

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. Traveling Animals
2. Good Gifts
3. Rock-A-Bye Baby

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. Special Gift
2. Story Wrap
3. Birthday Jump
4. Present Squared

Home: Prompting action beyond the experience

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



Today's Bible Story

Jesus is Born Luke 2:1-7

Jesus is the best gift.

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

Traveling Animals



What You Need

- ☐ "Traveling Animals" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Pool noodles
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear packing tape

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Yarn or ribbon



Inclusive Pro Tips

Attach a pool noodle animal to a wheelchair or walker with yarn or ribbon.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Traveling Animals" on cardstock and cut two sets per Small Group.
2. Cut each pool noodle in half.
3. Attach an animal head to one end of each pool noodle.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to follow you as they travel with their animals to different places in the room.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

Look at all these animals. I see a donkey (**hold up a donkey**), a chicken (**hold up a chicken**), sheep (**hold up a sheep**), and a cow. When I call your name, come take an animal and line up right here. (**Point.**) If you didn't hear your name, come stand with me, and you can help me lead the animals until it's your turn."

During the Activity

"Ready? You can ride your animal and follow me. (**Walk a few steps, then stop and turn to your helpers.**) Friends, where should we go? (**Let them name a place and pretend to go there. It is okay if the place is silly and pretend.**) Oh yes, let's go there! Follow us! (**Pause.**) Now, where should we go? (**Pause for responses.**) Yes, let's go there! Make your animal sound while we travel. (**Repeat as desired.**) Okay, everyone, let's switch places. If you helped me lead the animals, you get to be an animal now. (**Help children switch places.**) Friends, where should we go? (**Pause for responses.**) Yes, let's go there! (**Repeat as desired.**) Traveling with our animals was so fun!"

After the Activity

"In our true story from the Bible, we're going to hear about a woman who traveled a long way. She may have traveled there on a donkey! Let's go see where she traveled to!"

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by traveling like the animals in the activity.

SOCIAL 2/3

Good Gifts

What You Need

- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Gift bows
- ☐ Washable markers in the same colors as the gift bows



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Lay the butcher paper on the table.
2. Use the markers to draw squares of different colors and sizes, multiple squares per child.
3. Scatter the bows on the table.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to match the bows to the color of the squares (gifts) and add the bow to the top of the gift.
2. Once all the bows have been matched, reset and repeat.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, come to the table and look at these squares. **(Pause.)** They're all different colors and sizes! I see red, blue, and green. These squares remind me of gift boxes, but they are missing something ... gift bows!"

During the Activity

"Let's try to match the gift bows to the gift of the same color. **(Pause.)** Wow, great job! You matched the red bow to the red box! These are good gifts you are decorating. Keep going, let's match all the bows. **(Pause.)** Yay! You did it!" **(Reset and repeat.)**

After the Activity

"Wow, look at all our beautiful gifts, you all did such a great job matching the bows to the gifts. In our true story from the Bible, we're going to learn about the very best gift. Are you ready? Let's go!"

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by calling them by name and saying, "[*Child's name*], Jesus loves you."

SOCIAL 3/3

Rock-A-Bye Baby

What You Need

- ☐ Baby dolls
- ☐ Soft blankets
- ☐ Optional: Toy bottles, small cradles, baskets



Inclusive Pro Tips



Pair Thoughtfully: Let children choose a doll or take turns. Some may want to be helpers instead of caregivers.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Gather and set up baby dolls and blankets in a circle on the floor.
2. Optional: Place extra toys nearby.

During the Activity

1. Gather children near the baby dolls.
2. Show them how to gently swaddle the baby dolls.
3. Model rocking and caring for the dolls, encouraging gentle touches.
4. Celebrate their efforts to care for the babies.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hey friends! Please sit down by a baby. We're going to pretend to take care of all these babies today."

During the Activity

"Let me show you how to swaddle our baby dolls. We wrap them gently in a blanket just like this. **(Pause for children to practice.)** Now let's rock our babies. Can you hold your baby gently and rock them back and forth. **(Pause for children to practice.)** Wow! You guys are so great at taking care of the babies! You can even pretend to feed your baby or sing them a song. **(Pause for children to practice.)**"

After the Activity

"Great job taking care of your baby dolls! That reminds me of our Bible Story today! Let's go listen to learn how Mary took care of a very special baby."

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by pretending to rock or hold a baby.

2 Year-Olds

Small Group

December — Week 2

GROUPS 1/4

Special Gift

Memory Verse Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Special Gift" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Crayons, washable markers, or dot markers
- ☐ Stickers
- ☐ Washable self-inking stamps
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Baby wipes
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Adaptive crayons

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

Offer adaptive crayons.



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Special Gift" on cardstock and cut one per child.
2. Fold each child's paper and write their name.
3. Say the Memory Verse and do the motions with the children.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to decorate the outside of their gift and say the verse together.
2. Then ask children to open the gift and color the baby Jesus.
3. When complete, say the verse as you do the motions together.

After the Activity

Connect the Memory Verse to the Bottom Line.

Continue on the next page →



GROUPS 1/4

Special Gift

Memory Verse Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

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Note

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Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer adaptive crayons



② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, come stand with me, and let's say our verse as we do the motions. Ready? '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.**) That was great! Now let's sit down at the table to make something special!"

During the Activity

"Look! It's a gift! Decorate the outside of your gift with the markers, stickers, and stamps. While you are decorating, let's say the words to our verse. (**With children.**) 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son,' John 3:16. Great job saying the verse with me. Wow! These gifts look so wonderfully special! But wait, open your gift and see what's inside. (**Pause.**) It's Jesus! Hooray! Jesus is the most wonderfully special gift because God gave us Jesus! Decorate the inside of your gift too. (**Pause.**) Now close your present and let's say our verse one more time with the motions. '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."

After the Activity

"The Bible teaches us that a very special baby was born, and He was God's Son, Jesus! Happy Birthday, Jesus! Jesus is the best gift ever! God loves us so much that [**Bottom Line**] God gave us Jesus. How do we know God loves us? [**Bottom Line**] God gave us Jesus."

GROUPS 2/4

Story Wrap

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Fisher Price® Nativity set
- ☐ Christmas wrapping paper
- ☐ Large basket
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Party hats

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Wrapping paper cut into squares



Inclusive Pro Tips

Lay a wrapping paper square over each piece of the nativity so children can easily move the paper to reveal the piece of the story.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Wrap each piece of the nativity set in wrapping paper
2. If you have other animals or multiple nativities, wrap them as well to give you more pieces for the children to unwrap.
3. Place all the wrapped pieces in a basket.

During the Activity

1. Invite the children to sit in a circle with you.
2. Give each child a party hat to wear.
3. Place the basket of wrapped pieces in the center of the circle.
4. Each time you sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus, call on one child to take a wrapped piece from the basket, open it, and then talk about how their piece goes with the Bible Story.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hey friends! Come sit with me. We're going to play a birthday party game because Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus' birthday!"

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 2/4

Story Wrap

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Fisher Price® Nativity set
- ☐ Christmas wrapping paper
- ☐ Large basket
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Party hats

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Wrapping paper cut into squares



During the Activity

"First, let's all put on these birthday party hats. **(Pause.)** Yay, for Jesus' birthday! **(Clap.)** Now I'll put this basket right here. **(Place basket in the center of the circle.)** Listen for your name, because every time we sing Happy Birthday to Jesus, we will take turns unwrapping the Bible Story! Let's play!

"Happy birthday, to You!
Happy birthday to You!
Happy birthday, dear Jesus.
Happy birthday, to You!

"**[Child's name]**, it's your turn to unwrap the Bible Story! Pick something from the basket and let's see what's inside. **(Wait for child to unwrap one of the pieces and then say the words below that go with it. Continue with each child.)**

[Mary] "God sent an angel to tell Mary she was going to have baby Jesus." **[Joseph]** "Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem." **[Jesus]** "Mary wrapped baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger. Jesus is special because Jesus is God's Son." **[Animal]** "A **[animal name]** says **[animal sound]**." **[Shepherd]** "God sent an angel to tell the shepherds that Jesus had been born. The shepherds ran to see baby Jesus." **[Angel]** "God used angels to tell people about His Son, Jesus." **[Manger]** "Animals eat food out of a manger. Mary laid baby Jesus in a manger." **(Continue until every child has unwrapped an item or all items are unwrapped.)**

After the Activity

"Look! We unwrapped the Bible Story about how **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus! Yay, Jesus! **(Clap.)** Now every time we think about Christmas, we can remember how God loved us so much **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus! How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus! Yay, Jesus!"

"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!"

Inclusive Pro Tips



Lay a wrapping paper square over each piece of the nativity so children can easily move the paper to reveal the piece of the story.

2 Year-Olds

Small Group

December — Week 2

GROUPS 3/4

Birthday Jump

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

☐ Painter's tape

USES MINIMAL
SUPPLIES

MADE TO
↓
Move

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Create a large square on the floor with tape.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to walk the square along the tape line and when prompted, jump into the square.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, do you see this really big square on the floor? I think we should pretend that it is a really big gift box. Maybe it's a birthday present. Everyone, come stand on the lines. We are going to walk around the square and when I say 'Happy Birthday Jesus,' you jump into the box."

During the Activity

"Let's walk! (*Pause.*) Happy Birthday, Jesus! Jump in the box! (*Pause.*) Great job. Hey, I have a question. How do we know God loves us? Because **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. Jesus is the best gift! Go back the tape line and let's do it again. (*Repeat as desired.*) That was so fun."

After the Activity

"Today in our Bible Story, we learned that Jesus was born and is the best gift ever! God loves us so much that God gave us Jesus! How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus!"

Inclusive Pro Tips



In place of "walk" and "jump," say, "Move."

GROUPS 4/4

Present Squared

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Present Squared" Activity Page
- ☐ "Present Squared Pictures" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ Gift bows, one per child
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Adaptive crayons

Inclusive Pro Tips

Provide adaptive crayons



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Present Squared" on cardstock, one per child. Copy "Present Squared Pictures" on cardstock and cut out one set of cutouts per child.
2. Write each child's name on their paper.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to color each story picture, then glue them, in order, to their big present as you review the Bible Story.
2. Once all the pictures are glued to the big picture, ask children to add a bow to the top

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

Present Squared

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Present Squared" Activity Page
- ☐ "Present Squared Pictures" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ Gift bows, one per child
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Adaptive crayons

During the Activity

"In front of you are four pictures that tell today's Bible Story. Color each picture. **(Pause.)** Fantastic! Okay, find the picture of Mary and Joseph. They had to travel a long way to a town called Bethlehem. Glue that picture in the square with one dot. **(Point.)** Okay, now find the picture of Mary and Joseph and the manger. **(Pause.)** We learned that a manger is something animals eat out of. This is where Mary and Joseph stayed when they got to Bethlehem. Glue this picture to the square with two dots. **(Point.)** The next picture I want you to find is the one with the horse, cow, and sheep. **(Pause.)** There might have been some animals there too! Like a horse, or a cow, or a sheep that ate from that manger. Glue this picture to the square with three dots. **(Point.)** This place isn't fancy, but this is where a very special baby was born, and He was God's Son, Jesus! Mary wrapped baby Jesus in cloth and laid Him in a manger. Glue your picture of baby Jesus to the last square. **(Point.)** Hooray! Now let's finish the story present by adding a bow on top! **(Pause.)** Nice job, friends!"

After the Activity

"God gave us something very special. God loves us so much that **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. Jesus is the best gift ever! Happy Birthday, Jesus! Say that with me. Happy Birthday, 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

Traveling Animals

- ☐ "Traveling Animals" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Pool noodles
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear packing tape

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Yarn or ribbon

1. Copy "Traveling Animals" on cardstock and cut, two sets per Small Group.
2. Cut each pool noodle in half.
3. Attach an animal head to one end of each pool noodle.

Good Gifts

- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Gift bows
- ☐ Washable markers that match the gift bows

1. Lay the butcher paper on the table.
2. Use the markers to draw squares of different colors and sizes, multiple per child.

Rock-A-Bye Baby

- ☐ Baby dolls
- ☐ Soft blankets
- ☐ Optional: Toy bottles, small cradles, baskets

1. Gather and set up baby dolls and blankets in a circle on the floor.
2. Optional: Place extra toys nearby.

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Getting Ready

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Groups

Special Gift

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- ☐ Stickers
- ☐ Washable self-inking stamps
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Baby wipes
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Adaptive crayons

Story Wrap

- ☐ Fisher Price® Nativity set
- ☐ Christmas wrapping paper
- ☐ Large basket
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Clear tape,
- ☐ Party hats

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Wrapping paper cut into squares

1. Wrap each piece of the nativity set in wrapping paper. If you have other animals or multiple nativities, wrap them as well to give you more pieces for the children to unwrap.
2. Place all the wrapped pieces in a basket.

Happy Birthday Jump

- ☐ Painter's tape

1. Create a large square on the floor with tape.

Continue on the next page →

Getting Ready

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Present Squared

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- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Glue sticks
- ☐ Gift bows, one per child
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Adaptive crayons

1. Copy "Present Squared" on cardstock, one per child.
2. Copy "Present Squared Pictures" on cardstock and cut, one set out cutouts per child.
3. 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](https://www.ParentCue.org).