

# Lesson One • THE GIFT OF HOPE

## Items Needed



Four wrapped gifts, each with one of the following words inside: **Hope, Love, Wisdom, and Joy.** This week you will open up the gift with the word “Hope” inside. Gift words could be printed on a Christmas ornament, sign, or simply on a card. Note: Since only one gift is opened during each lesson, make sure to remember which word is in each of the wrapped gifts.



Sixteen cards (at least 3x5 size) with the words for the “Darkness vs. Light” activity, ready to hand out as children enter



The words “Darkness” and “Light” written on two large cards (at least 8x11 size, but poster size would be ideal) placed at opposite sides of the room with enough space for children to place smaller cards nearby



*The Gift of Advent* DVD for music and teaching videos



Advent wreath with four outer candles, one center candle, and matches to light the first candle



Four adult leaders designated to shout out in adoration the four names for the Savior (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace) as you read from Isaiah 9 during the large group opening time.

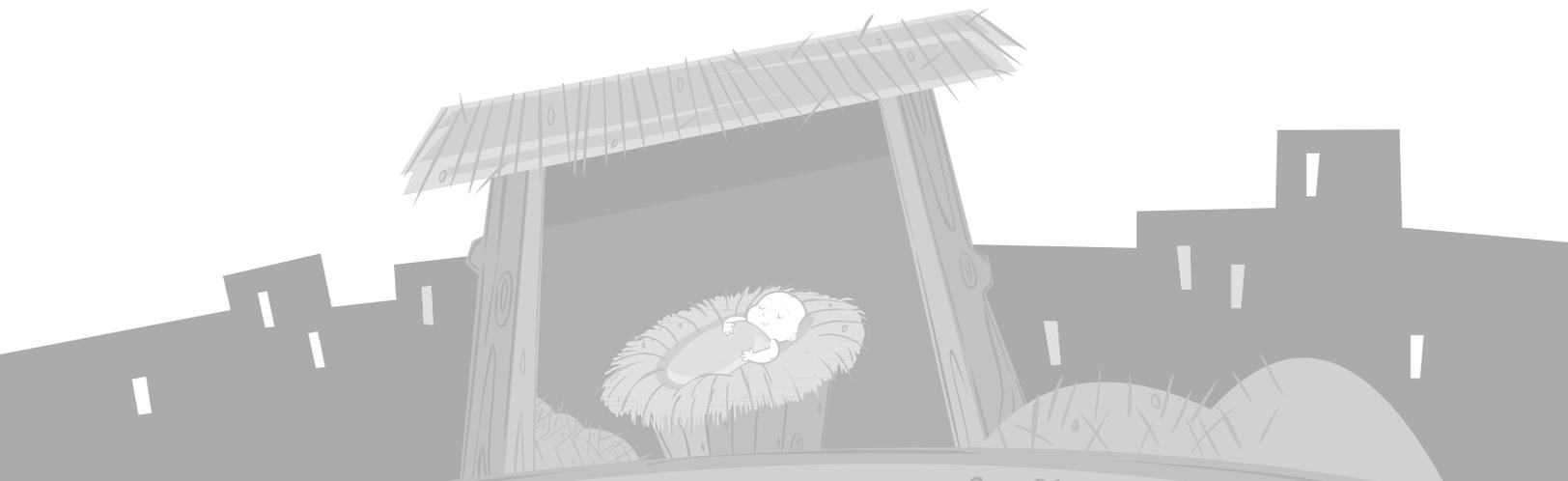


Manger placed near “Light” sign



Bible

*\*Additional items may be needed for optional activities.*



# 1

# Lesson One

## THE GIFT OF HOPE

### Music



- Joy To The World
- The Christmas Dance
- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- Christmas With A Capital "C"
- It's About The Cross

Music videos to sing along with can be found on the DVD & on the DVD-Rom

### Videos



Teaching Videos can be found on the DVD and the DVD-Rom

### Opening Activity

On one side of the room you should have the word "Darkness" and on the other side the word "Light". If possible, have an empty manger by the word "Light".

Print out the following words below on cards (at least 3x5 size):

sin	fear	growth
radiance	hope	Satan
death	night	day
wicked	lies	Jesus
life	truth	
lost	confusion	

As the children arrive, hand out one of the smaller cards to each student until they are gone. Instruct them to place it under either "Darkness" or "Light," whichever one they think is more fitting. Have leaders available to help children in case they need assistance.

Make sure to have the four wrapped gifts in the front of the room, each with one of the following words inside:

**Hope • Love • Wisdom • Joy**

*Gift words could be printed on a Christmas ornament, sign, or simply on a card.*

Begin music videos now.

### Large Group Opening

Do you get excited when your birthday is getting closer? How many of you like to count down the days ahead of time? Isn't it fun when your family starts to plan for your party and asks what you want to do to celebrate? Don't you just want to invite everyone? And of course, there's those presents!!! *(Grab the first gift with the word "Hope" in it and shake it as you say this.)*

December marks a very special birthday. Although everyone is invited to celebrate, some choose not to and ignore how special this day is. Whose birthday do you think I'm talking about? Jesus! Many of us who are really excited about Jesus' birthday start counting down the days about four weeks in advance. This special time is called Advent, which means "coming" or "arrival." When Jesus came into the world, born to save us, it was the best gift any of us could have ever received.



Do any of you have an Advent calendar or wreath at home? These things help us as we count down the days to Christmas. We are going to use this Advent wreath as we prepare for our celebration of Jesus' birth.

Can anybody tell me why the wreath is in the shape of a circle? A circle has no beginning or end so the wreath reminds us of God who has no beginning or end. He always was God and always will be God!

*Revelation 22:13 says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." ESV*

There are five candles on this wreath. The candle in the center represents Jesus. He is the center of everything!

The outer candles can represent different things. For some, each candle represents 1000 years. Altogether that's 4000 years! That's also an estimate of how long the time period was between Adam and Eve, at the very beginning of the Old Testament, until Jesus was born, at the beginning of the New Testament. To us 4000 years is a very long time, but not for God! This is how long God kept his promise of sending a Savior and this is where our story begins!

### Play Lesson 1 Teaching Video

*Teaching Videos can be found on the DVD & the DVD-Rom*

**Video Overview:** It is because of sin that Jesus came down to earth. In this video the Go Fish Guys explain how God unveiled His rescue plan way back in Genesis, after sin entered the world.

## Back To Leader For Wrap Up Of Large Group Time.



*Grab the gift that contains the word "Hope" and bring it to the front of the room.*

Some of you received cards as you came in today, to place under the categories of darkness or light.

*1 John 1:5 says, This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ESV*

Our world is filled with many wonderful things that God created. However, our world is also filled with sin and darkness. Even when Adam and Eve were the only ones on the earth, they sinned. But God provided us with light. Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 9:2 and I want us to read His words together. (Verses are from ESV)

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.*

Now skip down to verses 6-7. (Have four adult leaders designated to shout out in adoration the four names for the Savior as you read. "Wonderful Counselor," "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father," "Prince of Peace")

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

I want you to put your finger on that verse. That is a promise from God! God's Word is final, true and very real. Unlike the other stories that we hear at Christmas time: the Grinch, Rudolph, Frosty...this story is real! God sent Jesus to die for our sin so we didn't have to. Instead of living in (walk over to the word "Darkness" and point to cards) the darkness with sin, confusion, the wicked, and being lost, God provided His light (walk over to the word "Light") and gave us hope, truth, life, and best of all His Son, Jesus (point to the manger).

*Choose a child to open the first gift and have them read: HOPE!*

Our first candle (light candle) stands for hope and points to the Light that is coming, Jesus! He is our only hope of being rescued from darkness and the penalty of sin. What an amazing birthday we get to celebrate!!!

*End in prayer and transition into small groups.*

## Small Group Bible Lesson

*Even though the Scriptures are printed here, make sure you and the children are reading directly from the Bible. For leaders of younger children who will not be able to read on their own, have them follow along in their Bibles while you read. We recommend finding pictures for the children to look at as visuals while you are talking to them. For example: Adam and Eve, the serpent, Mary and Joseph, or the manger.*

We heard earlier how serious our sin is to God. Eating from the wrong tree might not have seemed like that bad of a sin to us, but who determines what is good and what is evil — us or God? God is the judge because there is no darkness or evil of any kind in Him.

We also heard how Adam and Eve disappointed God, but someone else was involved. Let's turn back to Genesis chapter 3 and read who else was there when Adam and Eve sinned.

*Genesis 3:1-5 ESV* Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

**?** Who lied to Adam and Eve? *The serpent*

**?** Who was the serpent? *Satan*

There are many people who think they know better than God and choose to ignore His commands. Just like Satan tricked Adam and Eve, he also likes to trick people today into believing they can choose what is good or evil. That is why it's so important to stay in God's Word so we know the truth.

We already heard about the consequence for Adam and Eve's sin but God also had some pretty strong words for the serpent. Let's read what God said:

*Genesis 3:14-15 ESV* The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

In other versions of the Bible (NIV) it says the serpent will strike the man's heel but the man will crush his head. Who do you think the man will be that crushes the serpent's head? Jesus! The one who deceived and tricked Adam and Eve was going to be defeated by Jesus. How was Jesus going to do that? Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 7:14 (*In order to save time, leaders of younger age groups may just want to read aloud; again verses are from ESV*).

*"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel!"*

God wasn't worried or surprised when sin entered the world. God already had a plan and promised to defeat Satan by sending a baby, an offspring of the woman He created. Let's turn to the book of Matthew right now and read about the birth of that baby.

*Read Matthew 1:18-25 ESV* Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

*But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

*When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

God fulfilled the plan we read about in Genesis. He fulfilled His promise and sent His Son from the most perfect place, heaven, to a world filled with sin.



**?** Do you think God would have sent Jesus, His only Son, if our sin wasn't so bad?

God knew that His perfect Son would be teased, insulted, spit on, beaten, and killed in a terrible way. But God also knew that sending Jesus was our only hope of being rescued from darkness and the penalty of sin.

Jesus is called Immanuel, meaning "God with us." God provided a way for us to be with Him forever by sending His Son, Jesus. That is why we have hope. What an amazing gift!

**?** Do you believe the Christmas story?

**?** Do you believe that God sent Jesus for you?

**?** Are you putting your faith and hope in God and God alone?

## Review

*If a white board is available, you can have the following passages and questions listed beforehand.*

Look up Romans 5:19 and answer the following questions.

*For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 ESV*

**?** Sin came into the world through one man. Who is the man that disobeyed God?

**Adam**

**?** Who is the only man to live on earth and never sin?

**Jesus**

## Personal Application

Read Isaiah 59:2

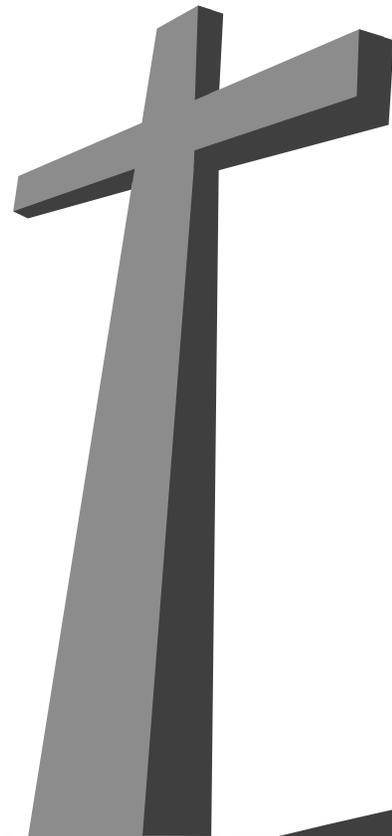
*But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isaiah 59:2 ESV*

**?** Have you trusted Christ to forgive your sin?

*Please don't pressure the children to answer this question out loud if they don't want to.*

If so, we need to ask God to help us continually see our daily sins and confess them to Him. We should thank Him for keeping His promise in sending a Savior and for providing a way for us to be forgiven for our sins.

*End in prayer.*





# CRACK THE CODE

DECODER

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
D	R	W	T	M	A	C	P	H	E	I	S	L

DECODER

Instructions: Replace each number with the letter found in the decoder to reveal the secret message.

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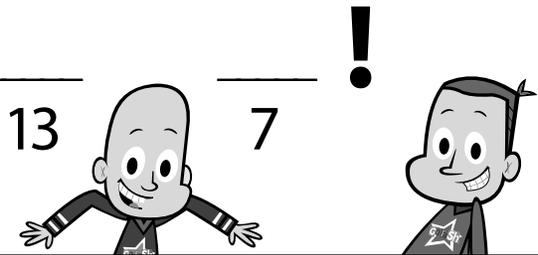
11    4    12                    7    6    13    13    10    1

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7    9    2    11    12    4    5    6    12                    3    11    4    9

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6                    7    6    8    11    4    6    13                    7



## Focus Verse

The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Genesis 3:14-15 ESV

Our need for a Savior began all the way back in Genesis when sin entered the world. In Genesis 3:14-15 God promised that an offspring of the woman would defeat Satan for good. God always keeps His promises which is why we celebrate Christmas! God sent Jesus to earth to carry out His rescue plan. We have hope because Jesus came to save us from our sins!



# Optional Activities

## OBSTACLE COURSE IN THE DARK

Have a room set up with obstacles that would be hard to move around, but not too dangerous with the lights out! You could have children work in pairs and then provide them with a flashlight. Talk about how, even though it might have helped a little with a friend, the light made the most difference. God is the only One who we should look to for direction in our lives because He is the true light of the world!

Scripture Verses and Discussion Questions for Obstacle Course:

*John 8:12 ESV* Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

**?** What promise does God make in this verse?  
*Whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness*

*Psalms 119:105 ESV*  
*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

**?** How do we keep from being lost?  
*Stay in the Word! God is our truth, our light and our hope!*

## QUIET TIME

This time of year is usually a very busy time for most. You might be helping your parents decorate the house, bake goodies, or even do some shopping. The calendar is probably filled with many events and you might even be traveling soon to spend time with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Although these things can be fun ways to prepare for Christmas, they might take our minds off of Jesus, the reason we celebrate. That's why it's important for us to take the time to prepare for Christmas in other ways as well. *Psalms 46:10 (ESV)* says, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" We are going to take time to be still and reflect, or think about, the most important person of the season. Your parents might have a quiet time each day where they read their Bible and talk to God. This isn't something to do only at Christmas, this is something that Jesus wants us to do everyday!

In your quiet time today, think about the different names for God we read from Isaiah.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*

**?** What do each of these names mean to you?

*Wonderful Counselor:*

*Mighty God:*

*Everlasting Father:*

*Prince of Peace:*

*Remind the children how important their quiet time is and encourage them to use their Bibles to help them stay in God's Word throughout the week.*

## SWORD DRILL

**Object of the game:** To be the first Player to find a Scripture reference and to become familiar with the layout of the Bible.

**How to play:** This is a tried and true game that has been around forever, but the children absolutely love it! After the children all sit down, have the leader call out a Scripture reference (i.e. Job 29:3). They will quickly try to find the verse in their Bibles and when the first person finds it they should leap to their feet. After giving the rest of the children some time to also find the verse, have the person who won read the verse aloud.

Additional verses to look up for the sword drill:

*Job 29:3 ESV* "When his lamp shone upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness."

*Psalms 27:1 ESV* The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

*Isaiah 60:19 ESV* The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

*Micah 7:8 ESV* Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.

*John 12:46 ESV* "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."



# THE GIFT OF HOPE – ORNAMENT

## Supplies Needed for Each Child:

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| ✓ One Pre-Cut Apple Shape in Felt, Foam or Heavy Cardstock                | ✓ Markers                     |
| ✓ One Green Leaf Shape in Felt, Foam or Heavy Cardstock                   | ✓ Ribbon (ornament hanger)    |
| ✓ Two Wiggly Eyes (either 6mm or 7mm)                                     | ✓ Single Hole Punch           |
| ✓ Two Black or Brown Chenille Stems                                       | ✓ Glue                        |
| ✓ One Pink Chenille Stem<br>(cut in one inch sections for snake's tongue) | ✓ One "Gift of Hope" Gift Tag |

## Instructions:

1. Punch out three holes on the apple shape for the snake entry/exit and ribbon ornament hanger.
2. Twist the two black chenille stems together to start the snake. Then roll the end of the stem 3 or 4 times around to make the snake's head.
3. Glue 2 wiggly eyes in place and insert pink chenille stem to create the snake's tongue.
4. Insert the end of the snake into the left hole, pulling the head through last. Come back through the apple in the right hole. Wrap the chenille stem into a squiggle of a snake tail. Adjust the shape of the snake to your liking.
5. Glue the "The Gift of Hope" gift tag in the center of the apple, under the snake.
6. Glue on green leaf near apple stem and attach ribbon ornament hanger.

*Note: If working with younger children, you may want to have snakes already attached to apples in order to save time.*

