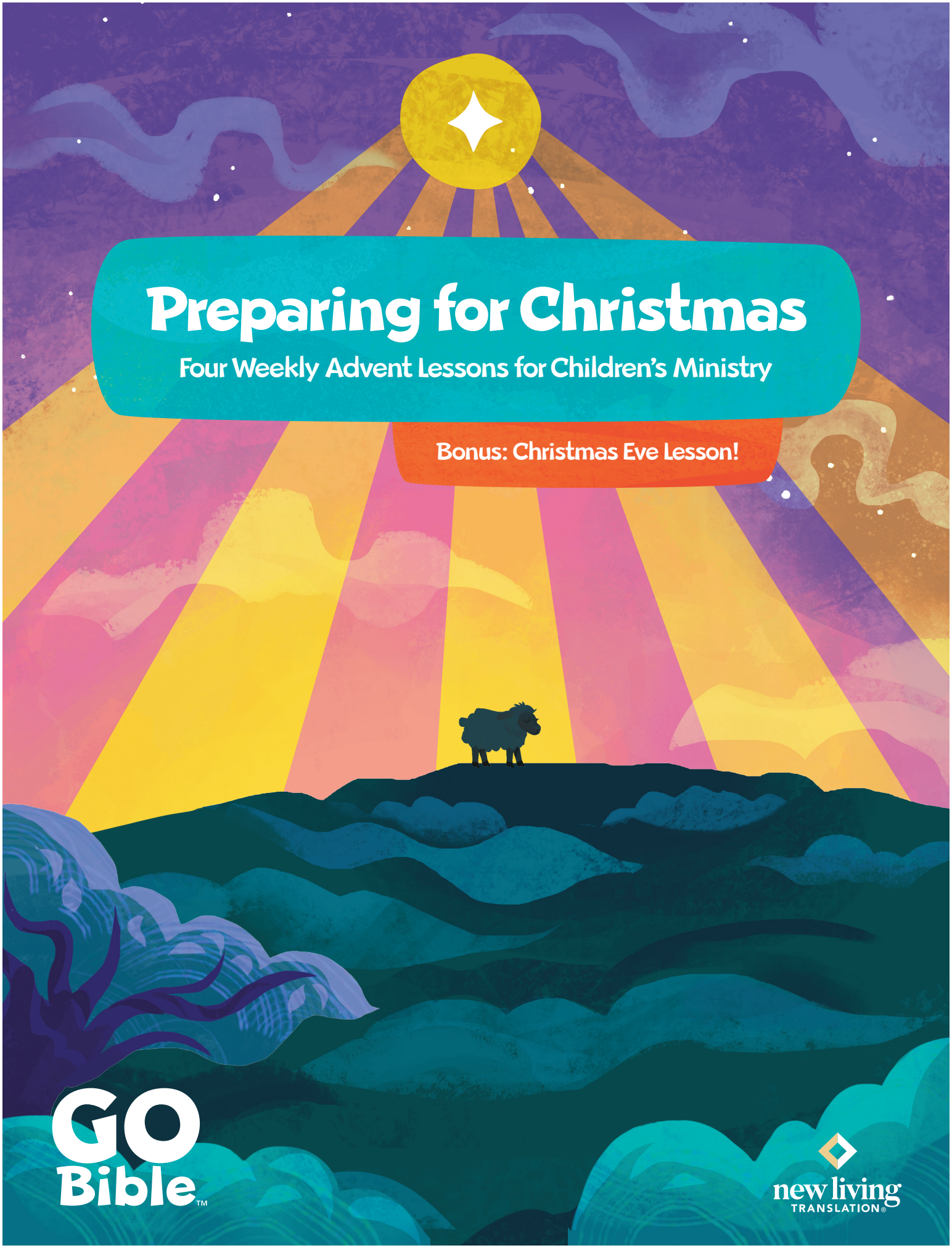

Preparing for Christmas
Four Weekly Advent Lessons for Children's Ministry
Bonus: Christmas Eve Lesson!
GO Bible™
new living TRANSLATION®

Introduction

For over sixty years, Tyndale House Publishers has been making God's Word clearer to readers through our books and Bibles. Our publishing journey began because our founder, Dr. Ken Taylor, desired to make the Bible easier to understand for his own kids. Every day, as he rode the train to and from work, he paraphrased Scripture so his children could internalize the words God gave us.

What began as a father's passion project for his kids ultimately became the New Living Translation. Through the years, the NLT has touched many lives and made God's Word accessible to adults around the world.

Now we're bringing this clear and easy-to-read translation to kids in the *Go Bible.* With exciting features, fun activities, and study aids that help kids make God's Word an integral part of their everyday lives, the *Go Bible* continues Dr. Taylor's legacy in an inspiring, life-changing way.

As those who serve God's children in ministry, we know that you share a similar desire to see God's Word **transform the children in your care.** That's why we've put together this resource for you to use in your children's ministry programs during Advent.

In the lessons, we have included page numbers from the *Go Bible* so you can easily find and read passages directly from it. You could use any translation you want, but we recommend the New Living Translation as an excellent translation for elementary-age children. All of the memory verses and scriptural quotes included in this resource are from the New Living Translation.

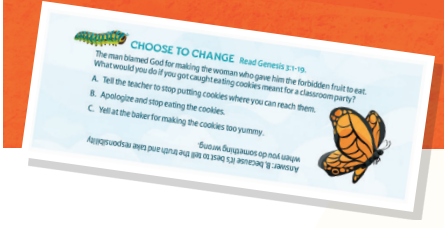
In addition, we are highlighting some of the awesome, kid-friendly, and engaging features of the *Go Bible.* **These features include:**



Key Verse Challenges:
Unlock the truth with these memory verses. Each verse comes with a fun, interactive challenge to help children remember and understand it.

Know, Grow, and Go:
Mini devotions that teach kids to **know** God's Word, **grow** in their faith, and **go** share it with others.





Choose to Change:
Modern-day dilemmas with multiple-choice options that show kids how to apply Bible knowledge to real life.

Factoids:
Interesting and fun facts about life in Bible times.





True Tales of Transformed People:
Snapshots of people in the Bible whose lives were forever changed by God.

Book Introductions:
Children are given the context to understand the importance of each book. They include . . .

Answers to these questions:
Who wrote it?
What's it about?
Where does it take place?
When does it take place?
Why does this book matter?
How does it fit in God's story?

Seek and Find: Lists three to four things children can search for while reading.

Timeline: Provides important dates for key events in the book.



Special Pages: Glossy, full-color pages covering big Bible concepts, including . . .

Faith and Science
Jesus and the Old Testament
Where to Turn When Life Is Hard



Big Ideas in the Bible:
Dive deep into these informational pages featuring detailed illustrations of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the plagues of Egypt, and more!

Full-Color Maps:
Enter the world of the Bible with maps featuring important places, travel routes, kingdom borders, and more.



How to Use These Lessons

Preparing for Christmas will help your children's ministry team meet the needs of the elementary-age children in your church. These lessons will help children during the Advent season to prepare their hearts and minds with the true meaning of Christmas so that they can better celebrate the miraculous birth of Jesus!

These lessons are built around the Advent wreath and its four—sometimes five—candles: hope, peace, joy, and love. Though not always used, the fifth candle, the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve. You can use this lesson if your church provides children's programming for a Christmas Eve service.

Easy-to-Use

Email these lessons to your elementary Sunday school teachers or the leader of your children's church, midweek program, or any other time when you have children together. All of the activities are designed to be quick and easy with little preparation and easy-to-locate materials.

Easy-to-Lead

For the four Sundays prior to Christmas, lead children in the activities described in this resource. Each lesson contains

- **Memory Verse**
- **Big Idea—**The one big idea we want kids to walk away with
- **Overview—**This short overview preps kids for what they will be learning
- **Opening Activity—**This fun and engaging activity will help kids get to know one another while introducing the Bible Story
- **Bible Story—**The Bible story about Christmas ties to the Advent theme: hope, peace, joy, love, Christ—the greatest gift.
- **Three Alternate Activities—**These activities are designed to grab kids' attention and get them directly involved with the lesson. There are a variety of activities: games, crafts, puzzles, hands-on science, snacks, etc.
- **Reproducible Page—**This page is a resource for one of the Alternate Activities and also serves as a reminder of all that they learned during the lesson.

Guided Conversation

Another thing that makes this book easy for leaders is that the Bible story and activities are all scripted with guided conversation. There are also suggested actions in type within parentheses.

There are many questions included in the guided conversation to check comprehension as well as to help kids apply these truths to their lives. Every activity and everything the leader says should lead back to each lesson's Big Idea. When someone asks their kid what they learned in Sunday school, we want that Big Idea to be the first thing they say!

Additional Sources

The following activities were picked up and adapted from RoseKidz books, available from Tyndale.

The Super-Sized Book of Bible Coloring and Art

- Journey to Bethlehem, page 21

The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, and Celebrations

- Advent Candles Pattern, page 9
- Advent Tree, page 10
- Special Visitor Code, page 16
- Christmas Poem, page 19
- Shepherds Search for Jesus, page 26
- Wise Men Maze, page 30

Top 50 Bible Stories about Jesus for Elementary

- Good News Crossword, page 15

Week 1: Hope

Bible Story Reference: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 (*Go Bible* page 830)

Memory Verse: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 (*Go Bible* page 830)

Big Idea: Jesus gives us hope for salvation.

Overview

Say: What are some of the things your family does to get ready for Christmas? (Children respond.) There are so many fun things to do in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day! There is a word some people use for the time leading up to Christmas. That word is *Advent.* Put your hand on your head if you've heard that word before. Advent is celebrated on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Some people also celebrate Advent on Christmas Eve. Today, we're talking about Advent and that Jesus gives us hope for salvation. (Open with prayer requests, praises, and a time of prayer.)

Opening Game

Verse Rhythms Game

Materials

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker

Preparation: On a large sheet of paper, print the words of Isaiah 9:6. Post that paper where players can see the words of Isaiah 9:6 as they play the game.



Key Verse Challenge

ISAIAH 9:6-7

Make a crown out of construction paper and write the titles listed in these verses around the crown. Then memorize the verses one line at a time. This is just one of many prophecies in Isaiah that points ahead to the Messiah, Jesus.

Directions: Players say the verse together aloud. Then players say the verse again, this time clapping on each word of the verse. Play additional rounds, varying the action: clapping on each syllable, stomping their feet, giving each other high fives on each word, hopping on one foot, etc. If time and interest allow, ask players to suggest actions.

Say: Based on the names for Jesus we read in Isaiah 9:6, what can we expect Jesus to be like? (Children respond: wonderful, mighty, peaceful, etc.) Jesus does many good things for us. Today, we're going to talk about the best of all the good things Jesus gives us. **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.**

Bible Story

Say: In Old Testament times, there was a man named Isaiah, who was a prophet. What is a prophet? (Children respond.) A prophet is someone who tells people messages from God. Isaiah wrote one of the books in the Bible. Can you guess the name of the book? (Children respond.) The book is named Isaiah—the same as the man who wrote it.

Timeless Words

During Bible times, God gave special messages to his prophets, and these prophets shared God's messages with the people. Today, God still communicates with us through the words he shared with these prophets. They're written down here in the Bible! God's messages are always true and relevant, no matter how long it's been since he first spoke them.

FACTOID

Let's read some of the words Isaiah wrote. (Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 . *Go Bible* page 830.) The people who walk in darkness are all the people who don't obey God. Isaiah is telling them—and us—that God would send a light into their darkness. Isaiah said that God promised to send a baby who would save people from the darkness they created by not obeying God. Who do you think this Savior is? (Children respond.) This Savior is Jesus!

Isaiah also told us about many names that Jesus would have:

- **Wonderful Counselor—**This name means that Jesus would teach people to follow God and that through him, God would give them wisdom and comfort.
- **Mighty God—**Because Jesus is fully God, he is all-powerful and can do anything!
- **Everlasting Father—**Jesus is not an ordinary man. He is God's one and only Son.
- **Prince of Peace—**Jesus brings peace to his followers.

Everyone was so excited to hear about the wonderful Savior God promised! But Isaiah wasn't the only Old Testament person to talk about the Savior God was going to send. Another prophet, Micah even said that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2; *Go Bible* page 1109).

Also, in the very first Bible story, we hear about Jesus. What are the names of the first two people? (Children respond.) Adam and Eve were promised that one day a Savior would come, and that the Savior would make a way for everyone in the world to be rescued from the punishment for the wrong things they do (see Genesis 3:15 ; *Go Bible* page 6).

However, the people had to wait a long time for Jesus to come. Does it sometimes seem like you must wait a long time for Christmas Day to come? (Children respond.) Well, God's people had to wait HUNDREDS of years! Still, in all the time they waited, God's people knew that God always keeps his promises. They were able to have hope that their Savior would come. We're lucky because we don't have to wait for the Savior. Jesus already came to earth, and he is alive today! **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.**

Object Lesson

Advent Wreath, First Sunday

Materials

- Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or lighter (for adult use only)

Say: What are some of the things your family does to prepare for Christmas? (Children respond.) Who remembers what the word *Advent* means? (Children respond). *Advent* is a word people sometimes use to talk about preparing for Christmas. Advent describes the four Sundays before Christmas when we can get ready to celebrate Christmas. Advent isn't about gifts or parties. It's mostly about remembering the important reasons we celebrate Christmas.

Every time we meet between now and Christmas, we're going to be talking about Advent. (Show Advent wreath and candles.) This wreath has five candles: three purple candles, one pink candle, and one white candle. The purple candles are for the first, second, and fourth Sundays. The pink candle is for the third Sunday, and the white candle is for Christmas Eve.

On the first Sunday of Advent we light only the first candle. (Light the first candle.) This candle is the Hope candle. It reminds us of Old Testament times when God's people looked to the future with hope for the Savior. This candle reminds us of the hope we can have in Jesus and that **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.**

Because we all do wrong things, we all need forgiveness. The Bible word for doing wrong things is *sin*. Jesus' death and resurrection provide a way for us to be forgiven for our sins. Jesus paid the price of our sins for us. (Invite children who would like to hear more about being forgiven for their sins and becoming a member of God's family to talk with you or any other adult helper.)

Optional Activities

Sing about It

Materials

- Recording of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus," or other Advent hymn
- Music player
- Printout of lyrics for the hymn or hymns you choose

Directions: Lead children to sing the hymn(s) you selected. Ask older children to read each stanza of the song, one stanza at a time. After reading each stanza, go over any vocabulary words that are new to the children. After reviewing the words, sing the hymn(s) again.

Say: We are so happy that Jesus was born! **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.** Because we've all sinned and done wrong things, we need salvation through Jesus to become members of God's family.

Optional: Ask a musician from your church to bring their guitar or other instrument to lead children in singing Advent hymns.

Advent Wreath Craft

Materials

- Advent Candles Pattern, page 9
- Dark- and light-green tissue paper
- Scissors
- Purple, pink, yellow, and orange crayons or markers
- Transparent tape
- Paper plates, one for each crafter
- Glue

Optional

- Paper cutter

Preparation: Photocopy the Advent Candles Pattern, making one copy for each crafter. Using a paper cutter or scissors, cut dark and light green tissue paper into squares approximately one inch in size.

Directions: Have crafters color the Hope, Peace, and Love candles purple, and the Joy candle pink. They should leave the Christ candle white. Have them color the flames yellow and orange. Then have crafters cut out the candles and roll them into a tube, taping the tubes closed.

Have crafters cut out the center of a paper plate to make a wreath and then scrunch and glue dark and light green tissue-paper squares on the plate to make a wreath. Have crafters glue the candles to the wreath.

Say: Let's make Advent wreaths to take home and use with our families. Our wreaths will remind us that **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.**

Optional: Cut flaps at the bottom of the candles so they stand up when glued.

Know, Grow, and Go

White as Snow *Read Isaiah 1:18.*

Have you ever gotten a glob of ketchup on your shirt? You tried everything, but you just couldn't get rid of it. Sin is kind of like that. It stains our hearts and souls. Every hateful word, every unkind thought, every lie makes the stain bigger and darker. Nothing we do can scrub it out. But if we ask God to forgive us, he'll wash it away. And that dark-red stain will be changed to snowy white.



Advent Calendar

Materials

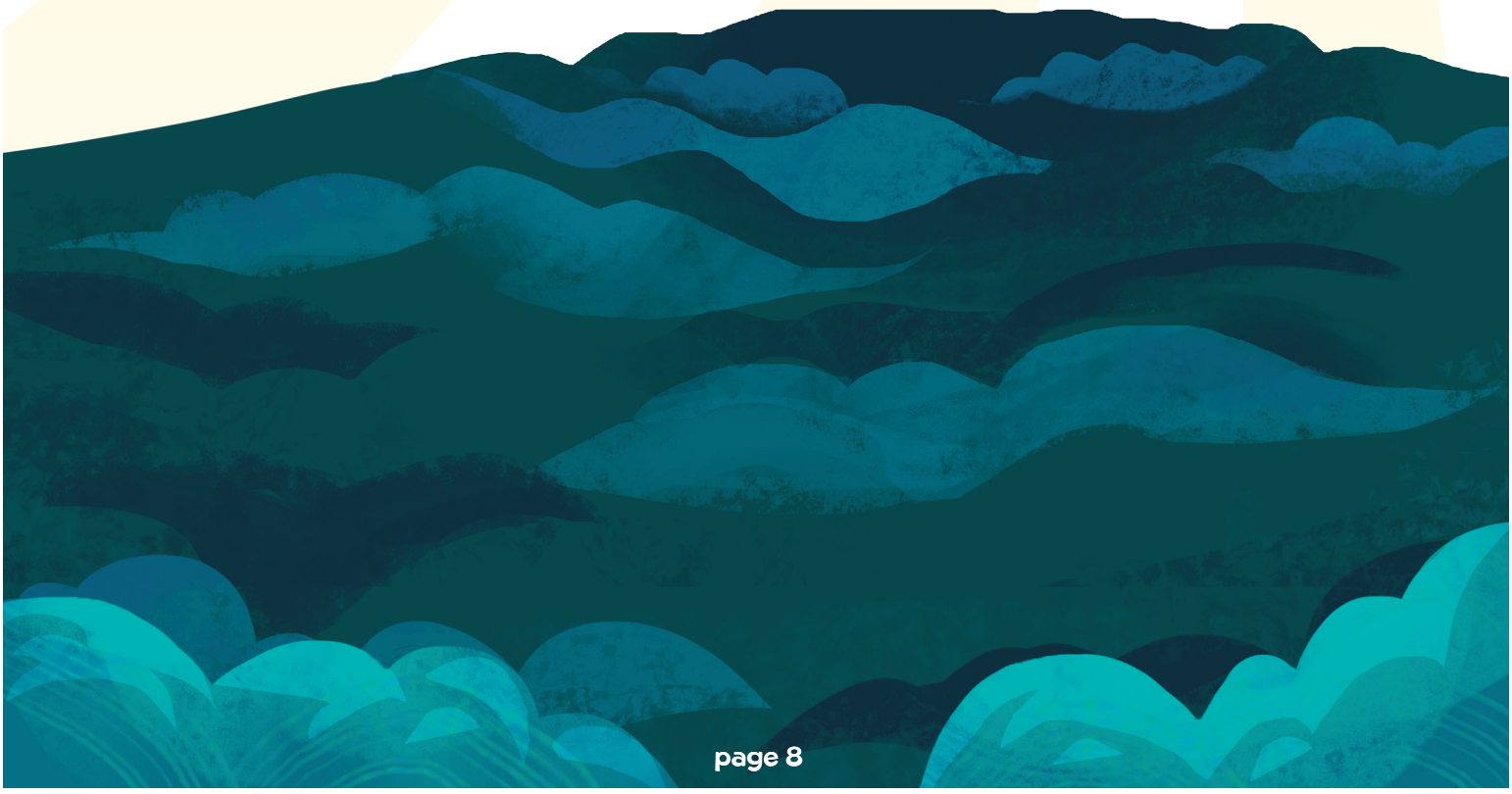
- Advent Tree, page 10
- Green paper
- Scissors
- Sheets of construction paper in various colors
- Glue
- Variety of ½-inch pom-poms, 24 for each crafter
- Resealable plastic sandwich bags

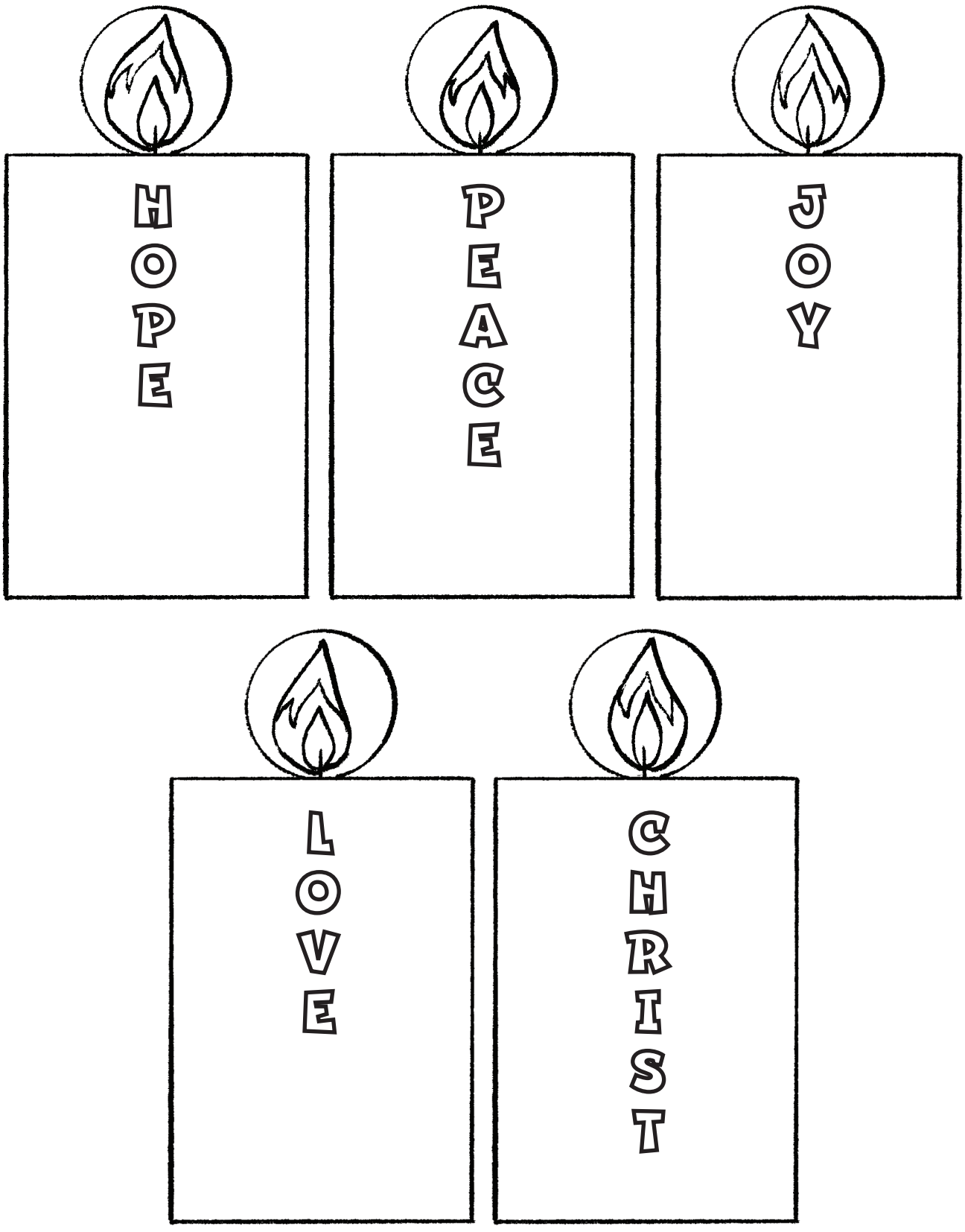
Preparation: On green paper, photocopy the Advent Tree, making one copy for each crafter.

Directions: Have crafters cut out the tree and glue it to a sheet of construction paper. Then have them select 24 pom-poms and place them in a resealable plastic sandwich bag.

Say: In addition to Advent wreaths, many people celebrate Advent with an Advent calendar. Our Advent calendar is a tree that includes good things we can do each day before Christmas. Each day from December 1 to December 24, you can do the suggested activity and then glue a pom-pom over the circle. Each day, as you complete your activity, you can remember that **Jesus gives us hope for salvation.**

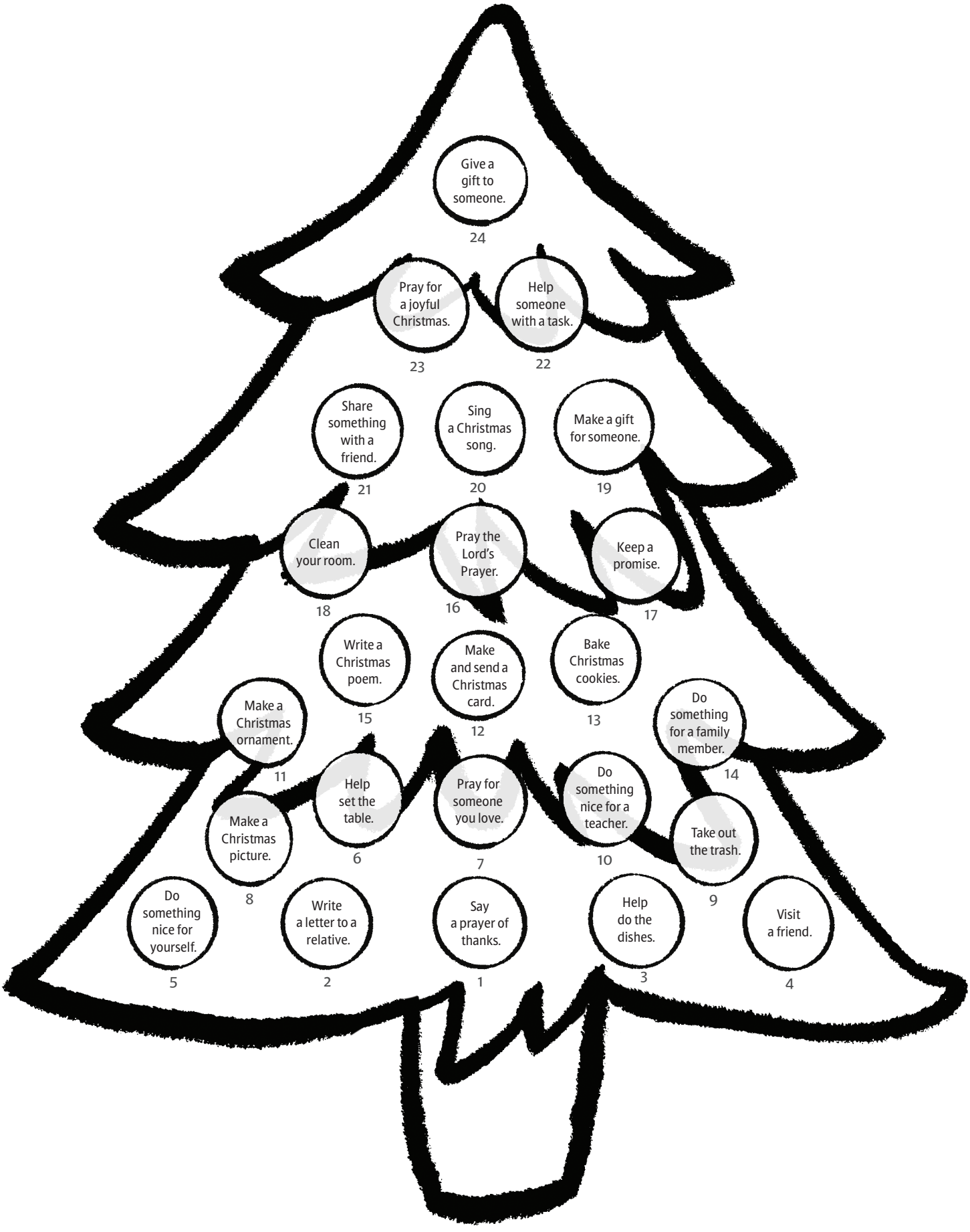
Tip: If time allows, ask each crafter to tell you which activity they are most looking forward to doing.





Advent Candles Pattern

© 2021 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, & Celebrations*



Advent Tree

© 2021 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, & Celebrations*

Week 2: Peace



Bible Story Reference: Luke 1:26-56 (*Go Bible* pages 1230-1231)

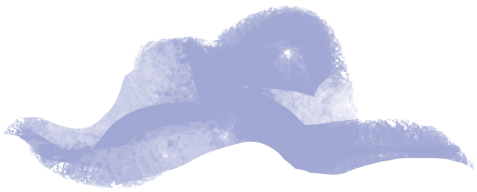
Memory Verse: "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" Luke 1:46-47 (*Go Bible* page 1231)

Big Idea: Jesus gives us peace.

Overview

Say: Today, to celebrate the second week of Advent, we're going to read another Bible story about Jesus' birth. In this story, Mary, a young girl, receives a surprising visit from a surprising visitor who gave her an extremely surprising message. Mary could have been scared, worried, or anxious, but instead, she was able to have peace. In the same way God gave Mary peace in a stressful situation, **Jesus gives us peace too.** (Open with prayer requests, praises, and a time of prayer.)





Opening Game

Verse Echo

Materials

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker

Preparation: On a large sheet of paper, print the words of Luke 1:46-47. Post that paper where players can see the words of Luke 1:46-47 as they play the game.

Directions: Show the paper on which you have printed Luke 1:46-47. Ask a child to volunteer to read the verse aloud. Repeat the verse, one phrase at a time, and encourage children to echo the phrase. As time permits, repeat the verse with different children leading the echo.

Say: We praise God for the good things he does for us. Mary was in a difficult situation. Many people would have been overwhelmed! But instead, Mary chose to praise God. Mary was able to praise God because he had given her peace. She knew and trusted that God would care for her. We can trust God too. We can know that no matter what, **Jesus gives us peace.**

Bible Story

Say: When have you had a surprise visitor? (Children respond.) One day in Bible times, a young woman named Mary got a surprising visitor. It was an angel! Now, angels don't appear that often to people. Usually, when God has a message for someone, he might send a prophet like Isaiah. But the message God had for Mary was SO BIG that he sent an angel named Gabriel to tell Mary. Do you know what the message was? (Children respond. Read Luke 1:28-33 aloud. *Go Bible* page 1231.)

Wow! That was a lot to take in! Mary must have felt shocked, scared, happy . . . and confused. She knew that God would be sending a Savior to his people. But I'm sure she never imagined that she would be the mother of God's promised Savior.

Mary did something surprising. Mary trusted God completely. God had given her peace about what was going to happen. Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true" (Luke 1:38).

What would you do if something like this happened to you? (Children respond.) A few days later, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Mary told Elizabeth everything that had happened. She even sang a song of praise and rejoicing. We call this song "The Magnificat."

(Read Luke 1:46-55 aloud. *Go Bible* page 1231.)

Mary was able to sing this song because she had peace. She trusted God and knew that he would take care of her. Because Jesus is God's Son, we can trust him. We can know that **Jesus gives us peace.**

Key Figures in Jesus' Genealogy

A genealogy is a list of people in a family, sometimes going back hundreds or thousands of years. For instance, your genealogy would include you, your parents, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, and on and on. The Bible features a lot of genealogies, and sometimes they just seem like boring lists of names. But they're there for a reason! The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 shows that Jesus' ancestors included Abraham and David. Matthew wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was the King and Savior descended from David that the Old Testament speaks about. Read on for some of the other important people in Jesus' genealogy.

Abraham was chosen by God to be the father of God's people, the Israelites.

Isaac was the son of Abraham and his wife, Sarah. He was the first of the many descendants God promised to Abraham.

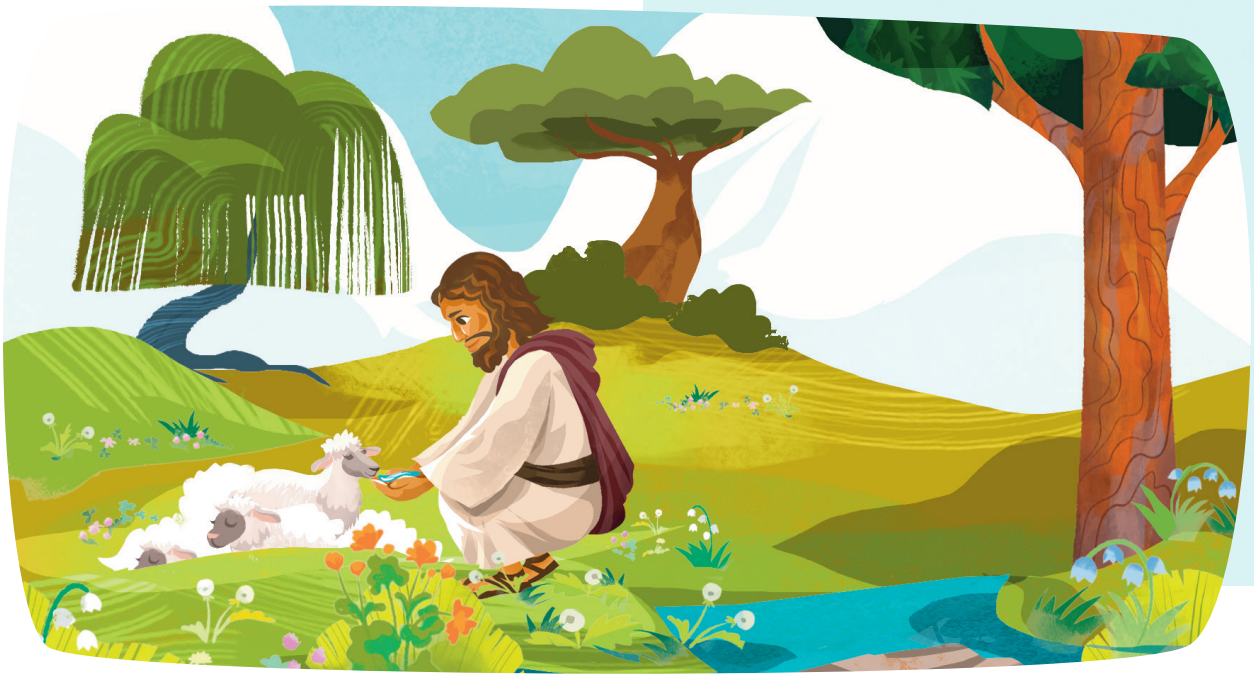
Jacob's sons and their families became the twelve tribes of Israel. God did incredible things for Jacob's family, including setting them free from slavery in Egypt.

Rahab was a woman who lived a sinful lifestyle, but she saved the lives of two Israelite spies and became part of God's family.

Ruth was a courageous woman who was faithful to her mother-in-law after both their husbands died. Like Rahab, she wasn't an Israelite, but God brought her into his family.

David is considered the greatest king of Israel. God promised his family would rule Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:16), a promise that pointed ahead to Jesus.

Mary became Jesus' mother when she was a young woman. She is the only person in the genealogy who was with Jesus throughout his earthly life.



Object Lesson

Advent Wreath, Second Sunday

Materials

- Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or lighter (for adult use only)

Say: Last week we talked about the Advent wreath. (Show Advent wreath and candles. Light the first candle.) Who can tell me what the first candle represents? (Children respond: hope.)

Today, we're going to light the second candle, which is purple like the first. (Light the second candle.) What do you think purple represents? (Children respond.) Three of our candles are purple to represent God's royalty—that God is King over all creation. Why do you think there are three purple candles? What's significant about the number three? (Children respond: the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

Because of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we can have peace no matter what happens in our lives. In all situations, if we trust him, his power, and his goodness, **Jesus gives us peace.**

Optional Activities

Rhythmic Guessing Game

Materials

- Rhythm sticks or other rhythm instruments

Optional

- Recording of "The Magnificat" and player

Directions: One at a time, use rhythm sticks or other rhythm instruments to play the rhythm of a well-known Christmas song. Have children guess what song you are playing. After a few rounds, whisper the name of a song to volunteers who use the rhythm sticks or other rhythm instrument for additional rounds of the game.

Say: What are some songs that are sung at Christmastime? (Children respond.) Even though Mary received some surprising, important news, she wasn't overcome with worry or fear. She trusted that God would take care of her and sang a song of praise. We can trust that Jesus cares for us too. Because we trust him, **Jesus gives us peace.**

Optional: Play recording of "The Magnificat" for children.

The Trinity: Three in One

There is only one God, but he exists as three Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons of God are known as the Trinity.

Are you confused yet?

Because we are humans, we can't fully understand some mysteries about God, and that's okay! We can trust him even though it may be hard to understand everything about him.

So, what is the Trinity?



God the Father is our loving, just, and forgiving Father. He is perfect and holy. He created the entire universe, and he's had a good plan for his creation since the beginning of time. God the Father made each one of us in his image (see Genesis 1:27).



Jesus is God's Son who came to earth as a human. He took the punishment for our sin and made a way for people to be reconciled to God by dying on the cross and rising again. Jesus now lives with the Father in heaven, and he will return to earth someday to make everything right.



The Holy Spirit helps us to know right from wrong and transforms us so that we become more and more like Jesus. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only filled certain people who had special jobs. But Jesus now sends the Spirit to live inside everyone who follows him.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together make up the Trinity. While they often play different roles, all three are fully God and deserve our worship.

Word Play

Materials

- Bibles
- Good News Crossword, page 15
- Pencils

Preparation: Photocopy Good News Crossword, making one copy for each child.

Directions: Have children complete the crossword puzzle.

Say: After receiving the message from the angel, Mary shared the good news with her cousin and sang a song to worship God. When we think about the angel's message to Mary, we can remember that Mary had peace and that **Jesus gives us peace.**

Coded Message

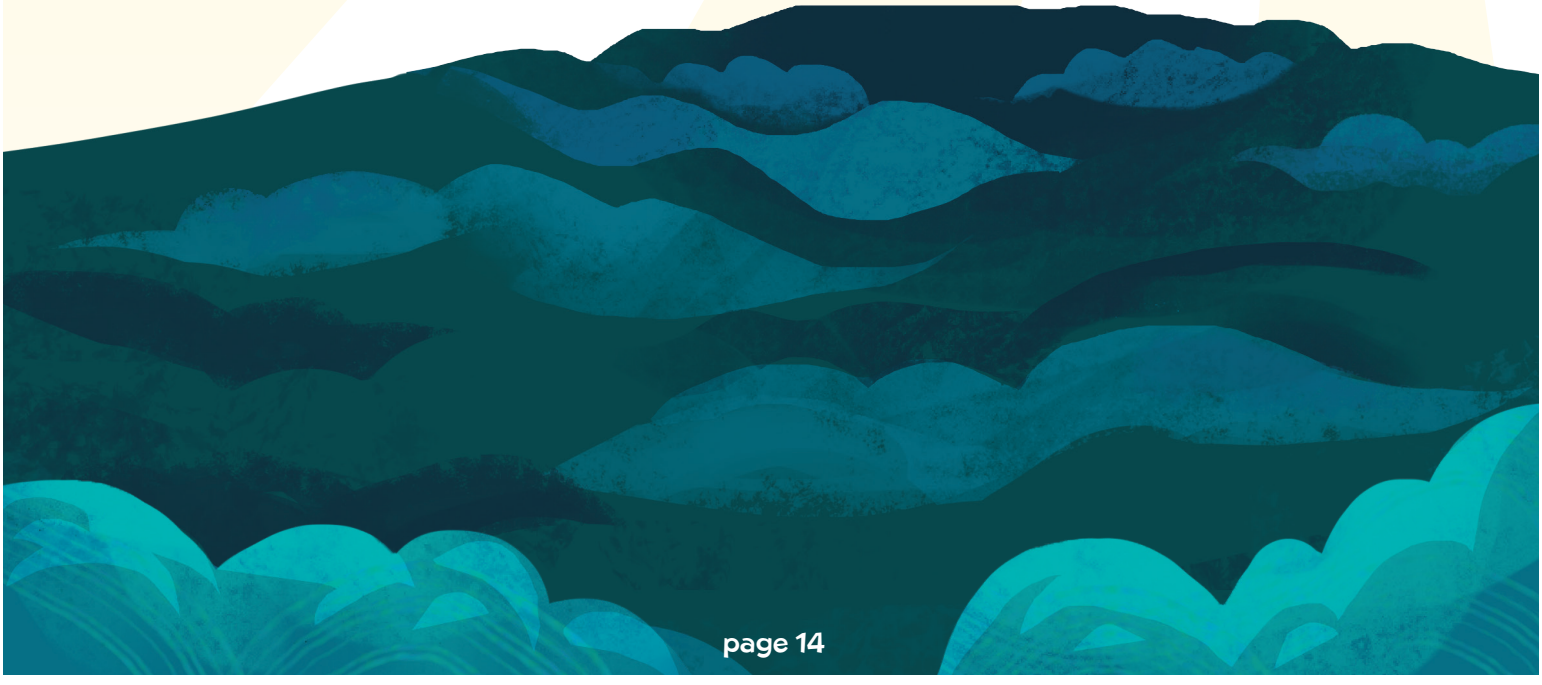
Materials

- Special Visitor Code, page 16
- Markers or crayons

Preparation: Photocopy the Special Visitor Code, making one copy for each child.

Directions: Have children follow the instructions on the page to complete the coded message.

Say: We've been talking today about how **Jesus gives us peace.** The peace that Jesus gives is for everyone in the world. In John 14:27, we read these words from Jesus: "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." What an amazing gift!





Good News Crossword

Fill in the blanks in each crossword clue. Complete the crossword with the answers.

Across

1. God sent an angel to the city of _____ (Luke 1:26, *Go Bible* page 1230).
2. The angel's name was _____ (Luke 1:26, *Go Bible* page 1230).
3. The angel said that Mary would have a _____ (Luke 1:31, *Go Bible* page 1231).
4. Mary's child would rule over the throne of _____ (Luke 1:32, *Go Bible* page 1231).
5. The angel said the word of God will never _____ (Luke 1:37, *Go Bible* page 1231).
6. The angel also went to visit _____ (Matthew 1:24, *Go Bible* page 1154).

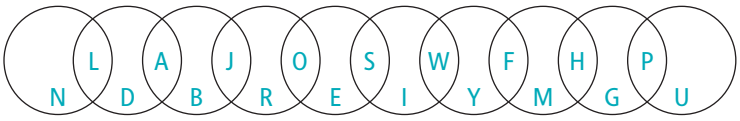
Down

2. Nazareth was located in _____ (Luke 1:26, *Go Bible* page 1230).
7. The angel told Mary that she had found _____ with God (Luke 1:30, *Go Bible* page 1231).
8. Mary's baby would be the Son of _____ (Luke 1:35, *Go Bible* page 1231).
9. The angel told Joseph that Jesus "will _____ his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21, *Go Bible* page 1154).
10. The prophets had received this message from the _____ (Matthew 1:22, *Go Bible* page 1154).
11. Mary _____ in God (Luke 1:45, *Go Bible* page 1231).

© 2021 RoseKidz. *Top 50 Bible Stories about Jesus for Elementary*

Special Visitor Code

To fill in the blanks, find the letter in the circle or circles with the same number that is under the blank. Example: 3, 4 = J. Color the scene.





One day _____ _____ _____ sent the _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
9 4, 5 2 2, 3 1 9 5 1, 2

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ to _____ _____ _____ _____. "Do not be
9 2, 3 3 4 6 5 1, 2 8 2, 3 4 7

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____," he said. "God will give you a _____ _____ _____ _____
2, 3 7, 8 4 2, 3 6 2 3 2, 3 3 7

_____ _____ _____. He will be the _____ _____ _____ of the Most _____ _____ _____ _____."
3 4, 5 7 5, 6 4, 5 1 8, 9 6 9 8, 9

Mary said, "_____ _____ _____ it be as you have _____ _____ _____ _____."
8 2, 3 7 5, 6 2, 3 6 2

Mary was pledged to marry _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____. An angel came to him in a
3, 4 4, 5 5, 6 5 9, 10 8, 9

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____, saying, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your
2 4 5 2, 3 8

_____ _____ _____ _____. God gave her the _____ _____ _____ _____. Call his name
6, 7 6 7, 8 5 3 2, 3 3 7

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____. He will save people from their _____ _____ _____ _____."
3, 4 5 5, 6 10 5, 6 5, 6 6 1 5, 6

© 2021 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, & Celebrations*

Week 3: Joy



Bible Story Reference: Luke 2:1-7 (*Go Bible* page 1232)

Memory Verse: "I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" Habakkuk 3:18 (*Go Bible* page 1121)

Big Idea: Jesus brings us joy!

Overview

Say: Every day, all over the world, babies are born. The birth of a baby brings much joy and happiness to their family. But there is one baby's birth that brings joy to the WHOLE world! What baby do you think this is? (Children respond: Jesus.) Jesus!

On this third week of Advent, we're celebrating the birth of Jesus. The whole world celebrates his birthday even today, thousands of years after his birth. **Jesus brings us joy!** (Open with prayer requests, praises, and a time of prayer.)

Opening Game

Verse Cover-Up

Materials

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker
- Sticky notes

Preparation: On the large sheet of paper, print the words of Habakkuk 3:18.

Directions: Read Habakkuk 3:18 aloud with the group. Choose a volunteer to cover one of the words on the verse paper with a sticky note. Use more than one if needed. Have the volunteer then lead the group to repeat the verse, still saying the covered word. Continue choosing volunteers to cover words and repeat the verse until all the words have been covered. Remove sticky notes and play additional rounds as time and interest allow.

Say: What does our verse mean when it says to "rejoice" or "be joyful" in the Lord? (Children respond.) During Advent, it's easy to be filled with joy because **Jesus brings us joy!**

Bible Story

Say: Yesterday we talked about a young woman who received the surprising news that she would give birth to God's Son, the Savior. What was this young woman's name? (Children respond: Mary.) Yes! It was Mary.

Several months after the angel Gabriel visited her, she and Joseph left their home in Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem. The ruler of their country had demanded that everyone return to their hometowns so they could be counted.

By now, Mary was pregnant and ready to give birth. Such a long trip must have been so difficult! Joseph must have been concerned about Mary—and the baby too! He must have worried about taking good care of them both.

Mary and Joseph weren't the only people traveling to Bethlehem. Many other people had to be there to be counted. When Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem, they had a big problem. There was no place for them to stay! What do you think Mary and Joseph did? (Children respond.)

The Bible doesn't tell us exactly how it happened, but it does say that there were no guest rooms or other lodging available to Mary and Joseph. So when Jesus was born, he was laid to rest in a manger—a box where animals are fed. Mary and Joseph must have been very happy to have a warm and dry place for their baby—even if there were animals around!

Every year, we celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas. It's a time of great joy and happiness because **Jesus brings us joy!**

No Room

Was Jesus really born in a stable? No one knows for sure, but we do know there were no rooms available and that Jesus' parents lay him in a manger after he was born. (A manger is a type of feeding trough for animals.) Some historians think Jesus may have been born in a cave because people often kept animals in caves at the time.



FACTOID

Object Lesson

Advent Wreath, Third Sunday

Materials

- Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or lighter (for adult use only)

Say: (Show Advent wreath and candles. Light the first candle.) Who can tell me what the first candle represents? (Children respond: hope.) That's right, Hope. How about the second candle? (Light the second candle as children respond: peace.) The second candle is for Peace. And today we will light the third candle, which is pink. What do you think the third candle represents? (Light the third candle as children respond.) The third candle represents Joy. It reminds us that **Jesus brings us joy!** Christmas is a time of joy—a time to celebrate the birth of our wonderful Savior. Because Jesus was born, we can become members of God's family.

Optional Activities

Oven-Baked Clay Ornaments

Note: These ornaments will be completed in Week 4's lesson.

Materials

The following ingredients will yield about 12 ornaments. Double or triple the recipe as needed to make your desired number of ornaments.

- 4 cups flour, plus extra to cover surface
- 1 cup salt
- 1½ cups water
- Large bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Resealable plastic bag
- Waxed paper
- Christmas cookie cutters
- Texture sheets, pencils, styluses, and other objects to create textures in clay (sponges, toothbrushes, buttons, etc.)
- Drinking straws
- Cookie sheets
- Clear varnish or gloss spray

Preparation: Make clay by combining flour, salt, and water in a large bowl, stirring with a wooden spoon until well mixed. Knead the clay on a floured surface for five minutes. Place the clay in a resealable plastic bag. Tear off pieces of waxed paper, one piece for each child.

Directions: Hand each child a fist-sized lump of clay

and a piece of waxed paper. Have children flatten the clay on the waxed paper to about a one-inch thickness. Then have children use a cookie cutter or their hands to form the clay into an ornament shape. They can create a design on their ornament using texture sheets, pencils, pens, styluses, and other objects. Have children use a drinking straw to poke a hole at the top of their ornament. Then have them carefully turn the ornament over and use their fingernail or other object to carve their initials into the clay. Place the ornaments on a cookie sheet.

After class, bake the cookie sheets in a 350°F oven for 30 to 45 minutes. After ornaments cool for about 10 minutes, spray with a clear varnish or gloss and set aside to dry.

When ornaments are dry, package them in a cardboard box or plastic bin for the Week 4 lesson.

Say: Next week, we will finish our ornaments. When we finish, they will be ready to decorate our Christmas trees every year at Christmas. Whenever we decorate our trees, we can remember that **Jesus brings us joy!**

Optional: Older children work together to make the clay.

Key Verse Challenge

LUKE 2:11

Get a piece of paper and some crayons or colored pencils. Draw what you think the scene looked like when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Then, on the back of the picture, write this verse. Hang the picture somewhere for everyone to see.



Christmas Poem

Materials

- Christmas Poem Cards, page 20
- Scissors
- Large sheet of paper
- Marker

Preparation: Photocopy Christmas Poem Cards, making one copy for each child, and cut the cards apart. On the large sheet of paper, use a marker to print the following poem, replacing the underlined words with a blank line. This page will be your answer key.

Christmas, Christmas, Christmas! Here's what the letters say.

C is for the Christ child who in the manger lay.

H is for the cattle's hay that pillowed Jesus' head.

R is for rejoicing by those around his bed.

I is for a busy inn, when room could not be found.

S is for the swaddling clothes that wrapped the baby round.

T is for good tidings that brought such wondrous joy.

M is for the mother dear who watched her baby boy.

A is for the angel host who told of peace on earth.

S is for the star so bright that shone at Jesus' birth.

Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year too.

May you honor Jesus in everything you do.

Directions: Distribute the cards among the children. Read the poem line by line, asking children to suggest words from their cards to fill in the blanks. As the correct words are suggested, write them on the blanks.

Say: Today we've been talking about how **Jesus brings us joy!** *Joy* is one of the words in our poem, but there's another word that means being joyful. Which word is that? (Children respond: rejoicing.)

Journey to Bethlehem

Materials

- Journey to Bethlehem Coloring Page, page 21
- Markers or crayons
- Green and red sheets of construction paper
- Glue

Preparation: Photocopy the Journey to Bethlehem Coloring Page, making one copy for each child.

Directions: Have children color the picture, and then glue the paper to a sheet of construction paper to make a frame.

Say: Display this picture at your house as a Christmas decoration. When you see this picture, it will remind you of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. It is also a reminder that **Jesus brings us joy!**

Optional: Provide stickers, garlands, and other decorative materials for children to glue to the construction paper frames to decorate their pictures.

ANGEL	FOUND	REJOICING
BED	HAY	ROUND
BIRTH	HEAD	SAY
BOY	INN	STAR
CHILD	JOY	SWADDLING
DO	LAY	TIDINGS
EARTH	MOTHER	TOO



Journey to Bethlehem Coloring Page

© 2020 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Bible Coloring & Art*

Week 4: Love

Bible Story Reference: Luke 2:8-20 (*Go Bible* page 1233)

Memory Verse: "God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." 1 John 4:9-10 (*Go Bible* page 1503)

Big Idea: Jesus loves us.

Overview

Say: On this fourth, final week of Advent, we are celebrating the love that we have because Jesus was born. God loves us so much that he willingly sent Jesus to earth to be born as a baby, grow to be a man, and die, so that we can become members of God's family. Jesus was willing to do God's will, leave heaven, and die for us because **Jesus loves us**. (Open with prayer requests, praises, and a time of prayer.)

Key Verse Challenge

1 JOHN 4:9-10

Thank God for loving you long before you loved him. Once you've memorized these verses, make a card for someone who's lonely or going through a hard time. (Ask a parent or guardian if you need ideas.) Write these verses on one side of the card, and write your own message on the other side.



Opening Game

Verse Ball

Materials

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker
- Foam ball

Preparation: On a large sheet of paper, print the words of 1 John 4:9. Post that paper where players can see the words of 1 John 4:9 as they play the game.

Directions: Have the players sit in a circle on the floor. Roll or toss the ball to one of the players as you say the first word of the verse. Then have that player say the first and second word as they roll or toss the ball to another player. Continue playing until the verse has been said completely. Play additional rounds as time and interest allow.

Say: (Display the paper on which you printed the verse and read it aloud.) For whom did God send his Son, Jesus? (Children respond: everyone in the world.) When our verse talks about "eternal life," it means that someday we can live with Jesus in heaven forever. Jesus made an incredible sacrifice by leaving heaven to be born here on earth—especially since it meant he would one day die for us. But Jesus willingly did all of that because **Jesus loves us!**

Bible Story

Say: What is a job that people do at night? (Children respond.) In Bible times, people needed to care for their animals at night. On the night Jesus was born, there were some shepherds in the hills outside of Bethlehem who were keeping watch over their sheep to make sure they didn't get lost or hurt. It must have been a quiet, peaceful job.

Maybe it was a bit like camping. What are some things you do at night when you go camping? (Children respond.) Life was a lot different in Bible times. The shepherds didn't have many of the things we take for granted like flashlights and cell phones. It was just them and the sheep with maybe a campfire, out in the fields alone. What would you do if you were a shepherd, watching sheep at night? (Children respond.) Maybe the shepherds were singing songs, looking up at the stars, or telling each other stories.

Suddenly the most extraordinary thing happened!

(Read Luke 2:9-12. *Go Bible* page 1233.)

The shepherds must have been stunned! They must have stared up at the angel with their eyes wide and mouths gaping. First, an ANGEL had appeared in the sky, and the sky was lit up like daytime! And then the angel said that the Savior they had been waiting for, and their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents had been waiting for, was finally here! What happened next must have made them drop to the ground in wonder.

(Read Luke 2:13-14. *Go Bible* page 1233.)

A huge choir of angels had sung the very first Christmas carol to the shepherds! When the angels disappeared, it must have taken them a few minutes to digest what had just happened. Maybe they had to talk it over for a minute.

Maybe one of them asked, "Did that really happen?"

And another said, "Yeah! I saw it! I heard what the angel said. The Savior has been born!"

A third may have added, "Yes! And the angel said we should go find him. He's over in Bethlehem. Let's go!"

We don't know everything the shepherds said to each other, but we do know that they decided to go to Bethlehem. When they did, they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in a manger. The shepherds were filled with joy and wonder. They lovingly worshiped Jesus. When they left, they told everyone they saw about the amazing announcement they'd received from the angels and the baby who was where the angels had told them.

The gift God sent the world that night in Bethlehem is the greatest gift ever given. Jesus came to earth to be born as a baby because he loves us. Jesus wants us to live with him forever in heaven as a member of God's family. (Invite children who would like to hear more about being forgiven for their sins and becoming a member of God's family to talk with you or any other adult helper.)



Key Verse Challenge

JOHN 1:12

Jesus offers you the opportunity to become a son or daughter of God! All you have to do is believe in Jesus and accept his gift of forgiveness and new life. If you've done that, congratulations! Design a certificate with this verse on it to remind you of your adoption into God's family.

Object Lesson

Advent Wreath, Fourth Sunday

Materials

- Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or lighter (for adult use only)

Say: (Show Advent wreath and candles. Light the first candle.) Who can tell me what the first candle represents? (Children respond: hope.) That's right, Hope. How about the second candle? (Light the second candle as children respond: peace.) The second candle is for Peace. And the third, pink candle? (Light the third candle as children respond: joy.) The third candle represents Joy. What do you think the fourth candle represents? (Children respond.)

This fourth candle represents Love. (Light the fourth candle.) It represents the love God has for us and the love we have for him. It reminds us that **Jesus loves us**.

Optional Activities

Oven-Baked Clay Ornaments

Materials

- Newspaper or plastic tablecloth
- Acrylic paints in a variety of colors
- Containers for paints (plastic dairy containers, paper or plastic bowls, etc.)
- Paintbrushes
- String, thin ribbon, or yarn in a variety of colors
- Scissors
- Oven-baked clay ornaments from prior lesson

Optional

- Paint smocks or adult-sized shirts for children to wear over clothing while painting

Preparation: Cover the table where children will be working with newspaper or a plastic tablecloth. Pour acrylic paints into separate containers and place on the covered table. Place a paintbrush in each paint container. Cut string, thin ribbon, or yarn into approximately six-inch lengths, preparing one length for each ornament.

Directions: Have children paint the ornaments they created in the previous session. Instruct children to return paintbrushes to the correct paint container to avoid accidentally mixing colors. Set aside to dry. When the ornaments are dry, have children thread a length of string, thin ribbon, or yarn through the hole. Form a loop and secure with a knot or bow. As children complete their ornaments, ask them which part of the biblical Christmas story their ornament reminds them of.

Say: Today at the end of our session, you can take your ornament home to hang on your family Christmas tree. Tell your family about your ornament and what it reminds you of. Be sure to remind your family that **Jesus loves us!**

Optional: Children put on paint smocks or adult-sized shirts over their clothing before painting.

Shepherd Dress-Up Relay

Materials

- Shepherd's costume (robes, headwraps or towels, headscarves, belt sashes, sandals, etc.), one for each team of 6 to 8 players
- Container (cardboard box, bin, or large brown bags, etc.), one for each team
- Masking tape

Preparation: Place each shepherd's costume in a container, preparing one for each team. Place the containers at one end of the activity area. On the opposite side of the activity area, use masking tape to make a starting line.

Directions: Have players divide into equally sized teams of six to eight players. Then have teams line up behind the starting line. At your signal, have the first player in each line run to their team's container and use all the items to dress up like a shepherd. Once dressed, the player should say, "Hallelujah! Jesus is born! Jesus loves us!"

Then, have the player remove all the items and place them back in the container. Have the player return to their team and tag the next player, who repeats the action. When the game is over, have the first team whose players all completed the relay recite the memory verse aloud or come up with a sentence about the Bible story. Switch up the teams and play additional rounds as time and interest allow.

Say: Why should the whole world celebrate Jesus' birth? (Children respond.) God sent Jesus to the world because he loves everyone in the world. We had fun racing each other in our game. The shepherds raced to see Jesus and raced to tell everyone they could that the Savior had been born. The shepherds knew that everyone needs to know that **Jesus loves us!**

Optional: Instead of or in addition to shepherds' costumes, include angel costumes. Just make sure there is a similar number of dress-up items for each team.



CHOOSE TO CHANGE Read Luke 2.

When the shepherds saw Jesus, they couldn't wait to tell everyone the Good News of his birth. What are some ways you can tell others about Jesus' love for them? Write down some ideas in your journal or notebook!



Shepherds Search for Jesus

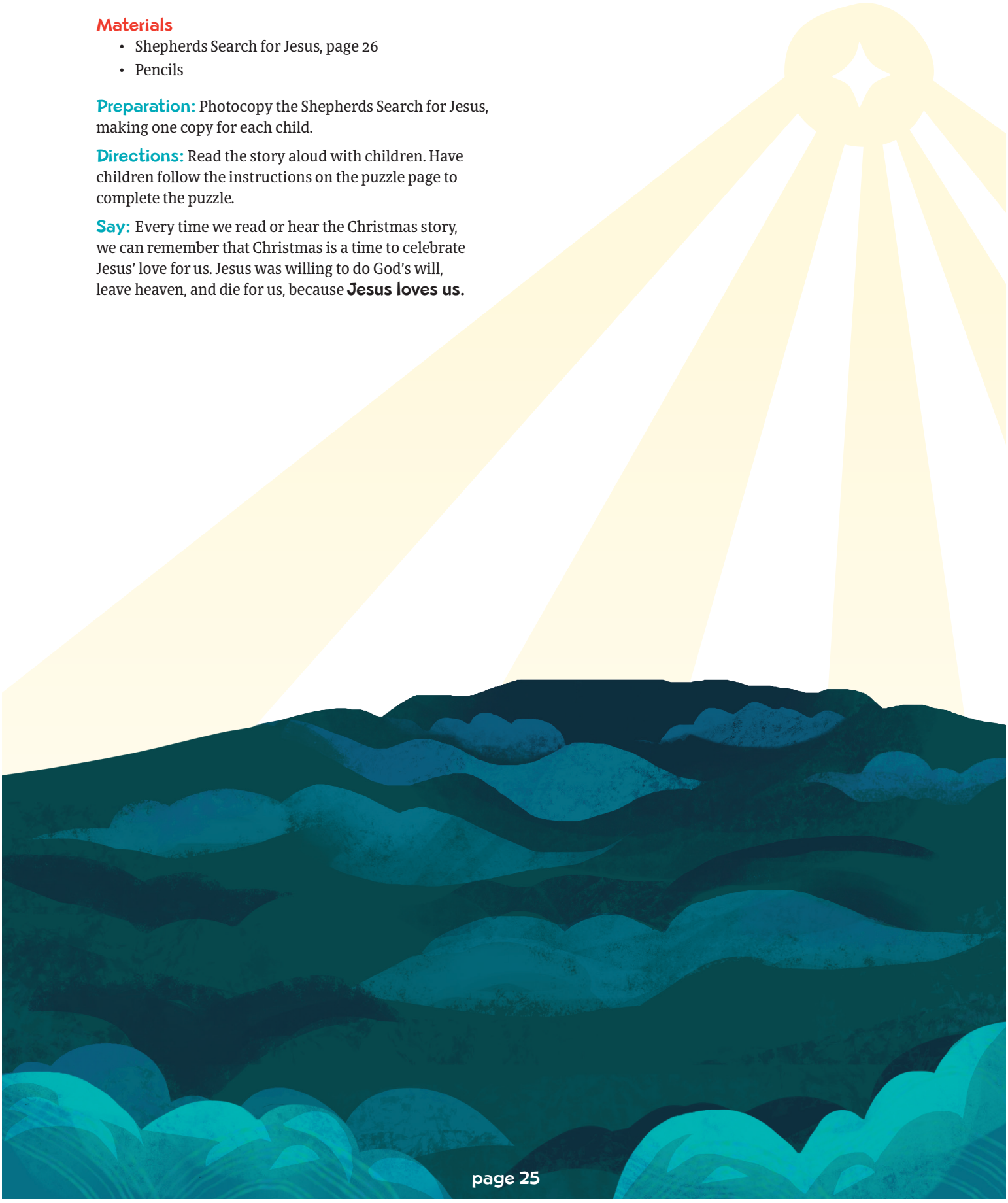
Materials

- Shepherds Search for Jesus, page 26
- Pencils

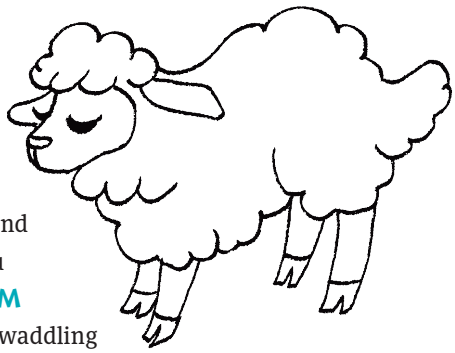
Preparation: Photocopy the Shepherds Search for Jesus, making one copy for each child.

Directions: Read the story aloud with children. Have children follow the instructions on the puzzle page to complete the puzzle.

Say: Every time we read or hear the Christmas story, we can remember that Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus' love for us. Jesus was willing to do God's will, leave heaven, and die for us, because **Jesus loves us.**



Shepherds Search for Jesus



One **NIGHT** there were **SHEPHERDS** in the **FIELDS**, keeping watch over their flocks. An **ANGEL** of the **LORD** appeared to them, and the **GLORY** of the Lord shone all around them. The shepherds were terrified. But the angel said, "Don't be **AFRAID**. I bring you **GOOD** news of great **JOY** that will be for all people. Today in the town of **BETHLEHEM** a Savior has been **BORN**; he **IS CHRIST** the Lord. You will **FIND** a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a **MANGER**." Suddenly a great **HEAVENLY HOST** appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest."

When the angels left, the shepherds said, "Let's **GO** and **SEE** this thing that has happened." So they hurried off and found Mary and **JOSEPH**. The **BABY** Jesus was lying in a manger.

Read the story above. In the word search below, find the words in all capital letters.
Challenge: Test your word search skills by finding the underlined words, which are diagonal in the puzzle.

H B K F S O M E Y X G O O D F
C E D I B A S A A F R A I D I
J T S N A A V W R F Q W Z M E
O H P D B G W I B Y X R R M L
Y L G O Y V J J O I B O R N D
J E L S H E P H E R D S H G S
O H O S C D O D B H T X N L I
S E R E C C A E S E G X I C U
E M Y E N S L K D A P Z G H M
P N C S F P C O H V S W H R S
H F W Y O O R K G E T J T I S
D E F E L K O Z O N U O E S R
N N P F A N G E L L I T W T H
X B L O R D T X F Y C A X N M
W A T C H H O S T M A N G E R

© 2021 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, & Celebrations*

Christmas Eve: Christ



Bible Story Reference: Matthew 2:1-16 (*Go Bible* pages 1154-1156)

Memory Verse: "Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'" John 8:12 (*Go Bible* page 1292)

Big Idea: We can worship Christ Jesus!

Overview

Say: Today's verse talks about "the light of the world." Jesus is the light of the world. What do you think that means? (Children respond.) Jesus is called the light of the world because his death and resurrection make it possible for every person in the world to be brought out of the darkness of sin and into God's light. We can have new life that never ends as members of God's family. This is one of the reasons **we can worship Christ Jesus!** (Open with prayer requests, praises, and a time of prayer.)



CHOOSE TO CHANGE Read John 8:12-20.

When we don't follow Jesus, it's like we're stumbling around in darkness. Why doesn't Jesus want us to live in the dark?

A. We'll stub our toes, bump into walls, and fall.

B. We won't see God's truth, which reveals sins and lies.

C. We won't be able to find the light switches or the good snacks.



Answer: B, because Jesus wants us to live lives free of sin and full of truth and joy.

Opening Game

Split Verse

Materials

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker

Preparation: Print John 8:12 on a large sheet of paper. Draw three lines to separate the verse into four sections:

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, / "I am the light of the world. / If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, / because you will have the light that leads to life."

Directions: Lead children to read the verse aloud. Split the class into two groups, which will alternate saying the different sections of the verse. Be creative with the way you divide the class: down the middle, boys and girls, by grade level, adult helpers and kids, brown hair and not-brown hair, birthdays between January and June versus July through December, etc. Play additional rounds with different groups as time and interest allow.

Say: Jesus said that everyone who follows him will receive the light of life. That means Jesus will help us love and obey him. He will show us how to live the very best life. **We can worship Christ Jesus** because of this light he gives to the life of everyone who follows him. (Invite children who would like to hear more about being forgiven for their sins and becoming a member of God's family to talk with you or any other adult helper.)

Bible Story

Say: Do you ever sit outside at night to watch the stars? (Children respond.) At the time when Jesus was born, a brilliant star began to shine in the night sky. This star had never been seen before, so it immediately got the attention of some wise men. These men studied the stars. They lived far from Israel, but they believed that this star was a sign that a great king had been born to God's people.

First, the wise men traveled across the desert and mountains to visit King Herod in Jerusalem. It may have taken them months or even YEARS to get to King Herod's palace. Have you ever been on a long trip? How did you feel when you finally got to where you were going? (Children respond.) The wise men must have been tired but also VERY excited to find the new king.

They asked King Herod, "Where is the newborn king? We want to worship him." The news of a new king being born made King Herod very angry and jealous. He was the king! He did NOT want someone else to become the new king. But King Herod tried to hide his feelings and pretended to be happy. He asked where the baby would be born.

(Read Matthew 2:6-8. *Go Bible* page 1154.)

Did King Herod really want to worship Jesus? No! What do you think King Herod really wanted? (Children respond.) King Herod wanted to stop Jesus from ever becoming the king. King Herod wanted to KILL Jesus!

The wise men didn't know this. They went on their way. They kept their eyes on the star and followed it to Bethlehem. When they found Jesus and his family, they bowed down and worshiped him. Then, they gave Jesus gifts fit for a king: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

When it was time to leave, the wise men planned to return to King Herod to tell him about the baby. But God protected Jesus. In a dream, God warned them to return home a different way. And they did.

God also sent an angel to tell Joseph to take Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt immediately. The angel told Joseph to stay in Egypt until God told him it was safe to return. So Jesus was safe with his family, all according to God's plan.

The wise men traveled long and far to worship Jesus. But we don't have to travel anywhere at all! **We can worship Christ Jesus** every day, wherever we are!

Wise Men

Does your family have a Nativity set? When we think about the wise men following the star and bringing gifts to Jesus, we usually picture him as a baby in a manger. But did you know Jesus was probably close to two years old by the time the wise men arrived? And they visited him in a house, not a stable (Matthew 2:11).

FACTOID

Object Lesson

Advent Wreath, Christmas Eve/Christmas Day

Materials

- Advent wreath and candles
- Matches or lighter (for adult use only)

Say: (Show Advent wreath and candles. Lead children to name what each of the other four candles represent as you light each one: hope, peace, joy, love.) The first candle represents Hope. The second candle is for Peace. The third candle is for Joy, and the fourth is for Love.

Not all Advent wreaths include this fifth candle. But those that do include it place it in the very center of the wreath. What do you think this fifth, white candle represents? (Children respond: Jesus.)

This candle is called the Christ candle and represents Christ Jesus. (Light the fifth candle.) We place it in the center of the wreath to remind us that Jesus is the center of our Christmas celebrations. We love Jesus, and **we can worship Christ Jesus** as a way to show our thanks to him.

Optional Activities

Ornament Pass

Materials

- Children's Christmas praise music and player
- Christmas ornament
- Individually wrapped candies

Directions: Have players sit in a circle. Place enough candies in the center of the circle so that each player can have one. Hand the ornament to a player and turn on the music for a few moments. Have each player pass the ornament to the person on their left. When you stop the music, have the player holding the ornament tell a part of the Christmas story. It could be from today's Bible story or any of the other Advent stories beginning with the prophet Isaiah.

After the player says a sentence, have them take a candy and begin passing the ornament again as the music plays. Continue until each child has had a turn and received a candy. If a player who has already had a turn is holding the ornament when the music stops, have that player choose someone who has not yet had a turn.

Say: Every year during Advent, we look forward to celebrating Christmas. **We can worship Christ Jesus** during Advent and Christmas or any time of year!

Tip: If you have more than eight children in your group, form more than one circle.

Worshipful Words of Praise

Materials

- Large sheet of butcher paper
- Masking tape
- Markers or crayons
- Variety of Christmas wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Transparent tape
- Adhesive-backed gift bows

Preparation: Use masking tape to secure the large sheet of butcher paper to a wall, low enough for children to reach it. Use a marker to print "We give Jesus our gifts of praise!" at the top of the butcher paper. At the bottom of the butcher paper, print "We can worship Christ Jesus!"

Cut large rectangles from wrapping paper, preparing one or more for each crafter.

Directions: Have crafters fold a prepared wrapping-paper rectangle in half. Then have them open the paper and write phrases or sentences of praise and worship to Jesus. Have crafters refold the paper and use transparent tape to tape it along the fold to the butcher paper to make a gift. Make sure the front of the paper can be lifted to see the writing on the inside. Have crafters stick a gift bow on the front of their "gift."

Say: In the same way we give gifts to family and friends at Christmas, the wise men brought gifts to Jesus. We can't give Jesus a gift like socks or a new toy, but our worship is a gift. **We can worship Christ Jesus** as a gift to him.

A-Maze-ing Wise Men

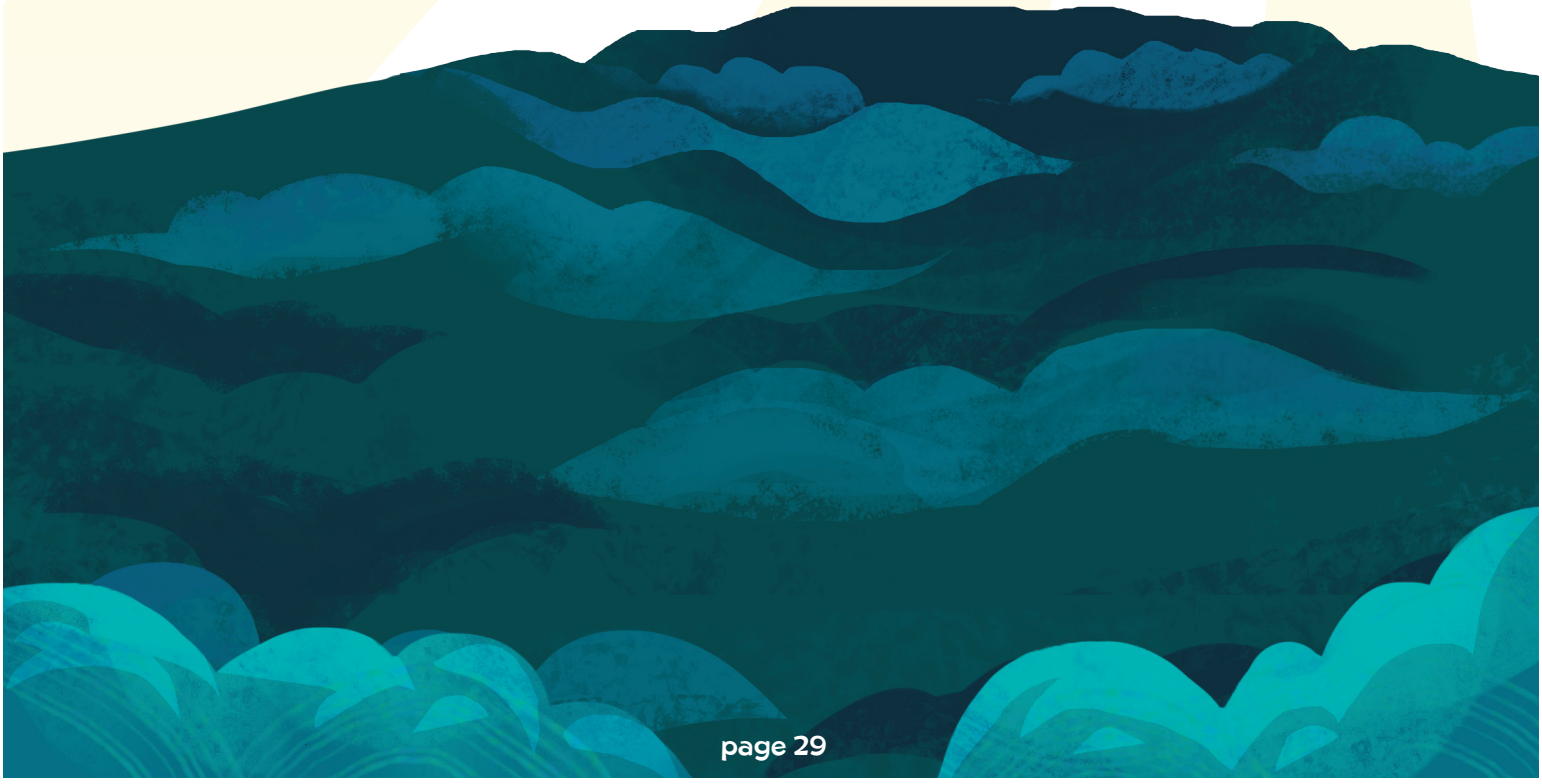
Materials

- Wise Men Maze, page 30
- Pencils

Preparation: Photocopy the Wise Men Maze, making one copy for each child.

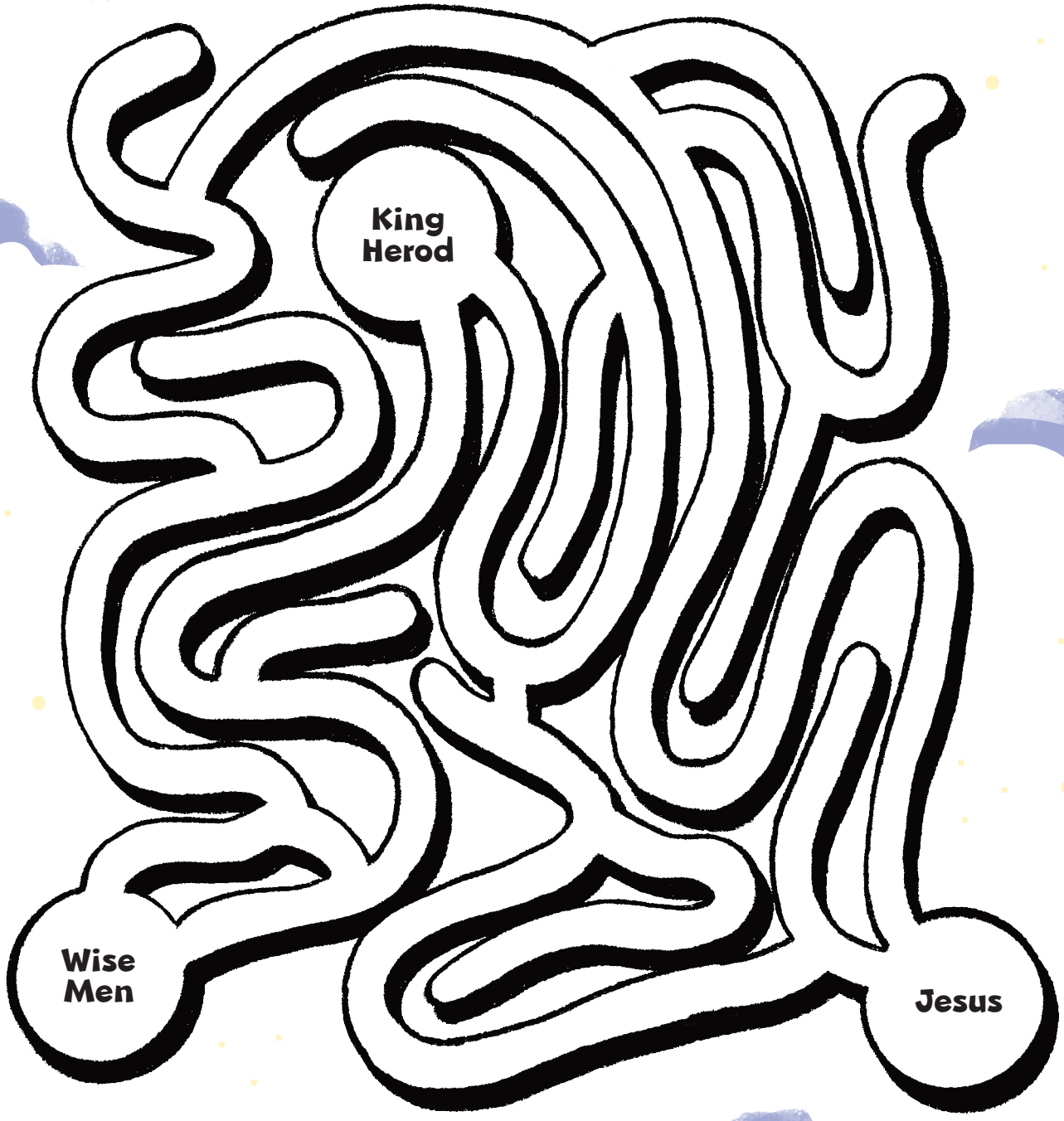
Directions: Have children follow the instructions on the handout to complete the maze.

Say: The wise men traveled far to worship Jesus. We're so lucky that **we can worship Christ Jesus** every day and everywhere!



Wise Men Maze

Help the wise men travel to King Herod and then to Jesus. Finally, help the wise men get home by another route. Remember, they don't want to see King Herod again!



© 2021 RoseKidz. *The Super-Sized Book of Holidays, Special Days, & Celebrations*