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Bible Passage: Isaiah 9:1–2, 6–7; Luke 2
(Birth of Jesus)

Jesus Is the Promised Savior

REMEMBER VERSE

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

The first time I felt a connection with the Advent season, I was traveling in Europe for a semester. During these travels I experienced my first acute sense of homesickness and longing—to be home, to be with friends and family, to be settled again.

As the end of my travels approached, so did the Christmas season. I remember sitting in a tiny chapel on a blustery December night singing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” As I stared at the candelabra, covered with dripping streams of white wax, my heart felt simultaneously heavy and broken, but also fully alive. My longing for the end of my travels and for the realization of Christmas became intertwined. I experienced some of what it might have felt like for the remnant waiting for the realization of their Messiah—the “consolation” of Israel.

Now I look forward to the Advent season. I feel as though it’s similar to the season of Lent before Easter, both solemn periods before seasons of celebration. Jesus’ birth and His resurrection mark the destruction of the separation from God caused by sin, the separation that caused the longing in the first place. Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection fulfill the truest desires of humanity, a fulfillment we only find when we know Jesus.

Tori Funkhouser
ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Jesus is the Promised Savior, the Messiah. But Jesus’ birth was decidedly unclimactic. The surroundings were

uncomfortable, dirty, smelly, and, most likely, disappointing to Mary and Joseph.

But right after Jesus entered our overcrowded, dirty world, angels burst onto the scene praising God for this astonishing display of His mercy. According to Luke 2:13–14, “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’” Though every work of God brings Him glory, the angels declared that this act brought “glory to God in the highest.”

This act of incarnation showed that God’s affection centers on humanity. This crude, maybe even distressing, birth brought glory to God in the highest degree. It was a moment when both heaven and earth joined together in celebration of His glory. And it happened in a world that, for the most part, took no notice.

Talking About Salvation with Kids

As the Holy Spirit speaks to the hearts of your kids, some may express an interest in beginning a relationship with Jesus. Be sure to tell their parents about this so they can pray together as a family. Offer to pray with them if they’d like. Of course, if a child doesn’t come from a Christian family, answer any questions he or she might have, and follow the Spirit’s leading as the child makes a decision to trust in Jesus for salvation.

For help in talking with kids about salvation, refer to the resource titled *Explaining God’s Salvation Plan to Kids*, found alongside this week’s Resources. You may also give copies of this resource to your families.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God’s Word

The name *Jesus* means “Jehovah is salvation” or “God saves.” Though the name was fairly common during the time Jesus walked the earth, His name had been given to Him by God the Father because it expressed the purpose of Jesus’ life on earth: to save His people from their sins.

As you think about this, pray God would bless you with a new sense of reverence for the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Then pray the children would have a new awareness and reverence for their Savior who, even in His name, proclaims His purposes on earth: to be the ultimate prophet, by revealing the heart of God the Father; to be a priest, by offering Himself as a sacrifice for His people’s sins; and to be a king, by establishing His holy kingdom and reigning forever.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s portion of The Big God Story.

God announced Christ’s birth many times throughout Scripture. He first announced it through prophets in the Old Testament. Then, in the New Testament, He announced it to people through angels. People then spread the good news throughout the faith community. Today’s activity will get your children thinking about

broadcasting good news throughout a community.

Television Broadcast

SUPPLIES

- Paper (1–2 sheets per child)
- Tape
- Scissors (1 per child)
- Markers

RELATE

Whenever something big happens in our world, it shows up on the news. News anchors explain what happened and show pictures or videos so everyone can know about it. Today we're going to be a news crew spreading important news to our community!

Distribute paper, tape, scissors and markers. Have each child construct or color a prop to use in the news broadcast. For example, one child can make or draw a microphone, and another child can make or draw a camera. Other ideas are: Create a television set background, a television, a remote control, lights, speakers, and so on.

Once everyone has had a chance to create a prop for the broadcast, have children act out the parts that go with their items. Encourage children to be silly and take turns doing various parts. You could have the news anchor use his microphone to tell a made-up story that sounds like news. The camerawoman can hold her camera and pretend to film. Have a director give commands to the cameraman, to the lights operator, to the anchorperson, etc. Additionally, one or two children can hold the background behind the news anchor. Someone else can hold up the television while another child holds the remote control and pretends to watch the news report at home.

When finished, ask: **How did it feel being a part of spreading the news? What part did you enjoy the most? Why? What news have you heard lately that is important to you?**

LARGE GROUP SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible Verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)
- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Connect

Encourage the members of your community to get to know one another through engaging questions, energizing games, and creative activities.

Question

If someone was introducing you, what would you want him or her to say about you?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Isaiah 9:1–2, 6–7; Luke 2

Storytelling Technique: Oil Pastel Drawings

Jesus Is the Promised Savior

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image (see Resources)
- Images: Isaiah 9:2, Isaiah 9:6, Manger (see Resources)
- Audio: Luke 2:10–11 (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Butcher paper (6'–12', black)
- Pencil
- Oil pastels (various colors)

PREPARE AHEAD

Ask one to three volunteers with some artistic gifting to take turns helping illustrate this lesson. First, use the pencil to divide the butcher paper into six squares. Then have your artists take turns sketching the following images lightly in pencil: square one, a speech bubble; square two, the phrase "God with Us" in block letters; square three, Mary and Joseph traveling by donkey toward Bethlehem; square four, different kinds of animals; square five, baby Jesus; and square six, angels appearing to the shepherds. The artist will color in each pencil sketch with oil pastels during storytelling time.

RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **Who remembers what a prophecy is?** Interact with responses. **Good thoughts.** As the Storyteller speaks, the artist should use the oil pastels to color in the speech bubble in square one. **A prophecy is a message**

from God.

A few weeks ago we heard a prophecy from Isaiah that foretold that God's Son would be called Immanuel. Artist should begin coloring "God with Us" in square two. We learned that *Immanuel* means "God with us." God gave Isaiah this message to share with people so that when Immanuel came to meet His people, they would know who He was.

Isaiah spoke to God's people (*Tech: Cue Isaiah 9:2 image*) saying, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." God's people were losing their faith while they waited for Jesus to come. Because of this, they walked in darkness. Even so, Isaiah said they "have seen a great light." Who is the "great light"? Allow responses. Yes! It's God's Son, Jesus. Jesus is the Promised Savior.

Isaiah described Jesus (*Tech: Cue Isaiah 9:6 image*) with these words: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Wow! That sounds amazing!

Hundreds of years after Isaiah's prophecy, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph, her husband-to-be, lived in a small town called Nazareth. Artist should begin to color in the image of Mary and Joseph in square three. Let's open our Bibles and read what God's Word says happened next. Encourage kids to open their Bibles to Luke 2:1–5. Read the passage aloud while the kids follow along. See, during that time, the current ruler decided to count everyone in the country. He demanded that all people go to their hometowns to be counted. So Joseph and Mary went to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem to be counted.

Artist should begin to color in the image of the animals in square four and the image of baby Jesus in square five. After they arrived, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Uh-oh! What would they do? They had no other option but to stay in a place where people kept their animals! It was probably dirty and smelly. But this is where Mary gave birth to God's Son. The Bible says that when Mary gave birth to Him, "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). *Tech: Cue Manger image*. This was the moment God's people had been awaiting so very long.

This was such a big moment, in fact, that it needed to be celebrated! Artist should begin to color in the angels in square six. God sent angels to announce Jesus' birth to shepherds living out in a field. Ask a child to read Luke 2:9 while the kids follow along: "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them." Wow! Can you even imagine what that must have looked like? Allow kids to respond with their insights. Great thoughts. The shepherds were frightened, but the angel told them to not be afraid. Then, the angel said ... *Tech: Cue Luke 2:10–11 audio*. God was inviting these shepherds to join the community in celebration. The angel told the shepherds where to find Him, so they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph with the baby.

Meanwhile, a man named Simeon was also waiting for the arrival of the Christ. Luke 2:26 says, "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, Simeon knew instantly that the baby was the Messiah. Encourage kids to open their Bibles to Luke 2:30–32. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying, "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel" (vv. 30–32). Simeon knew the child in his arms was the Savior. Seeing this, Joseph and Mary were amazed.

Mary and Joseph named the baby Jesus. Do you know what Jesus' name means? In Hebrew, the name is Yeshua. Can you say, "Yeshua"? Kids repeat. It means "God saves." This was the purpose for Jesus' life. Jesus would be the Christ that Isaiah had prophesied—the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is the Promised Savior.

God weaved this whole plan together for us. God did all of this because of His great love for us. Because God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with us, He gave us the opportunity to meet Him and know Him. God gave us the opportunity to be part of His family—to be brothers and sisters with others who have chosen to trust and obey Jesus. Share a personal story of how Jesus became your Savior.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: Jesus Is the Promised Savior

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

Questions for Younger Kids

Read Luke 2:8-15 with the kids.

- How do you think the shepherds felt when they heard the angel's news?
- What did it make you think or feel when other people told their stories about how they met Jesus?
- Did anyone meet Jesus today for the first time? If you feel comfortable, please tell us about it.

Questions for Older Kids

- Would anyone like to share how he first met Jesus?
- What do you think it means to be saved from our sins? Isaiah 1:18; Romans 10:9–10
- Does it make you feel stronger when friends and leaders believe in God along with you?
Why or why not? Hebrews 12:1–3
- How does God change our lives today? John 10:10
- What does it mean to you to be part of God's family?

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. This posture is meant to symbolize a willingness of heart to respond to God's Holy Spirit and receive what God has for them. As they stand in this posture of waiting, invite them to begin meditating on today's portion of The Big God Story—specifically on whatever part of the story most amazes them. Ask them to think about what they know about God as a result of this part of the story. Then, as they are thinking about this, read the Remember Verse (Isaiah 9:6) as a blessing over them:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

May you know Jesus, the Savior and hope of the world. May you remember that God always keeps His promises.