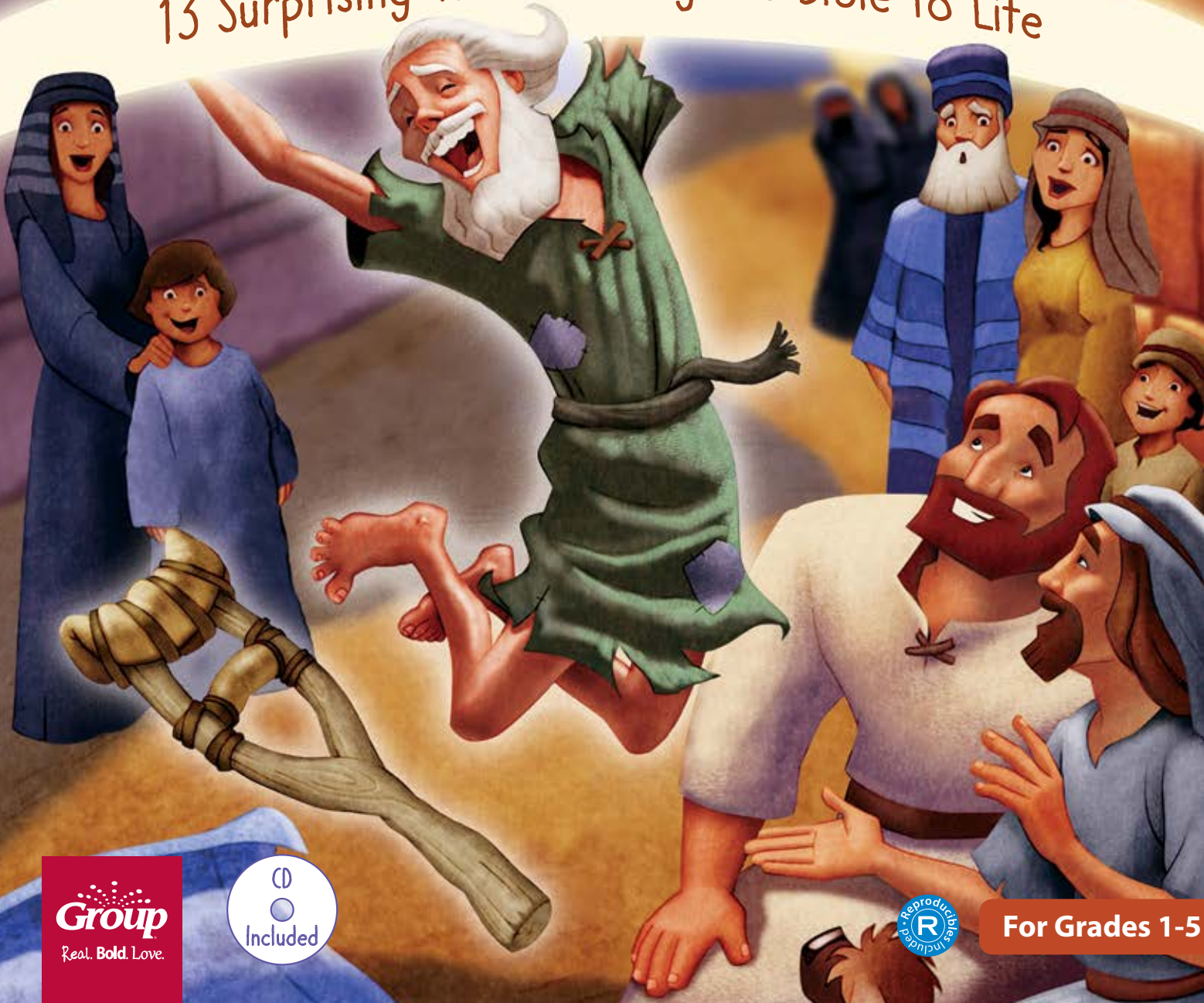


FRIENDS WITH GOD

BIBLE LESSONS

13 Surprising Visitors Bring the Bible to Life



COMPANY'S COMING!

Imagine what it would be like to have the shepherds themselves drop in and share about the surprising angel choir that joyfully declared the news of Jesus' birth. Or picture the power of Silas taking kids on an earth-shaking, jail-breaking, faith-making adventure with his buddy Paul! And if Jesus' friend Mary visited your classroom, how powerful would *her* story be, letting kids discover what it means to pour out your best for God's Son?

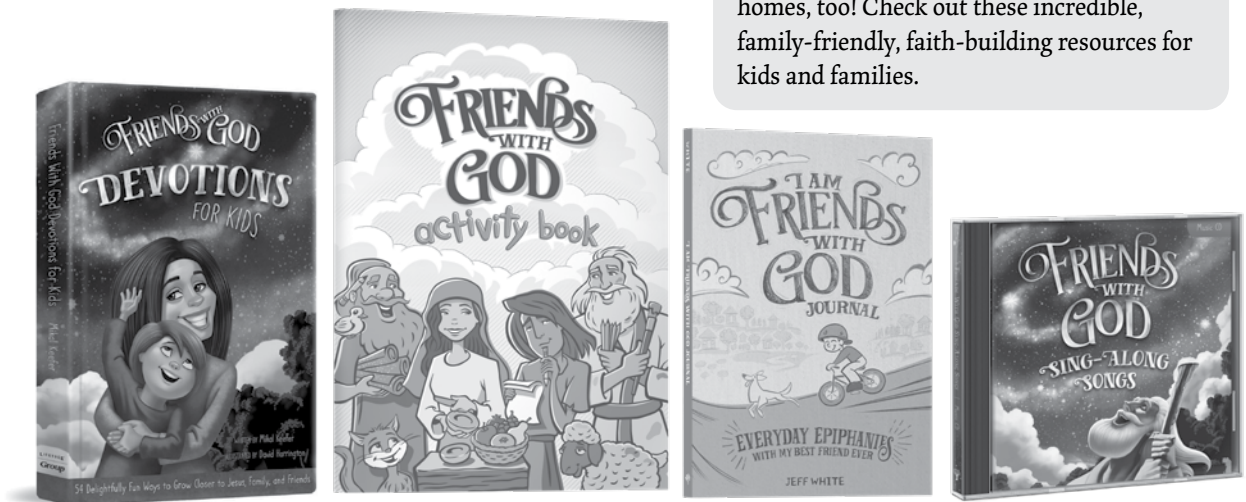
Well, *that's* just how real, surprising, and memorable your ministry is about to become! Each of these hour-long lessons includes an interactive script in which a Bible character drops in on your classroom to share his or her incredible, *true* adventures—and bring kids along for the ride. Each of these biblical accounts is told in the first person, inspired by the delightful *Friends With God Story Bible*. As kids explore the Bible story along with “the source,” they'll discover that these action-packed, emotion-filled stories *actually* happened to *real* people.

All you need is a hammy volunteer who can look over the script and be familiar with it—and be willing to have fun with the role. You'll be on hand to help with props and lead kids in joining the Bible adventure with all their senses. Oh, and of course each lesson includes friend-making icebreakers, giggle-inducing games, creative crafts, and powerful prayer times to reach every kind of learner.

But, hey, company's coming! Sweep the floor and get ready to open the door to a whole new way to bring the Bible to life!

...And for Kids and Families

These surprising friends of God can visit homes, too! Check out these incredible, family-friendly, faith-building resources for kids and families.



You're about to have 13 surprising visitors come to your Sunday school class...and change the way kids look at the Bible!

RIGHT WHERE WE BELONG

1

BIBLE STORY: Angels tell shepherds the news of Jesus' birth. (*Luke 2:1-20*)

BIBLE POINT: Jesus came for everyone.

BIBLE VERSE: "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (*Luke 2:10-11*).

Bible Insight

- ▶ Some have speculated that because Luke notes that the shepherds were "staying in the fields nearby," the events took place in spring or early fall. However, sheep required for temple sacrifices would remain in the fields near Bethlehem year-round. So no one can be certain of the specific date of Jesus' birth.
- ▶ *Angel*, translated into English from both Hebrew *and* Greek, means "messenger." These heavenly messengers must have been jaw-dropping in appearance, unlike anything the shepherds had seen, resulting in their fearful response (*Luke 2:9*).
- ▶ Shepherds take an important, recurring role in Jesus' life and narrative. These humble laborers are the first to hear of Jesus' birth, and their work reflects Jesus' lineage from the house of David—a shepherd who became king. Jesus refers to people as "sheep without a shepherd" (*Matthew 9:36*) and to himself as "the good shepherd" (*John 10:11*).

Kid Insight

In spite of being more connected than ever, society is fractured and siloed. People seem to be isolating themselves into "camps," depending on what they're for or against. Kids can't help but absorb some of this "them versus us" mentality and may begin compartmentalizing or labeling people. But the Bible is clear that God sent his Son to save the world—*all* people! Jesus' life and message resound with the news that God's love is for everyone. Use this lesson to unite kids around the common truth that Jesus came for all people.



You'll need:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ beach ball
- ☐ timer or watch with a second hand
- ☐ volunteer to play a shepherd
- ☐ Bible-times costume for the shepherd
- ☐ stuffed sheep
- ☐ 3 colors of balloons (1 balloon per child)
- ☐ marbles (1 per child)
- ☐ large plastic trash bag to hold balloons
- ☐ wide craft sticks (1 per child)
- ☐ paper plates (1 per child)
- ☐ flesh-colored crayons
- ☐ markers
- ☐ cupcake liners (3 per child)
- ☐ chenille wires (1 per child)
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ glue
- ☐ *Friends With God Bible Lessons Music* CD and music player

If you can't find a volunteer to play a shepherd, modify your script slightly and play the role yourself. You'll simply need to have kids close their eyes and put on their imaginations while *you* don the Bible-times costume. If you're female, simply play this as a female shepherd.

Getting Ready

- ▶ Inflate the beach ball.
- ▶ Put a marble inside a balloon. Blow up the balloon and tie it off. Make enough marble-filled balloons for each child to have one, ensuring that there is an equal number of each color. (The marbles make the balloon "sheep" less cooperative and harder to herd.) Put all the balloons in a large trash bag and set them aside until it's time to play "Sheep Shuffle."
- ▶ Make a sample shepherd craft to show kids.

THE LESSON

Friend-Maker Icebreaker (10 minutes)

HAVE A BALL

Welcome kids warmly—and welcome them by name. When you're a kid, it feels *great* when adults know your name and are happy to see you!

Say: I'm so glad that our room is filled with kids who are so different from each other. Think about the friend you spend the most time with. Ask:

🗣️ What's something *you* like to do that your friend *doesn't* like to do?

Let kids call out their answers.

Say: Let's play a game to help us find out how we're like—and not like—our friends here in class.

Have kids stand in a circle. Hold an inflated beach ball, and explain that you'll start a timer, call out a question, and then toss the ball across the circle. When the ball comes to a child, he or she must answer the question as quickly as possible before tossing the ball to someone who hasn't had it yet. Tell kids you'll time them to see how fast they can all answer the questions and toss the ball. When the last person has answered the question, stop your timer. Use the following questions to get you started:

- 🗣️ How many siblings do you have?
- 🗣️ What's your favorite place to eat?
- 🗣️ What's your favorite movie?
- 🗣️ What's your favorite Christmas carol?
- 🗣️ Name the last place you went on vacation.
- 🗣️ Would you rather have the superpower of flight or invisibility?
- 🗣️ Are you more like a monkey or a mouse?
- 🗣️ If you could have any famous person over for dinner, who would you invite?

Celebrate kids' fastest time, then have kids sit down. Ask:

- 🗣️ What did you learn about your friends?
- 🗣️ Why do differences sometimes keep people from being friends?

Say: Sometimes likes and dislikes or different interests separate people. We may all be different, but we have one awesome, wonderful, spectacular thing in common: God loves us all! God doesn't love only people who eat pizza or people who are quiet. He didn't give his Son only for people who can throw a football or people who can wiggle their ears. Today we'll explore how Jesus came for everyone, to show God's love, no matter *how* different we are!



Bible Adventure (20 minutes)

MEET A SHEPHERD

The “shepherd” should enter and begin a dialogue with kids. You may be needed to assist him or her with props or lighting. Join in the fun and surprise of talking with this friend of God!



RIGHT WHERE WE BELONG


(Enter holding the stuffed sheep, talking to it.)

All right, Shekel. I've got you now. You shouldn't wander away like that—those wolves love a good lamb dinner. *(Look up and see kids, surprised.)* **Oh! Looks like I'VE been wandering, *(motion to stuffed sheep)* not just Shekel here. At least YOU seem safer than those wolves we just escaped from.** *(Point behind you.)* **Whew!**

(Look more closely at kids.) **Hmm, you guys look kind of dressed up and fancy compared to me. I'm just a shepherd. Sure, King David was a shepherd once, but I'm never going to be a king like him.** *(Speak in a matter-of-fact tone, not apologetic or shameful.)* **I'm not rich. Living out here with the sheep gets me pretty dirty and *(sniff armpit)* kinda smelly. Sometimes it feels like I'm not very special.**

But one night—one SPECTACULAR night—my friends and I got to see the most amazing thing that ever happened.

We'd been seeing lots of families traveling from town to town, and the cities were filling up. The emperor was taking a census, and all the people had to go to their hometowns to be counted.

 **Where's your hometown?**

Maybe we should do our own census right now. *(Have kids count off.)* **Yeah, I guess it's sort of like that. Well, anyway, we'd watched people come and go, night and day. But this night was different.**

The sheep grazed just like usual. *(Peer more closely at kids.)* **You look about the same size as some of our sheep. Go ahead and act like sheep.** *(Encourage kids to crawl around, "grazing," making sheep noises. Herd them away from "dangerous" parts of the room—cliffs, holes, bears, or sharp rocks. After a minute or so, tell them it's late and all the sheep need to lie down and sleep. Set the stuffed sheep down so you can use your arms as you tell the rest of the story.)*

So things had gotten pretty quiet, but not for long! Pretty soon an ANGEL appeared out of nowhere, right in front of us! He blazed in a bright light. It was like nothing I'd ever seen—I was terrified! The sheep just slept through it all, so you can keep lying down.

"Don't be afraid," he said, "I have some good news for you, and it's going to make a lot of people very happy!"

The angel told us—yes US, a bunch of lowly shepherds—that a very special baby had been born in Bethlehem, the town just down the hill. It was Jesus—the Messiah himself! The angel even told us where to find him.

Then suddenly, angels surrounded us, praising God!

Shout: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased!" Well, I'm shouting, but they sang. Jump up and let's praise God like they did!

(Lead kids in standing and singing "Joy to the World!" with the Friends With God Bible Lessons Music CD. You can lead kids in simple motions or just let them dance, high-five each other, or move as they feel comfortable.)

After they delivered their message, *(snap your fingers)* they vanished! Just like that.

Well, my friends and I knew what to do. We raced down the hill as fast as we could! Finding a baby in a manger shouldn't be too hard, right? After all, we know a thing or two about hanging out with animals.

Thankfully, we found the tiny baby right away, just like the angel said we would. He was so cute, wrapped up tight in a blanket and lying in a feeding bin full of hay. His parents looked tired but proud.

Then we praised God, just like the angels had done.

Jesus' birth meant good news—**GREAT** news!

🗣️ **Call out some good news YOU know about God.** (*Encourage kids to shout out news such as "God loves you!" or "God is good!"*)

You sound like me and my buddies! We told **EVERYONE** we met about this new gift God had given the world. We couldn't stop praising God!

You know, God could've chosen **ANYONE IN THE WORLD** to be the first to hear the good news of Jesus. But he chose us, just a bunch of shepherds. (*Spread your arms to include all the kids.*) God loves all of us. That's why he sent his Son into the world. Jesus was a gift to everyone—the most precious gift God has ever given.

(*Pick up the stuffed sheep.*) Well, I need to get Shekel here back to the flock. But remember, friends, Jesus came for everyone, because God loves each one of you!

(*Take the stuffed sheep and exit.*)



SHEEP SHUFFLE

Ask:

- 🗣️ What do you think it would have been like to be a shepherd in Bible times? What do you think they did every day?

Say: Like people who raise animals today, shepherds in Bible times worked pretty hard. They kept the animals safe, made sure they had enough food and water, and tended any animals who got hurt. Let's see if you'd make good shepherds.

Form two groups, and hand each person a paper plate. Explain that one group will be Shepherds, herding the balloon "sheep" into different corners of the room, sorted by color. Shepherds can use their paper plates to create wind to guide the balloon sheep. The other group will stand around the perimeter of the room, holding their own paper plates. They'll wave the plates to make wind that will move the balloon "sheep" away from where the Shepherds are herding them.

Play upbeat music from the *Friends With God Bible Lessons Music* CD while kids play. After one round, have groups switch roles and play again. Then set the balloons out of sight and gather kids together. Ask:

- 🗣️ How do you think our game was like being a real shepherd?
- 🗣️ Why do you think God chose to share the news of Jesus' birth with shepherds first?

Say: Shepherds worked hard. They didn't have a lot of money or fancy clothes. They spent their time caring for animals. But God shared his best news with them first! Later in the Bible, Jesus called himself the good shepherd. Ask:

- 🗣️ How do you think Jesus is like a shepherd?

Say: Jesus came for everyone. He didn't come to save only people with money or fame or important jobs. He loves and wants a friendship with *everyone*!



A FLOCK OF SHEPHERDS

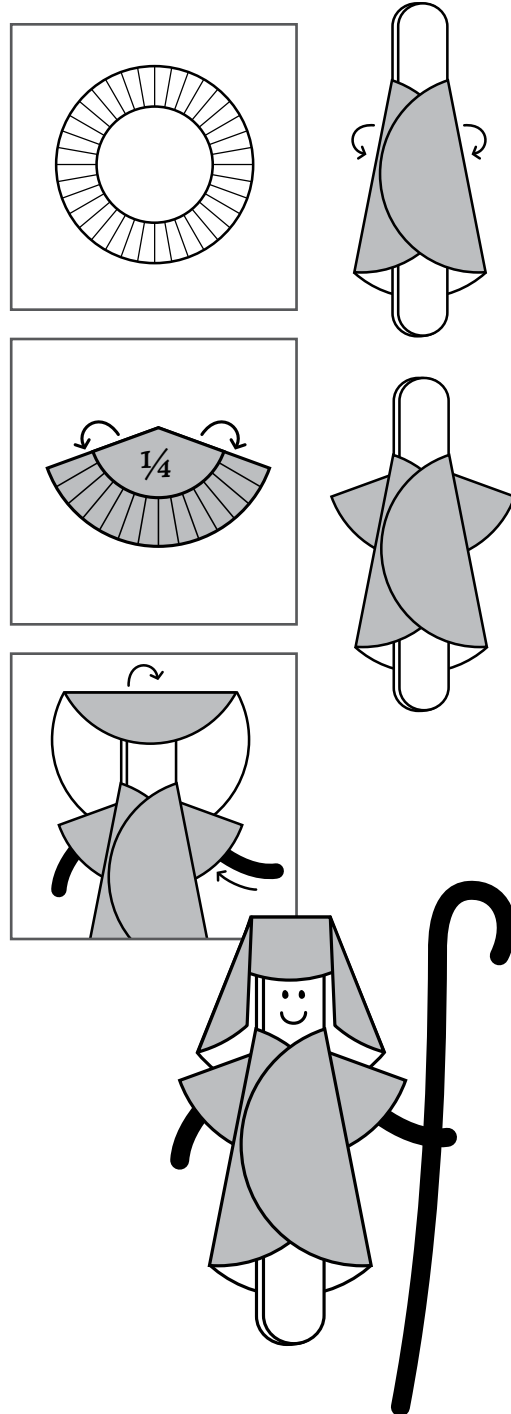
Set out glue, wide craft sticks, scissors, chenille wires, flesh-colored crayons, markers, and cupcake liners.

Say: **God's people waited hundreds of years for the Messiah—the one who would lead and save them. And when it was time for God's Messiah, Jesus, to be born, God chose lowly shepherds to hear the news first! Jesus came for everyone! He didn't come to love and save only rich, important, or powerful people. That's because God loves everyone. Let's make a group of humble shepherds to remember that Jesus came for everyone.**

Guide kids through the steps to make these fun shepherds.

1. Color a craft stick so it's the same color as you are.
2. Open a cupcake liner so the colorful side is facing down. Flatten the liner as much as possible to make a circle. Glue the craft stick on top of the circle, vertically. (You should have just a little more stick above the wrapper than below.)
3. Wrap the cupcake liner around the stick at the top, to make a slight "A" shape.
4. Fold a second liner into fourths. Glue the folded part down, then attach the liner to the back of the first one, with the point at the top.
5. For the shepherd's headdress, lay the figure on top of a third flattened cupcake liner so a small piece of the top of the liner is above the craft stick. Glue in place, then fold the top of the liner down to cover the tip of the stick. Fold the two sides in to create the sides of the shepherd's headdress.
6. Use markers to draw a face on the shepherd. Then cut two 2½-inch pieces of chenille wire. Put a dot of glue on the end, then slip the glued end into each of the shepherd's "sleeves" to make arms. Allow a small piece to stick out of the sleeve to be a hand.
7. Bend the top of the remaining part of the chenille wire into a shepherd's crook, and place the crook in the shepherd's hand.

Kids can use their shepherds to re-enact the Bible story.



Prayer Pals (5 minutes)

JESUS LOVES THEM ALL

Say: **The shepherds jumped up and ran to worship Jesus—they were so excited! Let's jump up and use some actions as *we* worship and talk to God.**

Have kids stand and join you in the following action prayer.

Pray: **God, thank you for sending your precious Son, Jesus, to show your love. Have kids kneel. Jesus, you came for humble people, who seem unimportant to some of us. You love them and treasure them. Have kids stand up. Jesus, thank you for coming to show your love to leaders who stand tall and lead countries, businesses, and schools. Quietly ask kids to take several steps away from the group.**

Continue: **Jesus, we're so glad you came for people in other countries, who live far from us. You love everyone in the world! Lead kids in raising their hands. Jesus, you are the king, the one who saves *all* of us. We praise you and worship you. In your name, amen.**



Includes 13
engaging lessons!

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Each of these 13 one-hour Sunday school lessons includes an interactive script, friend-making icebreakers, giggle-inducing games, creative crafts, and powerful prayer times to reach every kind of learner. *Plus, a CD with 13 sing-along songs!*



Fun Music
Inside!

Each of these biblical accounts is told in the first person, inspired by the delightful **Friends With God Story Bible**—a great companion resource for your students.

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