



LESSON 2 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

I think joy can best be learned from kids. There's nothing like hearing children laugh at silly songs or watching tiny babies giggle at funny faces people make at them. Or if you'd like to shed tears of joy, watch a clip of a child hearing her mother's voice for the first time. These are simple joys.

Joy is the ability to experience deep gladness no matter the circumstances of life.

Sometimes as we grow up, we take things like funny faces and silly songs for granted, or even the sound of the voices of people we love. Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by our circumstances that joy seems hard to find.

How are your circumstances impacting your joy this season?

The people hearing the words of Isaiah, and those later described in Luke's Gospel, lived in difficult times. Read Isaiah 35 and note that it describes a day when God will overwhelm His people with joy. Next, read Luke 2:6–18. Notice the angel's words to the shepherds that this news will bring "great joy for all the people" (v 10).

Born into difficult circumstances and laid in an animal feeding trough, this new baby probably still had funny faces made at Him. And at some point, He heard the voice of His mother for the first time. The difference in this story is that Jesus doesn't just teach us about joy; He is the source of it!

Jesus is our joy!

—**Matt Irvine**

Pastor and Editor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Isaiah was God's messenger to the nation of Judah during an unstable time who foretold of the coming Savior. The shepherds near Bethlehem were the first to hear of Jesus' birth and the first-ever evangelists, who told everyone about the child.

WHAT?

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that "the eyes of those who are blind will be opened" when He came (Isaiah 35:5). Jesus showed what the kingdom of God is like when He healed many who were sick. When Jesus returns, He will fix and restore all that is broken and disordered.

WHERE?

At the time of Jesus' birth, the shepherds lived in fields near Bethlehem, located about six miles south of Jerusalem in the region of Judea. Jesus was born in the humble setting of Bethlehem, instead of the glamorous palace of a king.

WHEN?

Jesus was born about 700 years after Isaiah wrote about God's "coming" to save His people. At the time, Isaiah's audience probably thought about how God would save Judah from physical destruction. But God "comes" to His people in physical form when Jesus is born.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

When sin entered the world, God put a plan into motion—He would redeem His people and fix all that was broken by sin. In the Old Testament, we see God working through one family—Israel—to bring about this plan of salvation, but this would not be clearly unveiled until the arrival of Jesus.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Activity: Stand Up if You Love...

Gather all the kids and tell them to sit down. **Today we're going to talk about love. What does it mean to love someone or something?** Allow the kids to respond. **You might love pizza or candy or love your parents. Those are different kinds of love! Let's do an activity where you'll stand up if you love the things I call out. After each round, everyone will sit back down. Only stand up if you love what I say.**

Say the following things, and invite the kids to stand up each time if they love what you say (or add your own ideas that are customized for your group):

- Ice cream
- Sports (name a local favorite team if you have one)
- Playing outside
- Swimming
- Animals
- Your family
- Reading
- Drawing
- Pickles
- Your stuffed animal or favorite toy
- Music or singing
- Dancing
- The color blue
- Chicken nuggets
- Sleep
- Running
- Friends

We didn't all love the same things! We might love those things in different ways, and we might all show love differently. Did you know that there is Someone who loves us more than any of those? It's God! He showed His love for us in a big way! We'll learn about that in God's big story today.



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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, thank You for being here with us! Please show us more about You and Your love for us as we explore Your big story today. Thank You for being our joy. Help us to live joyful lives that point others to You. 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 182

Jesus Was Born

Word of Wonder

WORD OF WONDER

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

— Isaiah 9:6



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LESSON 2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Craft: Nativity Streamer

SUPPLIES: manger scene, yarn, streamers, double sided tape, coloring utensils



In our story today, we learned that God sent Jesus to be born. Let's make a craft to help us remember the story of Jesus.

Pass out the manger scene and have kids color. Then help them tape streamers to the bottom and attach yarn at the top.



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Activity: Acts of Love

SUPPLIES: paper heart

Set out a paper heart.

How do you feel loved? We'll do an activity where you will show love to others! Whenever you see me hold up this paper heart, you will find a friend and do the action I call out.

Hold up the heart and encourage the kids to do the following actions:

- Give someone a hug.
- Give someone a high five.
- Pretend you're praying for someone.
- Help someone who has fallen down.
- Give someone a pat on the back.
- Pretend to give someone a present.
- Give someone a fist bump.
- Tell someone something nice.

That was a fun way to think about different ways we show people love. God also has ways He shows us He loves us. The greatest gift God has given us is Jesus.

Prayer and Blessing

Pray with the kids and thank God for sending Jesus and giving us joy.

When I say, "joy," you can lift your hands above your head like "praise hands" celebrating.

God, thank You for sending Jesus to earth for us. Thank You for making a way for us to be saved and forgiven. Because of Jesus, we can celebrate and have joy (praise hands). We love You! We want to keep celebrating Jesus! 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 kept His promises to His people and brought them joy through Jesus. God will keep His promises to you too because He knows you, loves you, and leads you. Rejoice this week because Jesus is our joy!