

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

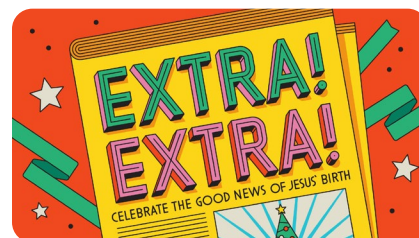
1. Bible Story Review: Shepherds' Surprise
2. Application Activity: Pass the Gift
3. Memory Verse Activity: Good News Gazette
4. Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

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

Jesus Is Born Luke 2:1-20

Bottom Line

Jesus is the greatest gift.

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
- ☐ Timer



① What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive → Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Recall the first time you heard about Jesus' birth. Thank God for giving Jesus, the greatest gift you could ever receive! Ask God to help each kid know how much He loves them, and that His love is a free gift they don't have to earn! Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you point to Jesus in every moment, and that new kids would leave small group celebrating that God loves them so much, He sent Jesus so they could be close to Him!

1. Greet each kid by name with a fist bump, high-five, smile, and ask them about their Christmas plans!
2. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
3. Explain the game:
4. Choose a kid to think of one Christmas-themed object.
5. If the kid is stumped, here are some suggestions.
 - wreath
 - angel
 - manger
 - tree
 - lights
6. Direct the rest of the group to ask "yes" or "no" questions to guess the object.
7. Feel free to play an example round or be ready to suggest questions as hints.
8. Use a timer for 2-3 minutes, or set a limit of 20 questions.
9. Continue playing until each kid has had a chance to think of an object.

Continued on the next page. →

Inclusive Pro Tips



Encourage kids to give thumbs-up and thumbs-down instead of verbally saying yes or no.

SOCIAL

Opening Activity

What You Need

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Timer

**Inclusive Pro Tips**

Encourage kids to give thumbs-up and thumbs-down instead of verbally saying yes or no.

② What You Say

"Wow, you all asked some great questions and figured out those Christmas objects! That was so fun.

You know, in our game, we had to ask lots of questions to try and guess what the object was. We had to do some guessing! But when Jesus was born, God clearly communicated exactly what was happening to some shepherds. The shepherds didn't have to do any guessing! God sent an angel to declare the good news! The angel told them clearly: 'A Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord,' (*Luke 2:11 NIV*).

"And here's the best part, Jesus isn't just for important people or people with lots of money or power. He came for everyone—even ordinary shepherds out in the fields. And He came for you and me too. We can celebrate Christmas, because **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift! **[Transition]** Let's go to Large Group so we can hear about this great gift God gave us because He loves us so much!"

Transition → Lead your group to the Large Group area.

GROUPS 1/4

Shepherds' Surprise*

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ No supplies needed
- ☐ Optional: blanket to "sit on the field" together

MADE TO
Imagine

① What You Do

1. Gather kids in a circle and say: "Today, we're going to review the Christmas story from Luke 2. I'll tell it, and you get to help by making faces or motions as we go. Let's see how well you listen and join in!"

Talk Together

Recap the Bible Story

1. "The shepherds were out watching sheep at night. Everyone, yawn really big and rub your eyes like you're super-tired."
2. "Then ... WHOA! An angel appeared, and God's light shone around the shepherds. The shepherds were so scared! Their peaceful night was just interrupted. Show me your best scared face! The angel said, 'Do not be afraid! I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people,' (Luke 2:10 NIV).
3. Ask: "Who was the good news about?" (Jesus)
4. "The angel said: 'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord,' (Luke 2:11 NIV, emphasis added). Everybody point to yourself and say, 'The Savior is for me!'"
5. "Then a HUGE choir of angels showed up, praising God. Let's all say what they said together: 'Glory be given to God in the highest heaven!' (Luke 2:14 NIV). Say it louder! One more time!"
6. "The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem. Everyone, stand up and run in place for five seconds. Stop! You made it!"
7. "The shepherds found Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus lying in a manger. Put your hands together and rock them like you're holding a tiny baby."
8. "The shepherds were SO excited that on their way home, they told everyone what they saw! Cup your hands around your mouth and shout together: 'Jesus is born!'"
9. "Say it one more time: 'Jesus is born!'"

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GROUPS 1/4

Shepherds' Surprise*

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

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Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ No supplies needed
- ☐ Optional: blanket to "sit on the field" together

MADE TO
Imagine

② What You Say

"Awesome job! I love this story! The shepherds started out tired, and when the angel came, they were scared. But when they saw Jesus, they were filled with joy! They didn't keep the news quiet to themselves; they shared the good news with everyone they saw. And that's what we can do too!

"Christmas isn't just about presents under the tree—it's about the greatest gift: Jesus! God loves us so much that He worked for years and years throughout history to bring Jesus. Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and paid for sin so anyone who chooses can be God's close friend forever. God was giving us the greatest gift—the chance to be close with Him! We can celebrate the great gift of Jesus by living with joy, sharing His love, and remembering that He came for ALL of us.

"So let me ask you:

- Who was the good news about? (Jesus)
- Who did the angel tell first? (the shepherds)
- What did the shepherds do after they saw Jesus? (They told everyone!)

[Bottom Line] "Jesus is the greatest gift, and God gave us this great gift because He loves us so much!"

GROUPS 2/4

Pass the Gift

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Small box wrapped like a Christmas present
- ☐ Music player (Optional: You can also sing "Jingle Bells.")



Inclusive Pro Tips

Teach kids the ASL way to say, "Jesus loves me" and have them use that as a response when the "gift" comes to them.

① What You Do

1. Invite the kids to sit in a circle.
2. Explain that you're going to play a game like "hot potato," but with a gift.
3. Start some music or sing, and instruct the kids to pass the wrapped gift around the circle.
4. When the music stops, encourage the kid holding the gift to share one reason Jesus is the greatest gift to them.
 - If they can't think of something, maybe ask them to share in general what or who is the greatest gift in their life, and help them connect how that person or thing is a gift from Jesus.
 - Younger kids may need a prompt like: "Because Jesus loves me," "Because Jesus forgives me," "Because Jesus came for everyone," or "Because Jesus helps me."
5. Continue until every kid has shared.

② What You Say

"Wow, you shared some amazing reasons why **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift!

"The shepherds heard the good news from the angel, and then more angels came and celebrated. And after the shepherds saw Jesus, they were filled with joy. They couldn't stop talking about what they had seen. And we can feel that same joy today, because God loves us so much He gave us Jesus!

"The toys, games, and clothes we get at Christmas are fun, but they don't last forever. But Jesus is a gift that lasts forever. Jesus gives us love that never ends, joy that never runs out, forgiveness that we could never earn, and a friendship that lasts forever.

"That's why we say: **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift. Jesus is the reason we celebrate Christmas, and He is the very best gift God could ever give."

GROUPS 3/4

Good News Gazette

Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked to Luke 2:11
- ☐ "Good News Gazette" Activity Page with the verse (Luke 2:11)
- ☐ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

MADE TO
↓
Create

① What You Do

1. Give every two kids a Bible.
2. Invite them to look up Luke 2:11 using the Bible Navigation Tips.

*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.

3. Give each child a copy of the "Good News Gazette" Activity Page.
4. Set out the crayons, markers, or colored pencils.
5. Read the Memory Verse together from the Bible (Luke 2:11).
6. Explain that today, they get to be "reporters" writing the greatest news story of all time: the announcement of Jesus' birth!
7. Guide the kids to fill in the missing words of the verse on their page, using their opened Bibles as a reference.
8. Encourage the kids to decorate their page.
9. When they finish, let them hold up their "front page" and read the verse aloud together as the headline news.

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GROUPS 3/4

Good News Gazette

Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked to Luke 2:11
- ☐ "Good News Gazette" Activity Page with the verse (Luke 2:11)
- ☐ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

MADE TO
↓
Create

② What You Say

"Wow, look at these front pages! You all are amazing reporters. And what better news could there be than this? 'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord,' (Luke 2:11 NIV).

"This isn't just old news, it's GOOD NEWS for today, for you and me. Jesus was born to show us God's love, to rescue us, and to give us the chance for all of us to be close friends with God. Just like a newspaper headline tells everyone what's important, this verse is a headline we can remember and share: **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift.

"Whenever you see Christmas lights, presents, or even a star on a tree, you can remember the best headline ever: **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift. That's why we celebrate so much at Christmas!"

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

- ☐ "Presents" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils



① What You Do

1. Gather the kids together in a circle.
2. Give each kid a present cutout from the "Presents" Activity Page and a pencil.
3. Say: "Jesus is the greatest gift! Today, turn the card over, and draw or write down a prayer thanking Jesus for being the greatest gift."
4. Invite the kids to draw or write a prayer to God on the back of the card.
5. Ask: "Does it change anything for you knowing that Jesus will always be the greatest gift for you?"
6. Pray together, thanking Jesus for being the greatest gift.
7. Close in prayer.

② What You Say

"Dear Jesus, You are so amazing. You really are the greatest gift—better than anything we have received or will receive. We know that even when Christmas is over, You will still be the greatest gift to us, every single day. Thank You for coming to earth to save us. Help us not to forget how much You love us. We love You, God, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Transition → As adults arrive to pick up, remind them to always remember that **[Bottom Line]** Jesus is the greatest gift! Encourage the kids to tell their grown-ups how important it is to know what Christmas is about—Jesus!

Inclusive Pro Tips



Allow kids to draw symbols or pictures to show their prayer instead of writing words.

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 #1.

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
- ☐ Timer

Groups

1. Shepherds' Surprise*

No supplies needed

Optional Supplies:

- ☐ Blanket to "sit on the field" together, one for each Small Group

2. Pass the Gift

- ☐ Small box, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Christmas-themed wrapping paper, one roll for each Small Group
- ☐ Music player (Optional: You can also sing "Jingle Bells")

Before group time:

- ☐ Wrap the small box with the Christmas-themed wrapping paper.

3. Good News Gazette

- ☐ Bibles marked to Luke 2:11, one for every two kids
- ☐ Print "Good News Gazette" Activity Page on paper, one for every kid
- ☐ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils; enough for each Small Group to share

4. Pray and Dismiss

- ☐ Print "Presents" Activity Page on paper and cut apart, one card for every kid
- ☐ Pencils