

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. Sticky Sheep
2. Match the Shapes
3. All the Angels

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. Run
2. Hidden Story
3. Shepherd Freeze Run Dance
4. Sheep Prints

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

The Shepherds Luke 2:8-20

The shepherds run to see 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

Sticky Sheep

What You Need

- ☐ Ball pit balls
- ☐ Plastic container
- ☐ Wide painter's tape
- ☐ Permanent marker
- ☐ Optional: Sheep stickers in place of the permanent marker.

**Inclusive Pro Tips**

Encourage children to move in a way that best suits the group.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Tear off two three-foot lengths of tape.
2. Attach one strip of tape vertically to the wall from the floor up and sticky side out, with a smaller piece of tape at the top and bottom.
3. Attach the second strip of tape the same way but two-feet apart from the first.
4. Create a straight line of tape on the floor about five-feet from the wall.
5. Draw a simple sheep face and ears on each ball pit ball and place them in the container.

During the Activity

1. Divide children into two groups and line each group up behind the tape line.
2. Encourage children to take turns picking a "sheep" from the container then running it to the tape.
3. Encourage children to stick the sheep to the tape line then run back for the next set of children to run. Continue until each child has had a turn.
4. If desired, the next round, ask children to take turns running to the wall to collect a "sheep" and run it back to the container. Repeat as desired.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

Continue on the next page →

SOCIAL 1/3

Sticky Sheep

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- ☐ Optional: Sheep stickers in place of the permanent marker.



② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends, come over here and stand with me. I have a super fun activity for us to do today!"

During the Activity

"Let's get into two groups. *(Help distribute children into two groups.)* This group stand in a line right here *(point to one side of the container)* behind the tape and the other group stand in a line on this side. *(Pause.)* This container has a bunch of sheep in it. *(Pick up a ball and show the face.)* When I say GO, our first two friends will pick up a sheep from the container and run it all the way to the wall and stick it to the tape then run back like this. *(Demonstrate.)* Okay are we ready? GO! Pick up a sheep and run! *(Pause.)* Stick it on the tape and run back! *(Pause.)* Great job! Next friends pick a sheep and run! *(Continue with each child. Repeat as desired.)* That was so fun getting the sheep from here to there!"

After the Activity

"Today we are going to hear a true story from the Bible about some shepherds. Shepherds are people who take care of sheep, just like you did today!"

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by pretending to herd and guide pretend sheep as you walk.

Inclusive Pro Tips



Encourage children to move in a way that best suits the group.

SOCIAL 2/3

Match the Shapes

What You Need

- ☐ "Match the Shapes" Activity Page
- ☐ Copy paper
- ☐ Toys or objects from the room that have the following shapes on them: heart, square, circle, and star
- ☐ Plastic container
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Masking tape



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Match the Shapes" on copy paper and cut, one set per Small Group.
2. Spread out the pictures on the table and tape to secure.
3. Gather the toys and objects and place them in the container.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to pick an item from the container and match the shape to one of the shape cards on the table.
2. Repeat as desired.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hey friends! It's great to see you today. Come join me at the table and let's play a matching game."

During the Activity

"Look at these pictures on the table. I see an angel in the shape of a heart. **(Point.)** And a present in the shape of a square. **(Point.)** A sheep in the shape of a circle. **(Point.)** And a very special star. **(Point.)** Let's see if we can find these shapes on the different items in the container. **(Pull an item from the bucket and look at it together. Point out the shape if the children need assistance.)** It has the **[shape]** on it! Let's put it here at the **[picture]**. **(Pause.)** Now your turn! Pull out an item and match the shape. **(Pause.)** Wow! What shape did you find? **(Pause for responses.)** Amazing! Set it next to the shapes on the table. Keep going! Let's see if we can match all these shapes. **(Continue as desired.)** Great job friends! You made all the shape matches."

After the Activity

"Friends, show me where the circle sheep is. **(Pause.)** That's right, there it is! **(Point.)** Today, in our Bible Story, we'll hear about some sheep and the shepherds that were watching them when an angel came to tell them the good news."

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by looking for the four shapes as you travel to your designated area.

SOCIAL 3/3

All the Angels



What You Need

- ☐ "All the Angels" Activity Page
- ☐ 11-inchx17-inch copy paper
- ☐ Little People®
- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Large, shallow plastic container
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Optional: Angel stickers in place of "All the Angels" Activity Page, copy paper, and clear tape.

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Gloves



Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer gloves to wear if the children are sensitive to the texture of cotton balls.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Enlarge and copy "All the Angels" on 11-inch x17-inch copy paper, one per Small Group.
2. Tape the activity page to the bottom on the container.
3. Cover the entire bottom of the container with cotton balls.
4. Place container on the table with the Little People figures.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to use the Little People figures to act as shepherds, herding their "sheep."
2. Ask children to try to push the sheep to one side or the other to find the angels. Reset and repeat as desired.

After the Activity

Introduce the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hello, hello! Come over here with me! I have some exploring for us to do!"

During the Activity

"Look in the container and tell me what you see. **(Pause.)** That's right! Lots and lots of cotton balls! They look like sheep! Let's pretend these people are shepherds. Shepherds take care of a lot of sheep. Pick a people figure and help move the sheep to this side **(point to one end)** or this side. **(Point to the other end.)** Let's get to work shepherds! **(Pause.)** Wait! I see something. Do you know what it is? **(Pause for responses.)** Yes, they're angels! Lots and lots of them! Okay shepherds, move all the sheep back! **(Repeat as desired.)** That was so fun!"

After the Activity

"What a surprise finding all those angels! Today in our true story from the Bible, we'll hear about angels that visited some shepherds when they were out in the field taking care of their sheep."

Transition → Move to Worship and Story by pretending to herd the sheep one way and then another all the way to your designated area.

2 Year-Olds

Small Group

December — Week 3

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

→ No Supplies Needed

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



Select a movement that is best for the group in place of running.



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Gather children in an open area of the room.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to run in place for a bit, then stop to say the verse as you do the motions together.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Friends come over here, we're going to do something fun to review our Memory Verse."

During the Activity

"Everyone let's run in place. **(Pause.)** Wow, great job! Stop running and let's say our verse and do the motions 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)** John 3:16. **(Open hands like a book.)** Super-duper! Now let's run in slow motion. **(Pause.)** Stop running and let's say our verse. '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.)** This time, let's run super, super fast. **(Pause.)** Wow, that was so fast. Stop and let's say our verse with the motions one more time. '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.)** Great job running and fantastic job saying the Memory Verse with the motions!"

After the Activity

"Today in our Bible Story, the shepherds ran **(run in place)** to find Baby Jesus. They knew Baby Jesus was the best gift ever. How do we know that God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus!"

GROUPS 2/4

Hidden Story

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Hidden Story" Activity Pages
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Painter's tape
- ☐ Hand towels
- ☐ Option: Paper towels



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Hidden Story" on cardstock, one set per Small Group.
2. Tape each story picture to the floor, picture side facing up.
3. Cover each picture with a towel.

During the Activity

1. Guide children as they take turns lifting the towel as they look for baby Jesus.
2. Each time a child finds baby Jesus, say the Bottom Line together, then put the Jesus picture in a new spot.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hey, everyone! Come over here and stand with me. We're going to play a game!"

During the Activity

"In our Bible Story, an angel told some shepherds that Jesus had been born. When the shepherds heard the good news, they ran to find baby Jesus! When I say your name, it will be your turn to try and find baby Jesus under one of these towels. Okay, **[child's name]**, it's your turn to find baby Jesus! Lift one of the towels. **(Pause.)** Did you find baby Jesus? **(Pause.)** No, but you found **[picture]**! Go sit down and **[child's name]** can have a turn! Lift one of the towels. **(Pause.)** Did you find baby Jesus? **(Pause.)** Yay! You found baby Jesus! We know God loves us because **[Bottom Line] God gave us Jesus!**" *(Reset and repeat with each child.)*

After the Activity

"That was fun finding baby Jesus, just like the shepherds did in our Bible Story! We know God loves us because **[Bottom Line] God gave us Jesus.** So, when I ask you, how do we know God loves us, I want us all to say **[Bottom Line] God gave us Jesus!** Ready? How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line] God gave us Jesus!** Yay! **[Bottom Line] God gave us Jesus!**"

GROUPS 3/4

Shepherd Freeze Run Dance

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Music player
- ☐ Upbeat worship music

Inclusive Pro Tips



Instead of "run" encourage children to "move" to Jesus.

Repeat the cue words clearly and consistently, FREEZE, RUN, DANCE, paired with exaggerated body language.



① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Gather children in an open area of your room.

During the Activity

1. Explain to the children they'll pretend to be shepherds with the following three motions.
2. Explain the motions with visual cues or gestures: FREEZE = Stop and listen (hands to ears like listening to the angel) RUN = Run in place or run across the space to "Jesus" DANCE = Dance in place
3. Celebrate by jumping or swaying with joy.
4. Start the music and play.
5. Mix the commands and repeat several times with enthusiasm.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Hello friends! Come join me over here and spread out. We are going to play a game where we pretend to be shepherds!"

During the Activity

"I want you to listen for three words as we play our game. Freeze, run, and dance. When I say FREEZE, (*hands to ears like listening to the angel*) we're going to stop and listen to the angel. When I say RUN, we're going to run to Jesus. And when I say DANCE, we're going to celebrate by jumping or swaying because God gave us Jesus! Ready? Let's play!"

(Call out commands with energy and mix them up!) "FREEZE! The angel says, 'Don't be afraid!' (*Pause for responses.*) RUN to the manger! (*Pause for responses.*) DANCE and celebrate! Wow! You guys are amazing being shepherds!" (*Repeat as desired.*)

After the Activity

"Great job, shepherds! You listened, you ran, and you celebrated! The shepherds in our Bible Story did the same thing. They were SO happy because **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus."

GROUPS 4/4

Sheep Prints

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ "Sheep Prints" Activity Page
- ☐ Cardstock
- ☐ Mini muffin pans
- ☐ White washable paint
- ☐ Black washable paint
- ☐ Paintbrushes
- ☐ Paper plates
- ☐ Plastic tablecloth
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Baby wipes
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Dot markers



Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer dot markers in place of putting finger in paint.

① What You Do

Before the Activity

1. Copy "Sheep Prints" on cardstock, one per child.
2. Write each child's name on their paper.
3. Cover table with tablecloth.
4. Pour white paint on several plates and place on the table.
5. Pour a small amount of black paint on a plate, one for every four children, and place on the table.

During the Activity

1. Encourage children to color their story picture.
2. Ask children to paint the backside of three top muffin cups on a pan.
3. Help children flip the muffin pan over and press it down on the bottom of their paper.
4. Encourage children to press their pointer finger into the black paint then press it in the center of each white painted circle.
5. Ask children to press their finger into the black paint again and press it down at the bottom of each circle for the sheep's legs.
6. Help children clean their hands as needed.

After the Activity

Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

Continue on the next page →

GROUPS 4/4

Sheep Prints

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

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- ☐ Paintbrushes
- ☐ Paper plates
- ☐ Plastic tablecloth
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Baby wipes
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies

- ☐ Dot markers



Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer dot markers in place of putting finger in paint.

② What You Say

Before the Activity

"Everyone come over and let's create some story art to help us remember today's true story from the Bible."

During the Activity

"Today in our Bible Story, we learned that one night, some shepherds were in the fields taking care of their sheep. God sent a special messenger to tell them the good news. Color your paper. **(Pause.)** Great. Now let's make our sheep. Spread some paint on these three muffin cups. **(Point.)** Now press the muffin pan near the bottom of your paper. **(Pause.)** Lift it up and look! There are three circles! Let's make these circles into sheep. Put your finger up in the air, now touch it in the black paint, and then press it in the middle of your sheep. **(Pause.)** You made the sheep's head with your finger. Add two black fingerprints at the bottom of the sheep circles for legs. **(Clean hands as needed.)** These look great!"

After the Activity

"An angel came and told the shepherds, "Don't be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy! God's Son, Jesus, has been born! Then more angels came! There were angels everywhere! The angels praised God and said: "Glory to God in the highest!" **(Luke 2:14 NIV)**

"The shepherds were excited because **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus. So they ran to find baby Jesus. The shepherds found baby Jesus in the manger, just like the angel said. They were so happy the shepherds told EVERYONE that Jesus, God's Son, was born! How do we know God loves us? **[Bottom Line]** God gave us Jesus."

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

Sticky Sheep

- ☐ Ball pit balls
- ☐ Plastic container
- ☐ Wide painter's tape
- ☐ Permanent marker
- ☐ Optional: Sheep stickers in place of the permanent marker.

1. Tear off two three-foot lengths of tape.
2. Attach one strip of tape vertically to the wall from the floor up and sticky side out, with a smaller piece of tape at the top and bottom.
3. Attach the second strip of tape the same way but two-feet apart from the first.
4. Create a straight line of tape on the floor about five-feet from the wall.
5. Draw a simple sheep face and ears on each ball pit ball and place them in the container.
6. Place the container on the floor at the tape line.

Match the Shapes

- ☐ "Match the Shapes" Activity Page
- ☐ Copy paper
- ☐ Toys or objects from the room that have the following shapes on them: heart, square, circle, and star
- ☐ Plastic container
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Masking tape

1. Copy "Match the Shapes" on copy paper and cut, one set per Small Group.
2. Spread out the pictures on the table and tape to secure.
3. Gather the toys and objects and place them in the container.

Continue on the next page →

Getting Ready

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All the Angels

- ☐ "All the Angels" Activity Page
- ☐ 11-inchx17-inch copy paper
- ☐ Little People®
- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Large, shallow plastic container
- ☐ Clear tape
- ☐ Optional: Angel stickers in place of "All the Angels" Activity Page, copy paper, and clear tape.

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Gloves
1. Enlarge and copy "All the Angels" on 11-inch x17-inch copy paper, one per Small Group.
 2. Tape the activity page to the bottom on the container.
 3. Cover the entire bottom of the container with cotton balls.
 4. Place container on the table with the Little People figures.

Groups

Run

No supplies needed

Hidden Story

- ☐ "Hidden Story Pictures" Activity Pages
 - ☐ Cardstock
 - ☐ Painter's tape
 - ☐ Hand towels
 - ☐ Option: Paper towels
1. Copy "Hidden Story" on cardstock, one set per Small Group.
 2. Tape each story picture to the floor, picture side facing up.
 3. Cover each picture with a towel.

Shepherd Freeze Run Dance

- ☐ Music player
- ☐ Upbeat worship music

Continue on the next page →

Getting Ready

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- ☐ Paper plates
- ☐ Plastic tablecloth
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Baby wipes
- ☐ Permanent marker

Inclusive Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Dot markers

1. Copy "Sheep Prints" on cardstock, one per child.
2. Write each child's name on their paper.
3. Cover table with tablecloth.
4. Pour white paint on several plates and place on the table.
5. Pour a small amount of black paint on a plate, one for every four children, and place on the table.

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).