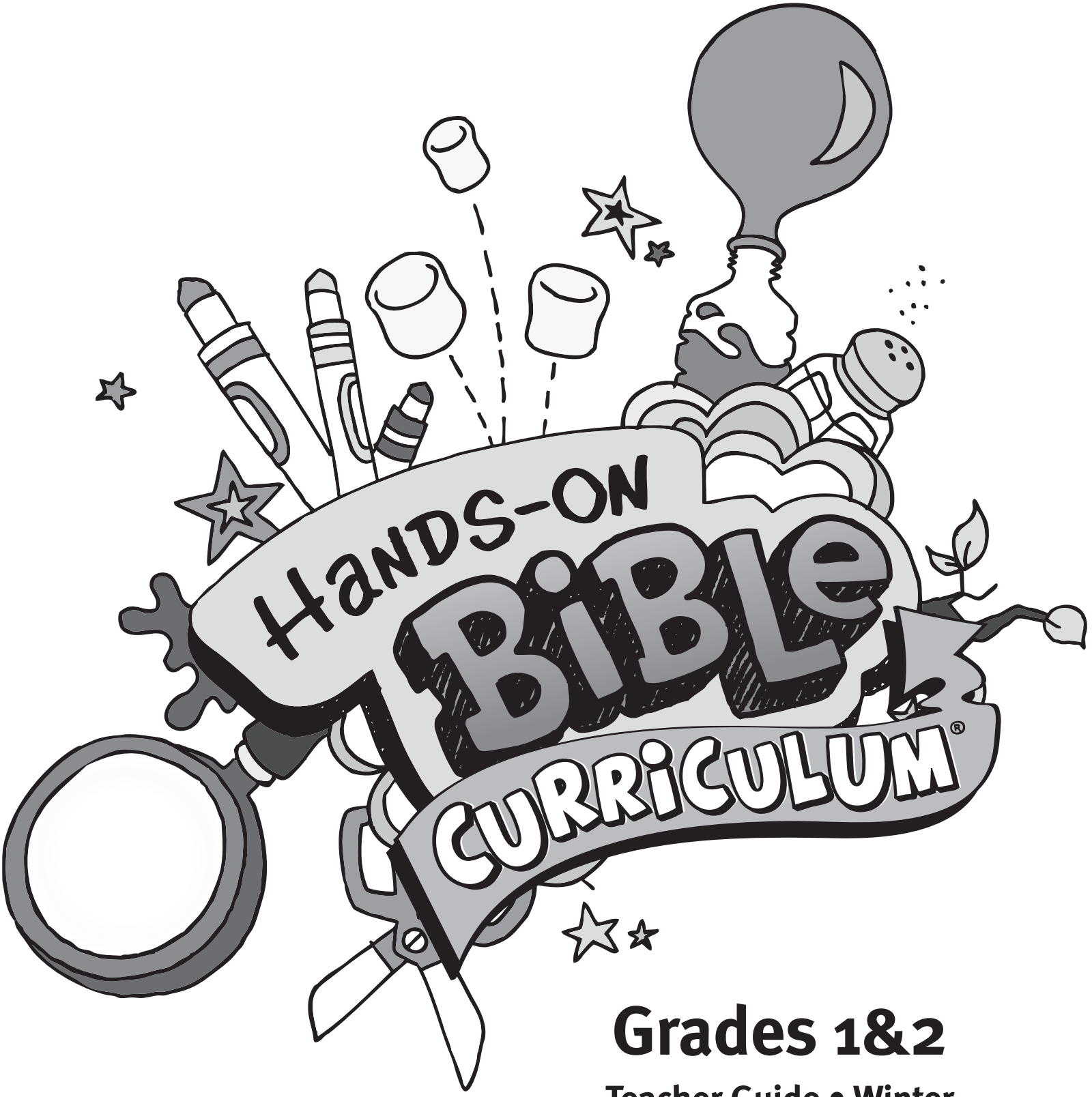
Group

Teacher Guide

GRADES 1 & 2

Winter

Teach as Jesus Taught!®



Grades 1&2

Teacher Guide • Winter

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Group

Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:

R·E·A·L
RELATIONAL EXPERIENTIAL APPLICABLE LIFELONG

Relational
Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential
What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable
The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong
Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

We know you care about kids...

We do, too!

That's why we attempt to ensure that all crafts, toys, and gizmos meet or exceed national safety standards—*and* are produced by manufacturers that don't use child labor or abuse their labor force. You can order Group resources knowing that in addition to caring for *your* kids, you're also caring for children elsewhere.

Let's keep kids safe!

We strive to provide products that are mechanically reliable and hold together during normal, intended usage. Items are also checked for flammability, and both paint and surface coatings are checked for heavy metals—including lead.

You can help your children stay safe by seeing that toys and gizmos are used as designed, for the purposes designed, and that any broken pieces are disposed of promptly and properly. We value your feedback. If you become aware of a problem affecting the safety of any of our products, please inform us immediately.

Group's HANDS-ON BIBLE CURRICULUM®

Group

Hands-On Bible Curriculum®, Grades 1 & 2, Winter

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* Due to the way Christmas falls, we recommend moving the lessons as needed to line up Lesson 2 with the week of Christmas.

Welcome to the Adventure!

Now why are you teaching first and second grades? Whether it's because you've done it for as long as you can remember or because you are giving it a try for the first time to fill a need, you'll find first- and second-graders to be endearing kids who unpack their world in concrete terms. They experiment with all of their senses and ask tons of questions. You can make a huge difference in their lives by introducing them to Jesus and helping them grow in their understanding of him. You will be launching them on a life-long journey of knowing, loving, and following their Savior, Jesus.

First- and second-graders think concretely, yet wonder about the world they are discovering. They want to meet Jesus and interact with him in ways that help them understand who he is and how he works. Our master teacher, Jesus, used active learning 2,000 years ago, and it still works today!

Your students will learn best by experiencing new ideas and concepts through a variety of styles. They want to touch, taste, smell, hear, and see what they are learning about. They will naturally want to ask questions and interact with you and their peers, so allow plenty of time for questions and discussion. If you encourage them, they will try new things and learn difficult concepts. You will change their lives as you open their minds and hearts to the most important person in their lives, Jesus.

Here are a few helpful do's and don'ts to make experiential learning work best for your kids:

• **Do think outside the learning-space box!** Move tables so students can move around freely and work in groups. Scope out other areas, such as a foyer, a parking lot, or a fellowship hall, that can be used for activities.

• **Don't turn down the volume!** Recognize the difference between good "learning noise" and a situation needing your attention. Active-learning activities often are fast-paced and noisy.

• **Do take advantage of teachable moments.** An activity that bombs may provide a wonderful opportunity for learning if you ask questions such as "Why didn't this work?" "How is this like what happens in real life?" or "What can we learn from this experience?"

• **Don't show children the contents of the Learning Lab® before they are used in the lessons.** Keep them guessing what's coming next!

• **Do get to know your children.** Be aware of the attitudes they bring with them. They may be dealing with family, school, or relationship issues. Encourage students to share their feelings as they participate in activities.

• **Don't forget—experiential learning is fun and captivating!** Enjoy it! A positive experience learning about God within the safe boundaries of your classroom will lead to more positive experiences with God outside the classroom. What a great way to encourage your students to discover the joy of the Lord firsthand and to grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

Be aware that some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies your kids may have. Also, be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.

Making the Most of Your Hands-On Bible Curriculum®

⚠ **WARNING:**
CHOKING HAZARD—
Learning Lab items may include small parts. Not for children under 3 years.

Module Introductions Within each quarter of Hands-On Bible Curriculum, there are three modules. Each module has a theme that runs throughout the lessons. The introduction to each module includes an overview of the lessons and a chart listing the Bible Point and Scripture used in each lesson.

Bible Point There's one point that you want your children to take home at the end of your lesson. That's the Bible Point. You'll see it referenced in the margin as well as italicized and underlined in the lesson. We've designed for it to be repeated numerous times during the lesson so no one will miss it.

Bible Verse These words, straight from God's Word, show the biblical basis for the lesson. The Bible verse appears in boldface in the lesson.

Teacher Enrichment This part of the lesson is just for you. If you can, read it early in the week. It includes an explanation of the Bible passage and some suggested ways to pray during the week so you'll be prepared, heart and mind, for your important hour with your children.

This Lesson at a Glance This valuable chart shows you the big picture for your lesson. You can quickly see what supplies you'll need and what needs to be done before you begin. A minute on this page will save you 10 during your lesson!

The Jesus Connection To us, this is the most important thing—making the connection between the story and Jesus, the reason for the story. You'll find a Jesus Connection in every lesson, set apart in a box. We want children to find Jesus every week in your class, so don't miss this part of the lesson.

***Hands-On Bible*® Connection** We want all kids to use their Bibles every week. The *Hands-On Bible* is, in our estimation, the best way to get kids into this important book. It's the Bible that kids not only read but also *do*! In every lesson, you'll find a quick, fun way to get your kids involved in using their Bibles. The tip is in a box that you can't miss.

Teacher Tips You'll find these in the margin throughout the lesson. They're just to give you additional ideas to enhance what you're doing. They vary from alternative ideas for activities to age-level insights.

Take-Home Papers These photocopiable pages that you send home with your families every week will help to reinforce the lesson and encourage learning all week long!

"There is only one thing worth being concerned about."

—Luke 10:42

What is this one thing?
It's the whole reason for this curriculum—

it's the whole reason for Sunday school. It's what we (and you) want your kids to know! Check out what Thom and Joani Schultz (Group's chairman and chief creative officer) have to say about the one thing and what it means in your life.

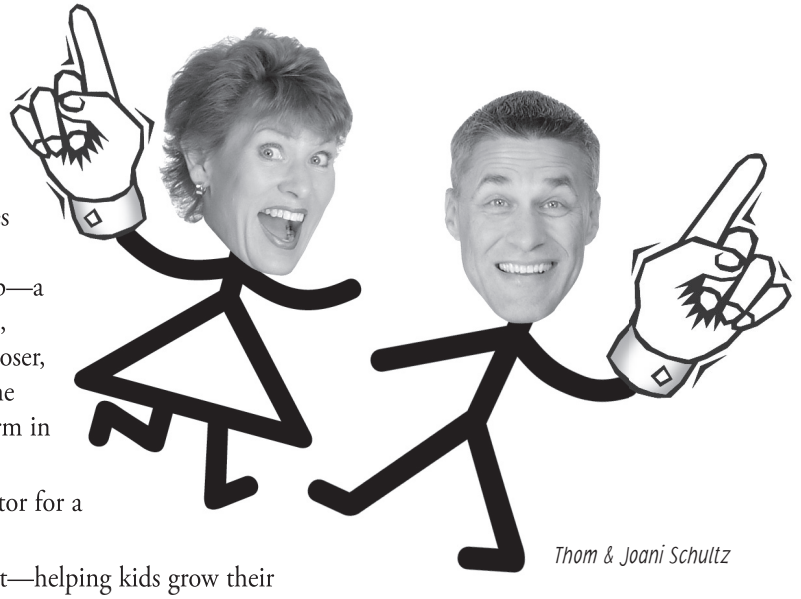
In Luke chapter 10, Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. As Martha worries about preparing dinner and being a busy servant, she gets upset because Mary isn't helping. But Jesus tells her, "There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha was doing good work. In fact, she was serving the Lord. But Jesus made his priority for us clear. He wants to have a loving relationship with us even more than he wants us to serve him.

Many might say Jesus is the one thing. But no, it's a **growing relationship with Jesus.** Martha would have identified serving Jesus as the one thing. But Mary better understood the *real* one thing.

We believe that the church, like Martha, is often distracted by many things. It tends to deprioritize the one thing. Many other well-intentioned things get in the way. Churches and Christians can get sidetracked with an emphasis on rules, political positions, appearances, social action, secondary goals, theological disputes, solemnity, rituals, and more. To the spiritually hungry, churches often seem more preoccupied with these distractions than the one thing.

If the church wishes to pursue a growing relationship with Jesus, it will need to rethink and reprioritize its ministry. A one-thing ministry emphasizes relationship. And we believe a relationship with Jesus resembles in many ways a human-to-human relationship—a friendship. The process of attraction, getting acquainted, enjoying one another's company, having fun, growing closer, and forming a bond of love and devotion is a natural one that lends clues to how a one-thing relationship may form in the context of church ministry.



Thom & Joani Schultz

How can we build a church that becomes an incubator for a one-thing relationship, for *real* friendship with Jesus?

That's what Hands-On Bible Curriculum is all about—helping kids grow their friendships with Jesus. As they experience the Scriptures and do the activities, they're building that relationship in a real and relevant way.

What's the most important thing your church can do for kids? Help them choose the one thing. And use tools like Hands-On Bible Curriculum to make it a reality.

Understanding your first- and second-graders

Mental Development

- Are interested in concrete learning experiences such as dramatizations and rhythms.
- Have a limited concept of time and space; are interested in the present but not in the past or future.
- Yearn for competence in developing skills.

Physical Development

- Have high energy levels, which demand a lot of physical activity such as jumping and running.
- Are industrious; like to make things and complete projects.
- Are more interested in the finished product than the process.
- Are developing small-muscle coordination; are beginning to write.

Social Development

- Usually prefer to stick to same-sex friendships.
- Thrive on organized games and group activities.
- Want to please teachers but are beginning to recognize their role in relation to their peers.
- Want to win and always be first; have a strong sense of competition with others.

Emotional Development

- Express feelings with physical action.
- Crave individual attention and affirmation.
- Are self-centered; each child wants to be first.
- Need to feel capable; this is directly related to their self-esteem.
- Want everything to be fair; have a clear-cut sense of justice.

Spiritual Development

- Understand God's love and God's world through personal experience.
- Don't comprehend the spiritual nature of God; think of God as a giant, a magician, or an invisible man.
- Don't comprehend the Bible's chronology except that the Old Testament came before Jesus and the New Testament talks about Jesus.
- Have a literal and concrete understanding of Bible stories and biblical truths; don't comprehend abstract ideas such as the Trinity.

Jesus' Birth

'Tis the season of Christmas, and all through your class,
The children count days that too quickly will pass.
They'll be wishing for presents and days of vacation,
While you try to teach them God's plan of salvation.
Then what to your wondering eyes should appear,
But a box full of gizmos—some real Christmas cheer!
Four lessons on Jesus' miraculous birth
And the news of God sending his Son to the earth.
Angels, surprises, the Savior who's come,
Games and activities, songs you can hum.
The children attending grade one and grade two
Will have lots of fun and learn something, too!
Using these lessons will bring you great joy,
As you teach God's Word to each girl and each boy
And help them remember that Christmas joy starts
When they welcome the Christ child into their hearts.

Four Lessons on Jesus' Birth

Lesson	Bible Point	Page	Bible Basis
1	Sometimes God surprises us.	15	Luke 1:5-25, 57-65
2	Jesus came to earth as a baby.	25	Luke 2:1-7
3	Jesus is our Savior.	35	Luke 2:21-38
4	God's angels watch over us.	45	Matthew 2:13-18

The Signal

During the lessons on Jesus' birth, your attention-getting signal will be clicking the *creature clicker* three times. Have children respond to the sound by snapping their fingers three times as they stop talking and focus their attention on you. Tell children about this signal before the lesson begins. Explain that it's important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible.

The Fidget Buster

When your students are too antsy to fully participate in the lesson, use this fidget buster to get the wiggles out.

Say: **Let's pretend we're the angels who told the shepherds about Jesus' birth. One thing the angels said was "Glory to God in the highest." Let's deliver that message.**

Have all the children stand and do these actions to the rhythm of the words as they say, "Glory to God in the highest."

- Call it out with loud voices.
- Snap their fingers, alternating hands.
- Clap their hands.
- Slap their thighs.
- Stomp their feet.
- Jump up and down.
- Call it out with soft voices.
- Whisper it.

Say: **Now, angels, let's fly back to our lesson.**

The Time Stuffer

The Time Stuffer for the four lessons on Jesus' birth is a collection of finger puppets. Children will create different characters based on each week's lesson using the photocopiable handout (p. 13) as a guide.

Place photocopies of the handout, crayons, scissors, and tape on a worktable. When children arrive before class or finish an activity early, invite them to create puppets related to the lesson.

If you have time at the end of class, let children re-enact the Bible story, using the puppets they've created. Have kids save the finger puppets from week to week so they can be used in future lessons.

Digging Into the Bible

Every lesson in each four-or five-week module focuses on a key Bible verse that ties in to the Bible Point of the lesson. In addition, each lesson points to a related activity in the *Hands-On Bible* to further illustrate your Bible teaching with fun and action. Since kids tend to remember only 10 percent of what they hear but recall 90 percent of what they do, including a *Hands-On Bible* experience with each lesson is a great way to help them remember what they've learned, long after class has ended.

Remembering God's Word

This module's key Bible verses will teach children about why God sent his Son, Jesus, to come to earth as a baby. Have fun using the following activities anytime during the lessons on Jesus' Birth to reinforce the Bible verse.

■ *What Does God Want?*

Tape a sheet of newsprint to the wall. Say: **Some of our actions please God; some of them don't. Think about what pleases God.**

Children may think of answers such as going to church or obeying their parents. Write the answers on the newsprint.

After children have contributed several ideas, say: **Listen to what the Bible says God wants us to do.** Read **1 John 3:23** aloud, and then have children repeat it once with you.

This verse talks about two things God wants us to do. Listen to the verse again, and see if you can discover the two things I'm talking about. Read the verse again.

Ask: • **What are the two things God wants us to do?** (Believe in Jesus; love others.)

Say: **Let's see how our ideas match what God wants us to do.**

Read the first idea on the list, and ask the children if it shows that they believe in God or if it shows love for others. Put a star by the ideas that reflect believing in Jesus, and put a heart by the ideas that reflect loving others. You may find that many ideas fit in both categories! After you've categorized each idea, have the children form pairs.

Say: **Tell your partner one thing you'll do this week to show you believe in Jesus.** Give children a moment to share. Then say: **Tell your partner one thing you'll do this week to show you love others.**

Give children a moment to share. Have children repeat the key Bible verse with you again. Then pray and ask God to help the children carry out their plans.

Musical Message

Cue the *CD* to track 2, "Joy to the World!"

Have children sit in a circle. Give one child a Bible. Give another child a manger, made as directed on page 33. Give another child the *squishy heart*. The children with the three objects shouldn't be sitting next to each other.

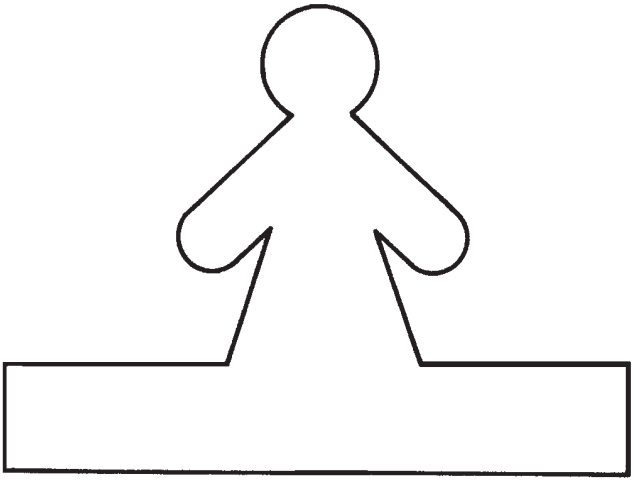
Say: **When I start the music, we'll pass the Bible, the manger, and the *squishy heart* around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the Bible will say, "This is what God commands." The person with the manger will say, "That we believe in his Son, Jesus Christ." And the person with the heart will say, "And that we love each other."**

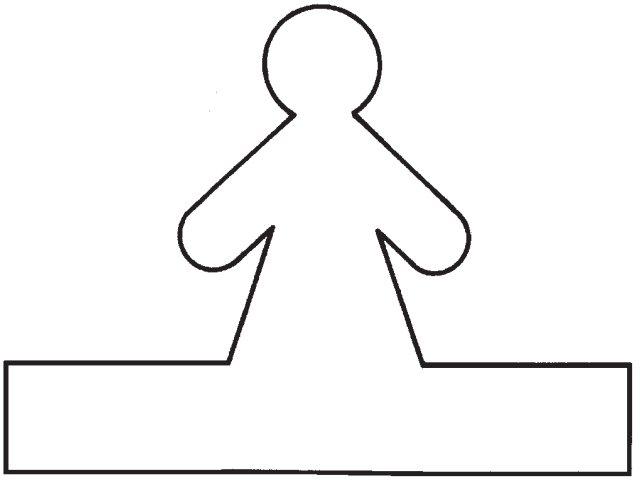
Start the music. Pause the *CD* intermittently throughout the song. These pauses will prompt the children with the props to say the verse. Continue until the song is over, and then sing the song together.

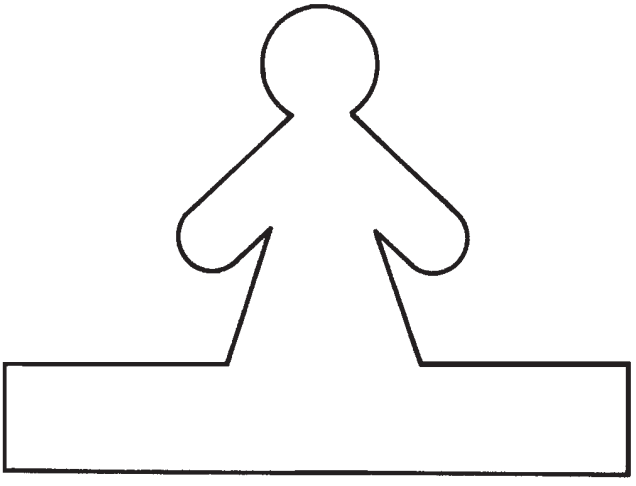
You may want to write the verse on newsprint to help the children.

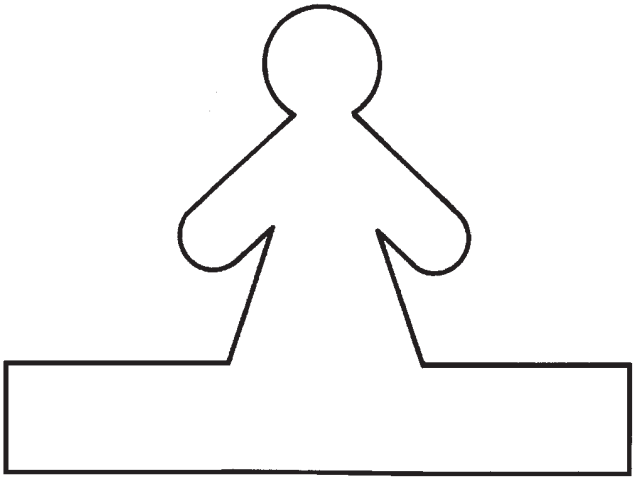
FINGER PUPPETS

Cut out and decorate your puppets to look like the people in this week's Bible story. Use extra paper to make hair, clothes, or other special features for your puppets. You can also draw background scenes. Tape the bottom ends of each puppet together. Then use your puppets to tell the Bible story.









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Sometimes God surprises us.

Bible Verse

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9b).

Growing Closer to Jesus

Children will
- be surprised by their choices;
- discover how God surprised Zechariah;
- prepare for a special, unexpected guest; and
- learn to anticipate God's surprises in their lives.

Teacher Enrichment

The Bible Basis

■ **John is born.**

Luke 1:5-25, 57-65

Jesus wasn't the only special baby announced by an angel. The baby predicted in this passage became John the Baptist. It's interesting to look at the similarities in the stories of their births. Both were announced in advance by the angel Gabriel. For both John and Jesus, the births and circumcisions were carefully described. And after each birth, someone was given a prophecy by God. There is no question that this baby John would fill a special role in the life of Jesus and in the kingdom of God.

Zechariah's question of the angel in Luke 1:18 doesn't seem too offensive, but it must have reflected a real lack of faith in what the angel was telling him. That's apparently why Zechariah was made unable to speak. God gave him some time to think quietly, and this time of reflection awaiting John's birth likely increased Zechariah's faith significantly.

At John's circumcision, it seems that people assumed the baby would be named after his father, or at least with a family name. But that's not what either of the parents wanted, and upon pronouncing the child as "John" in writing, suddenly Zechariah could speak again! And everyone around learned the truth: John would indeed be a special person—God's hand was on him from the beginning!

Prayer

- Read Luke 1:67-79.
- What does this passage tell you about Zechariah's attitude toward Jesus?
- Pray: Lord, help me have Zechariah's attitude toward Jesus. Make me more like him in...

Before the Lesson

- Collect items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart.
- Make photocopies of the "Growing Together" handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for your students and for God's direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome	**Welcome!**—Receive a warm welcome from the teacher, and make name tags.	"Birthday Cake Name Tags" (p. 23), markers, glue, scissors, tape or safety pins	
Attention Grabber	**Snack Surprise!**—Choose between two hidden snacks, and get a surprise.	Good snack, can of sardines, 2 shoe boxes	
Bible Exploration & Application	**The Baby Before Jesus**—Learn from Luke 1:5-25, 57-65 that an angel told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would prepare the way for Jesus.	Bible, matches, incense or a scented candle	
	Prepare the Way—Discover that God sent John for a special job.	Bibles, white paper, white crayons, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, water	
	Surprising Gizmos—Come up with surprises, read 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, and talk about the good surprises God is planning for them.	Bible	
Closing	**Surprising Messages**—Reveal a message on a piece of paper, and commit to telling others the unbelievable news of Jesus.	White paper, white crayon, washable markers	

Welcome

SUPPLIES: *"Birthday Cake Name Tags" (p. 23), scissors, glue, markers, tape or safety pins*

- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- Say: **Today we're going to learn that ►*sometimes God surprises us.***

◄BIBLE POINT

- Help children make name tags. Photocopy the "Birthday Cake Name Tags," and follow the instructions. Let kids use snippets of *mega confetti* to decorate their name tags.
- Tell children that the attention-getting signal you'll use during this lesson is clicking the *creature clicker* three times. Ask children to respond to the sound by snapping their fingers three times as they stop talking and focus their attention on you. Rehearse the signal with the children, telling them to respond quickly so you'll have plenty of time for all the fun activities planned for this lesson.

Attention Grabber

■ *Snack Surprise!*

See page 5.

SUPPLIES: *good snack, can of sardines, 2 shoe boxes*

Before class, hide a can of sardines in one shoe box. Hide a child-friendly snack in another shoe box. Place the boxes and the hidden treats on two different tables.

When the children arrive, show them the boxes.

Say: **There are snacks hidden in these boxes. You can choose which snack you want, but you can't see what's in each box. Go stand beside the box you think has the snack you'd like.**

After children make their selections and stand beside the boxes, have two children open the boxes to reveal what's inside. Have the children hold up the snacks for everyone to see.

Ask: • **What did you think when you realized you'd chosen the sardines?** (I was surprised; disappointed.)

• **How about when you realized you'd chosen the good snack?** (I was glad; I felt bad for the other kids.)

Put the sardines away. As kids enjoy the real snack, say: **I guess this surprise turned out well for everybody because I gave all of you the real snack.**

Ask: • **Who can tell about a time you had a good surprise in real life?** (Once my grandma came to visit, and I didn't know she was coming; I thought I was going to get a baby brother, but I got a baby sister instead.)

• **What other kinds of surprises do you like?** (Surprise birthday parties; finding money; not having to go to school on snow days.)

• **How does God sometimes surprise us?** (He may let something happen we don't expect; he may give us something we didn't know we'd get.)

Say: ►***Sometimes God surprises us!*** **Today we'll find out about a man who was surprised by an angel who gave him a message he could hardly believe.**

teacher tips

Some possible answers are given after each question to help you serve as a guide when children struggle with a question. Use these only to facilitate a discussion. Resist the temptation to give the answers after a few moments of silence and struggling. Children learn best when they are given the opportunity to discover for themselves.

◄BIBLE POINT

Bible Exploration & Application

■ *The Baby Before Jesus*

SUPPLIES: *Bible, matches, incense or scented candle*

Gather children in a circle. Open your Bible to **Luke 1:5-25**, **57-65**, and show the passages to the children.

Say: **A long time ago, there was an old married couple whose names were Zechariah and Elizabeth. They loved and obeyed God, but they had never been able to have a baby. Let's pretend to be elderly people. We'll walk around and talk like we're old.** Help kids think of ways they can pretend to be old, and then ask:

• **What would it be like to be an older couple with no children or grandchildren?** (Lonely; they probably wished they had kids.)

• **What are some things you have wanted so bad but knew you couldn't have?** (A puppy; a video game.)

Say: **Zechariah was a priest who worked in the Temple where people went to learn about God, pray to God, and praise God. One day Zechariah was chosen out of all the priests to go into the most special room in the Temple and burn incense as an offering to God. Incense has a special smell.** Light some incense or a candle, and allow kids to carefully smell it. Fan over the incense or candle toward kids as they smell so they don't burn themselves.

Ask: • **What's your favorite smell?** (Cookies; dinner; my mom's perfume.)

Say: **While Zechariah was in this special room, one of God's angels appeared!**

Ask: • **What would you do if an angel suddenly appeared to you?** (I'd be scared; I'd ask what it wanted.)

Say: **The Bible says Zechariah was frightened when the angel appeared. Show me how you look when you're frightened.** Pause.

The angel said Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a baby boy and they should name the baby John. John would grow up and tell people that God would soon be sending the Savior!

Ask: • **What is something someone has told you that was so surprising you didn't believe it? What happened? Was the person telling the truth?** (My sister told me that we were going to Disneyland, and it was true; my brother told me that Martians landed in our backyard, but he was playing a trick on me.)

Say: **Zechariah and Elizabeth were too old to have a baby. So Zechariah had a hard time believing what the angel said. So the angel said, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens because you did not believe my words, which will come true at the proper time."**

I'm going to ask you two questions. I want you to figure out how to answer my questions without any talking, just as Zechariah had to do.

Ask: • **What would it be like if you couldn't speak? Answer me without using your voice.**

• **If you always didn't have a voice, how would you tell people what you needed? Answer me without using your voice again.**

teacher tips

It's important to say the Bible Point just as it's written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over will help children remember it and apply it to their lives.

Say: **For many months, Zechariah couldn't speak at all! Then Elizabeth had her baby. When it came time for the baby to be named, everyone wanted to name him Zechariah after his father.**

Ask: • **What do you think Zechariah thought when the people wanted to name the baby after him?** (He thought that was nice; he didn't want them to; he remembered what the angel said.)

• **What do you think Zechariah did to tell people what the baby's name should be?** (Wrote it down; said it in sign language.)

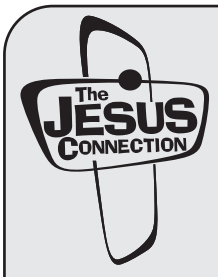
• **Why do you think it was a big deal that Zechariah name the baby John?** (God said to; the angel said he should; he needed to obey God.)

• **What might have happened next?** (Zechariah could talk; he named the baby John; he couldn't talk, so they named the baby Zechariah.)

Say: **Zechariah wrote a message to the people. It said, "His name is John." And all of a sudden, Zechariah could talk!**

Ask: • **What surprising things happened in this story?** (Zechariah was surprised by an angel; Zechariah and Elizabeth were surprised with a baby; everyone was surprised when Zechariah started talking again.)

Say: **Even though it seemed impossible for Zechariah and Elizabeth to have a baby, God made it happen. Sometimes we don't understand God's surprises, but they always turn out right in the end because God loves us.**



Say: **God does surprising things a lot. He did surprising things all through the Bible. He sent his Son, Jesus, to earth to save us from our sins so we could live with him in heaven.**

Ask: • **What is surprising about Jesus coming to die for sins?** (He didn't have to do that; God sent his own Son for us; he died and came back to life again.)

• **What are some other surprising things Jesus did in the Bible?** (He rose from the dead; he healed people; he fed a lot of people with a little bit of food.)

■ *Prepare the Way*

SUPPLIES: *Bibles, white paper, white crayons, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, water*

Say: **God surprised Zechariah and Elizabeth with a baby boy named John. Using a white crayon, we are going to draw pictures of John, their baby boy. When you draw, you won't be able to see the baby. But you have to trust that it will appear later.**

Break the white crayons into pieces so each child has a piece. Help children use the white crayons to draw a picture of a baby on a piece of white paper. While they are drawing, ask:

• **Why didn't Zechariah believe the angel when he said Elizabeth would have a baby?** (They couldn't have kids before; they already tried; they were too old.)

• **What is something amazing that has happened that you couldn't believe?** (My friend gave me his favorite video game; my dog did a trick I had been working so hard to teach him; my parents got back together after being separated for a whole year.)

• **Why does God surprise us with special things sometimes?** (He loves us; he wants us to follow him; he wants to make us happy.)

When children have finished drawing a baby on their papers, help them paint over the white crayon drawings with watercolor paint, slowly revealing the pictures they drew. The longer the paints have to dry, the more the pictures will be seen.

Ask: • **What surprised you about your pictures?** (They showed up; the paint helped me see them; the paint didn't stay on the crayon.)

• **How is that surprise like Zechariah and Elizabeth being surprised with a new baby?** (We didn't think we'd see the baby; we had to trust you like they had to trust God.)

Give the pictures more time to dry by setting them out of the way until the end of class.

Help students find **Luke 1:15-17** in their Bibles, and ask a volunteer to read the passage.

Ask: • **What did the angel say about John?** (He will be a great man; he will help people; he will bring parents and children together.)

• **What do you think John needed to do to prepare for Jesus?** (Tell people to stop doing wrong things; tell people to think about God.)

Say: **Let's read the Bible and find out what John told people to do to prepare for Jesus.** Have another volunteer read **Luke 3:11**.

Ask: • **Why do you think John wanted people to share their clothes and food?** (He wanted them to care about each other; he wanted them to love others.)

Say: **In other verses, John told people not to steal and not to lie, and he also encouraged people and got them excited about Jesus.**

Ask: • **How did this prepare the way for Jesus?** (It got people thinking about God; it helped people behave the way Jesus would want them to.)

• **How did God surprise people in this story?** (He sent John to prepare the way for Jesus; he sent an angel.)

• **In your life how can you do what John said?** (I can share with my brother; I can help the poor; I can give some of my lunch if my friend forgets hers.)

• **How can you prepare for Jesus, our special guest?** (I can pray; I can tell others about him.)

Say: ►***Sometimes God surprises us.*** **God surprised people by sending an angel and by sending John to prepare everyone for Jesus' coming. Special guests deserve special preparations. As Christmas gets closer, let's remember to prepare for Jesus, our most special guest, by doing what John said. Now let's play a game of surprises.**

HANDS-ON BIBLE

Say: **God surprised Zechariah and Elizabeth with a new son, John. But God had another surprise ready for them. He had a special job for John to do to prepare for Jesus to be born.**

Help kids find **I Corinthians 5** in their *Hands-On Bibles* and look for the Bio for John the Baptist. Have kids form pairs and read the Bio together. Then instruct kids to answer the questions together in their pairs.

Say: **John the Baptist had some special jobs to do!**

Ask: • **What makes you special?** (I can play the piano; I have a lot of friends.)

• **God had a special job for John. What is a special job God might use you for?** (I could play piano in church; I can tell all my friends about Jesus.)

■ *Surprising Gizmos*

SUPPLIES: *Bible*

Help children form groups of three.

Say: **We can find surprising ways to use a lot of different things. I am going to give each group an item from this box. When you get the item, work with your friends to find a surprising way to use the item.**

Distribute one Learning Lab item to each group. Give groups five minutes to find surprising ways to use their items. When each group has come up with at least one surprising use for its item, have volunteers present ideas to the class. Then return the items to the Learning Lab.

Ask: • **What are other things you use to surprise people?** (Balloons; presents; cake; noisemakers.)

• **What does God use to surprise us?** (Friends; family; special days; Jesus.)

• **Why is planning surprises so much fun?** (Because I know the other person will like it; because I want to see the look on people's faces.)

Say: ►***Sometimes God surprises us*** **with the very best surprises of our whole lives, just as he did with Zechariah. The Bible says God has surprises planned for us!** Have a volunteer read **1 Corinthians 2:9b** aloud: ►**"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9b).**

• **How do you think God feels about the surprises he has for us?** (I think God is excited; I think God can hardly wait to tell us what he's planned.)

• **What do you think God might have planned as a surprise for you?** (A new baby brother; a good friend; snow for sledding this week.)

• **What's good about getting surprises from God?** (They're good surprises because he loves us; they're surprises that no one else can make happen.)

⚠ WARNING!

This activity uses magnets. Swallowed magnets can attract each other through opposing intestine walls, causing serious infection or even death. Seek immediate medical attention if magnets are swallowed or inhaled.

◄**BIBLE POINT**

◄**BIBLE VERSE**

Say: **God already has great surprises planned for your future. We can wake up every day and know God has good surprises waiting for us! Now let's do something that will help us let others know about God's wonderful surprises.**

Closing

■ *Surprising Messages*

SUPPLIES: *white paper, white crayon, washable markers*

Before class, use a white crayon to write "You won't believe it!" on a piece of white paper.

Ask: **Zechariah couldn't talk for months. What would it be like if you couldn't talk?** (It would be hard; I couldn't do it; I would have a lot to say.)

Hold up the piece of paper. Say: **I bet we could get this piece of paper to give us a message. Do you think we can?**

Distribute washable markers.

Pass the paper around so the children can each color on the paper until the message is revealed. Ask each child to share a way they'll tell their friends about the unbelievable news of Jesus.

Say: ►***Sometimes God surprises us,*** **and we can tell others about God's wonderful surprises.**

Collect name tags for next week's use, and remind children to take home any crafts they made today.

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Growing Together" handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage children and parents to use the handout to plan meaningful activities on this week's topic. Follow up the "Growing Together" activities next week by asking children what their families did together.

Birthday Cake Name Tags

Photocopy this page, and cut the name tags as indicated. Take a small handful of the *mega confetti*, and cut it into small pieces. Have children tape or glue the confetti pieces on their name tags and write their names below the cakes.

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Growing Together

Jesus' Birth 1:
Sometimes God surprises us.

Bible Story
John is born (Luke 1:5-25, 57-65).

Bible Verse
"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9b).

In Touch

Today your child learned that God has wonderful surprises planned for him or her. The children learned that Zechariah was surprised by God's plan for him and his wife to have a baby boy who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Teach your child to look forward to what God has planned for the future. Incorporate these activities into the coming week with celebration and anticipation.

Unexpected Gift

Go telephone caroling. Gather your family, and practice one or two easy Christmas carols such as "Away in a Manger," "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," or "Joy to the World!" Surprise your friends and family by calling them and singing a verse to them. End the phone call by identifying yourselves. Don't forget to wish them a merry Christmas.

Dessert Surprise

This looks like a plain dessert, but hidden inside is a chocolaty, minty surprise. You'll need a package of chocolate wafer cookies, peppermints, and a large tub of whipped topping. Divide the whipped topping equally into two bowls. Crush the peppermints, and stir them into one of the bowls of topping. Spread a thin layer of plain whipped topping in a rectangular shape on a platter. Spread a cookie with a layer of peppermint topping, and stand it upright in the whipped topping on the platter. Keep spreading cookies with peppermint topping, and place them, one behind the other, like a roll of Life Savers candy. Press the cookies together gently to form a log shape. Spread the log with the plain whipped topping. Put it in the refrigerator for several hours before serving so the wafers become soft. Slice the log diagonally.

Surprise Jar

Cut wrapping paper into 3-inch squares. On the blank side of each square, have family members write ideas for fun things the family can do together during the holidays—watch last year's Christmas video, make Christmas ornaments, make hot chocolate, and drive around looking at Christmas-light displays, for example. Then fold the papers with the wrapping-paper side showing, and place them in a jar. Each day draw one idea, and then have fun together.

Christmas Countdown

Use strips of red, green, and white paper to make a paper chain. Count the number of days left until Christmas, and put that number of loops on your chain. Each day let a different family member tear one loop off the chain as you count down to Christmas!

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Teacher Guide

GRADES 1 & 2

Winter

Teach as Jesus Taught!®

JESUS USED EVERYDAY OBJECTS—a mustard seed, a fig tree, a lost coin—to teach his disciples the truths that would change the world. With Hands-On Bible Curriculum, you can teach as Jesus taught, using fun surprises that children can touch, see, and smell to relate eternal truths they won't forget.

This quarter your 1st- and 2nd-graders will learn these important Bible lessons:

JESUS' BIRTH

Luke 1:5-25, 57-65	Sometimes God surprises us.
Luke 2:1-7	Jesus came to earth as a baby.
Luke 2:21-38	Jesus is our Savior.
Matthew 2:13-18	God's angels watch over us.

JESUS CARES

Matthew 6:25-27	Jesus cares about people who are hungry.
Mark 12:41-44	Jesus cares about people who are poor.
Mark 5:21-24, 35-42	Jesus cares about people who who are sick.
Luke 15:1-7	Jesus cares about people who are left out.
Matthew 18:1-6; 19:13-15	Jesus cares about children.

FAMILIES

Genesis 13:1-12	Family members care for each other.
Luke 15:11-32	God loves us, no matter what.
Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:7b, 12, 13, 16; 2 Timothy 2:16, 23; 4:2, 5	God wants children to obey their parents.
Acts 4:32-37	The church is God's family.

Also available:

AWARD-WINNING HANDS-ON BIBLE®

God's Word comes alive with hundreds of fun, interactive activities. It also coordinates with Hands-On Bible Curriculum!

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