

LEADER GUIDE

ELEMENTARY • HOLIDAY YEAR 1



ELEMENTARY

HOLIDAY YEAR 1

LEADER GUIDE



Loveland, Colorado
group.com/SimplyLoved

Group
Real. Bold. Love.

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

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.



Leader Guide Elementary—Holiday Year 1

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ISBN 978-1-4707-6252-0

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 25 24 23 22 21

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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



How It Works

Simple Volunteer Roles

You'll need the following volunteers:

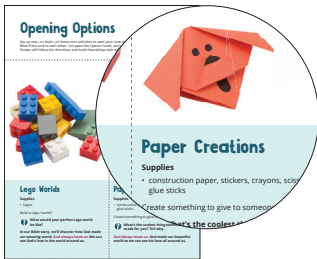
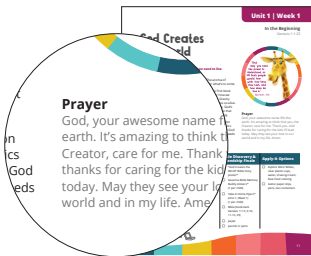
Leader: (That's you!) The one person in each teaching space who has looked over the lesson and will direct all activities. The glance-able, structured lessons in this guide allow leaders to spend more time interacting with kids and less time glued to scripts.

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!



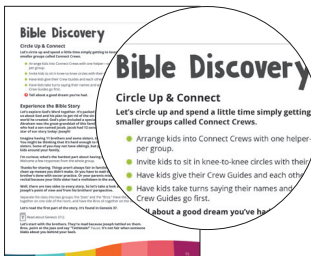
Opening Options

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!



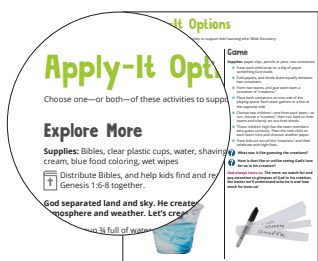
Sing & Play

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



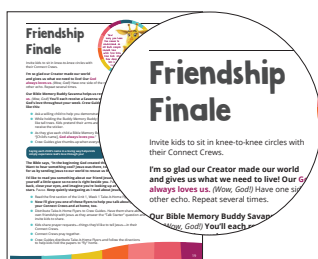
Bible Discovery

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.



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 1

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

- ☐ markers
- ☐ tape
- ☐ chenille wires
- ☐ pony beads
- ☐ child-safe scissors
- ☐ pencils and pens
- ☐ paper
- ☐ index cards
- ☐ permanent markers (*optional*)

Toys & Goodies

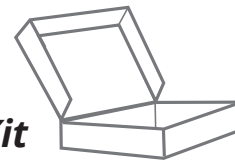
- ☐ balloons
- ☐ streamers
- ☐ tinsel garland
- ☐ beach balls (*optional*)
- ☐ Easter candy

Odds & Ends

- ☐ wrapping paper
- ☐ container
- ☐ smartphones or flashlights
- ☐ wrapped gift with treats inside for everyone
- ☐ 2 large envelopes
- ☐ paper cups
- ☐ palm branches (*optional*)



* 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.

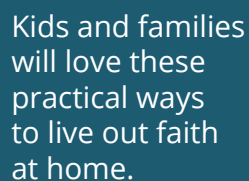
Prepare for takeoff!

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.

An Angel Appears to Joseph

We Celebrate Jesus
(Matthew 1:18-24)

Bible Point

We celebrate Jesus...because we trust him.

Purpose

You turn off the light, pull up the covers, and settle in for a “long winter’s nap.” Not a creature is stirring—except for your racing thoughts. You think about that not-so-great news about a family member. You ponder the headlines. You mentally assess what you need to do tomorrow. Sleep is elusive.

Wouldn’t it be interesting to know Joseph’s thoughts as he fell asleep that night? After hearing about Mary’s pregnancy, deciding to divorce her quietly, and processing lost hopes and unfulfilled plans, Joseph’s brain may have been on overdrive. But when sleep came, so did a message from God: “Marry Mary. Name the baby Jesus. Trust.”

Hmm. What’s on kids’ minds? What may keep them up at night this Christmas season? *You* may not know, but Jesus does. He’s Immanuel, God with us. Use this lesson to comfort kids with Jesus’ presence, reminding them—and yourself—that you can trust God with your worries and fears.

Prep

Opening Options	Sing & Play	Bible Discovery & Friendship Finale	Apply-It Options
<input type="checkbox"/> Option Cards* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Throw and Tell</i> : balloons, streamers, markers, tape <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Twisty Tree Ornaments</i> : chenille wires, pony beads, scissors	<input type="checkbox"/> countdown video* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video</i> DVD* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Buddy Video</i> DVD* <input type="checkbox"/> Olivia Bible Memory Buddy poster* <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark John 3:16)	<input type="checkbox"/> “An Angel Appears to Joseph” Bible Story poster* <input type="checkbox"/> Olivia 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 Matthew 1:20-21, 22-23, 24) <input type="checkbox"/> pieces of wrapping paper, each about 4x4 inches <input type="checkbox"/> pens	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explore More</i> : Bibles, pieces of tinsel garland <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Game</i> : tinsel garland, small pieces of paper, pen, container

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Prayer

Dear Jesus, you are our Lord, Immanuel. Thanks for being with me as I teach kids today. I celebrate you! In your name, amen.

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!



Throw and Tell

Supplies

- balloons, streamers, markers, tape
- Write the following categories on small pieces of streamer: favorite Christmas song, favorite Christmas movie, favorite kind of Christmas cookie, favorite Christmas tree ornament, favorite Christmas decoration at home, and favorite candy cane flavor.
- Tape streamers to an inflated balloon.
- Toss the balloon five times in a group. Whoever catches it on the fifth toss answers the question closest to his or her right thumb.
- Repeat.

Thanks for sharing your favorite things about Christmas. All these fun Christmas favorites help us celebrate Jesus!

Twisty Tree Ornaments

Supplies

- chenille wires, pony beads, scissors

Make ornaments for your Christmas tree.



What's the coolest Christmas ornament you've ever seen?

Some people put an angel at the top of their Christmas tree. In the Bible, an angel told a man named Joseph some surprising news—Jesus would be born! At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus!

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! It's the most wonderful time of the year because we get to celebrate Jesus. Let's start with a song.



"Joy to the World!" music video

Bible Point

Today's Bible Point is **we celebrate Jesus**. Every time you hear the words **"We celebrate Jesus,"** you'll respond in a certain way. Do what I do!

- Make fists, then pop hands open like fireworks and say, "Hooray, Jesus!"
- 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 **"Hooray, Jesus!"**

All around the world, people celebrate Jesus' birth. Let's celebrate all around our room and do the Christmas wave!

- Lead "the wave" across your room.
- Start at one side, and when you point to kids sitting in that section, they'll stand up, throw their hands up in the air, and shout "Celebrate!"
- Do this a few times, encouraging kids to add more energy and enthusiasm each time.

We celebrate a lot of things: when our favorite team wins, when people get married, and when babies are born. Today we'll celebrate the birth of a very special baby—Jesus!

Supplies

- Bible
- media player
- *Music Video* DVD
 - "Joy to the World!" music video
 - "What Child Is This?" music video
- *Buddy Video* DVD
 - Olivia Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 1)
- Olivia Bible Memory Buddy poster





Bible Memory Buddy & Verse

But first, let's meet our Bible Memory Buddy. *Who* could it be? *Why*, it's Olivia the barn owl! Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster. *How* much do you already know about owls? Let's find out with a This-or-That Challenge! You'll hear two fun facts about barn owls. It's up to you to decide which is true—this fact or that!

- ❓ **About how many months old is a barn owl when it takes its first flight?**
 - Have everyone spread their arms out like wings and then clap once to vote for *this* (one month) or clap twice to vote for *that* (two months).
- Make a drumroll sound by patting your thighs or the floor.
- Dramatically give the answer: **Baby barn owls start to fly when they are about two months old. Let's find out more about Olivia.**
- Watch the Bible Memory Buddy video.



Olivia Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 1)



Show the Bible. **The Bible is God's true story of love! From the end of the Old Testament to when the New Testament of the Bible begins, 400 years passed. And then, when the time was just right, God did something incredible. Our Bible Memory Verse tells what God did. It's John 3:16. Let's say the verse together. I'll say a line, and then you repeat after me.**

"For this is how God loved the world: *(make a heart shape with hands)*
He gave his one and only Son." *(extend arm and hold up pointer finger)*
 (John 3:16)

Christmas is about celebrating God's greatest gift—Jesus! We celebrate Jesus.
(Hooray, Jesus!) **Let's sing about this special child.**



"What Child Is This?" 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**.

- Have kids form Connect Crews with one helper—or Crew Guide—per group.
 - Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
 - Have kids give their Crew Guides and each other a fist bump with fireworks.
 - Ask kids to take turns saying their names and answering this question. Crew Guides go first.
- ❓ **Describe your perfect dream. What would happen? When would you wake up?**

Experience the Bible Story

Our Bible story comes from the book of Matthew, chapter one. Instead of just *listening* to the story, you'll all play a part in it. First, we need an angel. Crew Guides, choose one person in your Connect Crew to be an angel. You have five seconds. Go! Do a countdown from five.

Now, Angels, spread your wings and "fly" around your Connect Crew circles. As they "fly," glance at the bookmarked passage in the Bible, then call out for the Angels to freeze.

Actually, the Bible doesn't say anything about the angel having wings. Or a halo. It doesn't even say if the angel was a male or female. Hmm. So, Angels, walk back to your spot in the circle in a normal kind of way. Pause while Angels return to their seats.

Everyone else, you're Joseph. You've had a hard day. Show me how tired you are. Pause.

Josephs, it's time to get ready for bed. First, pretend to eat a snack. Pause. **Yum. Thirsty? Pretend to drink a glass of milk.** Pause. **Falling asleep with stinky breath is the worst. Be sure to brush your teeth, Josephs!** Pause.

Josephs, close your eyes and try to fall asleep. I'll be quiet. Pause for about 10 seconds. **Are you asleep yet?** Invite responses from Josephs. **No? It's hard to sleep when you've got a lot on your mind. Let's try again. I'll stop talking and let you get some rest.** Pause for about 10 more seconds, then whisper, **Josephs must be sleeping; I hear snoring.** Have kids snore.

Finally, Joseph fell asleep. Sleep may not have come easily because he had a lot on his mind. You see, Joseph was engaged to be married, but he was thinking of calling it all off. He had found out that Mary, his fiancée, was going to have a baby. And he knew that he wasn't the father.

Supplies

- Bible
- "An Angel Appears to Joseph" Bible Story poster
- pieces of wrapping paper, each about 4x4 inches
- pens

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 1 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	We celebrate Jesus.	An Angel Appears to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24) Focus: We celebrate Jesus...because we trust him.
Christmas Week 2		Magi Search for the Messiah (Matthew 2:1-12) Focus: We celebrate Jesus...because he's the King of kings.
Palm Sunday		Jesus Rides Into Jerusalem on a Donkey (Matthew 21:1-11) Focus: We celebrate Jesus...because he's our Rescuer.
Easter		Jesus Dies and Comes Back to Life (Mark 15:16-16:8) We celebrate Jesus...because he's our forever friend.



Join the Simply Loved Facebook community and learn from children's ministry leaders just like you! **facebook.com/groups/simplylovedteacherslounge**





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