



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

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: toy nativity set

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Hope Coloring Sheet (1 per kid)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Nativity Play

Set up: Set out a toy nativity set.

Play: Invite the kids to play with the toy nativity set. If they know the story of Jesus' birth, encourage them to act it out with the characters. If they don't know the story, help them act it out.

Play Station: Hope Coloring Sheet

Set up: Print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out the coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of something that makes them happy.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

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



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Craft: Angel

SUPPLIES: angel template (cone, body, wings) 1 per kid, double sided tape, coloring utensils



Give each child a set of supplies. Let them color the angel body and wings. Use double sided tape to make the cone and help them use tape to attach the body and wings to the cone.

Today we learned how an angel appeared to Mary and Joseph to tell them that Jesus would soon be born! You can take your angel home to remind you of this good news!



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Game: Hoping for Jesus

SUPPLIES: paper plates (1 per kid)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Baby Jesus Picture

Ahead of time, print the Baby Jesus Picture and cut out the Baby Jesus. Set out paper plates (or sheets of paper) on the ground in a big circle (enough for each kid to have one). Hide the Baby Jesus picture under one of the plates or papers.

Today we're going to play a game where we'll wait and hope to find Jesus too! We'll march or dance around in a circle when music plays. When the music stops, everyone will stop in front of one plate. When I say, "Go," you can bend down and pick it up to see if a Baby Jesus picture is under it.

Play upbeat music from the Early Childhood flash drive while the kids march or dance around the plates in a big circle. Pause the music periodically and tell the kids to stop. Then tell them to pick up their plates to see who has the Jesus picture. Whoever has the Baby Jesus picture will shout, "Jesus is our hope!" Then tell the kids to close their eyes or turn away while you hide it again. Play several rounds.



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!