

LEADER GUIDE
ELEMENTARY • HOLIDAY YEAR 3



ELEMENTARY

HOLIDAY YEAR 3

LEADER GUIDE



Loveland, Colorado
group.com/SimplyLoved

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:

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.



Leader Guide Elementary—Holiday Year 3

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Welcome to Simply Loved!

Welcome to Simply Loved Sunday school—where you and your team simply experience God’s love and share it with kids.

“Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.”

(1 John 4:11-12)

With Simply Loved, you, your helpers (we call them Crew Guides), and your kids explore a foundational, Jesus-centered journey through God’s story of Love. We believe that faith isn’t a subject to be mastered; it’s a relationship to grow! So every single component of Simply Loved sets the stage for you to more intentionally grow friendship with Jesus and each other. Keep reading to find out what that’ll look like in *your* classroom.

Join our Simply Loved Facebook community to learn from children’s ministry leaders just like you!

 [facebook.com/groups/simplylovedteacherslounge](https://www.facebook.com/groups/simplylovedteacherslounge)



How It Works

Simple Volunteer Roles



You'll need the following volunteers:

Leader: (That's you!) The one person in each teaching space who has looked over the lesson and will direct all activities. The glance-able, structured lessons in this guide allow leaders to spend more time interacting with kids and less time glued to scripts.

Crew Guide: A helper who simply shows up and participates with kids. Crew Guides don't need to be Bible experts—simply people who love Jesus and kids!

A Simple, Flexible Lesson!

Simple Prep for Leaders

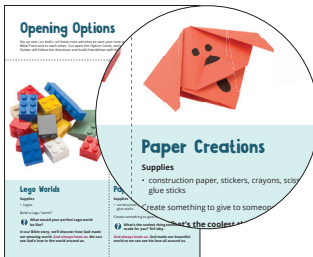
Prepare your heart and pray for the kids before each lesson. Plus, check off supplies as you gather them!



Prayer
God, your awesome name fills the earth. It's amazing to think that you created me. Thank you for caring for the kids today. May they see your love in the world and in my life. Amen.

Opening Options

Choose from two opening activities—both introduce the day's Bible Point. Each unit creatively uses the same supplies all four weeks. That means you'll need to gather Opening Options supplies only once a month! If you'd like, set up these Opening Options as activity stations in your room. Simply cut apart the cards you'll find in each lesson and place one at each station to guide activity and conversation. Or, do one or both activities with all kids together. You choose!



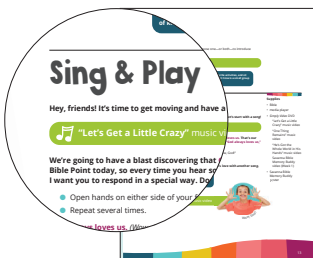
Paper Creations

Supplies
• construction paper, stickers, crayons, scissors
• glue sticks

Create something to give to someone else.

Sing & Play

Gather kids to sing and discover the Bible Point. Plus, a Bible Memory Buddy connects the Bible verse to kids' everyday lives.



Sing & Play

Hey, friends! It's time to get moving and have a blast!

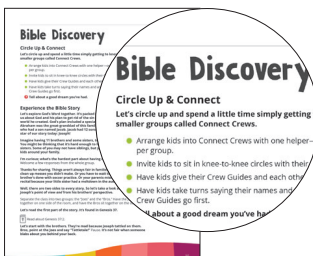
🎵 "Let's Get a Little Crazy" music video

We're going to have a blast discovering that Bible Point today, so every time you hear the Bible Point, I want you to respond in a special way. Do you?

- Open hands on either side of your head.
- Repeat several times.

Bible Discovery

We've given you lots of options, but don't skip this part! It's the "meat" of the lesson where kids experience God's greatest gift in an interactive, hands-on way. There's no time to be bored as kids and Connect Crews follow the Leader through a memorable Bible experience. You'll read directly from the Bible throughout the Bible Discovery, so be sure to mark your place ahead of time and choose a kid-friendly translation to read from.

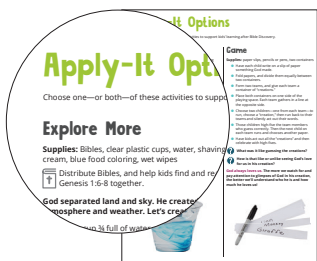


Bible Discovery

Circle Up & Connect
Let's circle up and spend a little time simply getting to know each other in smaller groups called Connect Crews.

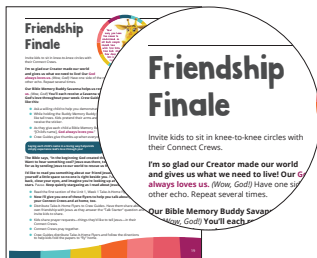
- Arrange kids into Connect Crews with one helper per group.
- Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their backs to the center.
- Have kids give their Crew Guides and each other a thumbs up.
- Have kids take turns saying their names and their Crew Guides go first.

Let's pray for each other and share about a good dream you've had.



Apply-It Options

Consider your time frame, and take your pick: a game or an activity that lets kids practice Bible skills! Each option applies the Bible Point to everyday kid life.



Friendship Finale

Wrap up your lesson with a gospel-centered Jesus connection, and equip kids to continue faith conversations at home! Plus, affirm kids by name as you give each child a Bible Memory Buddy sticker at the end of each lesson.

A Simple, Flexible Format!

Age-Graded Classrooms

It's simple! You'll need one prepared leader and at least one helper (we call helpers Crew Guides) for each teaching space. We recommend having a media player handy in each space for music and each week's Bible Memory Buddy video.

Age-Graded Classrooms With a Multi-Age Opening

It's simple! Lead the Sing & Play section with all ages together. Set up a media player in your gathering area so that when you're all together, you can sing along with music videos, introduce the Bible Point, and meet the Bible Memory Buddy! Then, disperse to age-graded classrooms for Bible Discovery, Apply-It Options, and the Friendship Finale. You'll need one prepared leader and at least one helper (we call helpers Crew Guides) for each teaching space.

One (big or small) Room With Multi-Age Kids

It's simple! You'll need one prepared leader plus at least one helper (we call helpers Crew Guides). Ideally, you'll have one Crew Guide for every five to eight kids, but it can work with your church's volunteer-to-children ratios. We recommend having a media player handy for music and each week's Bible Memory Buddy video.



Our Strategic Approach

There are “whys” behind every lesson component, and we want to share them with you! Here are the guiding principles behind the creation of Simply Loved Sunday school curriculum.

You may have heard...	But we've found...	That's why...
“It’s hard to recruit volunteers.”	When volunteers need less prep time, have fun, and feel like they’re making a difference, they’ll make serving a priority.	Simply Loved volunteer roles are important, but easy!
“Kids need to be entertained.”	Kids need to be noticed and loved.	Simply Loved lessons are designed to help you listen to kids and get to know them.
“You need a lot of supplies.”	You need only a few supplies used in creative ways.	Simply Loved incorporates minimal supplies each unit but uses them in innovative ways to introduce and apply the day’s lesson.
“We need helpers—any warm body will do.”	Helpers don’t just assist. Even though they don’t need to prep, they serve an important relational purpose and make a big difference in kids’ lives.	Simply Loved helpers have a name and an elevated role: they’re “Crew Guides”! They participate along with the kids, play a meaningful role in lessons, and make a difference by building friendships with kids.
“Kids are rarely able to remember Scripture.”	Creating a visual and emotional connection to Scripture dramatically helps kids remember and understand why the Bible matters in their everyday lives.	Simply Loved incorporates kid-friendly videos featuring Bible Memory Buddies (animals God created) to help them understand Bible truths and trigger Scripture memory. And Bible Memory Buddies help discoveries stick! (wink, wink)
“Teachers are Bible experts.”	Teachers are channels of friendship who help children understand and experience Jesus’ love.	Simply Loved uses human relationships to communicate God’s love in a tangible way. Built-in conversation starters help teachers share their personal stories and their own friendship with Jesus.
“Covering a lot of information is intimidating.”	Reaching children is simple when you focus on one Bible Point.	Simply Loved repeats key Bible Points in different ways so truths sink deep. And it combines the repetition of a Bible Point with an auditory and physical response that will stick with kids long after your lesson ends.
“Success requires getting through the whole lesson.”	You’ll clearly communicate the key Bible Point no matter how far you get.	With Simply Loved, a palette of Bible-Point-supporting options gives you the freedom to choose what works for your kids and your time frame. So no matter how much of the lesson you complete, the Truth from God’s Word shines through.
“Kids’ll get bored if you repeat something they’ve heard before.”	Kids appreciate routine and repetition when it’s done in a fun way.	Simply Loved’s scope and sequence intentionally repeats the Bible verse and Point for four weeks. This strategically cements Bible learning no matter how often kids attend.

Helping Elementary Kids Become Rooted in Faith

As their Leader, you get to show elementary-age children what loving Jesus looks like! And Simply Loved will help. Simply Loved incorporates the following Age-Level Teaching Tips to create a rich environment where elementary kids grow a lasting friendship with Jesus.

Go Deeper

As kids get older, we may be tempted to throw more Bible stories and Bible information at them. But elementary kids don't need more things to learn; they need to dig deeper into the truths they've been introduced to. That's why Simply Loved explores one Bible Point for four weeks and why open-ended questions meet kids right where they are—no matter their grade or prior knowledge of the Bible.

Make It Fun

You know, we often differentiate between “fun” and the “meat” of our lessons. We think that if we incorporate a game or free play, then we're making time for fun. But with Simply Loved, Bible discoveries are as fun as game time, and prayers are as fun as videos!

Keep It Simple

Kids benefit from messages that are short, sweet, and relevant to their everyday lives. That's why Simply Loved Bible lessons center around one short, simple, memorable Bible Point. Repetition cements learning, so repeating Bible truths helps kids remember them when they need it the most.

Build Friendships

Friendship matters to elementary kids. So Simply Loved builds friendships by allowing time for kids to talk and get to know each other. Plus, Simply Loved encourages you to break up into smaller groups called Connect Crews. That way each child is seen and known, and when a question is asked, everyone has a chance to talk and share.

Be Authentic

In order to build real friendships with kids, you need to let them see leaders as real people. That's why, when asking a question, Simply Loved encourages Leaders and Crew Guides to share from their own lives first and model the answer. When *you* go first, you're honestly telling kids about your own struggles and experiences—and even hard-to-reach kids will follow your lead.

Connect to Emotion

God has wired us with emotions, and the Bible is filled with stories of real people who experienced fear, sadness, joy, doubt, fatigue, and confusion. That's why Simply Loved identifies and evokes key emotions each week. Connecting to emotion cements learning and helps elementary kids know that Jesus understands their feelings and is with them, no matter what.

Point Out Kids' Purpose

Kids don't need to wait until they're grown up to fulfill God's purpose for their lives; they can do it right now! That's why Simply Loved intentionally incorporates time each week for Leaders to affirm and encourage kids as they grow closer to Jesus.

Supply Closet Inventory

Elementary—Holiday Year 3

Have these items handy for some hands-on fun!



Program Essentials

- Bibles
- Music Video DVD**
- Buddy Video DVD**
- Bible Story posters*
- Bible Memory Buddy poster*
- Bible Memory Buddy stickers*
- Take-It-Home Flyers*
- media player

Art Supplies

- bulletin-board paper
- chenille wires
- child-safe scissors
- clear tape
- crayons
- glue sticks
- markers
- paper (including red and green)
- pens & pencils
- pompoms
- stapler
- washable ink pads

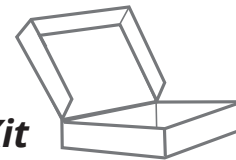
Toys & Goodies

- balloons

Odds & Ends

- Christmas stocking
- Christmas tree (*optional*)
- cotton balls
- paper bags
- pitchers of water
- plastic cups
- strand of Christmas lights
- trays
- wet wipes

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Take-It-Home Flyer Tips


Follow these steps to get Take-It Home Flyers off the ground effectively so they'll cruise on a direct flight home.

1. Follow your Simply Loved Leader Guide. The end of each elementary lesson is strategically written to incorporate these flyers.
2. Read the first page to your whole group of kids first. This is meant to be a quiet prayer time that intentionally connects kids to their friend Jesus.
3. Next, ask the "Talk Starter" question aloud, and give time for kids to discuss and pray in Connect Crews.
4. THEN, *and only then*, distribute Take-It-Home Flyers to kids. If you choose to forgo this strategic order, prepare to have papers whizzing by your head before you're ready for them.
5. Be sure to point out the challenge on the top of the folding instructions page. That'll *really* motivate kids to make sure this page gets home.
6. Be sure to give each helper a copy, too—not to fold for themselves, but so kids can reference the instructions once folding begins.

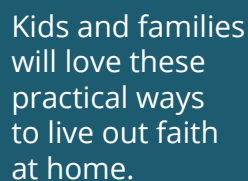
Prepare for takeoff!

Help your ministry to families really take off with these specially crafted Take-It-Home Flyers. After reading each Jesus-centered flyer and talking with their Connect Crews, kids will follow the directions and fold these flyers into 3-D masterpieces!

Once home, they'll transport meaningful opportunities for Jesus-centered family fun.



Cool questions help family members tell stories about their own friendship with Jesus!



Kids and families will love these practical ways to live out faith at home.



After kids make Bible discoveries at church, families can explore more about each lesson's Bible content at home.

Love Is Born

Jesus Gives Hope
John 3:16; Luke 2:1-7

Bible Point

Be glad! Jesus gives hope.

Purpose

When Christmas comes around, how do you feel? Joyful? Stressed? Perhaps you feel sad or nostalgic as you think of loved ones you've lost.

Christmas stirs up a lot of emotion for us today. And just imagine the wide range of emotions Mary and Joseph felt as they made that difficult journey to Bethlehem while very pregnant, then struggled to find lodging. Yet in the midst of this stress and worry, love was born. Jesus brought the hope of heaven to earth.

Elementary kids may feel all the emotions at Christmas, too. Sugar-induced enthusiasm meets way-past-bedtime grumpies. Excitement mixes with the stress they pick up from grown-ups. It's a lot! With this lesson, you'll help them feel hopeful and loved, too, as you tell about the best Christmas gift ever: Jesus!



Prayer

Dear God, thanks for creating us to feel. This Christmas, as we experience highs and lows that come with the holiday season, may we feel your love and accept your gift of hope. In Jesus' name, amen.

Prep

Opening Options	Sing & Play	Bible Discovery & Friendship Finale	Apply-It Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Option Cards* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Pretty Paper Gift Bags</i>: paper bags, markers, washable ink pads, wet wipes <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cup Catchers</i>: plastic cups, cotton balls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> countdown video* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video DVD</i>* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Buddy Video DVD</i>* <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Bible Memory Buddy poster* <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark John 1:14) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Love Is Born" Bible Story poster* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video DVD</i>* (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Hope Bible Memory Buddy stickers* (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Take-It-Home Flyers* (Christmas Week 1) (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark John 3:16; Luke 2:1-7) <input type="checkbox"/> chenille wires (1 pack per Crew) <input type="checkbox"/> child-safe scissors <input type="checkbox"/> media player 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explore More</i>: Bibles, balloon <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Game</i>: pompoms, cup

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Opening Options

Set up one—or both—of these intro activities to start your time together. Each activity connects kids to the Bible Point and to each other. Cut apart these Option Cards, and place one by each activity you choose. Crew Guides will follow the directions and build friendships with kids as they make discoveries together!



Pretty Paper Gift Bags

Supplies: paper bags, markers, washable ink pads, wet wipes

Make fun and colorful Christmas gift bags. Use the markers to draw and ink to decorate with fingerprints.

? What's a gift you're excited about *giving* this Christmas?

At Christmas, we give gifts to people we love. Today we'll hear about a gift Jesus gives us! **Jesus gives hope.**

Cup Catchers

Supplies: plastic cups, cotton balls

Hold a cup on your head, and have a friend throw cotton balls toward you. How many can you catch?

? What's something that makes you happy?

You were glad when you caught the cotton balls in your cup. And here's something else to be glad about: **Jesus gives hope.**

Opening

Now's a great time for Opening Options. Choose one—or both—to introduce today's Bible discoveries.



countdown video (1 minute)

Help kids transition, clean up the activities, and sit with Connect Crews. A Connect Crew is a small group of kids with one Crew Guide.

Sing & Play

Merry Christmas! I'm so ready to celebrate Christmas with you today. Let's get started with a song.



"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" music video

Jesus is that newborn king. We praise and give glory to Jesus—the king of everything!

Bible Point

We praise him because **Jesus gives hope**. That's our Bible Point today. Every time you hear the words "**Jesus gives hope**," clap quickly like this (demonstrate clapping quickly for a second or two) and say, "Wow! Thank you!" Let's try that together.

- Say, "Jesus gives hope."
- Quickly clap as everyone responds with "Wow! Thank you!"
- Repeat several times.

Repetition cements learning, so be sure to say today's Bible Point A LOT. Have fun with it! Kids will love listening for it and responding with "Wow! Thank you!"

When we hope, we look forward to good things. And we trust that even in hard or dark times, Jesus will make all things right.

You know, it was a sad and dark time for God's people before Jesus was born. God's people hadn't heard from God in hundreds of years. They were living in a country where they were treated horribly and overtaxed. They were waiting for God to send a Savior. Maybe things seemed hopeless.

And then people could be glad! Jesus came, bringing hope to people back then and people who've lived ever since.

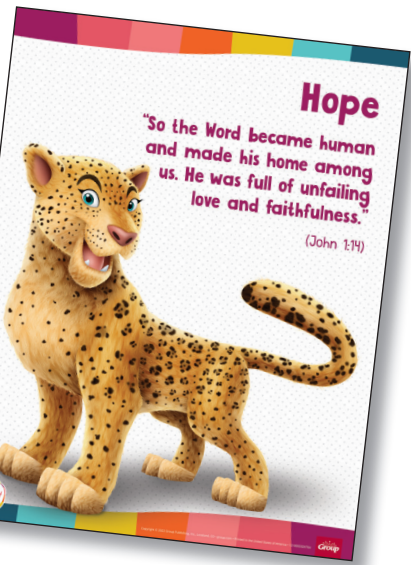


Supplies

- Bible
- media player
- *Music Video* DVD
 - "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" music video
 - "O Come, All Ye Faithful" music video
- *Buddy Video* DVD
 - Hope Bible Memory Buddy video (Christmas Week 1)
- Hope Bible Memory Buddy poster



Wow! Thank you!



Bible Memory Buddy & Verse

Speaking of hope...Hope is the name of our Bible Memory Buddy. Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster.

Hope is a jaguar. How much do you know about jaguars? Let's find out with a This-or-That Challenge! You'll hear two fun facts about jaguars. It's up to you to decide which is true—this fact or that!

- ❓ Are jaguars native to Africa or South America?
 - Have everyone stand up to vote for *this* (Africa) or crouch down to vote for *that* (South America).
 - Make a drumroll sound by patting your thighs or the floor.
 - Dramatically give the answer: **Jaguars live in...South America! They're one of the few big cats that *don't* live in Africa. Let's see what else we can find out from Hope.**
 - Watch the Bible Memory Buddy video.



Hope Bible Memory Buddy video (Christmas Week 1)

Baby jaguars are *soooo* cute! I wonder if Jesus was a cute baby, too. Today we'll read about his birth in the Bible.



Show the Bible. **The Bible is God's true story of love. It's one big book that's filled with a bunch of little books. Our Bible Memory Verse is John 1:14. Let's say the verse together. I'll say a line, and then you repeat it after me.**

"So the Word became human (*sign language for Jesus*)
and made his home among us. (*make roof over head*)
He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. (*put hands on heart one at a time*)
And we have seen his glory, (*circle arms around head*)
the glory of the Father's one and only Son." (*point up*)
(John 1:14)

"The Word" is another name for Jesus! Jesus came from heaven to live as a person like you and me. **Jesus gives hope.** (*Wow! Thank you!*) And he arrived in a town called Bethlehem. Let's sing the story through another Christmas song!



"O Come, All Ye Faithful" music video

Bible Discovery

Circle Up & Connect

Let's circle up and spend a little time simply getting to know each other in smaller groups called **Connect Crews**.

- Arrange kids into Connect Crews with one helper—or Crew Guide—per group.
- Have kids give their Crew Guides high-fives while jumping.
- Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
- Have kids take turns saying their names and answering this question. Crew Guides go first.
- ❓ **What's one thing you hope to get for Christmas this year?**
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has shared.

The Heart of the Matter

It's fun to hope and dream about exciting Christmas presents, isn't it?

When we hope, we look forward to good things. Jesus gives us hope so we can look forward to a forever friendship with him.

You see, before Jesus came, the world God made was messed up by sin. It was hopeless! There was nothing good to look forward to. But God had a plan to bring hope and love to the world. Listen as I read the plan.



Read aloud John 3:16.

God loves the world—and that includes each of you.

And God loves the people you love! In a minute, I'm going to give you a fuzzy wire to shape into a heart. As you do, think about someone you love a lot.

Give a chenille wire to each person to shape into a heart.

Let's talk in Connect Crews.

- ❓ **Tell about the person you thought of. Why do you love that person so much?** Invite Crew Guides to share first.
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has shared.

We all have people we love, and God loves them, too! Listen as I read God's plan again. Notice *who* it says God loves.



Read aloud John 3:16.

God loves the *world*. Show the Bible Story poster, pointing to the globe to represent the world God loves.

Supplies

- Bible
- "Love Is Born" Bible Story poster
- *Music Video* DVD (optional)
- chenille wires (1 pack per Crew)
- child-safe scissors
- media player

We call helpers Crew Guides. If you lead a small class, you can be the Crew Guide. Simply circle up with the kids. If you have helpers, form smaller groups so each child can be known—and so kids can befriend your helpers, too!

Keep your Sundays simple—and your kids delighted—with Simply Loved.

This Elementary Leader Guide provides a step-by-step, simple-to-follow plan for Simply Loved Holiday Year 3 lessons. Featuring memorable, hands-on, friendship-focused activities, each lesson easily adapts to your unique Sunday school format while guiding kids on a foundational, Jesus-centered journey through God's story of love.

Holiday Bible Discoveries:

Unit/Week	Unit Theme	Lesson Theme
Christmas Week 1	Jesus gives hope.	Love Is Born (John 3:16; Luke 2:1-7) Focus: Be glad! Jesus gives hope.
Christmas Week 2		Joy to the World! (Romans 5:2; Luke 2:8-20) Focus: Tell everyone! Jesus gives hope.
Palm Sunday		People Hope Jesus Will Be King (Mark 11:1-10; 15:22-41) Focus: Jesus gives hope...in unexpected ways.
Easter		Jesus Appears to His Disciples (John 20:1-10, 19-31) Focus: Peace be with you...Jesus gives hope.



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