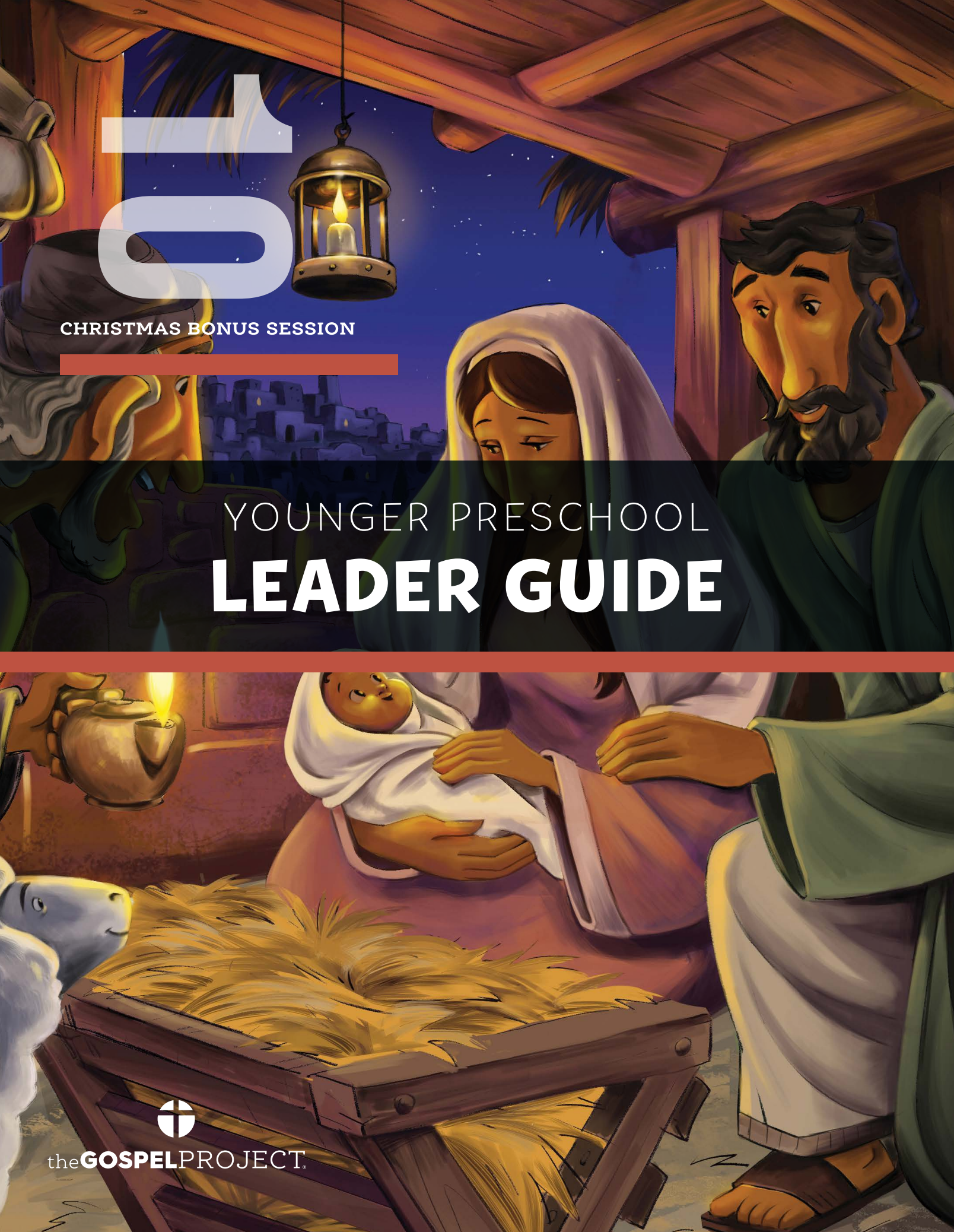


CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

YOUNGER PRESCHOOL

LEADER GUIDE

theGOSPELPROJECT®

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

LUKE 2



STORY POINT: Jesus was born to save us from sin.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.

KEY PASSAGE: If God is for us, who is against us? Romans 8:31

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: *What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.*



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Though the world often views the nativity story as a mere Christmas decoration along the same lines as snowmen and gingerbread houses, followers of Jesus recognize Christ's birth is the true and wondrous account of the long-awaited Savior, born to die so that we may find life in Him. From before the creation of the world, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was always God's plan for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-20).

The story of the birth of Jesus isn't as glamorous as people might have expected for the arrival of a royal king; instead, it's a humble story of an ordinary young woman giving birth among animals and common shepherds witnessing this event. In calling shepherds to marvel at the arrival of Jesus, God didn't summon those with power, wealth, and positions of great influence in society. Instead, He invited the lowly and humble, and they responded to God's invitation to experience the glory of His Son.

Whereas Caesar Augustus called the people of his kingdom to travel far and wide for his goal of conducting a census—a measure of an earthly ruler's power—Jesus was humbly making His way to His people in the greatest act of power the world has ever seen: God becoming man. Christmas is the story of Immanuel, which means, God with us.

Though the Christmas season comes each year, we must continually bring ourselves to recount the wonder, majesty, and grandness of the nativity story—the awe that our Creator would make the way to forgive us and to bridge the gap between God and sinners by becoming a human, living a perfect life, dying for our sins, and rising again.

Pray that the boys and girls you lead will experience the story of Jesus's birth and find their place in His redemption story. May they receive His love and—like the shepherds in this story—share the story of Christ with others.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session.



10–15 MINUTES

Greet preschoolers and open the session.



25–30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel.



Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel.

30–40 MINUTES



Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel.



60–65 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers for an additional hour.

PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tip scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.

WELCOME

Find the matching crosses
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster
- ☐ red construction paper
- ☐ blue construction paper
- ☐ yellow construction paper
- ☐ green construction paper

LEARN

Tell the Bible story
- ☐ "Jesus Is Our Substitute" video (optional)

Review the Bible story
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ baby doll

Learn and practice the key passage phrase
- ☐ Key Passage Phrase Marker

LOVE

Care for baby dolls
- ☐ raffia or shredded paper
- ☐ small cardboard box
- ☐ doll clothing
- ☐ baby care items
- ☐ baby blankets
- ☐ "God is For Us (Romans 8:31)" Key Passage Phrase Song

Retell the Bible story
- ☐ "Bible Figures" printable, 1 copy
- ☐ child-safe nativity set (optional)

LIVE

Paint with baby lotion
- ☐ baby lotion
- ☐ paper plates
- ☐ cotton swabs
- ☐ art smocks

Move sheep
- ☐ cotton balls
- ☐ spoons

Snack and transition
- ☐ hand sanitizer (optional)
- ☐ Big Picture Cards for Families

BONUS

Say the key passage phrase
- ☐ Key Passage Phrase Marker

Play with a farm set
- ☐ toy farm set
- ☐ animal figures including sheep

Complete Jesus puzzles
- ☐ Christmas cards showing Jesus as a baby



WELCOME Preschoolers

Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers opportunities to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ Connection, the story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the room. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

FIND THE MATCHING CROSSES

Post the Big Picture Question Poster near the entrance to the room. Cut at least three cross shapes from each color of construction paper—red, blue, yellow, and green. Tape one red, one blue, one yellow, and one green cross throughout the room on the walls. Greet kids as they come to the room and point out the Big Picture Question Poster. Hand kids either a red, blue, yellow, or green cross and invite them to walk around the room and find the other cross that matches. Invite kids to switch out their cross for a different one and look for that color as well.

> **SAY** *"I am so glad you are at church today! Our big picture question asks,* ***What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.*** *Can you find the crosses in the room that match the one I handed you?* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God."*

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**



LEARN the Bible Story

1 GO TO YOUR HOMETOWN

Invite children to line up behind you. Lead them on a journey around the classroom. Weave around furniture and toys as you circle the room a couple of times. End the journey in the group-time area.

> **SAY** *"We traveled around our classroom. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. When they arrived, Mary was ready to have her baby. Do you know who that baby is? Listen to find out!"*

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Luke 2 and tell the following Bible story:

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

> **SAY** *"Mary and Joseph were getting ready for a special baby. God told Mary that her baby would be His Son and the Savior of the world!*
>
> *At that time, a leader told everyone to go to their hometowns to be counted. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. When they got there, Mary was ready to have her baby. There was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept.*
>
> *Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Jesus was born to save the world!*
>
> *Some shepherds were watching their sheep nearby. An angel appeared to them and said, "Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born! You will find Him in a manger."*
>
> *The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Jesus, just like the angel said. They were so happy, and they praised God for sending Jesus."*
>
> *Christ Connection: Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.*

3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Place the Bible Story Picture Poster on the floor. Hand a baby doll to a child. Demonstrate how to hold the baby and rock him. Invite the child to answer a question about the story and pass the doll to the next friend. Ask questions such as, "What were Mary and Joseph getting ready for?" "Where did Mary place Jesus after He was born?" "Who came to see Jesus?" "Who was this special baby?"

> **SAY** *"Jesus was the special baby. Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God."*

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "Are You Sleeping?":

If God is for us, if God is for us,
Who is against us? Who is against us?
If God is for us, who is against us?
Romans 8, verse 31

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Romans 8:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Encourage children to say the phrase with you several times. Each time you say the phrase, leave out a word, leading kids to say the missing word.

If God is for us, who is ____ us? Romans 8:31

If God is ____ us, who is against us? Romans 8:31

If ____ is for us, who is against us? Romans 8:31

> **SAY** *"God is for us. God sent Jesus.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God."*

6 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to save us from sin.

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 MOVE TO THE MANGER

Clear a space or path in the classroom. Place a baby doll at one end of the path. Invite children to stand at the other end. Give directions such as take five baby steps, jump forward three times, or take two large steps. Invite kids to follow the directions as they make their way to the baby doll. Once everyone has made it to the baby, invite children to take turns leading the game with their friends.

> **SAY** *You made your way to the baby. Shepherds made their way to see Baby Jesus. Shepherds were watching their sheep. An angel appeared to them and said, 'Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born! You will find Him in a manger.' The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Jesus, just like the angel said. They were so happy. They praised God for sending Jesus.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**

2 CARE FOR BABY DOLLS

Place raffia or shredded paper in a small cardboard box to create a manger. Arrange baby dolls, doll clothing, baby care items, and baby blankets near the manger. Invite children to care for the dolls, dressing them, feeding them, and wrapping them in blankets. Encourage children to sing songs such as "Jesus Loves Me," "Away in the Manger," or the key passage phrase song "God is For Us (Romans 8:31)" to the babies as they place them in the manger.

> **SAY** *When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem, Mary was ready to have her baby. There was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept. Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, a feeding box for animals.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. Sin is anything against God. We are all sinners, and if we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.*

3 RETELL THE BIBLE STORY

Print the "Bible Figures" printable on heavyweight paper. Cut out and tape the figures to blocks. Arrange the figures and a Bible opened to Luke 2 on the table or floor so children can retell and act out the Bible story. Read the story from the Bible as children move the figures.

> **SAY** *Mary and Joseph were getting ready for a special baby. They went to Bethlehem. When they arrived, Mary was ready to have her baby. There was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept. Shepherds were watching their sheep nearby. An angel appeared to them and said a Savior had been born. They hurried to Bethlehem and found Jesus.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**

LIVE for God out of love

1 PAINT WITH BABY LOTION

Post an Allergy Alert. Pour baby lotion onto a paper plate. Place construction paper and cotton swabs on the table. Assist children with placing a smock over their clothing. Demonstrate how to use the cotton swab as a paint brush and the baby lotion as paint. Some children may prefer to paint with their fingers.

> **SAY** *"The baby lotion you painted with reminds me of a baby. God told Mary her baby would be His Son and the Savior of the world! Our key passage phrase tells us God is for us. God sent Jesus.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *"*

2 MOVE SHEEP

Encourage children to work together to build two square "fields" with blocks, using the blocks as fences. Once they've finished, place cotton balls in one "field." Tell the children to pretend the cotton balls are sheep and to take turns moving the "sheep" to the other "field" with spoons. Continue moving the "sheep" back and forth as time allows.

> **SAY** *"You did a great job pretending to move sheep from field to field. The shepherds in our story were taking care of their sheep when the angel appeared to them. The shepherds were so happy to see the Savior, and they praised God for sending Jesus to save them.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *"*

3 SNACK AND TRANSITION

Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

> **SAY** *"Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God. "*

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child learned or did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 ROCK THE BABY

Invite kids to pretend to rock a baby. Demonstrate how to pretend to hold the baby in your arms and sway back and forth. Tell children that Mary and Joseph were getting ready for a special baby.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Luke 2. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story.

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

- Mary and Joseph were getting ready for a special baby. God told Mary that her baby would be His Son and the Savior of the world!
- Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. When they got there, Mary was ready to have her baby. There was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept.
- Some shepherds were watching their sheep nearby. An angel appeared to them and said, "Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born! You will find Him in a manger."
- The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Jesus, just like the angel said.

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "Are You Sleeping?":

If God is for us, if God is for us,
Who is against us? Who is against us?
If God is for us, who is against us?
Romans 8, verse 31

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Romans 8:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Say the key passage phrase together several times. Encourage kids to turn and tell a friend the key passage phrase. Allow time for each child to have a turn if they would like.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to save us from sin. Pray for each child by name to choose to follow Jesus.

BONUS

TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 CUT OUT HAY

LOW PREP

Cut construction paper into ¼– to ½– inch strips. Place the paper strips and blunt-tip scissors on the table. Invite kids to snip the paper, creating something that resembles hay. Extend the activity by providing additional paper and glue sticks for children to create a collage with the hay.

> **SAY** *The paper you snipped reminds me of hay. Hay is sometimes used to feed animals. Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept. Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger. A manger is a feeding box for animals. Jesus was born to save the world! Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.*

7 PLAY WITH A FARM SET

Place a toy farm set with animals out for children to explore. Encourage children to name the different animals and imitate the sounds they make. Match the animals that are the same. Count how many toy sheep you have.

> **SAY** *The animals in the farm set remind me of the animals in our Bible story. When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, there was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept. Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Some shepherds were watching their sheep nearby. An angel appeared to them and said, 'Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior has been born!'* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**

8 COMPLETE JESUS PUZZLES

Collect several Christmas cards that show Jesus as a baby. Cut the cards into simple three or four piece puzzles. Place the puzzles on the table. Invite kids to put the puzzles together to find the pictures of Jesus.

> **SAY** *Mary and Joseph were getting ready for a special baby. God told Mary that her baby would be His Son and the Savior of the world! Did you find Jesus in each of the puzzles you completed? Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Jesus was born to save the world. Jesus is God, but He also became a human to save people from sin. If we believe in Jesus, we will be forgiven of sin and have a right relationship with God.*

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church's security procedure. Tell them something their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.



THE GOSPEL

God's Plan for Preschoolers

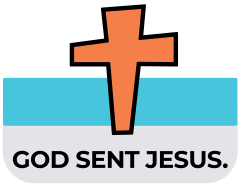
While preschoolers might not be ready to respond to the gospel, use this guide to help young minds begin to grasp big truths about Jesus and the kingdom of God.



Ask: "Who is in charge at home? Who is in charge over the whole world?" Explain that God made everything! He is King over everything, and He is in charge.



Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell preschoolers that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin makes God sad.



Explain that God must punish sin. He loves us, and He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus came to take away the punishment for sin.



Ask: "Do you like presents?" Explain that Jesus gives us the best present. He never did anything wrong, but He was punished in our place. Jesus wants to take away our sin because He loves us.

Pray that God will save your preschoolers. As you faithfully teach the Bible, you are planting gospel seeds in children's hearts. Ask God to grow the preschoolers into children who love and trust in Jesus.