

be able to obey His laws. But God also planned to provide a way for His people to be forgiven of their sin through Jesus.

When we trust in Jesus, all of our sin is forgiven. When you disobey the commandment that is hard for you to keep, it is forgiven when you trust Jesus. And the more that you understand and appreciate God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus, the more you will love Him and obey Him. That's why we drew the heart around that command. Because the key to obeying is loving Jesus!

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending His Son to live the perfectly sinless life we could not live on our own. Thank Jesus for dying on the cross and rising again so that we can be forgiven. Pray for each child by name. Ask God to help the kids recognize their need for Jesus to rescue them from sin and to love Him more and more each day out of gratitude for His goodness.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

Unit 5: Christmas

Unit Description:

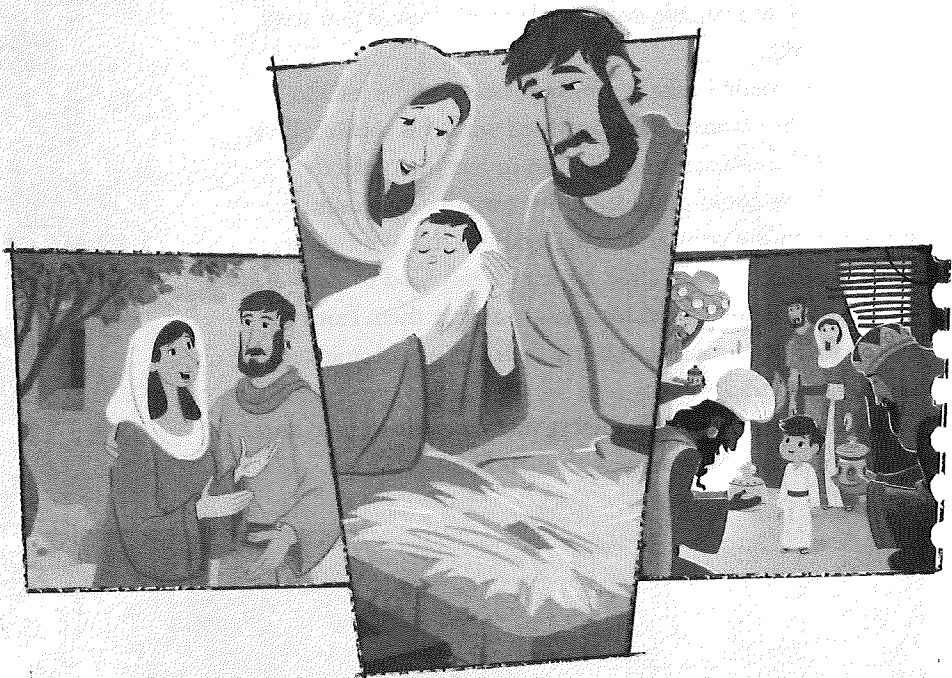
God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to be born as a baby in humble surroundings. Jesus was no ordinary baby as He was the One who would save God's people from their sin. Christmas is the time to celebrate God's greatest gift of Jesus Christ.

Key Passage:

Galatians 4:4-5

Big Picture Question:

Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.



Unit 5: Christmas

Session 1:

Bible Story:

Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

Bible Passage:

Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

Main Point:

God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

Session 2:

Bible Story:

Jesus Was Born

Bible Passage:

Luke 2:1-20

Main Point:

Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

Session 3:

Bible Story:

Wise Men Visited Jesus

Bible Passage:

Matthew 2:1-21

Main Point:

The wise men worshiped Jesus as King.

Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

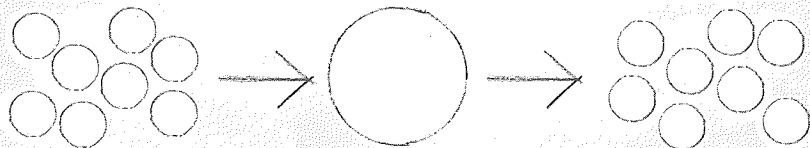
BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

MAIN POINT: God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

SMALL GROUP OPENING (10-15 MINUTES) **LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY** (25-30 MINUTES) **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES** (25-30 MINUTES)
PAGE 92 **PAGE 94** **PAGE 100**



Leader BIBLE STUDY

People had been waiting a long time for Jesus. God hinted at His coming in the garden of Eden when He promised a seed to conquer the serpent. (Gen. 3:15) The prophets told of His coming hundreds of years before His birth. God was working out His plan to bring His people back to Himself.

In the Bible, God sometimes used angels to communicate His message to people. Angels spoke to Abraham in Genesis 18. The Angel of the Lord spoke to Balaam in Numbers 22. Now Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus, each received a special visit from an angel to announce the birth of God's promised Messiah.

The angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary surprised her. By His grace, God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. The angel's message revealed much about this promised child.

First, He would be great in both being and nature. He would be the Son of the Most High. Jesus is the Son of God, and the Lord God promised to give Him the throne of His father David. These words fulfilled the prophecy given to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. He would reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom would have no end.

The good news that Jesus was coming into the world was good news because of why He was coming. An angel revealed Jesus' purpose to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, "He will save His people from their sins." The gospel is the good news of what God has done for us through Christ.

The announcement of Jesus' birth is not the beginning of the gospel; God had been planning for this moment since before the beginning of time. (See Eph. 1:3-10.) Help the kids you teach understand that God's plan has always been to save sinners and bring them back to Himself. Jesus, whose name means "Yahweh saves," is the culmination of that plan.



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

One day, God sent an angel named Gabriel to a town called Nazareth. The angel went to visit a young virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of King David.

The angel said to Mary, “Rejoice! You have found favor with God. He is with you.” Mary was very afraid and puzzled. Why would God find favor with her? She had done nothing special.

“Do not be afraid,” the angel said. Then he told Mary that she was going to have a very special and unique baby, and they would call the baby Jesus, which means “the Lord saves.” The angel explained that the baby would be great—He would be God’s Son! He would even be a king—the king God had promised would come.

Mary asked the angel, “How can that happen? I am not married yet.”

The angel replied, “God will be the father of the baby. The baby will be God’s Son.”

Then the angel told Mary, “Nothing will be impossible with God!” He said that Mary’s relative Elizabeth was pregnant, even though she was old and did not have any children.

“May everything happen just as you said,” Mary replied. Then the angel left her.

Mary hurried to her relative Elizabeth’s house. When she arrived, the baby inside Elizabeth leaped for joy! The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and she said, “What an honor, Mary! Your baby will be blessed too!”

Mary was so happy. She praised God with a song

about how great God is. Mary knew every family in the future would say she was blessed because God was going to do great things for her through Jesus. God was keeping His promise to bless the whole world through Jesus.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Then she went home.

Now Joseph found out Mary was going to have a baby, but Joseph knew it was not his baby—Mary and Joseph were not married yet! Joseph decided to quietly break his engagement with Mary so she would not be publicly disgraced.

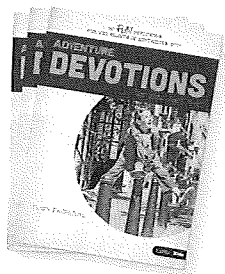
Soon after Joseph thought these things, an angel appeared to him in a dream.

“Joseph!” the angel said. “Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the baby she is carrying was put there by the Holy Spirit. Mary is going to have a son; name Him Jesus because He is going to save His people from their sins!”

This happened just like the prophet said it would: “See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel,” which is translated “God with us.”

When Joseph woke up, he did exactly as the angel commanded. He married Mary, and when she had a son, Joseph named Him Jesus.

Christ Connection: The baby Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, as well as other Old Testament prophecies, about the coming Savior. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled God’s plan of redemption that God planned from the beginning of the world.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that the angel told Mary and Joseph to name the baby Jesus. (Luke 2:21) Jesus, whose name means “the Lord saves,” was born to rescue us from sin. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

MAIN POINT: God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

- wrapped gift box
- marker
- “Joy to the Word” song (optional)

Welcome time

Before class, write the main point on a wrapped gift box. Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask kids to sit in a circle. Explain that when you play the music, kids will pass the gift box to the right. When the music stops, the kid holding the gift will read the main point to the class. Continue playing until each kid has had a turn saying the main point.

SAY • We’re going to learn in our Bible story today that **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** How did Mary and Joseph know about this gift to them and the world? God sent angels to tell them!

- “Word Search” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Word Search” activity page.

SAY • Many of these words you found come from our Bible story today. Today we will learn that **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** God sent an angel to tell them His wonderful plan.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What choice would you make?

Invite kids to answer the following questions. Affirm each kid's choice.

- If you were the captain of the football team, who would you choose to be your quarterback?
- If you were the president, who would you choose to be your vice-president?
- If you were going to an amusement park, who would you choose to go with you?
- If you could go bungee-jumping with anyone, who would you choose to jump with you?

SAY • As we'll learn in our Bible story, Mary and Joseph were ordinary people but **God chose them to be the earthly parents of Jesus.**

OPTION 2: Brown bag gift

Before class, wrap a small but nice present in a plain brown paper sack. (This gift could be a \$5 gift card to a favorite eating place, a box of Christmas candy, or something else your kids would like.) Wrap a rock in an elaborate gift bag with special ribbons and tissue paper. Display both bags. Choose two volunteers to come forward. Ask which bag they would prefer to open, then allow them to flip a coin. The child that wins the coin toss picks out which gift to open. You may also have an identical gift to give to the kid who ends up with the rock.

SAY • It is tempting to choose a gift based on how it looks. God doesn't work that way. God chose unlikely people to be the earthly parents of His Son.



- nice present wrapped in a brown paper sack
- rock wrapped in an elaborate gift bag
- coin
- matching gift for volunteer (optional)

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

MAIN POINT: God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

- room decorations
- Theme Backdrop Slide (optional)

SUGGESTED THEME DECORATING IDEAS: Decorate your current theme with Christmas lights and other non-fantasy decorations. Choose decorations that fit your space and your budget. You may also show the theme backdrop slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Large Group Leader enters. If you are breaking from the great race theme to celebrate Christmas, allow your great race leader to carry through to these stories.]

LEADER • Hello, everybody! Hmm. Something looks different today. *[Point to a kid in the audience.]* Did you get a new haircut? New shoes? Is that a new shirt? No? *[Take a moment to really ham up looking around the room. Maybe lean on some of the Christmas decorations.]*

I just can't seem to put my finger on what is different about this place. Can you kids help me out here? I must be losing my marbles! *[Invite kids to raise their hands and tell you what has changed in the room. Gasp and see the decor with "new eyes."]*

Wow, you're right! I can't believe I missed the fact that it's nearly Christmas! What's your favorite thing about Christmas? [*Invite kids to respond.*]

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • You know, we've been going chronologically through the Bible. That means we've been going through Bible in the order that the events actually happened. Over the next few weeks, though, we're going to take a break from Moses and the Exodus so we can focus on God's plan to send Jesus to earth as a baby.

Jesus is God the Son. God the Son has always existed with God the Father, and He was present at creation. Even before God created the world, the Father planned to send Jesus to rescue us from sin. But He didn't choose to send Jesus to earth as a grown-up. God chose to send Jesus to earth as a baby, born into the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To do that, Jesus would need a family. Today, we're going to learn that God chose Mary and Joseph—two ordinary people—to be Jesus' earthly parents.

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • I have a question for you. Why did God even send Jesus to earth? Why did Jesus willingly leave heaven and come to earth as a tiny, helpless baby? That is going to be our big picture question for the next few weeks. *Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.*

- Bibles
- “Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph.” For a shorter version of the Bible story, read only the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LEADER • Can you imagine how frightened Mary must have been when the angel appeared to her? At this time, God’s people had gone for about 400 years without a prophet or a message from God. God said at the end of the Old Testament that the next prophet would be the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

The angel’s message took Mary by surprise, but she knew God had promised to send a Messiah to rescue them, and she trusted God to do what He said He would do. Joseph also trusted the message the angel told Him. **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.**

The baby Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, as well as other Old Testament prophecies, about the coming Savior. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled God’s plan of redemption that God planned from the beginning of the world

Ask the following review questions:

1. Who was the angel who appeared to Mary? (*Gabriel, Luke 1:26*)
2. In what town did Mary and Joseph live? (*Nazareth, Luke 1:26*)
3. Which Old Testament king was one of Joseph’s ancestors? (*David, Luke 1:27*)

4. What other name for Jesus means “God with us”? (*Immanuel, Matt. 1:23*)
5. What was Jesus going to do? (*save His people from their sins, Matt. 1:21*)

The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I’m a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home with them and complete with their family.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Galatians 4:4-5 twice.

LEADER • When we turn away from sin and trust in Jesus, God adopts us as His sons. If you’re a girl, you might be thinking, “But I’m a daughter!” In Bible times, sons were the ones who received money, land, and gifts from their father when they died. Daughters, most of the time, did not. When we trust in Jesus, all of us are sons, meaning that we can receive all the blessings that God gives His own Son, Jesus!

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- “Adopted as Sons” song

Sing the key passage song.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Can you remember a time when you were chosen to do something that no one else got to do? [*Invite a few kids to respond with examples.*] Didn’t that make you feel special? Check out this video.

- “Unit 5, Session 1” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 5, Session 1” discussion starter video.

LEADER • Cherry thought he was going to be chosen for a special task, but he was chosen for dessert! **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** They were not chosen because they were special, famous, or wealthy. When the Bible says Mary found favor with God, that means God showed her grace. *Grace* is love and forgiveness that we don't deserve. Mary and Joseph were sinners, just like you and me, and they needed Jesus to save them too!

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Joy to the World" song

LEADER • I don't know about you, but learning about God's plan to send Jesus to rescue us from sin makes me want to sing!
Sing together "Joy to the World."

Pray (2 minutes)

Before transitioning to small groups, make any announcements. Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for Your plan to send Jesus to rescue us from sin before You ever created the earth. Thank You for making a way for us to receive what we don't deserve: Your love, adoption as Your sons, and forgiveness of our sins! Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24

MAIN POINT: God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

- Key Passage Poster
- Christmas stocking
- small pieces of paper
- marker

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Write the words of the key passage on several small pieces of paper. Fold up the pieces of paper and put them in a Christmas stocking. Instruct each kid to reach into the stocking and grab a piece of paper. When kids grab a piece of paper, guide them to unfold the paper and place it on the table. Keep this going until there are no more pieces of paper in the stocking. Once all of the papers are on the table, help the kids put them in the right order. After they have put the verse in order, read the verse aloud.

SAY • Who can tell me what the word *redeem* means?

Have you ever been to an arcade and redeemed your tokens to get a prize? *Redeem* means to exchange or buy back. Our key passage says that Jesus came to make an exchange. We deserved to die for our sin, but Jesus—who never sinned—took our punishment so that we could be forgiven of our sins and have life with Him forever.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Invite kids to open their Bibles to Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24, assisting kids as needed. Briefly review the Bible story.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

SAY • I am going to say statements from the Bible story. If you think that I'm speaking about Mary, I want you to pretend to rock a baby. If you think I'm speaking about Joseph, I want you to fold your hands under your head as if you are sleeping.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Bible story review statements:

- The angel appeared when this person was awake. (*Mary*)
- The angel spoke to this person in a dream. (*Joseph*)
- This person was told she was going to be the mother of God's Son. (*Mary*)
- This person was told to marry Mary. (*Joseph*)
- The angel told this person to name the baby Jesus. (*both*)
- This person went to visit Elizabeth. (*Mary*)
- This person was a descendant of King David. (*Joseph*)

SAY • **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** God planned from the very beginning to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. God chose to send Jesus to be born as a human being. Jesus was fully God and fully man, so He knows exactly what being a human is like but He never sinned. That's why He is our perfect Savior, God with us!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Deliver the message

Invite kids to sit in a circle with you. Whisper in the ear of the kid at your right a special message that he will whisper in the ear of the kid next to him. Continue around the circle until the message reaches the last kid, who will stand up and say the message aloud.



SAY • Each one of you got to deliver a message to your friends. Does that remind you of anyone from our story? Just like you delivered my message, the angel delivered God’s message to Mary and Joseph. And do you remember that message? **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.**

- Numbered Game Cube
- tissue box (optional)
- paper (optional)
- tape (optional)
- marker (optional)
- Big Picture Question Poster

OPTION 2: Big picture question review

Provide a numbered game cube. If you do not have a numbered game cube, use a cubed facial tissue box, cover the sides with paper, and number the cube 1–6. Print a copy of the big picture poster. Invite the kids to stand in a circle and number off 1–6. Roll the cube and whatever number is facing up when it stops rolling, the kids with that number will say the big picture question and answer together. Play again until each kid has an opportunity to say the big picture question and answer.

SAY • *Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.* None of us can take away our sin on our own. We need a Savior. God sent His own Son, Jesus, born as a human being like us, to live on earth. Jesus is fully God and fully man except He did not sin—ever. Even though He never did anything wrong, Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for sin that we deserve, and He rose again so we could have eternal life when we trust in Him.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write down or draw a picture of a special message they've received. Maybe their parents told them they were having another sibling, or maybe they were told they won an award. As they draw or write, talk about God's message to Mary and Joseph.

SAY • The angels told Mary and Joseph a life-changing message. Nothing would ever be the same again! **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus**—the Messiah! God with us! What good news about today's Bible story could you share with someone this week?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending His Son to redeem us and make us His children. Pray for each child by name. Ask God to help the kids recognize their need for Jesus to rescue them from sin.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids*