

LESSON 3  
JOY

## LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Is Our Joy

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 35; Luke 2

**GOD'S BIG STORY:** After many years of waiting, a Savior is born. His name is Jesus, and He brings joy to the world!

**WORD OF WONDER:** Faith is being sure of what we hope for and sure of what we do not see.

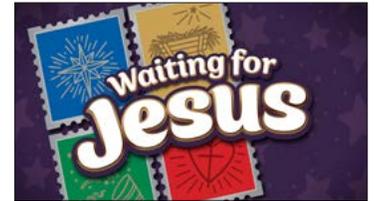
—from Hebrews 11:1

## CURIOSITY

## BELIEF

## FAITH

- Play Stations:
  - Party Time
  - Candy Cane Joy
  - Joy Coloring Sheet
- Word of Wonder: From Hebrews 11:1
- God's Big Story
- Circle Time: Happy Birthday, Jesus
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Joy Parade
- Closing Game: Jump for Joy



God Speaks Preschool Spotify playlist



## LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

### INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Is Our Joy  
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**WORD OF WONDER:** From Hebrews 11:1

I think joy can best be learned from kids. There's nothing like hearing children laugh at silly songs or watching tiny babies giggle at funny faces people make at them. Or if you'd like to shed tears of joy, watch a clip of a child hearing her mother's voice for the first time. These are simple joys.

Joy is the ability to experience deep gladness no matter the circumstances of life.

Sometimes as we grow up, we take things like funny faces and silly songs for granted, or even the sound of the voices of people we love. Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by our circumstances that joy seems hard to find.

*How are your circumstances impacting your joy this season?*

The people hearing the words of Isaiah, and those later described in Luke's Gospel, lived in difficult times. Read Isaiah 35 and note that it describes a day when God will overwhelm His people with joy. Next, read Luke 2:6–18. Notice the angel's words to the shepherds that this news will bring "great joy for all the people" (v 10).

Born into difficult circumstances and laid in an animal feeding trough, this new baby probably still had funny faces made at Him. And at some point, He heard the voice of His mother for the first time. The difference in this story is that Jesus doesn't just teach us about joy; He is the source of it!

Jesus is our joy!

—**Matt Irvine**

Pastor and Editor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS**

**WHO?**

Isaiah was God’s messenger to the nation of Judah during an unstable time who foretold of the coming Savior. The shepherds near Bethlehem were the first to hear of Jesus’ birth and the first-ever evangelists, who told everyone about the child.

**WHAT?**

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy that “the eyes of those who are blind will be opened” when He came (Isaiah 35:5). Jesus showed what the kingdom of God is like when He healed many who were sick. When Jesus returns, He will fix and restore all that is broken and disordered.

**WHERE?**

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the shepherds lived in fields near Bethlehem, located about six miles south of Jerusalem in the region of Judea. Jesus was born in the humble setting of Bethlehem, instead of the glamorous palace of a king.

**WHEN?**

Jesus was born about 700 years after Isaiah wrote about God’s “coming” to save His people. At the time, Isaiah’s audience probably thought about how God would save Judah from physical destruction. But God “comes” to His people in physical form when Jesus is born.

**CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:**

When sin entered the world, God put a plan into motion—He would redeem His people and fix all that was broken by sin. In the Old Testament, we see God working through one family—Israel—to bring about this plan of salvation, but this would not be clearly unveiled until the arrival of Jesus.

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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### Play Stations

**SUPPLIES:** plain party hats, decorating supplies, stickers, mini pom-poms, glue, cardstock (1 sheet per kid), red washable ink pads, candy cane, wet wipes, coloring utensils

**RESOURCES:** [Joy Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#), [Candy Cane Sheet \(1 per kid-back of coloring sheet\)](#)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

**Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?**

#### Play Station: Party Time

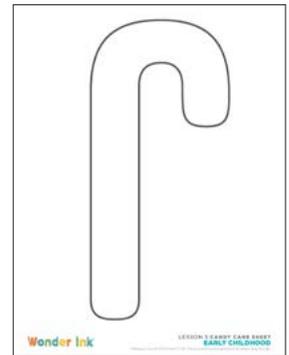
**Set up:** Set out plain party hats, decorating supplies, stickers, mini pom-poms, and glue.

**Play:** Invite the kids to decorate their own party hats. When finished, they can throw their own party and celebrate Jesus.

#### Play Station: Candy Cane Joy

**Set up:** Print the Candy Cane Sheet onto cardstock for each kid. Set out red, washable ink pads, a candy cane, and wet wipes to wipe hands afterward.

**Play:** Encourage kids to design a candy cane with stamps on the Candy Cane Sheet. Show kids a real candy cane so they can see the red and white stripes. Have kids use a red ink pad and their fingerprints to make the red lines on the candy cane. Tell kids when they turn their candy cane upside down, it becomes the letter J! Tell them that the letter J stands for joy and Jesus!



#### Play Station: Joy Coloring Sheet

**Set up:** Print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out the coloring utensils.

**Play:** Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a present they would want to receive or give.

## Word of Wonder

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, small candy cane, cups (3)

### WORD OF WONDER

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and sure of what we do not see.

—from Hebrews 11:1

**Our Word of Wonder for the Waiting for Jesus series is from Hebrews 11:1. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together.**

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **FAITH**—Make prayer hands.
- **IS BEING SURE**—Make a fist with one hand and put it down on your other hand (open palm).
- **OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR**—Put your fist down onto your open palm once for each word (what, hope).
- **AND SURE**—Hands on your hips.
- **OF WHAT WE DO NOT**—Hold one finger up and shake it back and forth (“No, No”).
- **SEE.**—Put your hands by your eyes like binoculars.
- **FROM HEBREWS 11:1**—Hands open like a book.

**This candy cane is in the shape of a J.** Hold up the candy cane to look like a J to the kids. **That's the first letter in Jesus. It's also the first letter of the word joy. It even kind of looks like a shepherd's staff if we turn it around. It reminds us of the joy that Jesus brought to the world when He was born and when the shepherds were the first to hear and celebrate Jesus' birth!**

**Our Word of Wonder tells us that we can be sure and certain of what we hope for—Jesus—even when we can't see Him. We can trust God! Let's play a game to see if we can find the candy cane even when we can't see it.**

Place all three cups upside down next to each other on a flat surface. Place the candy cane under one of the cups. Mix the cups up and let the kids take turns guessing which cup has the candy cane under it. Whoever guesses correctly will say the verse. Play several rounds.

Gather the kids to discuss these questions:

- **Do you think the shepherds felt joy when they heard the news of Jesus? Why or why not?**
- **What is something about God that is hard to understand or believe?**

## God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible; Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

### Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

**I open my Bible, and what do I see?** (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

**God's big story, waiting for me!** (Point to yourself.)

Let's start by reading part of God's big story from the books of Isaiah and Luke in the Bible. Isaiah is in the Old Testament, and Luke is in the New Testament.

[Read the God's Big Story Script below from Isaiah 35:3–6 and Luke 2:6–18.](#)

**Let's sit in our circle and get our hands ready. First, God made a promise. Hold your hands like you are holding a tiny scroll. He said that one day He would make weak arms strong and help people who were hurting. Show your strongest muscles. God promised wonderful things because a Savior would come.**

**Now let's move to Bethlehem. Everyone pretend to walk a long road. Mary and Joseph traveled there, and Mary was ready to have her baby. They needed a place to stay, but there was no room. Shake your head side to side. So they stayed where animals lived. Hold your nose and giggle like it might smell funny.**

**That night Jesus was born. Hold a pretend newborn baby gently in your arms. They laid Him in a manger. Open your hands like a little bed.**

**Out in the fields, shepherds were watching their sheep. Pretend to be sheep. Baa quietly. Suddenly an angel showed up and God's bright glory shone all around. Put your hands over your eyes like the light is too bright. The angel told them good news. A Savior was born. Then a whole group of angels praised God. Lift your arms high like you are praising.**

**The shepherds hurried to see Jesus. Pat your legs fast like you are running. They found Him, just like the angel said. Then they told everyone what they saw. Cup your hands around your mouth like you are telling someone great news. Jesus was here. God kept His promise.**

## Circle Time: Happy Birthday, Jesus

**SUPPLIES:** play dough, birthday candles

Gather the kids to sit in a circle.

**Today we learned about how Jesus was born and brought joy to the whole world! How do you celebrate birthdays?** Allow the kids to respond. Be sensitive to kids whose families don't do a lot for birthdays, and make sure they know that's OK. **Sometimes we eat birthday cake to celebrate birthdays. We're going to make a pretend birthday cake to help us celebrate Jesus' birth.**

Invite the kids to help you make a pretend birthday cake using the play dough. Then stick some birthday candles into it (like birthday candles on a cake!) and pass the pretend cake around the circle. Each kid will take one candle out when they get the cake and put the candle on the ground in the middle. The kid who pulls the last candle out will answer a question. Play several times with varying amounts of candles in the cake.

**Leader Tip:** If you don't have small birthday candles, use crayons instead. You could also take it up a notch and make a real birthday cake to serve the kids as a snack after the activity! If you do, be aware of food allergies.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **In what city was baby Jesus born?** (*Bethlehem*)
- **Who were Jesus' parents on earth?** (*Mary and Joseph*)
- **Who did the angel share the good news with about baby Jesus?** (*the shepherds*)
- **What did the shepherds do after they heard the good news about Jesus?** (*They hurried off to find the baby and see for themselves; told everyone the good news.*)
- **What makes you feel joyful and happy?**
- **What are you excited about for Christmas?**
- **How does Jesus bring you joy?**

**God sent Jesus to be the best present ever. We can celebrate Jesus and have joy because of Him. The joy that comes from Jesus lasts forever! Let's thank God for sending His Son Jesus to us and for giving us great joy!**

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for giving us joy because of Jesus.

## Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

### Responding in Worship: Joy Parade

**SUPPLIES:** party hats (from Play Stations, 1 per kid), ribbon wands, toy instruments, party horns or blowers (1 per kid)

**RESOURCES:** upbeat music from the [Waiting for Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

**God sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. Jesus came as a tiny baby to save the world from sin—the wrong things people say and do that separate them from God. We learned in today’s story that when God’s people were sad and scared, He promised that He was going to come and save them. And God sent the Savior as a baby and told a group of regular people first. The shepherds had so much joy.**

**And the joy didn’t stop with the shepherds! Jesus, the promised Savior, came to heal what was broken. Jesus came to help people. Jesus came to save us. We can have joy because of Jesus too.**

**Jesus came because He loves us more than anything! Because of God’s gift, we can love Jesus and have joy. We’re going to celebrate Jesus’ birth by having a joy parade! Let’s get ready to celebrate!**

Have the kids line up and give them party hats, ribbon wands, toy instruments, and party horns or blowers.

**Because of Jesus, we can have joy. Joy is deep gladness because of Jesus! Joy is something no one can take away because God loves us always. Joy comes from God and lasts forever! While we’re marching in the parade, remember to get loud and celebrate and praise God for sending Jesus!**

Play upbeat music from the [Waiting For Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#). Encourage kids to march around the room using their instruments, wands, or party horns as they sing and dance to the music.

You can also let the group march down the hallways of your church or do a parade for other groups.

**Make it Inclusive:** Some kids may struggle with this activity due to the chaos. They may enjoy doing their own mini parade in a small group.

At the end of the parade, bring kids back together. Collect the party horns and blowers, ribbon wands, and toy instruments. Show the kids how to fold their hands in prayer.

## Closing Game: Jump for Joy

**SUPPLIES:** ropes (2)

Today we learned from God's big story about when Jesus was born, and we learned that because of Jesus, we can have joy. Have you ever heard the phrase "jump for joy"? Allow the kids to respond. That just means celebrating with great joy. We're going to remember Jesus and jump for joy in a game. We'll see how big your joy jump is!

Lay two ropes on the floor on the floor about a foot apart.

Let the kids take turns getting a running start and then try to jump over the ropes without touching them with their feet. After all the kids have had a chance, move the ropes farther apart and play again. Every time kids jump, they can say the Wonder Truth, "Jesus is my joy!"

Play multiple rounds.

**Make It Inclusive:** For kids who are unable to jump, encourage them to step between the ropes or toss a ball as high or far as they can.