



WEEK 1

ELEMENTARY LESSON OUTLINE



MAIN EVENT

BIG IDEA

We can celebrate God's plan.

THE BIBLE

Mary and Joseph: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24;
(Colossians 1:15-20)

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

LARGE GROUP TIME

- MUSIC** | Celebrate and Worship
- ACTIVITY** | Guess the Travel Time
- ACTIVITY** | Create Your Own Map
- POLL** | Planning a Trip
- THE BIG IDEA** | We can celebrate God's plan.
- VIDEO** | Main Event, Episode 1
- SCRIPTURE** | Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24
- QUESTION** | Maps and Angels
- ACTIVITY** | Create Your Own Fun Flyer
- SCRIPTURE** | Colossians 1:15-20
- REFLECTION** | Why Do We Use Maps?
- PRAYER**
- ACTIVITY** | Let's Celebrate!
- MEMORY VERSE** | Words from the Word

SMALL GROUP TIME

- DISCUSSION**
 - How did Mary feel after learning what the great plan would be?
 - How did Mary respond?
 - What did the angel say to Joseph?
 - Read Colossians 1:17. How does this verse show that Jesus was God's great plan?
 - Is it sometimes difficult to do what God asks?
 - How can we be more like Mary and Joseph and follow God?
 - How is God with us? Think of a few different ways!
- ACTIVITY** | Plan the Perfect Day
- MEMORY VERSE** | Luke 1:46-47 (NIV)



WEEK 1

HACKS FOR PRETEENS



BY ASHLEY SIDER

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR PRETEENS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but preteens tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your preteens more engaged.

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Map

Pick a specific location (e.g., where you meet) and ask each student to draw a map from their house to your meeting place. See if you can piece all of the maps together to form one larger map of your town/city!

SCRIPTURE | Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24

Have a preteen read the story aloud while others act it out.

REFLECTION | Why Do We Use Maps?

Encourage preteens to draw a map of their personal story, kind of like a life timeline. Help them to identify some points in their lives where God had a plan for them. Take time to share personal stories as you are able.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Ashley works at Messiah College as the Assistant Director of Alumni and Parent Relations and serves her church by teaching Elementary Sunday School. Before her current role, she worked in Youth Ministry for several years, first as a volunteer, then assistant, and then director. She's also done some guest teaching in other churches and loves it!

When she was in middle/high school, her faith was deeply impacted by a short-term missions trip, which led her to go to college to learn more about cross-cultural ministry and the importance of learning about global differences. One of her favorite things to do is to create trainings for other groups going on

missions trips to help prepare them for their journey. She is an energetic, hardworking, easily excitable gal who was made to help inspire others. (Read: INTJ, Enneagram 3, and StrengthFinders Future/Strategic/Learner through and through.) Though she spends most of her free time reading, writing, and taking photos, she loves an unscheduled weekend at home, spending time outside and hanging with her husband and daughter in Pennsylvania.

If you'd like to chat further about the enneagram, using social media for your ministry, or picking a paint color for your front door, reach out! She would love to connect with you!

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Amber Stephens, Linda Moon, Lauren Wierzba.

TEACHING VIDEOS: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Jared Callahan.

PRETEEN HACKS: Ashley Sider.

SPECIAL NEEDS HACKS: Sue Spiesz.

MEMORY VERSE SIGN LANGUAGE: Sunny Brown.

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Josh Gosney, Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

LAYOUT DESIGN: Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Stephen Switzer, Ali Anne, Eddie Irvin, Ari Raines, Kellee Gentry, Tim Synan, Josh McLemore, Amber Gaddis.



WEEK 1

HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



BY SUE SPIESZ

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but kids with special needs tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your kids with special needs more engaged.

MUSIC | Celebrate and Worship

Kids with special needs are reached in amazing ways by the power of music. Give the kid some extra space and allow the child to move and worship in the way God designed them. This might mean jumping up and down, flapping their arms, clapping their hands, spinning etc. Through dance, a child's movements become controlled, fluid and purposeful. For students with severe needs, music time may be the only time we witness signs of their involvement through their displays of pure joy and exuberance.

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Map

A kid with special needs may have a difficult time creating a map out of nothing. They may have very little concept of what a map looks like. Give them something to start with, such as an actual map of their town, showing the street they live on, the school they attend, the church they go to etc. Help the child place a big red X on these landmarks. This will bring relevance to this activity, and make it personal for them so it makes more sense.

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Fun Flyer

Have a finished example for the kids to look at before they begin, and to refer to it throughout the activity. A kid with special needs may require some more assistance with this project, based on ability level. Have a lot of pictures already cut out from amusement park brochures, online images, and some celebratory exclamations about the fun to be had at the amusement park. As the child is selecting pictures, encourage dialogue between the child and his leaders and peers, emphasizing that this activity is for fun, and they are NOT going to an amusement park.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SUE SPIESZ



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My name is Susan, and I LOVE writing Special Needs Hacks for Grow Curriculum, and Student Ministries!!!!

For my profession, I teach Special Education to struggling preschoolers, and also teach school-aged students who are hospitalized, or home-bound.

One of my favorite jobs is teaching at the local college in the Exceptional Education Department!! So much fun!! I was so honored to be part of the launching of the special needs ministry at our church over 15 years ago, and now we help other churches in the area begin their own special needs ministries.

It's been an awesome experience! I have 4 amazing children who are crazy fun and outgoing! They range from 11 years old to 27!!

In my spare time I enjoy cycling and riding my jet ski on the great Niagara River! I've been caught zip lining in my backyard, and unicycling down my street. Life is fun around here!

Please feel free to reach out to me to chat about special needs curriculum and ministry. I'd love to hear from you!

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Amber Stephens, Linda Moon, Lauren Wierzba.

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WEEK 1

ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE



MAIN EVENT

BIG IDEA

We can celebrate God's plan.

THE BIBLE

Mary and Joseph: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24;
(Colossians 1:15-20)

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TODAY?

MUSIC | Celebrate and Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show or play some songs for worship time. Consider including "Lover of My Soul" by Jonathan McReynolds ([video](#)) and/or "Mary Did You Know" by Allstars Kids Club.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Give the kid some extra space and allow the child to move and worship in the way God designed them. This might mean jumping up and down, flapping their arms, clapping their hands, spinning etc.

ACTIVITY | Guess the Travel Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Split the group into two teams and tell them to come up with different places from around the country or around the world. Tell them to guess how much time it would take to travel from place to place by plane. Have a device with internet access handy so you can look up the distances. Let each group share their guesses and whichever side guesses the closest distance wins.

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Map

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Instruct the kids to draw a map on a piece of paper. It can be a map of anything: the way they drove to church, a route to school, or the inside of a building. It's okay if they don't know specific street names and accurate directions, just encourage them to create!

- ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Give them something to start with, such as an actual map of their town, showing the street they live on, the school they attend, the church they go to etc. Help the child place a big red X on these landmarks.
- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Pick a specific location (e.g., where you meet) and ask each student to draw a map from their house to your meeting place. See if you can piece all of the maps together to form one larger map of your town/city!

- **What was the most difficult part of this activity?**

POLL | Planning a Trip

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the kids the following question and tell them to vote on which answer they identify with.
- **How do you feel about planning a trip?**
 - Excited and ready for an adventure!
 - Nervous if I've never been there.
 - Why leave home?

THE BIG IDEA | We can celebrate God's plan.

- **What big holiday is coming up this month?** That's right, it's Christmas! That's why every week this month, we are going to CELEBRATE!
- **How many of you celebrate when you have to. . . go to the dentist or the doctor? Go to school? Clean your room?**
- Usually, these are not reasons to celebrate. But even if we don't feel like they are good things at first, when we see what happens when we follow through, we can be happy with the outcome!
- Maybe going to the dentist or doctor might be scary, but isn't it better to be as healthy as you can be?
- Maybe going to school might not be exciting, but isn't it good that you've been learning new things?
- Maybe cleaning your room might seem annoying, but isn't easier to find your things when your room is tidy?
- Today's Big Idea: **We can celebrate God's plan!**
- When we celebrate God's plan, we can see God's purpose is greater than any plan we could have for ourselves. And when we follow the plan, the result is always a reason to celebrate!

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

VIDEO | Main Event, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's [teaching video](#).

SCRIPTURE | Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask two kids to play Mary and Joseph, and one to play the angel. You could add costumes and props for more added fun! Prompt them to do the actions while you read aloud.

The following is one way you can paraphrase today's Scripture.

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have a preteen read the story aloud while others act it out.*

- Before Mary and Joseph were Jesus' parents, they were living pretty normal lives. They probably got up and did normal stuff: brushed their teeth, ate their meals, laughed with friends, cleaned the house, and went to sleep.
- That is, until everything changed. An angel appeared and spoke to Mary and told her God's great plan for all people: that Jesus would come to Earth in the form of a little baby! God wanted Jesus to be on Earth, and God wanted Mary to be in on this great plan. Of course, Mary was shocked. She might have even been really scared. She wasn't married and wondered what people would think if she had a baby already. But she chose to follow and celebrate this great plan.
- Some time later, Joseph, who was now engaged to Mary, was visited by an angel in a dream while he was sleeping. Joseph was worried about Mary and the baby. But the angel told Joseph that Mary's baby was indeed God's Son, so he didn't need to be afraid!
- Think of God's plan like a party. God invites us to follow the plan, and we can choose to join in or not. Sometimes, it's hard, and we aren't sure how to get there, but God is with us and will show us the way.

QUESTION | Maps and Angels

- **What do you think God's messengers to Mary and Joseph and maps have in common?**

ACTIVITY | Create Your Own Fun Flyer

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass out multi-colored papers for the kids to create their own amusement park/carnival flyers with along with crayons and other supplies.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Have a finished example for the kids to look at before they begin, and to refer to it throughout the activity. Have a lot of pictures already cut out from amusement park brochures, online images, and some celebratory exclamations about the fun to be had at the amusement park.*
- **How does your family plan for a day at an amusement park or carnival? What do you pack? What do you wear? What rides or foods do you hit first?**
- Thinking about following God's plan should be like planning for a fun day like that! It is something we can be excited about and celebrate.
- **What do you think are God's plans for you?** It's okay if you don't know. **What can we do to find out what God's plans for us are?**

SCRIPTURE | Colossians 1:15-20

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage with your group.*
- **If Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, what does that make you and me?** Yeah! We are part of Jesus' family! And as part of Jesus' family, we try to live in such a way that our lives and the choices we make point back to God.
- **What are some ways your actions and decisions point to God?**
- In verse 17, it mentions in Jesus, all things are held together. All of this was true even when Jesus was a little baby!

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

REFLECTION | Why Do We Use Maps?

- When we use maps and apps with directions, they guide us and show us the way. We tell it where we want to go, and if we follow the steps given, we will arrive at our destination. Sometimes, that’s an amusement park, and we are so excited to get there!
- But even when the steps along the way don’t make sense, we trust that they are leading us in the right direction. When we celebrate God’s plan, we eagerly wait for all the ways we can be a part of God’s story!

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Encourage preteens to draw a map of their personal story, kind of like a life timeline. Help them to identify some points in their lives where God had a plan for them. Take time to share personal stories as you are able.*

PRAYER

- God, thank You for asking us to be a part of Your story like Mary and Joseph. Please help us to be ready when you show us what our next steps with You are. We want to celebrate Your plan and be a part of Your story. Thank You for letting us join You every time You guide us and speak to us. In Jesus’ name, amen!

ACTIVITY | Let’s Celebrate!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before group time, prepare a large garbage bag filled with inflated balloons of all sizes (make sure you get some help to prepare this because the more balloons, the better!). Play some upbeat music and empty the bag where the kids are and let them have fun tossing the balloons around!*

MEMORY VERSE | Words from the Word

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell the kids to read the verse one word at a time, passing the Bible to the next kid after reading one word. Encourage them to do this as quickly as possible.*

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **How did Mary feel after learning what the great plan would be?**
- **How did Mary respond?**
- **What did the angel say to Joseph?**
- **Read Colossians 1:17. How does this verse show that Jesus was God’s great plan?**
- **Is it sometimes difficult to do what God asks?**
- **How can we be more like Mary and Joseph and follow God?**
- **How is God with us? Think of a few different ways!**

ACTIVITY | Plan the Perfect Day

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid the planner printable and something to write with. You could choose to also provide [stickers](#) they can use to decorate your page.
- **What would your perfect day look like?** Write out the things you would do on that day!
- Sometimes our plans might not work out, but God's plans ALWAYS do! That's why we can celebrate God's plan!

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 1:46-47 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Introduce kids to this month's memory verse, teaching them the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we've provided.