



LESSON 1 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

All I hoped for on my eighth birthday was a pair of cowboy boots. I have a picture of the moment it happened. I ripped apart the wrapping paper, opened the box, and there they were! The picture shows me in swim trunks, my new cowboy boots, and an ear-to-ear smile. As I reflect, I see that my hope was deeper than the leather, thread, and soles of those boots. While my childhood was mostly great, there were times when I felt tame, and weak, and trapped. I hoped that when I pulled on those boots, I would feel like a cowboy—wild, tough, and free.

By necessity, hope is present when something better is not. The people who first heard the words of Isaiah or lived the story in Matthew's Gospel were people of hope. They hoped for a leader who could make them wild, and tough, and free in the face of suffering and feeling powerless.

Read Isaiah 7:10–14 and Matthew 1:18–24. As you read, what do you see that points to hope?

For hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, God's people held onto hope. For over two thousand years after His birth, people have claimed the promise of our Wonder Truth: Jesus Is Our Hope!

How do you see Jesus providing the hope promised in Isaiah and Matthew?

What do you find yourself hoping for these days?

What might the children in your life be hoping for?

—Matt Irvine

Pastor and Editor

Contributor to Wonder Ink



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Activity: Nativity Play

SUPPLIES: toy nativity set

Greet the kids warmly and welcome them to church.

Hello! Welcome to church! Come see what we have today! Show the kids the nativity set and invite them to play with it. **We're going to learn in this series about when God sent Jesus to be born on earth. God sent Jesus to give us hope—that means knowing for sure that things will be OK and that God is with us. We're going to learn about that today! You can play with the nativity set and think about how God sent Jesus to be born.** If the kids know the nativity story, encourage them to act it out using the characters. If they don't, help them.



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LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, we invite Your Holy Spirit to lead us today. Teach us what You want us to understand. Help us to hear Your voice and know Your amazing love for us. Make us more like Jesus, who is our hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible

Ask: What is this called? ***The Bible***

Ask: Why is the Bible special? ***Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.***

Tell the Bible story

The Big Picture Bible, page 176

Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph

Word of Wonder

WORD OF WONDER

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

— Isaiah 9:6

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Craft: Christmas Tree

SUPPLIES: foam Christmas tree, jewel and star stickers



Give each child a foam tree and help them decorate it by adding jewels and sparkly stickers as ornaments. Help them put a star sticker at the top of the tree.

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish the activity, pray with them and thank God for sending Jesus to earth for us.

God, thank You for sending Jesus to earth to be our hope. No matter what happens, we can trust that Jesus is with us and loves us. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: God knows you and loves you more than you can imagine! May He fill you with hope today and always! And may the hope of Jesus shine in you so that others may see the love of God in you!