of you with your thumb almost touching your forehead like this. **(Straight, flat hand with thumb at your forehead.)** Then move your hand straight down in front of you like this, **(pull down)** and say, 'God.' **(Repeat with children.)** Great job!

"The next part of our verse says: 'Loved the world so much.' **(Cross arms over chest.)** Give yourself a hug, **(hug yourself)** and say, 'loved the world so much.' **(Pause.)** Now let's put that together. 'God **(flat hand with thumb to forehead, pull down)** loved the world so much.' **(cross arms over chest)** Great job!

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 1/4

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"The next part of our verse says: 'That he gave his only Son.' **(Rock arms like a baby.)** Let's pretend we are holding a baby in our arms like this **(rock arms like a baby)** and say 'that he gave his only Son.' **(Repeat with children.)** Nice job! Now let's put that together. God **(flat hand with thumb to forehead, pull down)** loved the world so much **(cross arms over chest)** that he gave his only Son,' **(rock arms like a baby)** Super! "Now the last part is: John 3:16. **(Open hands like a book.)** Put your hands together in front of you and open them like you are opening a book **(open hands like a book)** and say: John 3:16. **(Repeat with children.)** Great job! I think we are ready to do it all together! Ready friends? 'God **(flat hand with thumb to forehead, pull down)** loved the world so much **(cross arms over chest)** that he gave his only Son,' **(rock arms like a baby)** John 3:16. **(Open hands like a book.)** Nice job. Let's do it again!" **(Repeat several times.)**

After the Activity

"The Bible teaches us that God loves us because **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus."

GROUPS 2/4

Angel Message

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Angel Message" Activity Page
- ☐ Copy paper
- ☐ 9-inchx12-inch (or larger) envelopes



Inclusive Pro Tips

Place envelopes in places where all kids can easily reach and retrieve them.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Angel Message" on paper, one set per Small Group.
2. Put each picture in a large envelope.
3. Hide the envelopes in easy-to-find places all over the room.

During the Activity

1. Tell the children to look for the messages (envelopes).
2. Each time a child finds a message, open the envelope to see if it is the angel's message (picture of baby Jesus).
3. When a child finds the angel's message, say the Bottom Line together.
4. Then tell the children to close their eyes while you put the angel's message somewhere else in the room.
5. Repeat as time and interest allow.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

Hey, *[children's names]*! Come stand by me. We're going to play a game!"

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 2/4

Angel Message

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USES MINIMAL SUPPLIES

MADE TO
↓
Play

Inclusive Pro Tips



Place envelopes in places where all kids can easily reach and retrieve them.

During the Activity

"In our Bible Story, God sent an angel to give Mary a special message. The angel told Mary she was going to have baby Jesus! There are lots of messages in envelopes all over the room. When you find a message, we'll open it together and see if you find the angel's message! Ready? Let's go look for the messages! *(Pause.)*

"[*Child's name(s)*] found a message! Let's open it and see what's inside! *(Open the envelope and hold up the picture.)* What is this? *(Pause for responses.)* Yes, this is a [*picture*], but it's not the angel's message. Let's keep looking. *(Continue until you find baby Jesus.)* We found another message, let's open it and see what's inside. *(Pause.)* Look! It's baby Jesus! This is the angel's message! God loved the world so much [*Bottom Line*] God gave us Jesus! Let's play again! Close your eyes, and I'll hide the messages. *(Repeat as desired.)* That was fun looking for the special message God gave Mary."

During the Activity

"Friends, God loved the world so much [*Bottom Line*] God gave us Jesus! How do we know God loves us? [*Bottom Line*] God gave us Jesus! Again! How do we know God loves us? [*Bottom Line*] God gave us Jesus!"

GROUPS 3/4

Carry the Message

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Carry the Message" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Heart-shaped sticky notes, one per child
- ☐ Painter's tape



Inclusive Pro Tips

Place sticky note on hand or forehead if better for your group of children.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Carry the Message" on cardstock, one per Small Group.
2. Tape the "Carry the Message" to one side of the room at child's height.
3. Add a sticky note to the top of each child's shoe.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to move with sticky notes on their shoes across the room to the picture of Mary.
2. When they get to Mary, ask children to put their sticky notes on the picture and tell Mary, "Do not be afraid; I have good news."
3. Repeat as desired and change the message to, 'You are going to have a baby, and you will call Him Jesus.'

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Look what I have for each of you! (**Hold up a heart sticky note.**) A heart sticky note—hearts make us think of love! This is a message, we're going to give it to Mary. (**Point to the picture of Mary.**) I think we should take our messages to Mary in a super fun way! I'm going to put the heart sticky on your shoe, and you have to walk carefully to take that heart to Mary."

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 3/4

Carry the Message

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

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What You Need

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During the Activity

Are you ready to deliver the message? Let's go! **(Pause.)** Walk slowly. Carry the message all the way to Mary. **(Pause.)** If the heart falls off, stop and put it back on. Yay! You made it! Now put your heart on Mary and tell her the message, Mary, you're going to have a baby, His name will be Jesus. **(With children.)** Mary, you're going to have a baby, His name will be Jesus. Great job carrying the message to Mary!"

After the Activity

"You all told such a great message to Mary! God sent an angel to give Mary a special message. Mary was afraid, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid, Mary. I have good news! God wants you to know that you're going to have a baby. The baby is God's Son, and you will call him Jesus.' God showed us how much He loves us all by sending His Son, Jesus. And that is what we celebrate at Christmas! How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus!"

Inclusive Pro Tips



Place sticky note on hand or forehead if better for your group of children.

GROUPS 4/4

Heart Angel

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Heart Angel" Activity Page
- ☐ "Heart Angel Label" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Avery® Labels #5160 or equivalent
- ☐ 5" heart cutouts
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ 1/8-inch satin ribbon
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Adaptive crayons



Inclusive Pro Tips

Provide adaptive crayons.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Heart Angel" on cardstock, one per child.
2. And then copy "Heart Angel Label" on label paper, one label per child.
3. Cut ribbon in 6-inch lengths, one per child.
4. Write each child's name on their paper.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to glue the angel to the center of the heart.
2. Ask children to turn their angel over and place their label on the heart.
3. Create a loop with a piece of ribbon and tape to the back of the angel's head.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hello friends! Come join me at the table and let's create something super special to remember today's true story from the Bible."

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 4/4

Heart Angel

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

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- ☐ "Heart Angel Label" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Avery® Labels #5160 or equivalent
- ☐ 5" heart cutouts
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ 1/8-inch satin ribbon
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Adaptive crayons



During the Activity

"Today in our Bible Story, we learned that God sent an angel to give Mary a special message. Let's make an angel with this cutout (**hold up the angel cutout**) and this heart. (**Hold up the heart cutout.**) Hearts make us think of love, and we learned that God loves you and God loves me SO much. God gave us Jesus to be our friend forever! Glue your cutout to the heart. (**Pause.**) Great! Now you can color your angels and decorate them however you want! (**Pause.**) Wow! Super job! Now turn them over and add this label to the heart. (**Pause.**) Now I'll tape a loop of ribbon to the back so you can hang your special angels like a Christmas ornament."

After the Activity

"The true story of Christmas begins with God's love for us. God loved you even before you were born! God loves us SO much; God gave us Jesus to be our friend forever!

"It all started a long time ago when God sent an angel to give Mary a special message. Mary was afraid, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid, Mary. I have good news! God wants you to know that you're going to have a baby. The baby is God's Son, and you will call him Jesus.'"

"When God sent the angel to Mary, God showed us how much He loves all of us by sending His Son Jesus. And that is what we celebrate at Christmas! **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus."

Inclusive Pro Tips



Provide adaptive crayons.

Getting Ready

Social

Encourage preschoolers to enter the classroom and engage with peers and Small Group Leaders by providing fun, age-appropriate, hands-on activities that introduce new concepts they will hear in the Bible Story.

Offer one or more of the following activities as preschoolers arrive. Let one or two Small Group Leaders lead activities in different areas of the room while another leader greets parents and children at the door.

Groups

Create a safe place to connect through activities written to reach every learning style while reinforcing the Bottom Line introduced during the Bible Story and applying it to real-life experiences. In addition, these activities provide preschoolers with an opportunity to build relationships with their Small Group Leader.

Offer as many of the following activities as your time, facilities, resources, and leadership allow. You may want to lead one activity at a time. Or offer two activities at once and allow half the children to participate in each. Then switch groups and repeat the activities.

Pinterest

Visit our Pinterest page to see craft samples and suggested supplies.

bit.ly/FL_ChristmasShapes

Social

Floating Heart

- ☐ Mylar heart balloon, one per Small Group
- ☐ Plastic straw

1. Use the straw to inflate the balloon with air.

Piece by Piece

- ☐ Large heart cutouts in a variety of colors
- ☐ Envelopes
- ☐ Scissors

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ A visual sample of a completed heart

1. Cut each heart into 4 pieces, one set for every two children.
2. Place each set of pieces in an envelope.

Sort It with Love

- ☐ Shape sorter toys
- ☐ Foam hearts
- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Washable markers
- ☐ Masking tape

1. Cover the table with butcher paper and draw a circle, rectangle, square, and heart. Adjust shapes based on your shape sorter toys.
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Groups

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Memory Verse with Motions

→ No supplies needed

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ "Memory Verse Hand Motions" PDF
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Scissors

Angel Message

- ☐ "Angel Message" Activity Page
- ☐ Copy paper
- ☐ 9-inch x 12-inch (or larger) envelopes

1. Copy "Angel Message" on paper, one set per Small Group.
2. Put each picture in a large envelope.
3. Hide the envelopes in easy to find places all over the room.

Carry the Message

- ☐ "Carry the Message" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Heart-shaped sticky notes, one per child
- ☐ Painter's tape

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Heart Angel

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- ☐ "Heart Angel Label" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Avery® Labels #5160 or equivalent
- ☐ 5" heart cutouts
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ 1/8-inch satin ribbon
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Adaptive crayons
1. Copy "Heart Angel" on cardstock, one per child.
 2. Copy "Heart Angel Label" on label paper, one label per child.
 3. Cut ribbon in 6-inch lengths, one per child.
 4. Write each child's name on their paper.

Home

- Make copies on cardstock or email this week's Parent Cue Card.
- Copy the Memory Verse Card to hand out or make available to parents.
- Copy "Going Home" and hang it on the door where Small Group Leaders can reference and remind parents of the Bottom Line and Memory Verse as parents pick up their children.
- Tell parents about our additional family resource, the [Parent Cue App](#) and ParentCue.org.