

The CHRISTMAS PROMYS



TEACHING
MATERIAL FOR
3-5s, 5-8s
AND 8-12s





The Christmas Promise Sunday School Lessons
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Contents

Introduction 5



Session One: The Forever King

Prepare Your Heart 13

3-5s 14

5-12s 16



Session Two: The Rescuing King

Prepare Your Heart 29

3-5s 30

5-12s 32



Session Three: The New King

Prepare Your Heart 45

3-5s 46

5-12s 48

Family Service: The Greatest King 59



Introduction

Welcome to this adventure in God's Christmas promises!

In this three-lesson series for 3-12-year-olds, the children you teach will trace the message of God's promised King from his foretelling in Isaiah to his Christmas arrival. The series follows the structure of the best-selling storybook *The Christmas Promise* and is intended to help children to dig deeper into Bible passages from Isaiah, Matthew and Luke that underpin it.

Each of the three sessions in the series includes:

- a "Prepare Your Heart" section, helping you to enjoy and apply the truths yourself, before you teach them to your children's group.
- a lesson plan for 3-5-year-olds.
- a lesson plan for 5-12-year-olds, with different Bible-time questions and activities signalled as being for "Younger Children" (approximately 5-7-year-olds) and "Older Children" (approximately 8-12-year-olds). These teach directly from the Bible to examine God's promises about his forever, rescuing King in Isaiah and see their fulfilment in the New Testament.
- free, downloadable PDFs containing the relevant Bible passages, questions, activity sheets, and resources for certain activities, games and crafts for you to use with your group, as well as downloads of all the illustrations from the storybook. (You will see the icon to the right  wherever the session is talking about something that is included in the download.)

The lesson overviews below give more details on exactly what the lesson plans for the different age groups include.

The resource also includes an outline and suggested detail for an all-age service that shares what the children have been discovering about the promised King. It recaps the promises in Isaiah and elements of the Christmas narrative the children have seen, and invites people to consider and emulate the responses of Mary, the shepherds and the wise men to Jesus, God's promised King.

We have put each lesson together in a way that means you can deliver it exactly as it's written: all activities, scripts, Bible studies, questions, links and prayers are provided for every session, as well as games and craft ideas. (Please note that you'll need a copy of the storybook for teaching a 3-5s group.) If preparation time is pressed, or you are new to teaching children, we want to give as much support as possible. At the start of each session for 5-12s, we've also included an outline of the aims of each part of the session, making it easy for you to adapt things to suit your particular group.

-  *Where you see a text marked in this way in the 5-12s' plan, it's a note for you as the leader, rather than something intended to be read aloud to the group!*

Having bought this book, you now have access to free, downloadable material. You can download the content of this book as a PDF, for free, as many times as you like, to share with other leaders and helpers within your church. (Please note that you are not allowed to share it more widely outside your own church.) You'll find all the downloadable material at thegoodbook.com/tcpllessonresources, and will need to enter the passcode at the top of the next page.



The scripts and Bible studies use the International Children’s Bible (ICB), New International Reader’s Version (NIRV), New Living Translation (NLT) and New International Version (NIV). They will work with other translations, but we recommend aiming to use translations with simpler sentence structures, especially for the Bible studies where older children are being asked to find answers from the text themselves with less support. Memory verses are from the New International Version.

If You’re Teaching 3-5-year-olds...

Session Structure

Each of the three lesson plans contains a number of segments that can be adapted for your circumstances.

The core elements of each lesson are:

- 1)* A short opening prayer
- 2) Reading the relevant pages from *The Christmas Promise*
- 5) A simple statement summarising that section’s teaching (See the “God’s Word Tells Us...” summary in each lesson plan)
- 6) Sharing a Bible verse that shows that the truths in the book come from the Bible
- 7) A simple closing prayer

* The numbers here correspond to numbered segments in the full lesson plans provided.

In addition, you can include any/all of the following optional elements:

- 3) Simple questions that engage with the book reading
- 4) A game that reinforces the teaching point as well as providing movement and a concentration break
- 8) A craft activity that reinforces the teaching point

Sample explanations are also included for how to show the children the link between the game/craft and what they have been learning.

Series Overview

SESSION	MAIN TEACHING POINT
1. The Forever King	Jesus is God's promised forever King. He will always look after his people.
2. The Rescuing King	Jesus is God's promised rescuing King. He is great news! Note: During this session, you may want to explain to the children what "sin" is in an age-appropriate way. Here is one suggestion for how you could do so: "Sin is not loving God, not listening to God, and not letting God be in charge".
3. The New King	Jesus is God's promised new King. Jesus is King for all sorts of people everywhere.
Family Service	God promised to send a King who is different to all other kings. Jesus is that King. He is the new, rescuing, forever King. Mary, the shepherds and the wise men show us what it looks like when we treat Jesus as our King.

If You're Teaching 5-12-year-olds...

Session Structure

For each of the parts of the session outlined below, the lesson plans provide examples and ideas. Each full session plan also begins with an individual lesson outline going into more detail on the goals of each segment for that particular session.

Each session includes:

SESSION ELEMENT	PURPOSE
Recap	Provide a brief review of previous sessions.
Introductory Activity	Introduce or set up an idea that will help the children understand the Bible ideas and/or apply the truths they will think about.
Opening Prayer	Model prayer seeking God's help to understand and act on his word.

Bible Teaching	<p>This first Bible-teaching section is intended to be the briefer of the two. It involves a brief discussion of a few verses from Isaiah.</p> <p>In each lesson there are two different suggested studies, one for younger and one for older children. If you have the full age range in your class, these could be done in separate groups before you come together for the closing summary statement.</p> <p>Studies for younger children do not require them to read, and involve a variety of activities to help them engage with and understand the passage. Studies for older children require them to do more close textual work and articulate their understanding for themselves.</p> <p>The age ranges suggested are just a guide, and you may want to modify or combine ideas for your particular children.</p>
Game	<p>Different ideas are given for games that allow an opportunity to move about / take a break in concentration, but which also reinforce or set up a teaching point.</p>
Bible Teaching	<p>This second Bible-teaching section involves the leader telling and explaining the parts of the birth narrative of Christ that reveal that God was fulfilling the promises made through Isaiah.</p> <p>Example scripts are provided that tell and explain the relevant part of Luke or Matthew using a mixture of Bible verses from various translations, paraphrased storytelling and interactive question-and-answer segments. The lesson plans also provide suggestions for how to engage the children visually or with movement in the storytelling.</p>
Application	<p>Depending on the session, this will involve a very short talk from the teacher or whole-group discussion or pair work or an opportunity to think individually. The aim is to encourage the children to consider what difference the truths you have been learning about make to our lives today.</p>
Prayer	<p>Model or give opportunities for responding to God and his word in prayer. Various suggestions for what this might involve are given, ranging from very supported/scaffolded to more open times of prayer.</p>
Craft/Activities	<p>An opportunity to exercise some God-given creativity and enjoy a reminder of the lesson! Various suggestions are given, ranging from those requiring pen and paper to crafts that need some minimal resourcing to more time/resource-heavy and/or complex projects.</p>
At Home	<p>Encourage families to keep thinking and praying together during the week about what the children have learnt at church. Suggestions are given for resources and ideas that could be shared with parents.</p>

Series Overview

SESSION	GOD'S WORD TELLS US...	SO WHAT?	BIBLE PASSAGES
1. The Forever King	God promised to send a King unlike any other. Jesus is that King. There is no limit to the length of his righteous reign—he will be all-powerful and always perfect for all time.	The good news is that Jesus is the best ruler we could ever hope for. A right response is to joyfully entrust ourselves to his good rule.	Isaiah 9 v 6-7; Luke 1 v 26-38
2. The Rescuing King	God promised to send a King who would rescue his people from sin. Jesus is that King. There is no limit to the lengths he will go to—he is the good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.	The good news is that Jesus transforms fear of judgment into joy and peace with God. A right response is to praise him and share the good news of who he is.	Isaiah 53 v 4-6; Luke 2 v 1-20
3. The New King	God promised to send a new type of king who would be for all types of people. Jesus is that King. There is no limit to the extent of his rule—he is the rescuing, forever King for people from every tribe, tongue and nation.	The good news is that Jesus welcomes all sorts of people from all over the world into his kingdom. A right response is to accept that invitation by recognising and worshipping him as our King.	Isaiah 49 v 5-7; Matthew 2 v 1-12

Family
Service

God promised to send a King unlike any other. Jesus is that King. He is the new, rescuing, forever King.

He is the best ruler we could ever hope for: he will be all-powerful and always perfect for all time; he is the good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep; and he is all this for people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

The good news is that Jesus is the King we can trust for forgiveness and entrust ourselves to. He is the King we can access and come to, whoever we are. He is a King worthy of being sought and celebrated and shared and worshipped.

A right response to him will involve coming to him, as the shepherds did, acknowledging his right to rule, as the wise men did, and trust in him, as Mary did.

Isaiah 9 v 6-7; 49
v 6-7; 53 v 5-6



SESSION 1
The Forever King



The Forever King - Prepare Your Heart



Read Luke 1 v 26-38

- What do these verses tell us about Mary's baby?
- What does verse 37 tell us about God's word/promises? What does verse 38 show us is the right response to this truth?

Here is one of the most familiar parts of one of the most familiar stories in the entire Western world—and so there's a danger that familiarity dims the glory and the surprise of it. So, as you prepare your heart to teach the children in your group, here are three truths about the God who lies behind all the events of Christmas—and who came to lie at the centre of Christmas.

First, he is a *surprising* God. When he sends his angel Gabriel to make this world-changing announcement, it's not to a political centre such as Rome or a religious centre such as Jerusalem. Instead it's to a backwater town so unremarkable that it is not mentioned even once in the entire Old Testament—Nazareth. Not only that, but the announcement was not for a leader, or a priest, but an unmarried girl (probably a teenager)—Mary. If we were God, we wouldn't have done it like this! But as the old hymn puts it, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. So the first Christmas should prompt us to be open to God surprising us—to read his word ready to have our hearts and minds changed by what he says there, and to head through our days looking for God to be working in us and around us in ways we hadn't expected and perhaps cannot explain.

Second, he is a *present* God. The angel's message is that God himself, God the Son, is going to grow as a human in a womb and live as a human in his own world. The most amazing thing is not that this is a virgin birth but that it is a divine birth (v 35). Why is the divine stepping into history? To rule. He is a King (v 32) who will

reign over "Jacob's descendants" (v 33)—the promised king, the Messiah (or "Christ"), descended from David and fulfilling all the prophecies of the Old Testament. Not only that, but his kingdom will never end. Here is a forever King—a King powerful enough to keep his promises and eternal enough to keep his promises. However great (or not) the ruler of your nation is, and however great (or not) the next one will be, they will not be perfect and they will not endure. Whether by death, overthrow or democratic vote, they will leave office. Jesus is a different kind of ruler. He never disappoints, never makes a mistake, never acts selfishly and never leaves his throne. He is the perfect forever King.

And third, therefore, here is a God who is *worthy of our joyful service*—even when that's costly. Mary faced losing her impending marriage, her reputation, her hopes and dreams. She didn't know it, but she would face watching her son die. Yet she responded, "I am the Lord's servant ... May your word to me be fulfilled" (v 38). She said yes, because she trusted God and so was willing to be part of his plan. Serving God is sometimes painful, but it is always a privilege—for us just as for Mary. We will not bear God's Son, but we are called to serve him and be part of his plans for his world. What else would we want to spend our lives doing?! And who else would we entrust ourselves to?! Perhaps this Christmas would be a good time to say to King Jesus, "I am your servant. I trust you. I'm all yours."

- Look back over the past year. In what surprising ways have you seen God at work in your life or in the lives of others?
- What areas of service has God called you to? In what ways are those costly? What causes for joy have they given you, and how does reflecting on those help you to say "King Jesus, I'm all yours"?



God's Word Tells Us...

Jesus is God's promised forever King. He will always look after his people.



1. Pray

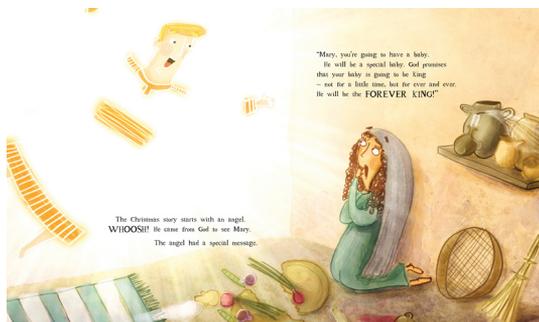
Let's talk to God before we read the story:

Dear God, please show us why Jesus is the best King ever. Amen.



2. Listen

Read *The Christmas Promise* storybook from the beginning up to and including the page spread that looks like this...



To make the reading interactive, you could:

- look at the pictures on the first double-page spread and ask them the names of any famous kings or queens, presidents or prime ministers they've heard of. Or ask them where they might see a picture of a king or queen or ruler (in history books, on TV, on coins and notes, on stamps, on playing cards). You could have examples of these items to show them.
- ask how we might know if someone is a king/queen and have props for dressing a child up in a crown and a robe and

then seat them on a "throne".

- point to the picture of the castle on the first double-page spread and ask them what they think it might be like inside. When you get to the picture of Mary's home, before reading the text, ask them if it looks like the sort of place they imagine a king living. Why/why not?
- tell them to do an action such as putting on a crown every time they hear the word "king".



3. Thinking

- Who promised to send a King who would be different from all other kings and queens?
- Did God keep that promise by sending Jesus?
- Is Jesus special because he is going to be King for ever?



4. Game

"How long can you...?" Give the children simple physical challenges and ask them if they think they can keep going without stopping for 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 30 seconds, a minute, two minutes, five minutes...! Have fun seeing how long they can stand on one leg, run on the spot, do star jumps, spin in a circle, and so on, before they tire or topple!

Then say:

"We can't do things for ever, but Jesus can! Jesus is the King who is going to be king for ever."

OR

"How long will it last?" Have various easily breakable/tear-able items in a bag. Invite children one at a time to pick something out of the bag and have a go at breaking it. Items might include a breadstick, a rice cake, a piece of dried lasagne/spaghetti, a piece of paper, a biscuit, some dried cereal, a cardboard tube... Once the final one has been removed, sneak a coin into the bag and ask a child to pull it out and have a go at breaking it. Encourage them to stamp on it or (safely!) hit it with something.

Then say:

"Lots of things break. Things don't last for ever. But the coin is more like Jesus: Jesus is strong. Jesus will be there for ever. Jesus will be a strong King for ever."

5. Summary Statement

Jesus is the King who God promised. Jesus will be King for ever.



6. Listen to God from the Bible

We know this because in Luke chapter 1 verse 33 the Bible tells us that Jesus "will rule forever over his people" (NIRV).



7. Pray

Let's talk to God again now:

Lord Jesus, you are the King who will be in charge for ever. You will never change or stop loving us. Wow! Amen.



8. Craft Ideas



- Give the children the colouring page of Mary and the angel from the activity book for them to colour/stick on household items (see downloadable sheet).
- Give each child a paper or card crown with "JESUS is the FOREVER King" on it. They can decorate it with pens/stickers/tissue paper/craft jewels etc. before you tape/staple it to fit them.
- Make paper-plate or cardboard-tube angels. (There are lots of simple ideas for how to do these on the internet.) Prepare speech bubbles containing the words "Jesus is God's promised forever King" for children to stick on.
- As the children enjoy crafting, you could ask them what makes Jesus different from other kings. What made him different from other babies?!