

WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Jesus is the Savior
God promised.

BIBLE

An Angel Appears To Mary:
Luke 1:26–38

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Some of our favorite gifts are things that were promised to us— a new baseball glove, a computer, or a special trip with our family. This week, we'll hear about how the angel Gabriel told Mary the joyful news that she will carry God's own son. When he was born, people realized just how special this gift would be—

Jesus is the savior God promised.

WELCOME TIME

ACTIVITY | Jumping For Joy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, provide gift sacks like [these](#) to use for a sack relay race between two teams.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Toddlers may not be able to manage a sack race, but they would enjoy adding and removing toys and stuffed animals from the giant gift sacks.
- I'm so excited because it's almost Christmas time, and Christmas brings us so much joy! Christmas carols, colorful cookies, time with friends and family, all the gifts ... I can't wait! But Christmas is still a few weeks away, so we'll have to wait, and while we wait, let's have some fun.
- It's never too early to be jumping for joy for Christmas. Let's have a jumping for joy relay race!

ACTIVITY | Wreath Relay Race

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, obtain cardboard wreaths or make your own by cutting out the middle part of paper plates. Then, wrap the circular frame in contact paper or double-sided tape. Split the kids into teams and give them a large bowl of colorful pom-poms. Line the kids up and have them race to stick pom-poms on their wreaths one at a time. Keep going until each team's wreath is completely covered, or set a three-minute timer. You can also do this more as a collaborative project than a game, giving groups of two or three wreaths to work on together.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Pom poms can pose a choking risk for toddlers. Instead offer the toddler a chance to play with shatterproof ornaments. You can weave pipe cleaners through the top to form loops that toddlers can use to hang on jewelry trees or a small coat rack.
- When we see decorations like these and toys wrapped up and sitting under Christmas trees, we know that Christmas is on its way!
- **But do you remember why we really celebrate Christmas?**
- It's because God promised a savior a long time ago. This savior would connect people back to God. Today's Bible story is all about the time God sent an angel to give this news to a very special young woman.

STORY TIME

SCRIPTURE | Luke 1:26–38 (An Angel Appears to Mary)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Teach this Scripture passage by reading from a preschool-friendly Bible translation, Bible storybook, or using the talking points provided below! Use an angel toy or doll as a prop to represent the angel Gabriel and another for Mary. Show each figure when talking about them in the Bible story. Consider sitting on a rug with kids in a half circle to make this more cozy.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** You know the story of Jesus' birth intimately well but toddlers are hearing the Christmas story for the first time! Be sure to repeat key elements like baby Jesus, Mary, and the angel over and over so that they start to grasp the story.
- Welcome to the Joy Story corner! We'll learn all about why the birth of Jesus gives us so much joy.
- **Show your most joyful face!**
- You see, a long, long time ago, God made a promise. We know that God always says what is true. God made a promise to all of the earth to send a savior. A savior is someone who saves or rescues.
 - **So when God promises something, do you think it will come true?** Yes! God always keeps promises. Every. Single. Time!
 - But sometimes, God's promises don't happen right away.
 - **What is the longest you can wait for something you really want? One day? One hour? One minute?**
- God's people waited hundreds of years for the savior to show up. Can you imagine waiting that long? But people did because they knew God always kept promises. So God's people waited and waited and waited. Until one day, God's promise came true!
- One day, an angel named Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a baby—a baby boy named Jesus.
 - And this baby would not be like any other baby born before. This baby would be the Son of God, the savior that God had promised a long time ago!
 - **What would you have said if you heard the angel's message?**
- Mary asked simply, "How can this happen?" She wasn't sure that God picked the right person.
 - But God had a plan. Jesus would be born through Mary, and he would grow up just like any other kid!
 - And at the right time, he would show himself to be the savior everyone had been waiting for.
- This is the beginning of the Christmas story—and it all began with a promise from God that came true. What a Joy Story!

BIG IDEA | Jesus is the savior God promised.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Prepare five wrapped boxes in advance, each containing a different toy with a Big Idea tag attached (use one of the [Big Idea graphics](#) provided or write your own). Label each box with a number corresponding to the week. This week, invite a couple of kids to unwrap box #1. If you have a recordable plush available, you could record yourself saying the Big Idea in advance, reset it each week, and gift wrap it in the box again. Once unwrapped, say the Big Idea aloud for the kids (or squeeze the tummy if using a recording) and have kids follow along with the motions below.
- What's the Big Idea of today's Joy Story?
 - **Jesus is** ("[Jesus](#)" in ASL)
 - **the Savior** ("[Savior](#)" in ASL)
 - **God** (Point up.)
 - **promised** (Link pinky fingers together.)

VIDEO | Joy Story, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Cali's World](#).

ACTIVITY | A Promised Present

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, prepare [small paper bags](#) that come in a variety of colors, fold the top over, and secure lightly with tape or glue. Pass one bag to each kid sitting in a large circle. Fill only one color with lightweight treats like stickers, bookmarks, or snacks. Then, before you play, promise kids they will get a present. As Christmas music plays, have the kids pass the bags around the circle so they always hold one bag. When the music stops, call out the color of an empty bag and have kids holding that color open their bag. They might be disappointed or confused that the gift bag is empty. Continue playing until the last color is called the one that contains gifts. Have the kids holding that bag pass out its contents to their friends.
- You had to wait a long time to get the good thing I promised. But you waited, and the promise came true!
- God's people waited a long, long time for the savior. They were probably confused and sad the savior took a long time to come.
- But God waited for the perfect time and then let people know that Jesus would be born soon! **Jesus is the savior God promised.**

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus. He is the savior you promised, and he is our savior, too. Amen.

SHARING TIME**SNACK | Angel Treats**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a slice of bread and apple slices. They can tear their bread, or provide cookie cutters, to make circles and triangles to create angel shapes out of the bread. Then, help them arrange the apple slices to resemble angel wings. You can also add marshmallows or whipped cream for clouds and other fruit for the halo, mouth, and eyes ([like this](#)).
- **If an angel visited you and made you a promise, what would it be?**
- **How would you feel if you met an angel?**

ACTIVITY | Circle Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Pass around a customizable snow globe (choose from [classic globes](#), [mason jar kits](#), and [plastic kits](#)). Each week, you can insert a picture of anything you'd like—a small toy, a laminated photo of one of the kids in your ministry, a photo of you or one of your volunteers as a preschooler, or even hand-drawn pictures your kids made. Invite kids to shake the globe each time it's passed to them. After it's passed around the circle once, ask one of the questions and invite the kids to call out their responses.
- **Who gave God's message to Mary?** An angel named Gabriel.
- **God promised Mary that she would have a ...?** Baby.
- **What did God promise the people a long, long time ago?** A savior.
- **Who is the savior?** Jesus!
- Let's say our Big Idea together: **Jesus is the savior God promised.**

ACTIVITY | Joy Tree Ornament

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Each week invite the kids to create a paper ornament to represent what they learned. The kids will create their joy tree ornament using the provided [ornament template](#), a hole puncher, and ribbon or twine. You may choose to have leaders write the Big Idea on the ornament for them. This week, have kids work

with glitter glue and sparkly stickers to decorate their ornament. Have kids write their names on the back and hang it up on a tree in your space (it can be a tree outline with green tape on a wall) or take it home. Consider printing on cardstock or laminating their finished work to make them last longer.

- This ornament can hang on a tree—or anywhere we want—to help us remember our Big Idea: **Jesus is the savior God promised.**

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 1:46–47 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Help kids learn this month's memory verse by setting the words (and the Scripture reference) to the tune of "We Wish You A Merry Christmas." You can also have kids repeat the verse after you in small chunks, say them using silly voices, or create simple hand motions for keywords.
- **"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."**

PLAY TIME

ACTIVITY | Coloring Page

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Print and distribute [the coloring page](#) along with crayons or markers. As the kids color, you can review today's Bible story, Big Idea, and memory verse.

ACTIVITY | Joy-Fill Station

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a sensory bin where the kids can pretend to be holiday baristas. The bin should include the following: paper coffee cups, drink stirrers, [brown crinkle paper](#), cinnamon sticks, red pom-poms, and other paper or craft materials that can be used for toppings for their grown-up-looking coffee, hot cocoa, and other fancy creations.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Remove items like pom poms and cinnamon sticks that may be choking hazards for toddlers. Let the toddlers scoop and dump the shredded brown paper using the cups.

ACTIVITY | From The Joy Box

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Each week, provide a box of different toys kids can play with. You can guide them to use the toys to build something they remember or reenact parts of the Bible story. This week, set the stage for the Christmas season by filling a large bin with [fake snow](#) ([here's a DIY version](#)) along with cookie cutters and silicone molds for kids to play with.