



## Sermon Guide

### WEEK 2

**Key Question:** What are your plans this Christmas? We start with this question to help kids start generally thinking about the plans they make. By now, preteens understand that plans don't always work out. However, what we can learn through the Christmas story is that God can use what we're experiencing to do amazing things in and through our lives. We pray that kids will start trusting that no matter what they face, God still has a plan for their lives. .

In week 2, we turn to Luke 1:26-56. The Messiah had been promised for generations, but no one would have guessed that God would use a young woman to bring that promise to fulfillment—including that young woman herself. Mary was awestruck when the angel came to announce that she was about to have a child who would be the Savior of the world. Mary found peace in trusting that through God, all things are possible.

**Bottom Line:** You can have peace because God has a plan. When God sent Jesus, it was the answer to many, many years of a plan to rescue the world. The people must have wondered what God was doing or if God was still working. We can feel the same way about our own circumstances. Yet, time and again, we realize that we can trust God no matter what. We might not understand God's plan, but we can have peace when we remember how God has been faithful throughout history.

### CHRISTMAS is about celebrating Jesus, God's greatest gift

The Christmas season can be an interesting time for families as they navigate how they'll celebrate with their kids and extended family and friends. It's important to keep in mind that not everyone will experience this season the same way. Some go all out with presents, while others keep it low-key. Christmas can be a time when people feel grief from losses over the past year or the pain of current health situations. Christmas can also expose some of the socioeconomic differences among the people who attend your church. It's important to keep all of these things in mind as you talk about Christmas plans, what kids want for Christmas, or what kids are hoping for this year. Have a plan in place to make sure ALL kids feel at home in your church. Also, remind your Small Group Leaders and Storytellers that it's not our job to tell kids what to think and believe about Santa Claus, Elf on the Shelf, or any of the traditions that people have. Just meet kids where they are and direct them back to their parents for these sorts of questions.

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

You can have peace because God has a plan.

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

Christmas—Celebrating Jesus, God's greatest gift

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What are your plans this Christmas?

### MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace." Isaiah 9:6a, NIV

### TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

**Our King of Peace** Gabriel Appears to Mary  
Luke 1:26-56

**KEYSCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:26-56

This message should be 15-18 min. More time for small groups is key. Remember the lead small model.

**SLIDE:** KEY QUESTION

"What are your plans this Christmas? That may sound like a simple question, but as we think about God having a plan to rescue the world, it's a question that can help us think about the ways God is in control. Like how does having the bigger picture of what God is doing in the world help us hold our own plans a little more loosely? What can we learn from Mary's story about how to think about our own plans? You may not be sure how you'd answer those questions, but that's totally fine. You'll have the chance to chat with your Small Group Leader and continue learning about God's plan for peace. Before you head out, let's pray and ask for help to find the sort of peace that only God can give! Let's pray!"

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Today as you go to groups, think about this: What are you hoping for?"

# DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



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10 MINUTES

## TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

**Our King of Peace**  
Gabriel Appears to Mary  
Luke 1:26-56

## TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What are your plans  
this Christmas?

## TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

You can have peace  
because God has a plan.

## MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"A child will be born to us. A son  
will be given to us. He will rule over  
us. And he will be called Wonderful  
Adviser and Mighty God. He will also  
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Isaiah 9:6a, NIRV

## MONTHLY VIRTUE

Christmas—Celebrating Jesus,  
God's greatest gift

## BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

## LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**

Host enters . . .

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME**

## WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

## OPENER

**HOST:** "Hey, everybody! Great to see you all today as we deck the halls to discover more about Christmas and celebrate Jesus, God's greatest gift! The countdown to the big day is on! Christmas is fast approaching, and I've got a game to get us into the holiday spirit. Every year, we sing songs and learn how Jesus came to bring peace on earth. I thought it might be fun play a little game that gets us into that peaceful sort of holiday mood. I call it 'Peace on Plate!'

**SLIDE: "PEACE ON PLATE"**

"'Peace on Plate' is a game that will test your artistic abilities, and it's for everyone! But don't worry, we have a bit of a twist to make sure that even if you don't think you can draw very well, you can have fun and maybe even win! And it starts with a paper plate and a pen. Everyone can get one now.

Pass out the supplies. Have several volunteers pass out one paper plate and pen per kid.

"Here's how it works: when I prompt you, everyone will place the plate on top of their head with the bottom of plate facing up and draw above their head without looking the entire time. (Host can demonstrate.) Then I'll give you

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a series of directions for you to follow. At NO POINT may you look at the plate until you are done—all the drawings need to be done with the plate on top of your head. Each of these drawings SHOULD end up looking like a peaceful Christmas scene. When you're done, you'll compare drawings with your Small Group and decide who has the most peaceful looking scene. Who's ready to play?!

"Alright, let's see who can follow my instructions and draw a peaceful Christmas scene on their plate. Group up with your Small Groups. Plates on heads!

"First, draw a line for a floor.

"Second, draw a Christmas tree on the floor. Add decorations if you're feeling festive.

"Third, draw a star on top of your tree.

"Fourth, draw a fireplace with a mantel next to the tree.

"Fifth, draw a stocking hanging from the mantel of your fireplace. Maybe draw a cat or dog laying by the fire warming itself . . .

"Sixth, draw a present below the tree.

"Finally, draw a gift tag on the present and write the name of the person the present is for on the tag.

"Okay pens down and . . . look at your masterpiece! Now show your work to the people around you and compare! Don't you feel more peaceful already?!

*After a minute or two, have Small Groups each declare a winner. Hand out some Christmas candy or small prize to the winner in each Small Group.*

"That was a blast! Now let's stand and worship our amazing God!"

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## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** “There is so much to love and appreciate about this time of year. At Christmas, we celebrate because God sent Jesus to be our Savior. This song says, ‘I will go and tell it. I will go and tell it—tell it from the mountaintop.’ Let’s sing and thank God for sending Jesus for us.

**AUDIO:** “GO TELL IT” / TRACK 1 FROM GO TELL IT SINGLE

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “GO TELL IT” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Yes—we can share God’s love with the world! So good. Before we continue in worship, check this out.

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE):** LIVE LOUD VIDEO FROM GET REEL

“Last week we taught you a new version of ‘Silent Night.’ God promised to send a Rescuer . . . and when the time was right, God sent Jesus to the world. As we read in Psalm 33:11: *‘The plans of the Lord stand firm forever. What he wants to do will last for all time.’* (NIRV) Remember, God’s plans are always good! Sing this with us.

**AUDIO:** “SILENT NIGHT (THE KING IS BORN)” / TRACK 1 FROM SILENT NIGHT (THE KING IS BORN) SINGLE

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “SILENT NIGHT (THE KING IS BORN)” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“This next song is a fun way for us to stop and remember what Christmas is really about. God loved us enough to send Jesus FOR us. Sing this from your heart.”

**AUDIO:** “GREATEST GIFT REMIX” / TRACK 1 FROM GREATEST GIFT REMIX SINGLE

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “GREATEST GIFT REMIX” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

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## COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

**SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND**

*Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit. Communicator is singing: "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas . . ."*

### INTRODUCTION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Hey, everyone! Do you think it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas? I really do love the chance to deck the halls and get ready for Christmas!"

**SLIDE: VIRTUE**

"And as we celebrate Jesus, God's greatest gift, each week we'll take a closer look at a word that helps us countdown to the big day. The word for this week is . . ."

**SLIDE: PEACE**

"PEACE! Peace is an interesting word. Sometimes we talk about peace in how we get along with each other. We might think about peace as staying away from meaningless arguments and trying to have good relationships with the people around us. But there's another way to think about peace. Peace can also mean having or finding a general feeling of being content and choosing not to worry about what's happening around you.

"We sing about peace in some of our Christmas carols and read about peace in the Christmas story, but have you ever noticed that this season can feel anything but peaceful? Seriously, Christmas can sometimes be the most chaotic time of the year! Let me show you. I need a volunteer.

*Communicator chooses a volunteer. The following demonstration will be chaotic, so be sensitive to kids who may struggle in this type of environment.*

(To volunteer) "Alright, your task is to stack the following cups in a triangle stack: 6 cups, 5 cups, 4, 3, 2, and 1 cup on top. Pretty easy, right? Okay, just focus on the task. Ready, set, go!"

**LIGHTS: BLINKING AND FLASHING**

**AUDIO: HIGH-ENERGY BACKGROUND MUSIC**

*As soon as the volunteer begins, environment turns chaotic—like, lights flashing, music playing, people walking on stage, Communicator asking random questions, etc. Lights should go back to normal, and Audio should stop when the person is finished building the cup tower.*

**LIGHTS: BACK TO NORMAL**

**AUDIO: FADE OUT MUSIC**

(After the task is completed) "Pretty good, pretty good . . . but how about we try that again? Maybe let's try something a little different this time? (Calmly) Ready, set, go."

**LIGHTS: DIM TO 50%**

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## AUDIO: CALM BACKGROUND MUSIC

*Volunteer tries again, this time in a peaceful environment. Communicator uses a soothing voice of affirmation ("You're doing great"). Lights should go back to normal, and Audio should stop when the person is finished building the cup tower.*

## LIGHTS: BACK TO NORMAL

## AUDIO: FADE OUT MUSIC

*(After task completed, to volunteer) "So, tell us about what you just experienced? How were those two challenges different from one another? Which was a more peaceful experience? Why?"*

*Give volunteer a chance to answer the questions. Communicator dialogues with them as you have time. Afterwards, dismiss volunteer to their seat.*

## TENSION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "So let's chat about this. Life doesn't always feel quiet and calm and peaceful like that last round of tower building. A lot of time, it's more like that first round. Sure, we may not have loud music or flashing lights constantly trying to distract us, but maybe we face circumstances that make us feel stressed out or frustrated—like we have a lot of homework or school projects on top of sports or dance and chores at home. It can feel like we can't ever get a moment to ourselves to just chill and hang out. Or maybe we get some bad news and we're feeling anxious about what will happen next.

"When life feels chaotic, how do we find peace? How can we trust that God is with us and helping us as we face moments that feel out of control and not peaceful at all? This is a great question to think about, especially in the busyness of the season.

"Thankfully when it comes to finding an answer to these sorts of questions, we have a great place to start—the Bible! The Bible is filled with wisdom and stories written by people who had personal experiences with God and wrote them down so others could learn about God and experience God for themselves. And in the Bible we can read a lot about what it means to find and have peace. Let's check out one of those moments today."

## TRUTH

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Now, I'm pretty sure this will be a fairly familiar story for many of you, but hopefully the WAY we tell the story will add some new life to it. But I need a little help. Are there two or three volunteers out there who are pretty good at making sound effects?"

*Communicator chooses and brings up two or three volunteers.*

"Here's how this will work. As I tell the story, every so often, I'll hold up a word. Volunteers, it will be up to you to make a sound effect that adds to our story and illustrates that word for us. And don't worry, I can give you some help when you need it. Got it? Alright, let's give it a try.

"Now first, let me introduce you all to Mary. Now what do you all know about Mary?"

*Allow audience to respond with what they know.*

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“Great! Now, one thing you may not know is that Mary was just an ordinary young girl, probably not much older than you all. She lived in a small town called Nazareth. Because Nazareth was a small town, chances are that most EVERYONE would have known Mary.

“Now there is something else you should know about Mary—she was engaged to be MARRIED. (hold up ‘MARRIED’ sign)”

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers. Suggest the wedding song if stuck. Repeat once.*

“Yes, Mary was getting married! And God was about to do something extraordinary in the life of this ordinary girl who lived in a small town.

*Open the Bible to Luke 1:26b (NirV) and read, emphasis added.*

“‘God sent the ANGEL Gabriel.’ (Hold up ‘ANGEL’)

*Communicator waits for an angel sound effect from volunteers. Comment on the sound they come up with.*

“Yeah—that sounds angelic . . . Let’s keep reading . . .

*Open the Bible to Luke 1:26b, 28 (NirV) and read, emphasis added.*

“‘God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee . . . The angel GREETED her . . .’ (Hold up ‘GREETED’)

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers.*

(Continues reading) “‘and said, “The Lord has blessed you in a special way. He is with you.””

“It turned out that the angel was a MESSENGER. (Hold up ‘MESSENGER’)

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers.*

“The Lord had sent this angel to visit Mary and share some incredible news. But Mary was AFRAID . . . (Hold up ‘AFRAID’)

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers.*

“Okay, maybe for her it was less like a horror movie, but nice job. She didn’t understand why the angel was appearing or what message he had for her. Let’s be honest . . . a visit from an angel would probably make most of us pretty scared, too! Let’s keep going.

*Open the Bible to Luke 1:30-32a (NirV) and read.*

“‘But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God.””

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"What an announcement! Mary would have a BABY . . . (Hold up 'BABY')

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers.*

"And this BABY would be the one they had been waiting for Jesus . . . the long-awaited Messiah!

"Now this was confusing to Mary because she wasn't MARRIED yet (hold up 'MARRIED' again). And even more, this would have the potential to make others look down on Mary. Everyone would have known her situation and how it had changed. But God reassured Mary that she wouldn't be alone. God would be with her through it all. How do you think Mary responded? Was she AFRAID? (Hold up 'AFRAID' again)

*Allow responses from audience.*

"We actually have Mary's response right here! Check it out.

*Open the Bible to Luke 1:38 (NirV) and read.*

*"'I serve the Lord,' Mary answered. 'May it happen to me just as you said it would.' Then the angel left her.' (Hold up 'ANGEL' again)*

"Later on, we read this beautiful song that Mary sang about everything that God was doing. (Hold up 'SONG')

*Communicator waits for sound effect from volunteers.*

"Okay, that one wasn't too fair because you don't even know the song . . . but that was a good effort. Do you know that we actually have the lyrics though? They're right here. Check it out."

*Open the Bible to Luke 1:46-48 (NirV) and read while volunteers repeat.*

*"My soul gives glory to the Lord. My spirit delights in God my Savior. He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important.'*

"Hey, let's give thanks to our volunteers for helping us out!"

*Volunteers can be seated.*

## APPLICATION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "I imagine when Mary was a young girl dreaming about how her life would go that she probably didn't imagine this. An angel? A baby? The very Son of God coming into the world through her? This probably felt anything but peaceful.

"But for Mary, she came to the place where she was amazed by the fact that God would want to use her. She even had a 'why me' moment. 'Why me? Who am I that God would use ME?' I'm sure she wondered why God would want to use an ordinary girl from a small town to do something so extraordinary. Maybe she thought she was too young, too shy, too small, too . . . whatever. And yet, God used her in a big way . . . maybe the biggest way!



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“There are certainly times when we might have a plan for how our life should go and maybe even about what God should do to fit into that plan. And sometimes life takes unexpected turns, for sure. Life can become uncertain. The world can become chaotic. And when it does, it can become hard to find peace in the middle of it all. Thankfully, we can trust God no matter what. We can still trust and even celebrate that God has a plan! And maybe there is something big that God wants to do through you! It’s easy to think like Mary, ‘Why me? Who am I that God would use me?’ But God can turn any situation into something amazing, AND God can use anyone to help make it happen—even you and me. And that can give us peace.

“Here’s something else to think about. What God was doing through Mary was also part of the plan for the whole world. The plan for a Rescuer. The plan for a Savior. The plan to bring ultimate peace through the PRINCE of peace! It probably wasn’t easy for Mary, but God was with Mary the whole time and gave her the strength she needed to see it through.

“Sometimes what God wants to do in us and through us can be uncomfortable. Sometimes it can be inconvenient. But if God is in it, we can have peace because God has a plan!”

## LANDING

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Today as you head to Small Groups, think about this:

### SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

**“What are your plans this Christmas?** That may sound like a simple question, but as we think about God having a plan to rescue the world, it’s a question that can help us think about the ways God is in control. Like how does having the bigger picture of what God is doing in the world help us hold our own plans a little more loosely? What can we learn from Mary’s story about how to think about our own plans? You may not be sure how you’d answer those questions, but that’s totally fine. You’ll have the chance to chat with your Small Group Leader and continue learning about God’s plan for peace. Before you head out, let’s pray and ask for help to find the sort of peace that only God can give! Let’s pray!”

### SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.*

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**