



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

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Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Curiosity Activity: Decorate Party Hats

Play Station: Party Time

Set up: Set out plain party hats, decorating supplies, stickers, mini pom-poms, and glue.

Play: Invite the kids to decorate their own party hats. When finished, they can throw their own party and celebrate Jesus.



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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, 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



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Craft: Bible Verse Christmas Tree

Supplies: craft stick, 1 per kid, strips of green paper (4 per kid, 1 of each size), verse labels, glue sticks



Help kids glue their green strips onto their craft stick. The shortest piece goes at the top and the longest piece goes at the bottom. Then help the kids attach the labels to each of the green strips. Kids can put a star at the top of their tree.



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Game: Greeting Relay

Ahead of time, clear a large area in your space where the kids can freely move around. Kids will need to line up on both sides of the open area and move back and forth.

In God's big story today, the angel greeted Mary with a very exciting message. Then Mary traveled and greeted her cousin Elizabeth. Mary got a good greeting and then she gave a good greeting! Let's play a game where we get to give each other good greetings!

Divide the kids into teams of four to six. Split each team in half and have them stand directly across from each other. **When the game starts, the first person from each team** (designate which side goes first) **will run across to the other members of her own team. When those kids reach their team members on the other side, they will give the next people a specific greeting that I call out before that team member can then start running.**

Every member of the team goes back and forth giving the same greeting until everyone has gone. You can play multiple rounds, using a different greeting with each round.

Round 1: Give a high-five.

Round 2: Give a fist bump.

Round 3: Shake hands.

Round 4: Say, "Hi, friend!"

Round 5: Say, "Jesus is the promised King!"

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!