

WEEK 1 ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus came to bring good news to the world.

THE BIBLE

The Birth of John Foretold: Luke 1:5-20; 57-66;
Malachi 3:1-4

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You can lead kids in worship with any songs you like best, but here are a few songs that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)
 - "Good News" (Mandisa)
 - "Joy" (For King & Country)
 - "Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee" (Go Fish)
 - "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" (Paul Baloche)

ACTIVITY | Joyful Noisemakers

- Welcome to Joy to the World, everyone! This month is all about celebrating, since we are talking about things that happened around the time Jesus was born!
- **Have you ever been part of a big celebration?** Maybe it was someone's birthday or graduation. No matter the occasion, people get loud at celebrations!
- "Everybody make some noise" is a popular phrase emcees use to hype people up! But did you know the Bible says something similar? In the book of Psalms, for example, the whole world is called to "shout for joy" or "make a joyful noise!"
- Let's make something together that will help us make some joyful noise for God!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Kids can create their own “joyful noisemakers” to use every week of this series! Staple or duct tape one end of a cardboard tube and fill it with dry grains or kernels. Pinch the other end of the tube into a cone and staple or tape it shut. Then, personalize with markers, crayons, stickers, and colorful paper!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Provide a variety of noisemaker craft options for preteens. Search online resources such as Pinterest for ideas that don’t require too many additional supplies or prep.
- When we get good news, we want everyone to know it! Everybody make some noise!

ACTIVITY | That’s Good News!

- **Whenever someone shares something good that happened to them, how do you respond?**
The right way to respond is to be happy for them and with them!
- **Does anyone have good news to share with the group?** Like maybe, “Aunt Veronica and Uncle Carlos are having a baby!” Or, “I made a new friend at school!”
- Here’s how we’ll share our good news with the group:
 - You: “Guess what!”
 - Everyone: “What?”
 - You: “I have good news!”
 - Everyone: “Tell us!”
- After you tell us your good news, everyone will say “That’s good news!” and cheer you on with our Joyful Noisemakers!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Start off the activity by sharing first. Then choose a kid to share their news, and have that kid pick the next person once they are done. Keep going until everyone has had a chance to share. If your group is timid or doesn’t want to share, prepare a list of good news that’s going on around the world or even in your church, and have everyone respond to those pieces of news!
- Sometimes it might feel like our world is filled with more bad news than good news. But the good news from today’s Bible story is still the best and most important news we’ve got!

QUESTION | How do we celebrate good news?

- **We’ve been celebrating with noise, but what are some other ways you can celebrate? Dancing? Jumping for joy? Throwing a party?**
- **Share a story from your family or culture that describes how you celebrate good news.**
- There are so many different ways to celebrate, not just one. And in December, people all over the world get ready to celebrate Christmas! Let’s take a look!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show images and share a few facts about [Christmas celebrations from around the world](#). You could also show a video like [“Christmas Celebrations in Different Countries”](#) or images from [the Giant Lantern Festival](#) that takes place in the Philippines.
- **Did you know that God celebrates with us, too?** God created celebration and invites us all to join in!

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

BIBLE STORY | The Birth of John Foretold

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use puppets, figures or other toys (get creative) to help kids visualize this story from Luke 1:5–20. You could also use a video ([like this](#)) to summarize the Bible story.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Involve preteens to act out the story instead of using props. The easiest way to do this is have them improvise! Cue them by calling out an action that their character might have done in the story (e.g., “Zechariah jumped back in alarm!”).
- Zechariah and Elizabeth were an elderly couple who loved God deeply.
- One day, Zechariah was serving in the temple when an angel suddenly appeared!
 - **What if an angel suddenly appeared to you? How would you feel?** I’d be scared, and Zechariah was, too!
- The angel came from God to give Zechariah a very important message. God would give him and his wife, Elizabeth, a baby who would be named John. John would be filled with the Holy Spirit and turn many people to God.
- Zechariah couldn’t believe it. It seemed too good to be true! “How can this happen?” he wondered. “Elizabeth and I are too old to have a baby!”
- Zechariah was so overwhelmed that he couldn’t talk anymore—for months! He was literally speechless! Having a baby with Elizabeth at their age seemed impossible to him.
 - **But is anything impossible for God?**
 - No! And just like God promised, Elizabeth and Zechariah had a baby boy!
- When Zechariah wrote down that the baby should be named “John,” like the angel told him to, he could speak once again! So, he started praising God. The good news was coming true!
- And the best part of this good news was that John would be the one who would prepare the way for Jesus later on. That’s very good news!

THE BIG IDEA | Jesus came to bring good news to the world.

- It’s time for the Big Idea! And since we’re discovering celebrations from different countries around the world, let’s say that again, but in . . . Mandarin Chinese, the world’s second-most spoken language!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Find a native speaker to record this on a simple video, or play [this sound clip on Google Translate](#) for kids to copy. Afterward, pass out the Big Idea passport printable to each kid and have them write today’s Big Idea in box #1. Collect the passports at the end of large group time and save for next week.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Create stickers out of printer labels that say the Big Idea so kids can stick it on their passport page easily. This is a recurring activity so you will need to prepare one every week. Don’t forget to provide noise-cancelling headphones here and any time the noisemakers are used for kids with noise sensitivity.
- Are you ready? “Shì dà chuàng yì de shí hòu le!”
- Well done, everyone! It is time for the Big Idea! And today’s Big Idea is [Have kids shake their noisemakers from earlier.] . . . **Jesus came to bring good news to the world!**

VIDEO | Joy to the World, Episode 1

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

VIDEO | Some Good News (SGN)

- **Do you keep good news to yourself?** When I hear good news, I can't wait to tell everybody – like, my family, my friends, and my neighbors.
- Good news connects us with people all over the world. And when times seem tough, like they were during the time of Zechariah and Elizabeth, good news gives people hope!
- Not too long ago, we were all staying home to avoid getting sick. It was a tough time, and everyone was hungry for some good news.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show the first part of [this video](#) by "Some Good News (SGN)," featuring people thanking medical professionals during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Or, choose another video from the [SGN channel](#) to show others celebrating when people care for one another. Be sure to preview all videos carefully before showing them to kids.

OBJECT LESSON | Share the Good News!

- Remember how I said you might get a little treat today? Well, good news – you'll all get one if you follow directions!
- But here's the catch. I'm only going to give the directions to one of you!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Take an index card, fold it in half, and add these words inside: "Good news – Jesus loves you! Now, pass this along to one other person!" Ask the kid with the nearest birthday to come up, then hand them the "Good News Card" without any further instructions. Once they read it, they'll pass the card along, one person at a time, until it reaches everyone in the group.
- **Did you all get the good news? How did you get it?** Someone shared it with you!
- The thing about good news is that we don't all get it at the same time. That's why it's our job to make sure we pass it along by telling others . . . even people we might not think to tell at first.
- Zechariah received good news that he would have a son but he couldn't really tell anyone about it until baby John was born. But the coolest part of that story is that his son would eventually grow up and tell everyone the good news about Jesus!
- Even though Jesus wasn't even born yet in today's story, the story about John's birth still shows us that **Jesus came to bring good news to the world!**

BIBLE | Malachi 3:1–4

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Malachi 3:1–4 with the group.
- **Who do you think the messenger is, based on today's stories?** John or Jesus?
- This part of the Bible was written about 500 years before John or Jesus was born. **What does this tell you about God's good news for the world?** God has been planning it for a very long time!
- **What good news did you hear in these verses?** Jesus will come and cleanse us of sin like soap cleanses us of dirt.
 - Sin is something we all have and we all do, every time we say, do, or think about something that causes us to disobey God. But unlike dirt, it's not something we can get rid of ourselves. We all need a Savior for that.

- That's why Jesus came to earth, so that he can save us from sin. **Jesus came to bring good news to the world!** Very good news, indeed!

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

REFLECTION | Gingerbread Sins

- Many people in the United States and Europe make gingerbread people or houses around Christmas time. While we can decorate with frosting, candy, and other goodies, it's tough to decorate if the cookie is broken! Or maybe you can but it won't look the way you'd like.
- The bad news is that we, too, were all broken at one point. Our sins — the things we do that's wrong or the things we don't do even though it's right — kept us from knowing God fully and having the right kind of relationship. But the good news is that Jesus came to fix that! Namely, Jesus came to cleanse away our sins.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass out double-sided copies of the gingerbread person such that one side says "without Jesus" and the other says "with Jesus." Either pre-cut or have kids cut out their gingerbread figure.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Adjust this activity by printing the gingerbread person and laminating it. Have kids draw a picture of a sin with a dry erase marker. Take an eraser that says JESUS on top and have them erase the sins from the gingerbread person.*
- Write down different kinds of sins on the gingerbread person that's on the side of your paper marked "Without Jesus."
- But on the side that says "With Jesus," leave the gingerbread person blank and clean!
- Take this home and flip it back and forth to remind you that with Jesus, we are cleansed of our sin!
- **Jesus came to bring good news to the world!**

RESPONSE | Sticky Joy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give each kid a stack of sticky notes to write on and stick to the corresponding poster boards. "My Family," "My Friends," "My Neighbors," "My School or Team," and "My World."*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Consider allowing students or groups to create their own "Good News" newspaper. What would it be called? What would be added in? Featured stories? Check out [this site](#) for tips and templates on how to have kids create their own newspaper articles. If you want to take the digital route, have kids plan out a vlog or website.*
- Think of some good news for people in your family, school, team, neighborhood, or the world. Write it down on a sticky note and stick it on the board it belongs on.

MEMORY VERSE | Traveling Word

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have kids stand in a circle. Print out the printable containing the words from Luke 2:14, then pass them out one or more to each kid in order. For groups larger than twenty, have kids take turns. Stand in the middle of the circle and instruct kids to kids say their word(s) out loud. On the second time, have them pass down their cards to the next person as they say it out loud. Collect all the cards from the last person and see if the group can recite their assigned words from memory!*

- Great job working together to learn the memory verse for the month! Let's say it together once more time:
- **"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."**

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring good news to the world. Thank you that no one is left out of your good news! May we always remember to share good news with people around us, especially the good news about you! Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **What was the good news about John?**
- **Why was the good news so hard for Zechariah to believe?**
- **What happened to Zechariah after the baby was born?**
- **Read Luke 1:58. What did her neighbors and family members do when they heard Elizabeth's news?**
- **What are some things you do when you hear good news?**
- **Name one piece of good news you received this past week.**
- **What good news about God can you share with others?**

ACTIVITY | Good News Travel

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a printable of the travel magazine "card" and fold it in half. Have them decorate the cover with a fun destination of their choice and on the inside, write a piece of good news about God or something happening in their life to share with someone.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Make a "Good News Whispering Tube" with toilet paper tubes that kids can decorate. Have "God loves you" printed on labels. Teach friends this phrase, have them stick the label on their tube, then have them whisper it in the tube.
- **Jesus came to bring good news to the world. What can we do to help that good news travel to people we know, and even those we don't know?**

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 2:14 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Practice this month's memory verse with the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we've provided in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/Luke2-14.
- Let's practice this month's memory verse together!
- **"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."**