

Teaching Aids

SESSIONS 1–3

Advent Readings

These readings will be used during Connect to God. The prophet Isaiah is an important voice in the season of Advent. This reading is drawn from Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:2, 6; Isaiah 11:1–2, 6–8; Isaiah 40:3, 11; Isaiah 35:1, 7; Isaiah 61:1–3. Many have read Isaiah’s words as descriptions that apply to Jesus. His words help us know what God’s promised Messiah will look and act like. Isaiah helps us imagine how our world can be different.

Advent 1

All: God is sending a Savior! A rescuer! A king!

One Voice: But how will we know the promised one is here?

Group 1: The earth beneath our feet will be different: valleys will grow taller, mountains and hills become smaller, rocky ground made smooth. Deserts will bloom with flowers, and dry places will flow with water.

Group 2: People will be different: those who have been grieving will get a beautiful garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning. Those who have wandered in the darkness will see a great light. Nations will not make war anymore. All people will live in peace.

Group 3: Even animals will be different: wolves and lambs will dwell together, leopards snuggle with baby goats, calves and lions live in peace. Vicious carnivores will eat grass and straw, and destruction will be no more.

One Voice: The whole world waits for such a savior.

All: We wait for you, Lord Jesus.

Advent 2

All: God is sending a Savior! A rescuer! A king!

One Voice: What will the Savior be like?

Group 1: He will be like a fresh new tree growing up out of a stump everyone had left for dead.

Group 2: He will overflow with God’s spirit—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge.

Group 3: He will be a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Parent, a Prince of Peace.

One Voice: The whole world waits for such a savior.

All: We wait for you, Lord Jesus.

Advent 3

All: God is sending a Savior! A rescuer! A king!

One Voice: What will the Savior do?

Group 1: He’ll lead us like a shepherd, tenderly gathering lambs in his arms and gently leading the mother sheep.

Group 2: He’ll bring good news to the oppressed and bind up the brokenhearted; he’ll proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.

Group 3: He’ll be Emmanuel—God with us in flesh and blood.

One Voice: The whole world waits for such a savior.

All: We wait for you, Lord Jesus.

SESSION 1

Arbitrator Situations

Copy and cut apart to use during Explore (Peace Pursuit). Divide into groups of three. Hand out the situations below. Have two people role-play the conflict and then have the third person act as an arbitrator, making a ruling on what should happen.

Morgan is the captain of the school's improvisational drama team headed to the city championships. They need to practice in the gym after school because it is the only place in the building with a stage. Ethan is the captain of the school's ultimate frisbee team. They have received an invitation to a state tournament and need to practice in the gym after school because the soccer team uses the only outdoor field on the school grounds for their practices.

Jasmine wants to take her cell phone to school because all her friends do. She feels out of touch with them during the day without a phone. Her dad says her cell phone has to stay home. Her last report card wasn't very good, and she needs to focus on learning and not texting or talking while she is in school.

Jason and Adam share a locker. They take art class in different periods. Jason forgot his set of art pencils at home. Adam says he can use his, but Adam needs them back before last period when he has art. Adam finds the set of pencils in the locker on time, but some are broken and two are missing. When he confronts Jason, Jason says that's how the pencils were when he took them. Adam says he wants a new locker partner.

SESSION 3

"God's Promises" Strips

Copy and cut apart for use in Explore (Peace Pursuit).

1. Psalm 50:15	2. Psalm 30:5
3. Exodus 4:11-12	4. Psalm 32:8
5. Zechariah 8:12	6. Jeremiah 29:11
7. Jeremiah 29:13	8. Psalm 147:3
9. John 4:13-14	10. John 8:12

SESSION 3

Skit Starters

Make one copy for each pair of youth for use in Explore (Wrestle).

What if Mary and Elizabeth had offered different responses to the good news of what God wanted to do? How would the story have changed? Try the skit starters below with a partner. Continue the skits and imagine different outcomes. Then do the skit again, telling the story as it really happened.

Characters: Gabriel, Mary, Elizabeth

Scene 1: Gabriel appears to Mary

Gabriel: Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Mary: That's impossible! How can this be?

Gabriel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.

Mary: No way. Some things *are* impossible. Plus, this will really mess up my life. Do you know how much trouble I would get in? And what would Joseph do? Thanks, but no thanks. God can favor someone else if this is what it means to be favored by God.

*What happens next? Does Gabriel keep trying to convince her, or does he give up?
Continue the dialogue, imagining where the story goes from here.*

Scene 2: Mary visits Elizabeth

Mary: (*knocking on door*) Elizabeth? Are you home?

Elizabeth: Mary! I can't believe it. God has obviously cursed you! Why has this happened to us, that such shame should be brought on our family?! You're pregnant and not even married! Why have you come here to spread trouble? As soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped in panic. Even he knows this is terrible! No one is going to believe an angel appeared to you!

*What happens next? Does Mary stay or leave?
Does Mary still sing? If so, how does her song change?
Continue the scene, imagining where the story goes from here.*

SESSION 4

Modern-Day Christmas Story Instructions



Work together during Explore (Collaborate) to create a modern-day Christmas story that you can act out.

- Choose a setting. Where will Jesus be born (*town, country, home, hospital*)? Where will he sleep?
- Choose “shepherds.” Choose a modern-day profession that may be looked down on by other people.
- Choose a mode of communication. How does God communicate the news to the group that represents the “shepherds”?
- Choose Mary. How old is she? What does she look like?
- Choose Joseph. How old is he? What does he look like?

After choosing the setting and characters, rewrite the message that the angels spoke to the shepherds. How can you best convey the concepts using your chosen mode of communication? What words will be meaningful and easy for your audience to understand?

Practice acting out your story. Create props as needed to show the setting and characters.

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SESSION 4

"Jesus Is Born" Readers Theater

Make enough copies for each person to have one for use with the Bible story.

Characters: Narrator, Shepherd 1, Shepherd 2, Angel, Angels (group), Townsperson 1, Townsperson 2

Narrator: Near Bethlehem, there were shepherds living in the fields, watching their flocks. Late one night, they had unexpected visitors.

Shepherd 1: (*frightened, to others*) Hey, what is that bright light?!

Shepherd 2: I don't know! What's happening?

Angel: Don't be afraid. (*Shepherds bow down.*) I have good news. This joyful news is for you and for all people. Today the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord has been born in the city of David. You will find him wrapped in bands of cloths and lying in a manger.

Narrator: Suddenly the sky was filled with angels, praising God.

(*Angels appear.*)

Angels (group): Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace!

(*Angels leave.*)

Shepherd 2: What in the world was that?

Shepherd 1: I'm not sure, but I'm going to Bethlehem!

Shepherd 2: Wait up! Can this really be true?

Shepherd 1: I guess we'll find out.

* * *

(*Shepherds gather around the baby Jesus and talk to Mary and Joseph.*)

Shepherd 1: We saw an angel.

Shepherd 2: Well, actually, the whole sky was filled with angels!

Shepherd 1: The angel said your baby is the Messiah.

Shepherd 2: Well, actually, the angel said your baby is the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord!

Shepherd 1: The angel said we would find him lying in a manger.

Shepherd 2: Well, actually, the angel said we would find him wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

Shepherd 1: And now we are here, and your baby is in the manger, just like the angel said.

Shepherd 2: Don't forget about the bands of cloth! The angel was right about that too.

Narrator: The shepherds left. Mary treasured these words and pondered them in her heart.

* * *

SESSION 4

Readers Theater (continued)

(Shepherds talk to Townspeople.)

Shepherd 1: We saw angels when we were watching our sheep last night!

Townspeople 1: Angels? Are you sure?

Shepherd 2: It's true. The sky was filled with angels singing joyful praises to God. They told us that a baby had been born who was the Savior we have been waiting for.

Townspeople 2: Where is this baby?

Shepherd 1: *(pointing back over shoulder)* We just saw him. He was wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger, just like the angel told us.

Townspeople 1: This is amazing! Let's go and see the baby!

(Townspeople leave together.)

Narrator: The shepherds continued on their way, telling everyone they met about the amazing message of the angels and the special baby.

SESSION 11

"Jesus Heals Two Daughters" Readers Theater

Make enough copies for each person to have one for use with the Bible story.

Characters: Narrator, Jairus, Woman, Jesus, Disciples, Jairus' People, Girl

Narrator: When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly . . .

Jairus: *(kneels before Jesus)* My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.

Narrator: So Jesus went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd.

Woman: *(to herself)* If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well. *(Sneaks up and touches Jesus' cloak.)*

Narrator: Immediately the woman's bleeding stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned around to face the crowd.

Jesus: Who touched my clothes?

Disciples: You see the crowd pressing in on you. How can you say, "Who touched me?"

Narrator: He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, fell down before him trembling with fear and told Jesus the whole truth.

(Woman comes and kneels before Jesus.)

Jesus: Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.

Jairus' People: *(All quickly come up to Jairus.)* Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?

Narrator: Jesus overheard what they said.

Jesus: *(to Jairus)* Do not fear, only believe.

Narrator: Jesus allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

(Everyone cries loudly.)

Jesus: Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.

(Everyone scoffs.)

Narrator: Then he put them all outside. He took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.

Jesus: *(takes girl's hand)* Talitha koum. Little girl, get up!

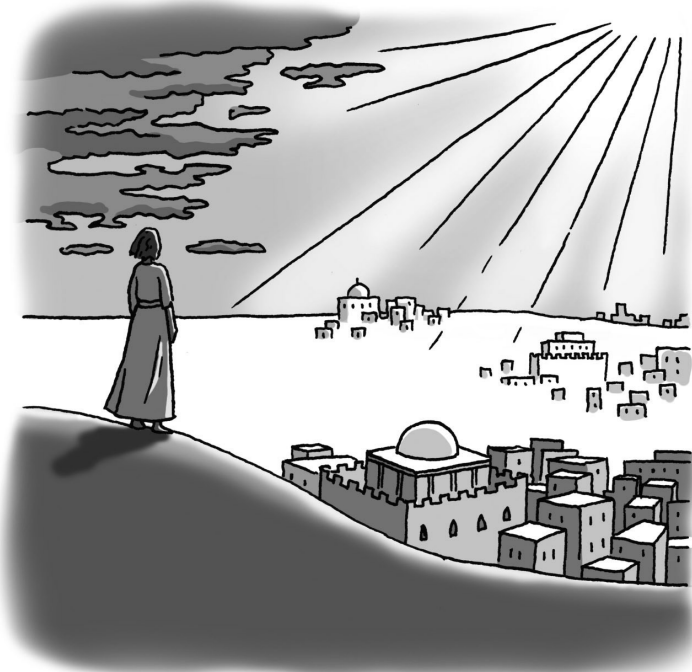
Narrator: And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about. (She was 12 years old.) Everyone was amazed.

(Girl gets up; everyone gasps.)

Narrator: Jesus strictly ordered them not to tell others and told them to give her something to eat.

SESSION 7
Story Pictures

Copy and cut apart the pictures for use in Explore (Peace Pursuit).



SESSION 8

"Good News, Bad News" Prompts

Read these prompts for Connect to Each Other. Youth will position themselves on a masking tape line to indicate whether they think this is good news or bad news. If they think it is neutral or are unconcerned about it, they would stand at the midpoint of the line.

- You will now have gym class every day for one hour at school.
- You will be in charge of making dinner three times a week.
- You can get a babysitting job.
- The local library will be closing because they do not have enough funding.
- You are required to read a book for one hour every day.
- There is a recreation center opening where you can meet up with your friends.
- You have to start taking music lessons.
- You are chosen to be the lead actor in the community play.
- This year you will only take math and science classes.
- You have to move away from your current home.
- Your favorite sports team lost most of their games.
- Everyone in your class who has high grades gets to have a pizza party.
- A huge grocery store is being built right next to your house.
- Your family gets a pet hamster, and you have to take care of it.

SESSION 8

"Scripture or Sayings?" List

Read these statements for the Explore (Wrestle) activity. Youth will try to determine if it comes from the Bible or is just a common saying and respond with the appropriate assigned motion. Answers are in parentheses after each sentence.

1. God helps those who help themselves. (*No. This is an ancient Greek saying.*)
2. Defend the rights of the poor and needy. (*Yes. Proverbs 31:9*)
3. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of others. (*Yes. 1 Corinthians 10:24*)
4. Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself will lead only to loss. (*Yes. Proverbs 22:16*)
5. A penny saved is a penny earned. (*No. This is a 17th century saying.*)
6. To thine own self be true. (*No. This was written by William Shakespeare.*)
7. There will never cease to be some in need on the earth, so open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land. (*Yes. Deuteronomy 15:11*)
8. Let go and let God. (*No. Unknown origin.*)
9. God never gives you more than you can handle. (*No. No one is quite sure where this came from.*)
10. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. (*Yes. Matthew 25:40*)
11. Honesty is the best policy. (*No. This was written by Benjamin Franklin.*)
12. This too shall pass. (*No. A Persian poet wrote this in the Middle Ages.*)
13. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? (*Yes. 1 John 3:17*)
14. Actions speak louder than words. (*No. This was said by Abraham Lincoln.*)
15. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (*Yes. Matthew 7:12*)
16. God shows no partiality. (*Yes. Acts 10:35*)

SESSION 9

Fish Facts

Copy one Fish Facts sheet for each pair of youth for use in Explore (Collaborate).



	Question	My Guess	Correct Answer	Points
1	On which day of creation did God make fish?		(Genesis 1:20–23)	
2	On which side of the boat were the fish Jesus told them to catch?		(John 21:6)	
3	What kind of fire did Jesus build to cook the fish?		(John 21:9)	
4	What kind of fish did the disciples give Jesus to eat after he rose from the dead?		(Luke 24:42)	
5	How much did the fish in Egypt cost the Israelites?		(Numbers 11:5)	
6	Who spent time in the belly of a fish?		(Jonah 2:1)	
7	How many fish did the boy give to Jesus to feed the multitude?		(John 6:9)	
8	Who built the Fish Gate in Jerusalem?		(Nehemiah 3:3)	
9	On which day did the Tyrians sell fish to the people of Judah?		(Nehemiah 13:16)	
10	What body of water were Peter and Andrew near when Jesus called them?		(Matthew 4:18)	

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Answers: (1) fifth day; (2) right side; (3) charcoal; (4) broiled; (5) nothing; (6) Jonah; (7) Two; (8) the sons of Hassenaah; (9) Sabbath; (10) Sea of Galilee

SESSION 10

Discussion Questions

Make enough copies for each pair or small group of youth to have one card of questions. Use these for Explore (Wrestle).



LUKE 6:20-23 (CEV)

Jesus looked at his disciples and said: "God will bless you people who are poor. His kingdom belongs to you! God will bless you hungry people. You will have plenty to eat! God will bless you people who now are crying. You will laugh! God will bless you when others hate you and won't have anything to do with you. God will bless you when people insult you and say cruel things about you, all because you are a follower of the Son of Man. Long ago your own people did these same things to the prophets. So when this happens to you, be happy and jump for joy! You will have a great reward in heaven."

- What is the good news? Who will be happy to hear this message?
- What do these verses show about God?
- What is hard to understand about these verses?

LUKE 6:24-26 (CEV)

"But you rich people are in for trouble. You have already had an easy life! You well-fed people are in for trouble. You will go hungry! You people who are laughing now are in for trouble. You are going to cry and weep! You are in for trouble when everyone says good things about you. That is what your own people said about those prophets who told lies."

- What do you think of this message? How does it make you feel?
- Who might feel sad, worried, or angry to hear this message? Why?
- Jesus talked about prophets who lied and then became even more successful. What are other examples of people doing wrong things but still becoming popular and successful?

LUKE 6:27-31 (CEV)

"This is what I say to all who will listen to me: Love your enemies, and be good to everyone who hates you. Ask God to bless anyone who curses you, and pray for everyone who is cruel to you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, don't stop that person from slapping you on the other cheek. If someone wants to take your coat, don't try to keep back your shirt. Give to everyone who asks and don't ask people to return what they have taken from you. Treat others just as you want to be treated."

- What questions do you have about these verses?
- Is Jesus saying that it's okay to physically hurt others? Are we supposed to let others hurt us or steal our things? What do you think he means?
- Talk about a time you or someone you know did something good in a hard situation. When have you responded with kindness to someone who was being mean?

LUKE 6:32-36 (CEV)

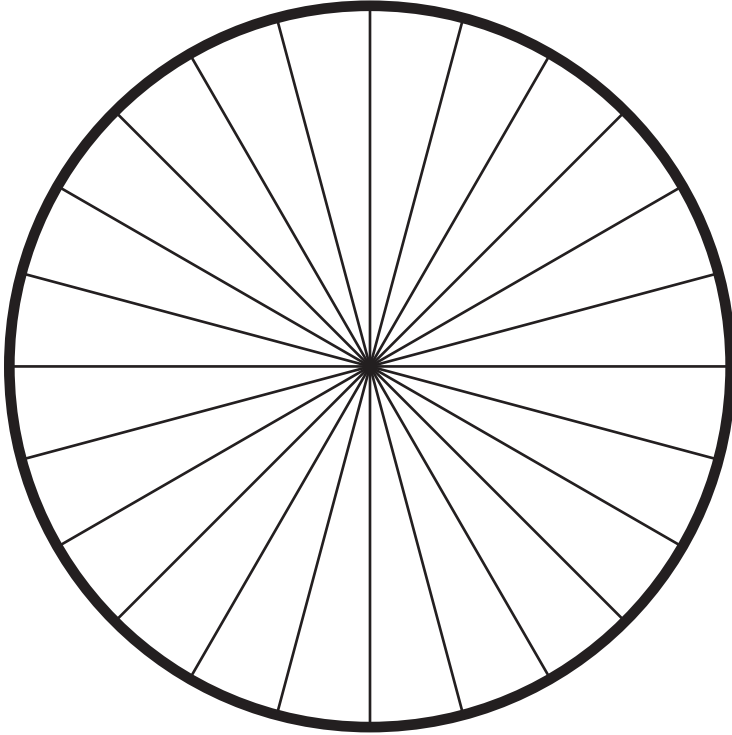
"If you love only someone who loves you, will God praise you for that? Even sinners love people who love them. If you are kind only to someone who is kind to you, will God be pleased with you for that? Even sinners are kind to people who are kind to them. If you lend money only to someone you think will pay you back, will God be pleased with you for that? Even sinners lend to sinners because they think they will get it all back. But love your enemies and be good to them. Lend without expecting to be paid back. Then you will get a great reward, and you will be the true children of God in heaven. He is good even to people who are unthankful and cruel. Have pity on others, just as your Father has pity on you."

- What is the good news in these verses?
- What is difficult to hear or understand in these verses?
- What do these verses show about God?

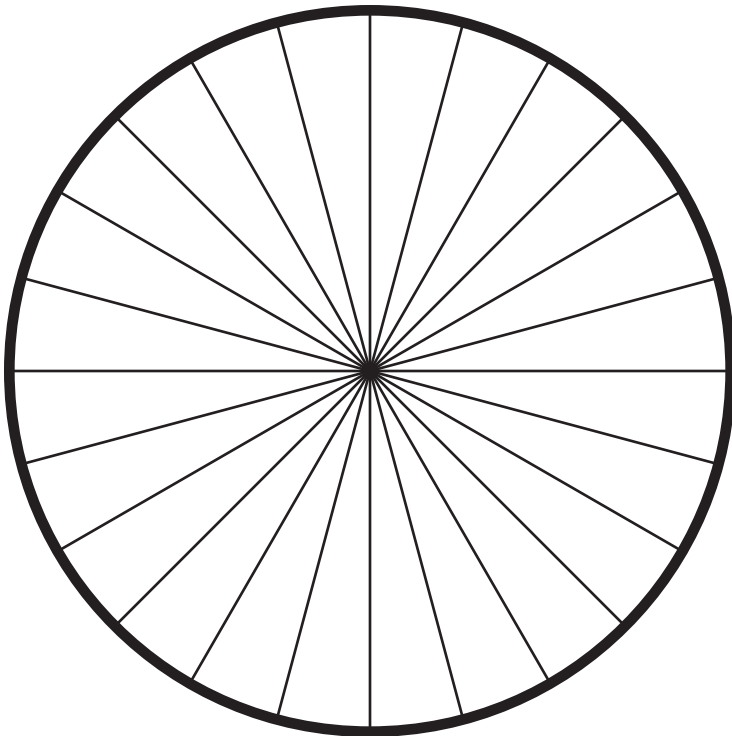
SESSION 12
Hours Chart

Make enough copies so each youth can have a chart for use in Explore (Respond).

For each color, write down something you do most days (sleep, eat, school, sports, socializing, hobbies, prayer/Bible study, electronics/gaming, chores, exercising). Then color the chart to show how much time you spend doing each thing. 1 section = 1 hour.



- Red = _____
- Orange = _____
- Yellow = _____
- Green = _____
- Blue = _____
- Purple = _____
- Brown = _____
- Black = _____
- White = _____



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SESSION 13

"Watch the Worry" Game

Print the game for use in Explore (Peace Pursuit). Divide into two or more teams and assign each team a color. Each team will need a Bible. The first team chooses a time, such as 7:00. Read the reference for that time, such as John 14:27, and have one person from each team quickly search for the verse in the Bible. The first person to find it rings a bell or taps the table then reads the verse aloud. Color the number on the clock with the color of the winning team. Continue until all the numbers are colored and see which team has the most. Each team could work together to find the verses rather than only one person on the team. This will work best if youth are not very familiar with the Bible.

Print the game to send home with each youth at the end of the session.

