

GOD IS MERCIFUL



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YEAR 3, UNIT 12

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GOD IS MERCIFUL

MONTHLY PREPARATION GUIDE

YEAR 3, UNIT 12 - ELEMENTARY

WEEK 1

LESSON MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece | Sticky Notes of two different colors (1 set per team) | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers | *Bible Trivia* Activity Page (1 per class) | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi* Activity Pages (1 set per class) | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi B&W* Activity Pages (1 image per child) | Crayons | Wooden Building Blocks (1-2 sets per class) | Bible | Party Noisemakers (1 per child) | *God is Merciful* Activity Page (1 per child) | Cardstock | White Crayon (1 per class) | Watercolor Paints & Brush (1 set per child) |

WEEK 2

LESSON MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece | Angel Decorations (Garland, Angel Wings, etc.) | Christmas Music | *Angel Messengers* Activity Pages (1 set per class) | *Angel Messengers B & W* Activity Pages (1 page per child) | Small Doilies (1 - 6 inch doily per child) | Scissors | Clothespins (1 per child) | Glitter | Glue | Gold Pipe Cleaners (1 per child) | Various Skin-Toned Papers | Fine-Tip Black Marker | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers |

WEEK 3

LESSON MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece | Burlap or Linen Tunics (1 per team) | Leather Cording (1 per team) | Toy Grasshoppers (1 per child) | Small Paper Plates (1 per child) | *John the Baptist* Activity Pages | Cardstock | *His Name is John* Activity Page (1 per child) | Scissors | Markers or Crayons | Craft Sticks (6-8 per child) | Glue | Sticky Notes | Music |

WEEK 4

LESSON MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece | *Scavenger Hunt Cards* Activity Page (1 per class) | Tape | *Scavenger Hunt Checklist* Activity Pages (1 list per team) | Cardstock | Markers or Crayons | *Ornament* Activity Page (1 image per child) | *Holy Family* Activity Page (1 image per child) | Scissors | Glue Sticks | Ribbon | Hot Glue Gun (for teacher only) | Hole Punch | Clear Plastic Ornaments (purchase online or at craft stores - 1 per child) | *Jesus Is* Activity Page (1 per child) |

GOD PROMISES A NEW KING

BIBLE PASSAGE

Nehemiah 2, 8-9; Malachi 3 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

God is Merciful

FOCUS VERSE

"The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made."

Psalm 145:9 (ICB)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | Sticky Notes of two different colors | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers | *Bible Trivia* Activity Page | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi* Activity Pages | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi B&W* Activity Pages | Crayons | Wooden Building Blocks | Bible | Party Noisemakers | *God is Merciful* Activity Page | Cardstock | White Crayon | Watercolor Paints & Brush |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- Have you ever gotten excited about someone coming to visit you? Why were you so excited?
- Did you do anything special together? If so, what did you do?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

Say, "Do you know what today is? [Allow for responses.] Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a time of waiting. What do you think we are waiting for? [Allow for responses.] We are waiting to celebrate Jesus' birth. How many of you are excited about Christmas? Me too! [Allow for responses.] Advent helps us think about what it was like for God's people to wait on Him to send His Son, Jesus. This month's theme song will help us do that, too. Let's sing 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.'"

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is this month's recommended theme song. Kingdom Kids (available on YouTube) has our favorite version.

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Gather everyone for prayer.

Sample Prayer: "Dear God, thank You for loving us and sending Your Son, Jesus. We are so grateful You keep Your promises. In Jesus' name. Amen."

REVIEW – 5 MINUTES**MATERIALS:** | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, "This month, we will learn that **God is merciful**. The Bible teaches us that we are saved because of God's mercy and grace. Let's think about these two words - mercy and grace. They are alike, yet they are different. Would someone like to share why you believe these words are alike and different? [Allow for responses.]

"Mercy means 'not getting what we deserve.' Can you think of a time when you should have gotten in trouble for something but didn't? Does anyone want to share a story about that?"



MERCY AND GRACE CAN BE CHALLENGING CONCEPTS FOR CHILDREN, BUT PROVIDING EXAMPLES WILL HELP. SHARE A PERSONAL STORY ABOUT A TIME YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN IN TROUBLE BUT DIDN'T BECAUSE SOMEONE GAVE YOU MERCY. ROLE-PLAYING IS ANOTHER EFFECTIVE WAY TO TEACH ABOUT MERCY. COME UP WITH A FEW SCENARIOS WHERE CHILDREN MUST CHOOSE TO BE MERCIFUL AND KIND. FOR EXAMPLE, IF ONE CHILD TOOK ANOTHER CHILD'S TOY, YOU CAN ROLE-PLAY HOW TO OFFER MERCY DESPITE THE WRONGDOING.

Say, "Instead of us being punished for our sins [the wrong things we do], God sent His Son to take the punishment for us. He loved us that much. That is MERCY!"

"Grace means 'we get what we do not deserve.' Whew, that sounds similar to mercy, but it's not the same. This is what I mean. We get a new life with Jesus. He saves us and makes us His friends. We don't deserve these good gifts, but He gives them to us anyway. All we have to do is accept Him. That is GRACE! Have you ever gotten something wonderful you didn't deserve? Tell us about it! [Allow for responses.]

"In short, we deserve punishment for our sin, but Jesus took that punishment so we wouldn't have to. That's God's mercy. We DON'T deserve God's forgiveness, but because of Jesus, we have it. That is God's grace.

"Today, we will learn about a time when God showed mercy with a promise for a new King who would be the world's Savior, but first, we need to post this week's puzzle piece. Who would like to do that?"



SOME KIDS WOULD LIKE TO BE CHOSEN FOR TASKS (LIKE POSTING THE WEEKLY PUZZLE PIECE) BUT AREN'T COMFORTABLE VOLUNTEERING. INCORPORATE PRACTICES THAT GIVE EVERYONE A CHANCE TO SERVE. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU CAN DOWNLOAD AN APP THAT RANDOMLY GENERATES A NAME FROM THE LIST OF STUDENTS YOU PROVIDE. (DON'T FORGET TO ADD YOUR VISITORS!)

TRANSITION: Say, "Before we read from God's Word, let's play a game!"

ENGAGE — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Sticky Notes of two different colors (1 set per team) | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers | *Bible Trivia* Activity Page (1 per class) |

Say, "Christmas is the time we celebrate Jesus' birthday, and for the next few weeks, we will be 'getting ready' for Christmas. For example, we may decorate Christmas trees, buy gifts, listen to Christmas music, and have parties. Today, let's play a game to help us 'get ready' to hear about God's promise to send a Savior."



TODAY'S GAME IS SET UP SIMILARLY TO *CONNECT 4*. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A DRY-ERASE BOARD, USE MASKING TAPE TO CREATE A GRID ON A LARGE POSTER BOARD.

GAME GOAL: To be the first team to get four sticky notes in a row

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Draw a grid on the dry-erase board.
2. Divide your group into two teams. Give each group a stack of sticky notes. (Each team will have their own color of notes.)
3. You will ask each team a question on their turn. If they answer correctly, they place one of their team's sticky notes on the grid. However, they may only fill in the grid from the bottom up (just as you do in the *Connect 4* board game). Then, it is the next team's turn.
4. The first team to get four sticky notes in a row - vertically, horizontally, or diagonally - wins.

TRANSITION: Say, "That was a fun game! You remember so much from this year's lessons! God promised to send Jesus as far back as the Garden of Eden. He used many messengers to help the world 'get ready' for Jesus. Today's story will tell us about a few of those people. Let's get ready to listen!"

LEARN — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi* Activity Pages (1 set per class) | *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi* B&W Activity Pages (1 image per child) | Crayons | Wooden Building Blocks (1-2 sets per class) | Bible | Party Noisemakers (1 per child) |



GATHER THE CHILDREN AROUND YOU IN A SEMI-CIRCLE ON THE FLOOR. YOU WILL USE THE BLOCKS TO BUILD A WALL AND THEN A TEMPLE (BUILDING) INSIDE THE WALL, SO ENSURE THE CHILDREN CAN SEE THE BLOCKS AS YOU TELL THE STORY.

Show the children the images of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Malachi as you teach.

Say, "Later this month, we will talk about the Christmas story, but first, let's look back to the Old Testament when three good men, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi, obeyed God and spoke His words to the people. They have something to teach us about the Christmas story long before it happened!"



SOME CHILDREN FIND IT HELPFUL TO COLOR OR DRAW AS THEY LISTEN. MAKE EXTRA COPIES OF THE BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGES TO GIVE THE CHILDREN THE OPTION OF COLORING AS YOU TEACH TODAY'S LESSON.

Say, "The people of Israel had been taken into captivity [they were taken as slaves to a faraway country]. Their enemies had destroyed their city, Jerusalem. Even worse, they had stopped following God and were worshipping idols.

"At the start of today's lesson, some people had returned from exile to their homeland but still were not following God. However, the Lord loved them, so He had mercy on them. [He did not give them what they deserved.] God sent a good man named Nehemiah to help the people to rebuild their city and the Temple."

Use the blocks to build the wall and temple as you tell the next portion of the Bible story.

Say, "Nehemiah had been taken far from home and was working for a king. He heard about what happened to his city, so he asked the king if he could go help rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. God was merciful and worked in the king's heart to allow Nehemiah to leave."

Ask, "What would it be like to leave your town and return to see everything destroyed? Why would you need a leader like Nehemiah to help you rebuild everything?" Allow for responses.

Use your Bible for the next portion of the lesson. Place the lesson text inside your Bible, stand up, and read like you are Ezra.

Say, "Ezra, the priest [like a preacher/pastor], was there when they started rebuilding the Temple, and he was the one who read God's Word to the people. As the people listened, they began to cry. They knew they had not kept God's Word.

"Have you ever felt sad after doing something wrong? [Allow for response.] It doesn't feel good, does it? Did you know that sadness can be helpful when it reminds us that our sin makes God sad? It tells us it is time to admit our sins to God [confession] and ask God to forgive us as we commit again to follow Him [repent]."

Say, "On the second day, Ezra read that God wanted His people to have a special feast. So, Ezra and Nehemiah told the people to celebrate - to have a party because God still loved them - He had never stopped loving them!

"Why do you think God told the people to have a special feast? [Allow for responses.] We can celebrate God's forgiveness when we confess our sins and repent! We don't have to feel ashamed after we return to God. He loves us SO much, forgives us completely, and we can celebrate being His children!"

Say, "The people listened to stories about the awesome things God had done. They heard how God created the world, made His special promise to Abraham, and rescued the people from Egypt. They heard how, time and time again, God had been merciful to them. The people began telling God they were sorry

for doing wrong things. They worshiped Him and started obeying His laws. God had mercy on them. He forgave them.”

Give the children the noisemakers and take a moment to celebrate God’s merciful forgiveness! Celebrate God, and give the children an opportunity to share things they love about God.

Say, “Another man named Malachi also lived during this time. He was a prophet who spoke God’s words to the people. He told them that God would send His Son to earth to take the punishment they deserved, forgive them, and give them new life. Then, FOUR HUNDRED YEARS after Malachi said these things, Jesus arrived, just as God promised! Wow! Four hundred years is a long time, isn’t it?!”

Use your Bible to point out the book of Malachi. Show the children the division between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Ask, “How did Malachi know God would send Jesus? [Allow for responses.] Malachi could have only known about Jesus if God told him. Isn’t that incredible?”

“This lesson reminds us that God always keeps His promises. Sometimes, we have to wait a long time, but He will always do what He says He will do. Next, it reminds us that **God is merciful**. God’s people did not deserve a new city or temple. [Did you notice that God brought them back home and sent Nehemiah to help them BEFORE they repented?] Then, at just the right time, He had Ezra read God’s Word so they could see their sin and repent. Finally, God sent Malachi to prepare God’s people for Jesus 400 years before He arrived. Isn’t God merciful and kind? God sent His only Son to save us. That is God’s mercy!”

TRANSITION: Say, “Mercy is ‘not getting what we deserve.’ Mercy is God loving us so much that He sent His Son to earth to take our punishment. Aren’t you thankful for our God, who is full of MERCY?”

DISCUSS — 10 MINUTES

Say, “Let’s talk about the story you just heard.”

1. What is mercy?

Response: Mercy is not getting what we deserve.

2. What is grace?

Response: Grace is getting what we do not deserve.

3. Name the three good men in our story.

Response: Nehemiah, Ezra, and Malachi

4. What did Nehemiah do?

Response: Allow the children to retell this portion of the story in their own words.

5. What did Ezra do?

Response: Allow the children to retell this portion of the story in their own words.

6. What did the people do when they heard God’s Word?

Response: They cried because they knew they had not obeyed the laws of God.

7. Why did the people have a party?

Response: They had a party to celebrate God’s love and mercy.

8. What was Malachi’s message to the people?

Response: He told them that the Savior was coming to earth to save the people from their sins.

9. What did you learn about God in today's lesson?

Response: **God is merciful.** God is kind. God forgives us. God wants us to celebrate His forgiveness, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "Aren't you thankful that Jesus came to earth to take our punishment and save us? That's God's mercy!"

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *God is Merciful* Activity Page (1 per child) | Cardstock | White Crayon (1 per class) | Watercolor Paints & Brush (1 set per child) |

Say, "The craft we are making today will help us remember that **God is merciful** to the whole world. He loves us so much!"



BEFORE CLASS, PRINT *GOD IS MERCIFUL* ACTIVITY PAGE ON CARDSTOCK, ONE FOR EACH CHILD. THEN, USING THE WHITE CRAYON, DRAW A CROSS IN THE BLANK SPACE BELOW "GOD IS MERCIFUL" AND ABOVE THE EARTH.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Give one *God is Merciful* Activity Page and watercolor set to each child. (They will likely not notice the white crayon cross drawn on their papers at first.)
2. Direct the children to paint the Activity Page. Be sure to encourage them to paint in the blank space under "God is Merciful" and above the Earth. This will reveal the cross.

TRANSITION: Say, "Does everyone see the cross on your Activity Pages now? Isn't it amazing that even hundreds of years before Christ was born, God had a plan to send His Son to die on the cross for our sins? Just as you didn't see the white crayon cross until you painted over it, God's people didn't know the great mercy they would be shown through Jesus Christ. Because we all sin, we all deserve to be punished, but God gives us mercy instead!"

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

Say, "It's time to learn our memory verse for this unit. It tells us about God's great mercy and love for all of us. I'll read it first, and then we will read it together."

"The Lord [point up] **is good** [give thumbs up] **to everyone** [spread arms wide open]. **He is merciful** [hold both hands in front of you, palms up] **to all** [spread arms wide open] **he has made** [have your fists one on top of the other twisting slightly]."

Psalm 145:9, ICB (hold hands out like a book)

CHALLENGE: Write the verse on the board. Provide the children with paper and markers. Challenge them to draw a picture that represents this verse. Walk around and ask the children to describe what they are drawing.

REFLECT — 5 MINUTES

Say, "Jesus came to take the punishment for our sins. He is a God of mercy, and He loves us SO MUCH! His mercy will change us. Let's pray.



PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN DURING THE WEEK AND ASK GOD TO MERCIFULLY TOUCH THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *"Dear Jesus, Thank You for this Advent and Christmas season when we celebrate Your coming. Help us understand that You love us very much so we can love You too. Amen."*

RELEASE — 5 MINUTES

If you have extra time, play the ENGAGE Hot/Cold Alternative Activity game. When parents and guardians arrive, please give them a copy of the monthly Parent Guide.



ALWAYS GREET FAMILY MEMBERS WITH POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT THEIR CHILD AND TELL THEM HOW HAPPY YOU ARE TO HAVE THEIR SON OR DAUGHTER IN CLASS.



**GOD
PROMISES A
NEW KING**

WEEK 1

**GOD IS
MERCIFUL**

BIBLE TRIVIA

1. **Name the king who started as a shepherd boy.**

Answer: David

2. **Which man in the Old Testament was willing to sacrifice his son to God?**

Answer: Abraham

3. **Who was Abraham's wife?**

Answer: Sarah

4. **How old was Sarah, Abraham's wife, when she had Isaac?**

Answer: 90 years old

5. **Who did God tell to build the Ark?**

Answer: Noah

6. **How many people were on the Ark?**

Answer: 8

7. **In what town was Jesus born?**

Answer: Bethlehem

8. **Who was the first man?**

Answer: Adam

9. **Who was the first woman?**

Answer: Eve

10. **Name three books in the Old Testament.**

Answer: Accept three Old Testament books.

11. **Name five books in the New Testament**

Answer: Accept five New Testament books.

12. **Who was Jesus' mother?**

Answer: Mary

13. **What is mercy?**

Answer: Not getting what we deserve.

14. **What is grace:**

Answer: Getting what we do not deserve.

15. **When did God first talk about sending His people a Savior?**

Answer: In the Garden of Eden

16. **Who was the boy king who faithfully served God?**

Answer: Josiah

17. **What was the name of the king who wanted to kill David?**

Answer: Saul

18. **Which wise woman calmed David down and kept him from killing her family?**

Answer: Abigail

19. **Which little boy heard God call him at night and finally answered, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening?"**

Answer: Samuel

20. **Name two of Jesus' disciples.**

Answer: Accept any two of the following: Simon Peter, Andrew, James (son of Zebedee), John, Matthew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Simon (the Zealot), Judas, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus

21. **What happened on the first Pentecost?**

Answer: God sent the Holy Spirit to His people

NEHEMIAH



EZRA



MALACHI



NEHEMIAH



EZRA



MALACHI



GOD IS MERCIFUL!

The Lord is kind and shows mercy. He does not become angry quickly but is full of love. The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made. Psalms 145:9 (ICB)



ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE NEW KING

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 1, Matthew 1:18-24 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

God is Merciful

FOCUS VERSE

"The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made."

Psalm 145:9 (ICB)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | Angel Decorations | Christmas Music | *Angel Messengers* Activity Pages | *Angel Messengers B & W* Activity Pages | Small Doilies (6 inch) | Scissors | Clothespins | Glitter | Glue | Gold Pipe Cleaners | Various Skin-Toned Papers | Fine-Tip Black Marker | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- Why is it so much fun to get gifts?
- Tell me about one of your favorite gifts.

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

Say, "What do you think of when you hear the word 'angel?' [Allow for responses.] Have you ever seen pictures of angels that look like cute babies? Those images might be adorable, but the Bible tells us the truth about angels. It describes them as strong warriors with supernatural powers.

"Angels are amazing and powerful! If we saw one, we would probably be afraid of it. We might even be tempted to bow down and worship it, but that wouldn't be right, would it? No, even the angels know there is only One who deserves our worship. Who is that? [Allow for responses.] Right! Only God deserves our worship. The Bible says angels are worshipping God right now! Let's join them!"

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is this month's recommended theme song. Kingdom Kids (available on YouTube) has our favorite version. We also love "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" (by LifeTree Kids) for this week's lesson.

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Ask if any of the children would like to lead in prayer. Some kids are shy about praying aloud, so do not force anyone. However, it is good to provide the opportunity.

SAMPLE PRAYER: "Dear God, thank You for Your great mercy. You are so good to us! [Allow the children to name ways God has been good to them.] We love You so much! Amen."

REVIEW — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, "Last week, we began new lessons about our merciful God. Who remembers what mercy means? [Allow for responses.] That's right! Mercy is not getting what we deserve." Refer to Lesson the BACKGROUND in Lesson One for suggestions on explaining "mercy" to young children.

Say, "Our story was about three good men God sent to tell the people that Jesus was coming. This week, we will talk about the angels who also shared special messages about Christ, the coming King. First, let's place our new puzzle piece on the wall."

TRANSITION: Say, "Now, who would like to play a special Christmas version of musical chairs? Great!"

ENGAGE — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Angel Decorations (Garland, Angel Wings, etc.) | Christmas Music |



BEFORE CLASS, DECORATE ONE CHAIR WITH THE ANGEL DECORATIONS (GARLAND, ANGEL WINGS, ETC.). THEN, ARRANGE CLASSROOM CHAIRS (INCLUDING THE "ANGEL CHAIR") FACING OUTWARD IN A LARGE CIRCLE. THERE SHOULD BE ONE CHAIR FOR EACH CHILD.

Say, "Today, we will play a special version of musical chairs called *Angel Musical Chairs*. Everyone take a seat, and I'll explain the rules."

GAME GOAL: To be the last child remaining in the game

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Have each child stand in front of a chair outside the circle.
2. Start the music and have the children walk clockwise around the circle. (The kids should walk at a comfortable pace.)
3. Stop the music suddenly. The children should quickly sit down in a seat. One player will be forced to sit in the "angel chair."
4. The player who sat in the "angel chair" is out of the round.
5. Remove a chair and play again until only one player is left.

TRANSITION: Say, "We've been talking a little about angels already, but the best is yet to come! This week's lesson is about three angel visits. However, it's the message they brought, not the angels, that we really need to hear. So, let's gather to listen to God's Word together!"

LEARN — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Angel Messengers* Activity Pages (1 set per class) | *Angel Messengers B & W* Activity Pages (1 page per child) |



USE THE *ANGEL MESSENGERS* ACTIVITY PAGES AS YOU TELL TODAY'S STORY. POST EACH ONE ON THE WALL AS YOU TALK ABOUT THE CORRESPONDING PORTION OF THE LESSON. YOU CAN USE THE *ANGEL MESSENGERS B & W* ACTIVITY PAGES FOR ACTIVE CHILDREN TO COLOR AS THEY LISTEN.

Say, "Last week, we learned that our merciful God was preparing to send His Son to earth. Now it was almost time! Today's lesson is so exciting because everything is about to change! God's people have waited and waited for God's Son, and He's finally about to arrive.

"Zechariah was the first person in today's story to receive an angel's visit. He was a priest serving in the temple. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were getting old and had never been able to have children, but God is merciful. He was about to give them a son in their old age. Let's listen to the message God sent through His angels." Read Luke 1:11-20 (ICB).

¹¹ Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. ¹² When he saw the angel, Zechariah was confused and frightened. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. ¹⁴ You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. ¹⁵ John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God...

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that what you say is true? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too."

¹⁹ The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God. God sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ Now, listen! You will not be able to talk until the day these things happen. You will lose your speech because you did not believe what I told you. But these things will really happen."

Say, "Zechariah didn't believe the angel when he said they would have a child in their old age. Because of his unbelief, Zechariah's voice was taken away. But as soon as John was born, Zechariah could speak again, and he began to tell the people that his son John would be God's messenger. John would teach the people about God's mercy and prepare the way for Jesus."

Post the *Angel Messenger (Zechariah)* Activity Page.

Say, "The second person in our story is Mary. The angel's words to Mary tell us that God is merciful. The angel Gabriel told her she would have a son and that she should name Him Jesus. At first, Mary was afraid, but the angel helped her understand. The angel said her baby would be God's Son." Read Luke 1:35-38 (ICB).

³⁵ The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Now listen! Elizabeth, your relative, is very old. But she is also pregnant with a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. ³⁷ God can do everything!"

³⁸ Mary said, "I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.

Post the *Angel Messenger (Mary)* Activity Page.

Ask, "How does this show us God's mercy? [Allow for responses.] Mary didn't deserve to be Jesus' mother, but God is merciful. We don't deserve Jesus either – He's too perfect, loving, kind, and good – but God sent Him to save us anyway. We have one more angel visit. Let's see who he went to this time." Read Matthew 1:18-24.

¹⁸ The mother of Jesus Christ was Mary. And this is how the birth of Jesus came about. Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, she learned that she was going to have a baby. She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ While Joseph thought about this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son. You will name the son Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel." This name means "God is with us."

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph married

Ask, "Who received the third angel visit? [Allow for responses.] Right! Joseph, Mary's husband. Did Joseph believe the angel? [Allow for responses.] Yes, he did! This angel's words also teach us that God is merciful." Reread verse 21.

Say, "God sent Jesus to save us from our sins! God is so merciful! He showed His great mercy when He made a way for us to go to heaven and live forever with Him."

Post the *Angel Messenger (Joseph)* Activity Page.

TRANSITION: Say, "Jesus is God's perfect gift. When we accept and follow Jesus, we become God's children. Aren't you thankful for God's mercy?"

DISCUSS — 10 MINUTES

Say, "Let's talk about the story you just heard."

1. Name the three people who were visited by an angel.

Response: Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph

2. What did the angel tell Zechariah?

Response: Zechariah and his wife would have a son who would tell the people about Jesus.

3. What was the message to Mary?

Response: The angel told Mary that she would have a baby. This baby would be the Son of God.

4. Tell me about the third person an angel visited.

Response: An angel visited Joseph to tell him that Mary would have a son who would be the Savior of the world.

5. How do these stories show us that God is merciful?

Response: Answers will vary.

6. What did you learn about God today?

Response: **God is merciful**, God sent His Son to save us, God loves us, God is powerful, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "Jesus came to earth for us. He did that because **God is merciful!**"

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Small Doilies (1 - 6 inch doily per child) | Scissors | Clothespins (1 per child) | Glitter | Glue | Gold Pipe Cleaners (1 per child) | Various Skin-Toned Papers | Fine-Tip Black Marker |

Say, "We learned about three unique angel visits. What was the important message they all shared? [Allow for responses.] Yes! They came to tell the people that Jesus was coming! Let's make an angel you can use to decorate your house or Christmas tree. I hope it will remind you of the angel's wonderful news to Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph.



PRACTICE MAKING CLOTHESPIN ANGELS BEFORE ARRIVING TO CLASS.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Use glue and glitter to decorate the clothespin.
2. Cut a small circle from the skin-toned paper to make the angel's face. Then, draw a face. (The angels look cute with closed eyes and an open mouth as if they're singing.) Glue the face to the top portion of the clothespin (where it opens).
3. Make the angel's wings by pinching a doily together in the middle. Then, wrap a pipe cleaner around the center of the doily. Use the rest of the pipe cleaner to make a halo. Snip off extra pipe cleaner.
4. Spread out each side of the doily to create wings.
5. Clip and glue the doily into the clothespin to attach the wings to the angel.

TRANSITION: Say, "As Christmas draws closer, thank God for sending the angels to prepare His people

for Jesus.”

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Dry-Erase Board | Dry-Erase Markers |

Say, “Let’s practice our memory verse again today. I will say it out loud first, then you can say it with me.”

“**The Lord** [point up] **is good** [give thumbs up] **to everyone** [spread arms wide open].
He is merciful [hold both hands in front of you, palms up] **to all** [spread arms wide open] **he has made** [have your fists one on top of the other twisting slightly].”

Psalm 145:9, ICB (hold hands out like a book)

CHALLENGE: Write the first letter of each word on the board. Practice reciting the verse with only these letter clues. (If you do not have a dry-erase board, prepare a poster board beforehand.)

REFLECT — 5 MINUTES

Say, “Understanding that **God is merciful** can help us be more willing to give others mercy. When someone hurts our feelings or is mean to us, how should we treat them? [Allow for responses.] Yes! We show them mercy because **God is merciful** to us! How do we do this? [Allow for responses.] Those are great examples! Having mercy certainly means forgiving them.”



ENSURE CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXTENDING MERCY TO SOMEONE UNKIND AND STAYING IN A DAMAGING SITUATION. WHILE WE WANT CHILDREN TO GROW IN MERCY, WE DO NOT WANT KIDS TO THINK GOD WANTS THEM TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE DANGEROUS OR ABUSIVE (THIS INCLUDES BULLYING). EXPLAIN THAT THEY SHOULD TELL A SAFE ADULT IF THEY ARE EVER AFRAID OF SOMEONE. ALL CHURCH VOLUNTEERS AND PAID STAFF SHOULD BE TRAINED TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE.

Say, “Is there someone who needs your mercy? You don’t have to say their name out loud. It’s hard to be merciful when we are angry or hurt, but God loved us so much that He loved us even when we were His enemies. [See Romans 5:10.] As we pray, ask the Holy Spirit to help you be merciful to that person God is bringing to your mind. If you can’t think of anyone, ask Jesus to help you become a person who can love your enemies.”

SAMPLE PRAYER: “Dear God, Thank You for being merciful to us. Please make us more like Your Son, Jesus, by helping me give mercy to others, especially those who are unkind or make me angry. I love You. Amen.”

RELEASE —

If you have extra time before the parents arrive, replay *Angel Musical Chairs* or another game the kids enjoy.



**ANGELS
ANNOUNCE THE
NEW KING**

WEEK 2

**GOD IS
MERCIFUL**













GOD PREPARES FOR THE NEW KING

BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Luke 1:60-64; Matthew 3: 13-17 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

God is Merciful

FOCUS VERSE

"The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made."

Psalms 145:9 (ICB)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | Burlap or Linen Tunics | Leather Cording | Toy Grasshoppers | Small Paper Plates
| *John the Baptist* Activity Pages | Cardstock | *His Name is John* Activity Page | Scissors | Markers
or Crayons | Craft Sticks | Glue | Sticky Notes | Music |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite restaurant?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

Ask, "What do you like best about Christmastime? Is it the decorations, the music, the candy, the gifts, or something else? [Allow for responses.] One thing that makes the Christmas season exciting is that we are all waiting for the big day.

"Before Jesus came, God's people were also waiting. They knew God would send them a Savior, but they didn't know when. They talked about the 'big day' and sang songs about it. They were excited because they knew everything would change when God sent the Messiah [Jesus]! And it did!

"Right now, we are in the season of Advent. It's the time when Christians think about what it was like to wait for Jesus to arrive for the first time. Like these people from long ago, we are waiting. We're waiting for Christmas, of course, but we are also waiting for Christ to come again!" Sing together.

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is this month's recommended theme song. Kingdom Kids (available on YouTube) has our favorite version. Additionally, "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" by Getty Kids is an excellent compliment to this week's lesson.

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Make your prayer time special and explain that this is one way we talk with God. Ask the children to tell you why it's important for us to talk with God.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *"Dear God, thank You for this Christmas season when we can remember how You came to earth to be our Savior. Help us to see what a great God You are and to understand how much You love us. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen."*

REVIEW — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, "All month, we have been learning something important about God. Does anyone remember what that is? [Allow for responses.] Yes! God is merciful! In the first week, we learned that long before Christ was born, God told His people that He would send Jesus to save them from their sins.

"Last week, we heard about three angel visits. God had special messages for Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph, so He sent His angel to deliver them. Today, we will learn about Zechariah's son, John, who was born about the same time as Jesus. It is a fantastic story about God's mercy, and I can't wait to share it with you. First, let's place our puzzle piece on the wall."

TRANSITION: Say, "Speaking of getting ready, we're going to play a game to get our hearts and minds ready for God's Word. Let's begin!"

ENGAGE — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Burlap or Linen Tunics (1 per team) | Leather Cording (1 per team) | Toy Grasshoppers (1 per child) | Small Paper Plates (1 per child) |



PURCHASE A (ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL) TUNIC OR CREATE ONE FROM BURLAP OR LINEN FABRIC BY FOLDING THE FABRIC IN HALF AND CUTTING A SPACE FOR THE CHILDREN TO PULL THE MATERIAL OVER THEIR HEADS. CUT THE CORDING INTO 36-INCH STRIPS.

Say, "Today, we will play a John the Baptist relay. To win, your team must be the fastest at putting on clothes like John the Baptist wore and making plates of food like he ate. Who is ready to play?"

GAME GOAL: To be the first team to have all players complete all relay tasks

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Create two stations on one side of the room. The first station should have a stack of paper plates. The second station should contain toy grasshoppers. Space these stations at least four feet from one another.
2. Divide the class into at least two teams and have them form lines opposite from the stations.

3. Provide each team with a tunic and a piece of leather cording.
4. Explain when you say "Go," the first member from each team should put on the tunic and then tie the leather cording around their waists. Once the players have put on the two clothing items, they should grab a plate at the first station. Next, they should run to the second station, where they will place a grasshopper on their plate. Finally, they will run back to their team with the grasshopper on the plate.
5. When they return to their team, they should remove their clothing items and hand them to their teammate.
6. The process continues until all team members have completed the tasks.
7. The team to finish first wins.

MODIFICATION: Younger children may not be able to tie the leather cording. Leave this item off the relay list if needed.

TRANSITION: Say, "What a fun game! You were all super-fast, and I love how you worked together! Now, if you thought that was a strange relay, listen closely because it's all about to make sense."

LEARN — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *John the Baptist Activity Pages* |



ALTHOUGH WE PROVIDE A WRITTEN SCRIPT OF THE LESSON, PREPARE BY PRAYING FOR YOUR KIDS, IMMERSING YOURSELF IN THE BIBLE PASSAGE, AND READING THE LESSON CONTENT SEVERAL TIMES THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. WHEN YOU SHARE FROM YOUR HEART, CHILDREN CONNECT BETTER WITH THE LESSON.

Say, "This is our third week learning about God's mercy. Do you remember what mercy means? [Allow for responses.] That's right! Mercy is not getting what we deserve. [Give examples of merciful acts. Review the BACKGROUND in Lesson 1 for more suggestions.] God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that everyone who believes in Him can be saved. Today's story is about a man named John the Baptist. We learned a little about him last week. Do you remember the angel visiting Zechariah in the temple? What can you tell me about that story? [Allow for responses.]

"God told Zechariah that he and his wife would have a baby named John. John the Baptist, the man from today's story, was that baby! The angel explained that Zechariah's son would be God's special messenger and tell others about Jesus.

"What happened to Zechariah when he did not believe he and his wife could have a baby in their old age? [Allow for responses.] God took Zechariah's ability to speak until after John was born.

"The day of John's birth was a celebration! Friends and family came to see the new baby. These people said, 'Call him Zechariah after his father.'" Read Luke 1:60-64.

⁶⁰ But his mother said, “No! He will be named John.” ⁶¹ The people said to Elizabeth, “But no one in your family has this name!” ⁶² Then they made signs to his father, “What would you like to name him?”

⁶³ Zechariah asked for something to write on. Then he wrote, “His name is John.” Everyone was surprised. ⁶⁴ Then Zechariah could talk again. He began to praise God.

Say, “John grew to be a strong man. He lived in the desert and wore clothes made of camel hair and a leather belt. He ate strange food like locusts [like grasshoppers] with honey.” Remind the kids of the relay game they just played.

Show the children the *John the Baptist Activity Page (1)*. Ask them what they think about the man in the picture.

Ask, “I wonder what it was like to live in the desert and eat locusts and honey.” Allow the children to imagine that kind of life.

Say, “Before we see what John did next, I want to show you another picture. [Show the children *John the Baptist Activity Page (2)*.] What do you think is happening in this picture? [Allow the children to share their thoughts.] John preached and told the people that God was about to send a King to save them. He told people they should repent. [Explain that to repent is to be sorry for sinning and to stop sinning]. Many people believed John, repented from their sins, and then John baptized them in water. This is why he is called John the Baptist.”



IF YOUR KIDS DON'T REGULARLY SEE BAPTISMS OR IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN WHO ARE NEW TO CHURCH, TAKE A MOMENT TO EXPLAIN BAPTISM. FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC, SEE OUR BONUS LESSON AT WWW.IPHC.ORG/KIDS/KIDS-CURRICULUM/ FOR AN ENTIRE TEACHING ON THIS TOPIC.

Say, “One day, when John was baptizing people, Jesus came to the river and asked John to baptize Him. Whoa! Imagine you were John preaching and baptizing people when Jesus suddenly walked up. What do you think John thought? [Allow for responses.] Well, this is what happened.” Read Matthew 3:13-17.

¹³ At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John and wanted John to baptize him. ¹⁴ But John tried to stop him. John said, “Why do you come to me to be baptized? I should be baptized by you!”

¹⁵ Jesus answered, “Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are right.” So John agreed to baptize Jesus.

¹⁶ Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water. Heaven opened, and he saw God's Spirit coming down on him like a dove. ¹⁷ And a voice spoke from heaven. The voice said, “This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him.”

Ask, "Wow! Who can tell me what just happened in our story?" Have the children summarize in their own words to ensure they understand.

Say, "Isn't this a fantastic story about God's mercy? God was sending His people the perfect King! No, they didn't deserve this King, but God loved them so much that He sent Jesus [His Son] anyway. That is a reason to celebrate!"

TRANSITION: Say, "John obeyed God and preached the Good News that our merciful God was making a way for all people to be saved. Do you think God sent Jesus for you, too? [Allow for responses.] Yes! He did! God is merciful!"

DISCUSS — 10 MINUTES

Say, "Let's talk about the story you just heard."

1. What do you remember about Zechariah's story?

Response: Allow the children to summarize Zechariah's story in their own words.

2. What did God want John to do?

Response: John was one of God's great messengers. He was preaching about Jesus' coming.

3. Where did John live? What did he wear and eat?

Response: He lived in the desert. His clothes were made of camel's hair. He ate locusts and honey.

4. Why was John called John the Baptist?

Response: He baptized people in water.

5. Did John want to baptize Jesus?

Response: He didn't feel worthy (holy or important enough), but Jesus told Him God wanted him to do it.

6. What happened when John baptized Jesus?

Response: The Holy Spirit came down like a dove, and God the Father said from heaven, 'This is My Son.'

7. What do we learn about God from this lesson?

Response: **God is merciful.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. God sent messengers like John the Baptist to prepare His people for Jesus, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job discussing our story! Let's make something to take home to help you remember everything we've learned."

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Cardstock | *His Name is John* Activity Page (1 per child) | Scissors | Markers or Crayons | Craft Sticks (6-8 per child) | Glue |

Say, "Remember how Zechariah wrote John's name on a tablet so everyone would know what to call him? Today, we will make a tablet to help us remember that John was sent to bring news that Jesus was coming to save us."

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Give each child a piece of cardstock.
2. Have the children use a marker to write in the middle of the cardstock, "His Name is John."
3. Color and cut out the images from the *His Name is John* Activity Page. Glue them on the cardstock as decorations around the words.
4. Glue the craft sticks to all four sides of the cardstock, making it look like a frame.



WRITE THE WORDS "HIS NAME IS JOHN" ON THE BOARD SO THE CHILDREN CAN COPY IT IF NEEDED. SET THIS CRAFT ASIDE SO THE GLUE WILL DRY BEFORE THE CHILDREN LEAVE.

TRANSITION: Say, "God gave John the Baptist an important job. He was to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus. In His great mercy, God sent His own Son to save us. He also made sure His people would recognize Jesus, so He sent people like John to prepare them. That's mercy, too!"

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Sticky Notes | Music |

Say, "Let's practice this month's verse, and then we're going to play a game to help us remember it!"

"The Lord [point up] **is good** [give thumbs up] **to everyone** [spread arms wide open]. **He is merciful** [hold both hands in front of you, palms up] **to all** [spread arms wide open] **he has made** [have your fists one on top of the other twisting slightly]."
Psalm 145:9, ICB (hold hands out like a book)

CHALLENGE: Play a new version of musical chairs to help the children remember this month's Focus Verse.



BEFORE CLASS, WRITE ONE WORD FROM THIS MONTH'S FOCUS VERSE ON EACH STICKY NOTE.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Arrange the chairs facing out and in a circle. Include one chair for each child.
2. In random order, place sticky notes on each chair. (You do not have to have a note for each chair, but you can put more than one sticky note on each chair if needed.)
3. Start the music. The children will walk around the circle while the music plays. Whenever the music stops, the children should sit in the nearest chair and see if their chair's sticky note has the next word of the memory verse. If so, they will place it on the board in the correct order.
4. When all words are used, the class reads the verse together to ensure it is correct.

REFLECT — 5 MINUTES

Say, "Even though we don't deserve it, God sent Jesus to die on the cross and take our punishment. God is good to us, He is kind to us, and He loves us more than we can imagine. God is merciful! Let's pray."

SAMPLE PRAYER: *"Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for Your mercy. Thank You for loving us and sending Jesus to be our Savior. Help us boldly share the Good News of Your mercy with our family and friends. In Jesus' name. Amen."*

RELEASE —

If you have extra time before the families arrive, replay the musical chairs game from this week's
MEMORIZE.



**GOD PREPARES
FOR THE NEW
KING**

WEEK 3

**GOD IS
MERCIFUL**

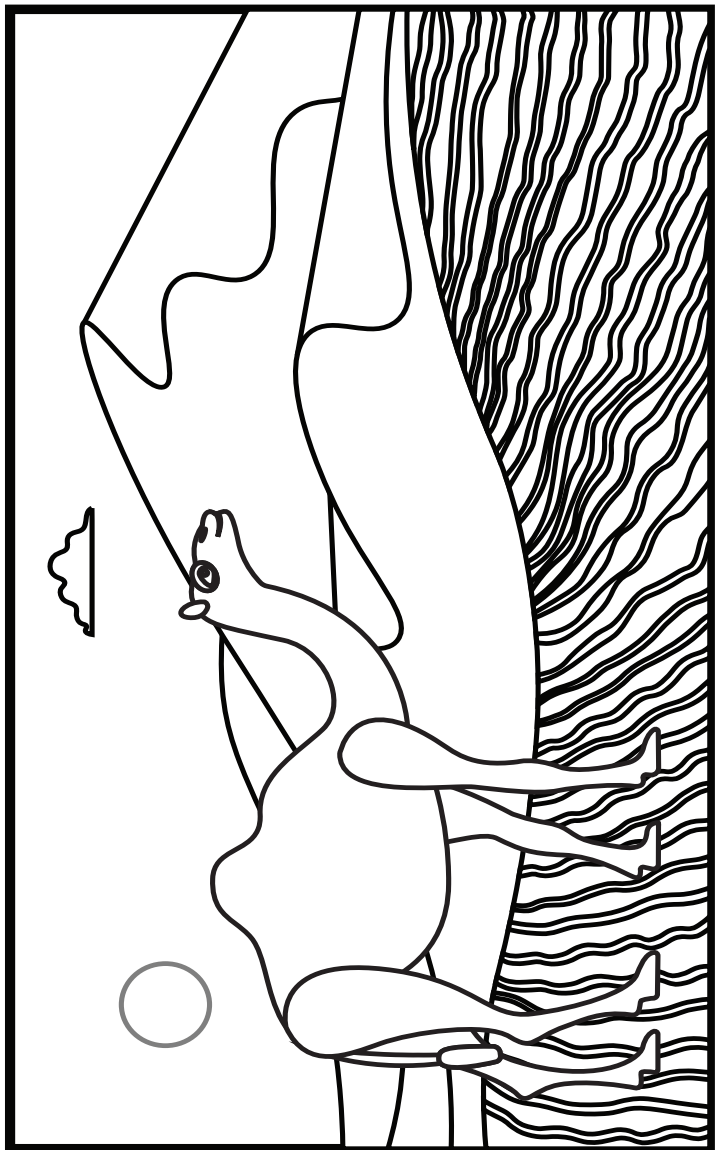
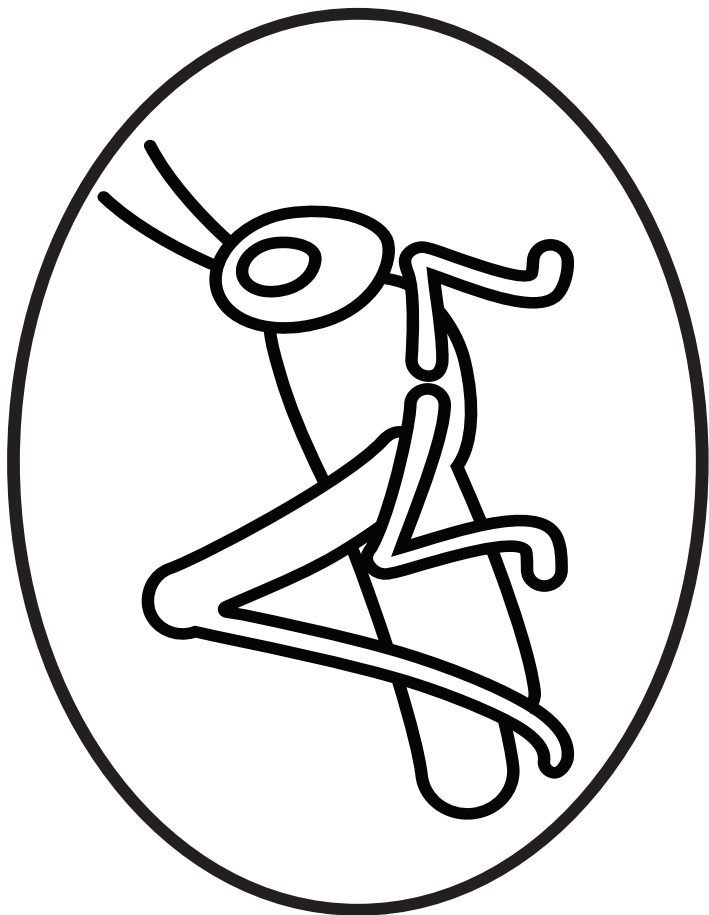
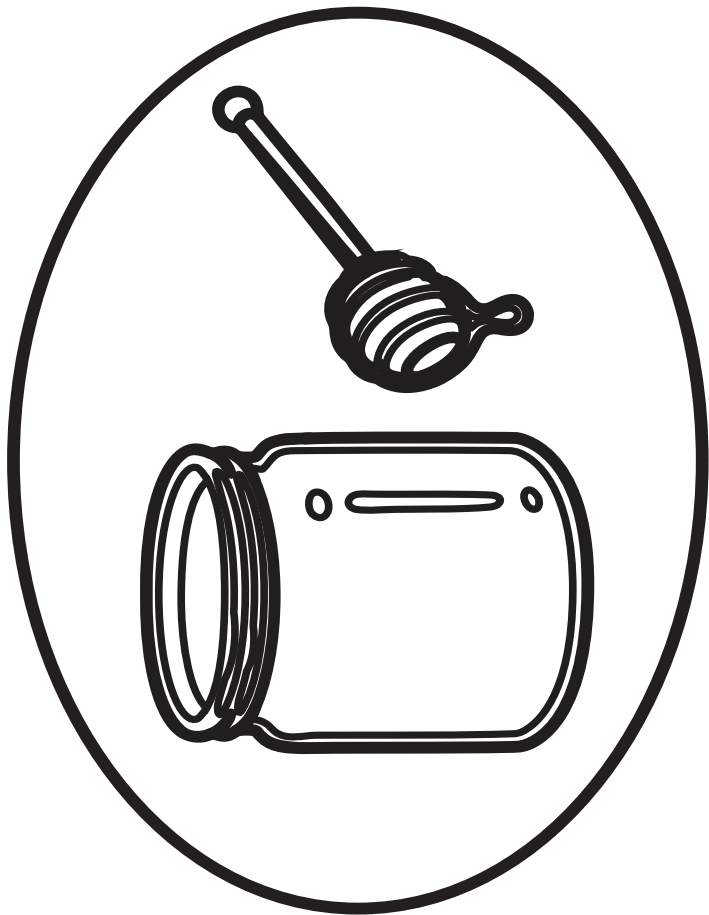
JOHN ALONE



JOHN BAPTIZING JESUS







GOD SENDS THE NEW KING

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 2:6-14 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

God is Merciful

FOCUS VERSE

"The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made."

Psalm 145:9 (ICB)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | *Scavenger Hunt Cards* Activity Page | Tape | *Scavenger Hunt Checklist* Activity Pages | Cardstock | Markers or Crayons | *Ornament* Activity Page | *Holy Family* Activity Page | Scissors | Glue Sticks | Ribbon | Hot Glue Gun | Hole Punch | Clear Plastic Ornaments | *Jesus Is* Activity Page |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- What are some of your favorite things about Christmas?
- Do you have a favorite Christmas movie or song? What is it?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

Say, "Christmas is here! Advent and all its waiting is over; now it is time to celebrate!" Help the children understand that Christmas is more than stockings, candy, and gifts. Christmas is the day we celebrate our Savior's birth! So, make today's time together jubilant! Begin by singing your celebratory Christmas songs. Our favorites include "Joy to the World," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," and "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee."

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Pray with your children.

Sample Prayer: "Dear God, Thank You for Christmas. Thank You for sending Your Son to save us. Thank You for loving us so much more than we deserve, and please help us remember that Jesus is the best gift we have ever received. Amen."

REVIEW – 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, “This is our Christmas lesson, and it is time to celebrate! God loves us so much that He had a plan from the very beginning to give us mercy by sending His Son to rescue us and make us His friends.”

Use the puzzle pieces to review this month’s lessons.

Say, “Three weeks ago, we learned that hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God sent a message through His prophets. He told the people that their King was coming! In lesson two, we learned about the angel who announced the birth of King Jesus to three different people. Do you remember who those people were? [Allow for responses.] Great! Yes, they were Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph.

“Last week, we learned about John the Baptist, whom God sent to tell people about Jesus. One day, John even got to baptize Jesus and hear God say, ‘This is my Son!’ Finally, we come to the day God’s people had waited on for hundreds of years. Today, we get to celebrate Jesus’ birth!”



REDIRECT TALKATIVE OR ENERGETIC CHILDREN BY GIVING THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE. THESE BOYS AND GIRLS ARE FREQUENTLY OVERLOOKED FOR TASKS BUT OFTEN RISE TO THE OCCASION WHEN THEY BELIEVE AN ADULT TRUSTS THEM. SO, LOOK FOR WAYS TO INCORPORATE ALL YOUR KIDS IN CLASSROOM TASKS LIKE POSTING THE PUZZLE PIECE, HANDING OUT CRAFT SUPPLIES, ACTING OUT A BIBLE LESSON, OR LEADING IN THE MEMORY VERSE RECITATION.

TRANSITION: Say, “Before we get to our lesson, let’s play a game!”

ENGAGE – 10 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Scavenger Hunt Cards* Activity Page (1 per class) | Tape | *Scavenger Hunt Checklist* Activity Pages (1 list per team) | Cardstock | Markers |



PRINT THE *SCAVENGER HUNT CARDS* ON CARDSTOCK AND CUT THEM OUT. THEN, BEFORE THE CHILDREN ARRIVE, HIDE CARDS IN VARIOUS PLACES THROUGHOUT THE CLASSROOM. IF POSSIBLE, LAMINATE THE CARDS SO THEY DO NOT TEAR. THIS WAY, YOU CAN ALSO KEEP THEM FOR FUTURE YEARS.

Say, “Raise your hand if you’ve ever done a scavenger hunt. Great! We have a special CHRISTMAS scavenger hunt today, and I can’t wait to see how you do. Let’s get started.”

GAME GOAL: To be the first team to finish the scavenger hunt

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Divide the children into small teams.
2. Give each team a *Scavenger Hunt Checklist* Activity Page and a marker.

3. Explain that the kids will search the room for the *Scavenger Hunt Cards* that match the items on their *Scavenger Hunt Checklist*.
4. Once they find an item, they should check it or circle it on their paper. (Note: Each team has a unique list of items to find.)
5. The first team to find every item wins.

TRANSITION: Say, "Wow, that was a fun game! Wasn't it exciting to discover the missing cards? That excitement is nothing compared to how God's people must have felt when they discovered their Savior had arrived. They had been waiting on Him their whole lives! Let's read about this most wonderful day now!"

LEARN — 15 MINUTES

Say, "Last week, we learned about John the Baptist, whom God sent to prepare the way for Jesus, the new King. Now, the time had come for God's Son to be born.

"The government of Rome made a law that all people had to register [be counted] in their family's hometown. Since Joseph's family was from Bethlehem, they had to travel there. It was a long journey, and Mary was about to have a baby. When they got to Bethlehem, it was so crowded that the only place Joseph could find for them to sleep was in a stable where animals were kept. Baby Jesus was born that night. Mary wrapped Him in warm cloths and laid him in a manger [a feeding trough]." Read Luke 2:6-7.



WHENEVER THE LESSON QUOTES SCRIPTURE, READ DIRECTLY FROM YOUR BIBLE. CHILDREN NEED TO MAKE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OUR RETELLING AND GOD'S WORDS.

⁶ While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

Ask, "What do you think that night was like for Mary and Joseph?" (Allow for responses.)



ENCOURAGE THE CHILDREN TO USE THEIR IMAGINATIONS TO ENTER INTO THE STORY AS THEY CONSIDER WHAT THESE EXPERIENCES WERE LIKE FOR MARY, JOSEPH, AND THE SHEPHERDS. YOU CAN HELP THEM DO THIS BY ASKING THEM TO CLOSE THEIR EYES AND IMAGINE THE SCENES.

Say, "Also, on that night, shepherds were in the fields watching over their sheep when suddenly an angel came with the best news! The Savior had been born in Bethlehem! Listen closely as I read from God's Word. When I finish, I want you to tell me everything the angels tell the shepherds about Jesus." Read Luke 2:8-14.

⁸ That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. ⁹ An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. ¹⁰ The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. ¹¹ Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is Christ, the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box."

¹³ Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

¹⁴ "Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God."

Have the children use their Bibles or Bibles from the classroom to answer the following question.

Ask, "What did the shepherds learn from the angels?" (Allow for responses.) Emphasize the following pieces of information that the angels received: 1) Jesus' birth was good news. 2) Jesus' coming would be good for everyone. 3) Jesus (God) came as a human baby. 4) He is called "the Christ." This indicates Jesus was the "chosen" one. He was the Messiah they had been waiting for. 5) He is the Lord; thus, He is the ultimate authority, and we must follow Him. 6) Jesus' birth brought peace. He is the Prince of Peace.

Say, "The angel told the shepherds where to find the baby. Then a choir of angels filled the sky, and the shepherds heard them praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.'"

Say, "When the angels left, the shepherds agreed they should find the newborn baby, and that's what they did! They found the stable and saw Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. They bowed and worshiped Him, then went and told everyone about everything that had just happened to them.

"All of this happened because of God's great love and mercy for us. The God of the universe, the all-powerful Creator of all things, became a helpless baby because we needed a Savior. **God is merciful!**"

TRANSITION: Say, "God sent His Only Son to be our Savior! Aren't you thankful for God's mercy? He did that for you and me!"

DISCUSS — 10 MINUTES

Say, "Let's talk about our story."

1. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

Response: The Roman government had made a law that all people had to register (be counted) in their hometown.

2. What happened when they arrived in Bethlehem?

Response: There was no place for them to sleep, so they had to stay in a stable.

3. What happened on the fields near Bethlehem the night Jesus was born?

Response: Allow the children to retell this portion of the story in their own words.

4. What did this lesson have to do with God's mercy?

Response: Because of God's mercy, He gave His Only Son to be born as a baby and later die for our sins.

5. How can we be saved?

Response: We are only saved by God's mercy. Christ came to save us even though we were sinners.

6. What have you learned about God today?

Response: **God is merciful.** God humbled Himself and came as a baby for us. God loves us. God teaches us about Himself through His Word, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "I am proud of how you listened to our story today. Now, let's make something that will remind us that **God is merciful.**"

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

There are two ornament craft options for this lesson. You may either select one ornament for everyone or provide materials for both and allow children to choose. Make samples beforehand so the children can visualize what they are making.

MATERIALS:

Ornament #1: | *Ornament Activity Page* (1 per child) | Cardstock | *Holy Family Activity Page* | Scissors | Crayons or Markers | Glue Sticks | Ribbon | Hot Glue Gun (for the teacher only) | Hole Punch |

Ornament #2: | Clear Plastic Ornaments (purchase online or at craft stores) | *Jesus Is Activity Page* | Ribbon | Hot Glue Gun (for the teacher only) |

Say, "Today, we are going to make an ornament to remind us of the day God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with us. Let's get started!"



BEFORE CLASS, PRINT THE *ORNAMENT* ACTIVITY PAGE ON CARDSTOCK. YOU'LL NEED ONE ORNAMENT IMAGE PER CHILD.

Ornament #1 Instructions:

1. Give each child one *Ornament* image from the *Ornament Activity Page* and one *Holy Family* image from the *Holy Family Activity Page*.
2. Have the children color the *Ornament* image a dark color and cut it out.
3. Next, have the children color the *Holy Family* image and cut it out.
4. Instruct the kids to glue the family on the *Ornament* image.
5. Help the kids make a bow out of ribbon. The teacher should then hot glue the ribbon to the top of the paper ornament to make it more decorative.
6. Finally, punch a hole in the top of the ornament and thread a ribbon through it. Tie the ribbon so the children can hang their ornament on a Christmas tree.



BEFORE CLASS, PURCHASE CLEAR PLASTIC ORNAMENTS FROM A CRAFT STORE.

Ornament #2 Instructions:

1. Give the children a *Jesus Is* Activity Page and have them cut out the strips.
2. Have each child stuff the word strips inside the ornament.
3. The teacher should hot glue a ribbon bow at the top.
4. Add another ribbon for hanging the ornament on a Christmas tree.

TRANSITION: Say, “God is so merciful that He sent His only Son to save us by taking the punishment for our sins. We celebrate Christmas, remembering that this is why Jesus came! I hope you will think of God’s mercy whenever you look at your beautiful ornaments.”

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

Say, “This is the last day to practice this month’s memory verse. Who would like to lead us in saying it together?”

“**The Lord** [point up] **is good** [give thumbs up] **to everyone** [spread arms wide open].
He is merciful [hold both hands in front of you, palms up] **to all** [spread arms wide open] **he has made** [have your fists one on top of the other twisting slightly].”

Psalms 145:9, ICB (hold hands out like a book)

CHALLENGE: Discuss the meaning and application of the verse together. Use the following questions to aid in conversation:

1. What do you like best about what this verse says?
2. Do you have any questions about what it means?
3. How have we seen God’s mercy in our Bible lessons this month?
4. Have you ever experienced God’s mercy? Explain.
5. This verse says that God is good and merciful to all. Is it easier to imagine God being good to you or to others? Tell me more about that.

REFLECT — 5 MINUTES

Say, “As we celebrate Christmas, let us never forget that it was God’s great love and mercy that motivated Him to send Jesus, His only Son, into this world. We deserve to be punished for our sins, but Jesus took that punishment for us. If you haven’t asked Jesus into your heart, you can today. It is very simple. Pray this prayer with me.”

SAMPLE PRAYER: “Dear Jesus, Thank You for coming to earth to be my Savior. Forgive me for all the wrong things [sins] I have done. I want to be Your child. I believe You are God’s Son, and I love You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”



AS ALWAYS, BE SENSITIVE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ASK HIM TO DIRECT YOU THROUGHOUT THE LESSON. PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN DAILY AND ASK GOD TO OPEN THEIR EYES TO HIS GREAT MERCY.

RELEASE — 5 MINUTES

If you have extra time before the parents arrive, celebrate Jesus' birth with your favorite Christmas hymns and worship songs.

















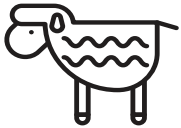
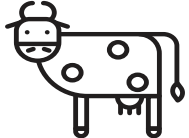




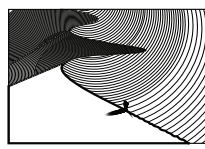



















**GOD SENDS
THE NEW
RING**


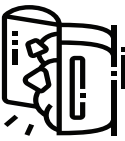





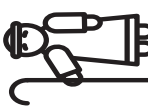




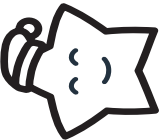


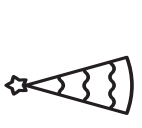




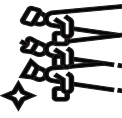




WEEK 4

**GOD IS
MERCIFUL**



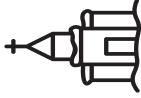
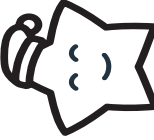











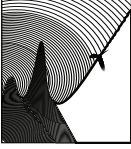



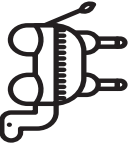
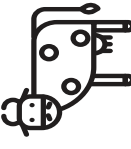

CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT CALL-OUT SHEET

 ANGEL	 SHOOTING STAR	 MITTEN	 PRESENT	 3 WISE MEN	 3 CROWNS
 FRANKINCENSE	 GOLD	 MYRRH	 NATIVITY	 KING HEROD	 CAMEL
 MARY	 SHEPHERD	 SMILING STAR	 JOSEPH	 SHEEP	 COW
 MANGER	 HAY	 CHICKEN	 NIGHT	 DESERT	 BABY JESUS
 TRUMPET	 HEAVENLY HOST	 TRAVELING	 HEART	 DREAM	 BIBLE
 HEAVEN	 DOVE	 PATH	 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 CHRISTMAS TREE	 BOW
 ORNAMENT	 CHURCH	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM	 CLOUD		


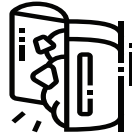



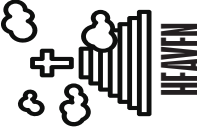






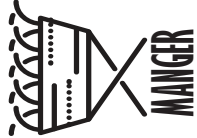




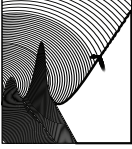


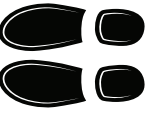


CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

 ANGEL	 FRANKINCENSE	 MARY	 HEAVEN	 TRUMPET
 CLOUD	 GOLD	 SHEPHERD	 BABY JESUS	 HEAVEN
 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 MYRRH	 SMILING STAR	 NIGHT	 PATH
 CHRISTMAS TREE	 CHURCH	 JOSEPH	 BOW	 HEART
 3 WISE MEN	 KING HEROD	 DOVE	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM	 DREAM










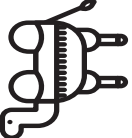
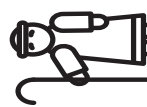


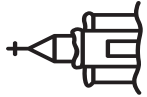
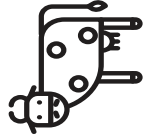










CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

 SHOOTING STAR	 MITTEN	 CHURCH	 SMILING STAR	 CHICKEN	 TRAVELING
 PATH	 NATIVITY	 CHRISTMAS TREE	 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 DOVE	 HEAVENLY HOST
 HEAVEN	 CLOUD	 SHEEP	 DESERT	 DREAM	 BIBLE
 PRESENT	 CAMEL	 COW	 BABY JESUS		


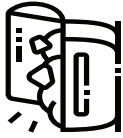

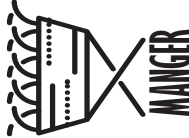

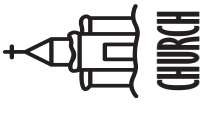

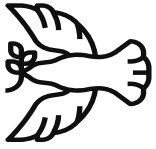






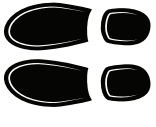
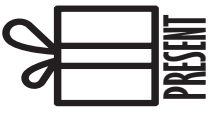






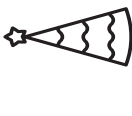
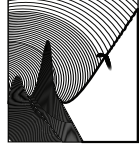

CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

 ANGEL	 FRANKINCENSE	 CLOUD	 PATH	 PRESENT	 HEAVEN
 MARY	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM	 SMILING STAR	 MYRRH	 JOSEPH	 SHEEP
 MANGER	 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 CHICKEN	 DOVE	 HEART	 DESERT
 TRUMPET	 CHURCH	 TRAVELING	 HEART	 DREAM	


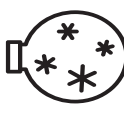






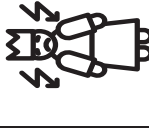
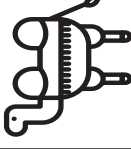

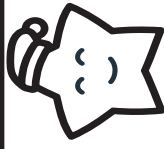


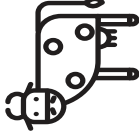



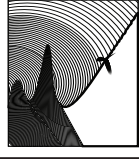






CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

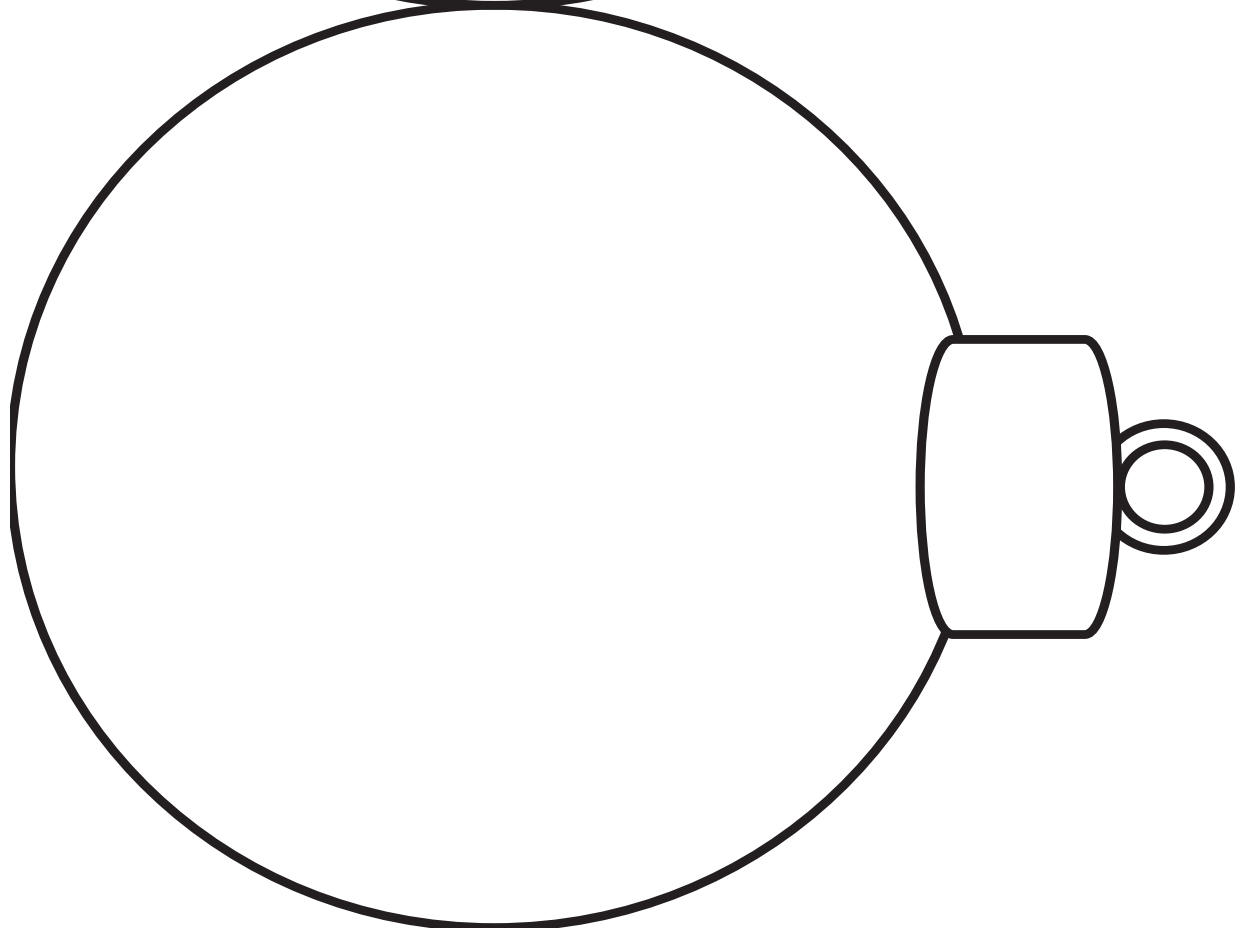
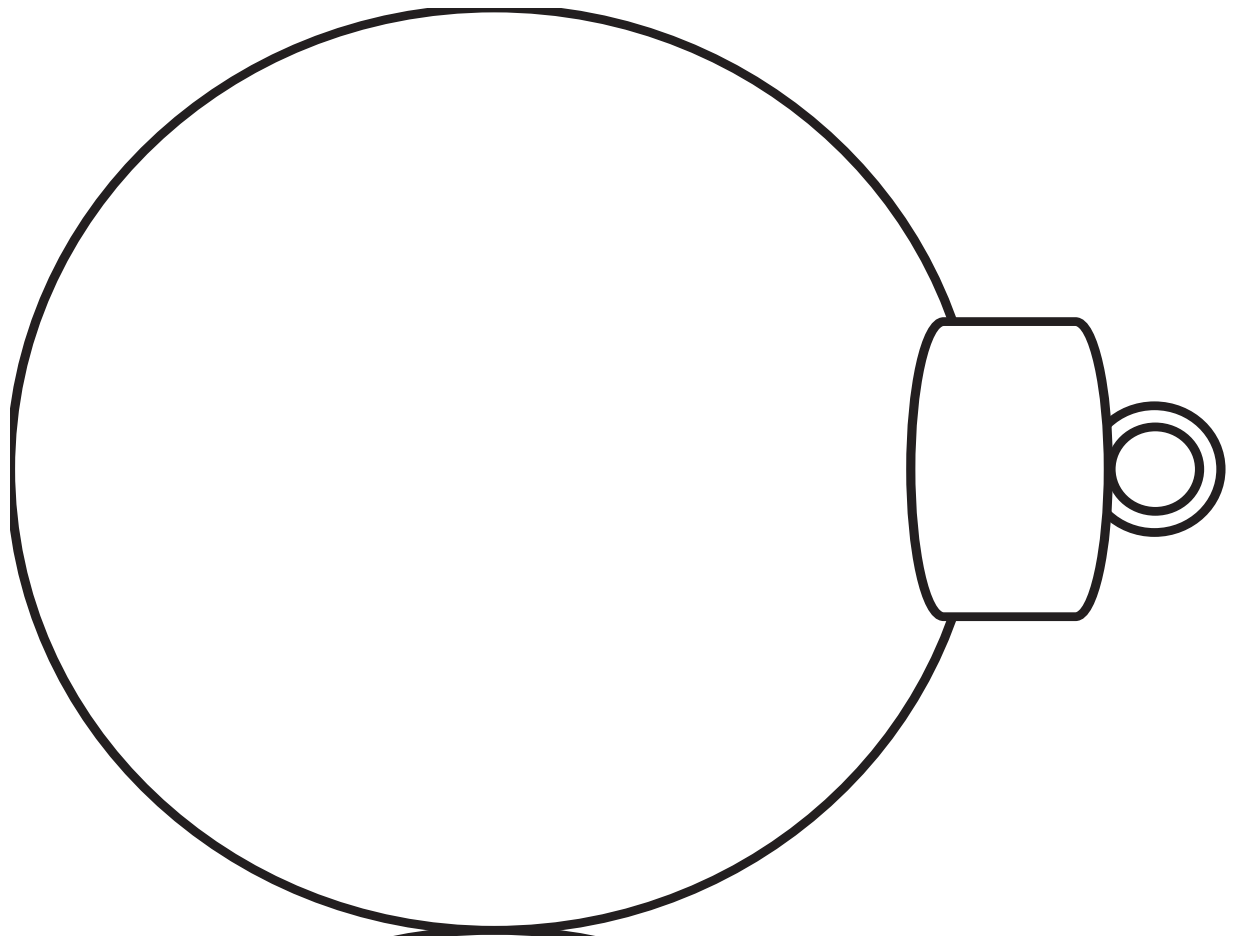
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 GOLD	 DOVE	 NATIVITY	 PATH	 CAMEL
 SHEPHERD	 CHRISTMAS TREE	 JOSEPH	 CHURCH	 COW
 HEAVEN	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM	 NIGHT	 BOW	 BABY JESUS
 HEAVENLY HOST	 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 HEART	 CLOUD	 BIBLE

CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

 ANGEL	 FRANKINCENSE	 HEAVEN	 MANGER	 TRUMPET
 CHURCH	 GOLD	 DOVE	 CLOUD	 BOW
 MITTEN	 MYRRH	 PATH	 CHICKEN	 TRAVELING
 PRESENT	 NATIVITY	 SHEPHERD'S STAFF	 SHEEP	 HEART
 3 WISE MEN	 ORNAMENT	 CHRISTMAS TREE	 DESERT	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM

CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

 SHOOTING STAR	 ORNAMENT	 CHURCH	 3 WISE MEN	 3 CROWNS
 GOLD	 STAR OF BETHLEHEM	 NATIVITY	 KING HEROD	 CAMEL
 SHEPHERD	 SMILING STAR	 JOSEPH	 SHEEP	 COW
 HAY	 CHICKEN	 NIGHT	 DESERT	 BABY JESUS
 HEAVENLY HOST	 TRAVELING	 HEART	 DREAM	 BIBLE





JESUS IS MERCFUL

JESUS IS GRACIOUS

JESUS IS LOVE

JESUS IS GOOD

JESUS IS TRUE

JESUS IS ETERNAL

JESUS IS FAITH

JESUS IS PEACE

JESUS IS ALL-POWERFUL

JESUS IS ALL-KNOWING

JESUS IS EVERYWHERE

JESUS IS PATIENT

JESUS IS LORD

JESUS IS TRUE

JESUS IS SAVIOR

JESUS IS LIFE