

WEEK 2

TEACHING GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Jesus is always good news.

BIBLE

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 1:26-38;
Matthew 1:18-24; John 10:10

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | Halo Hullabaloo

- Welcome back to *Halo*, a series where we're discovering what role the angels played in the very first Christmas.
 - If you were here 2 weeks ago, you know God occasionally sent angels to deliver some pieces of big, exciting news – especially in the days surrounding the very first Christmas.
 - But before we start talking about those messengers, let's see how good you are at delivering some Christmas messages of your own.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need a bowl, a white board and dry erase markers, Play-Doh, plenty of index cards, paper gift tags, or blank Christmas stationery, and maybe a set of angel wings and a halo. On each piece of paper, write a Christmasy word or phrase (like "ornaments," "Christmas tree," "nativity set," or "cookies") and place them into the bowl. To play, have at least one student come to the front and put on the angel wings and halo – they'll be your Messenger for that round and will pass the wings and halo to someone else for the next round. Put 60 seconds on the clock and play as many rounds as you'd like. For each round, the Messenger must draw a word from the bowl and communicate that word to the audience, using one of three methods:*
 - **CHARADES:** *Act out the word without making any sounds or mouthing any clues.*
 - **SCULPTING:** *Sculpt the word out of Play-Doh.*
 - **DRAWING:** *Draw the word on the white board.*

QUESTION | What good news would you want to hear from an angel this Christmas?

- Obviously, the angels who delivered messages on the very first Christmas had a lot more complicated (and important) messages to deliver than the ones we just attempted. But now I'm wondering, if an angel appeared to you this Christmas with an announcement, **what good news would you want to hear?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- Maybe your idea of some good Christmas news has to do with something small, like . . .
 - Getting that one big present you've been wanting.

- Your least favorite family Christmas gathering getting canceled.
- Christmas break going on forever — and school resuming never.
- Or maybe your idea of some good Christmas news is about something a lot bigger, like . . .
 - Your family spending time together without a huge blow-up fight.
 - Your loved one's health improving.
 - Your needs getting met.

DISCUSSION

- What's something you're hoping for this Christmas that isn't a present?
- * What are some reasons the Christmas season might not feel like "good news" to some of us this year? Can you relate to any of those reasons?

OBJECT LESSON | A Grown-Up Christmas List

- When you were a kid, your Christmas Wish List was probably pretty simple: toys, games, candy, or maybe a pet pony if you were dreaming really big. But as we get older, or life gets a little less carefree, our Christmas lists have likely started to change.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, a paper towel roll or brown craft paper, and a large permanent marker. You'll be creating a Christmas list with your students in reverse order, writing at the bottom of the paper roll first and then adding more items at the top of the list, pulling the paper roll downward as you go to create a long scroll of Christmas wishes. Begin by asking students what was on their Christmas list when they were toddlers, then preschoolers, then in elementary school, and so on. When you get to the present day, prompt them to share Christmas wishes that go beyond just tangible gifts.*
- If things are good this Christmas, your idea of "good news" might be as simple as getting some new toys or games. But if you're dealing with some difficult things this Christmas, your idea of "good news" might be getting something more important than cool stuff.
- For those of us struggling with bad news this holiday season, our Christmas lists this year might ask for . . .
 - Peace in our homes in place of chaos or disagreement.
 - Our families to stay together instead of breaking apart.
 - Help figuring out a difficult situation or relationship.
 - Hope for the scary thing we're experiencing.
- This year, if your Christmas list looks anything like that, I hope you know you're not alone — and there's good news.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 11:1-10

- Almost 3,000 years ago, long before the very first Christmas, God's people (the nation of Israel) were looking for some good news too.
 - Generations earlier, God had promised Israel it would be a thriving nation under God's protection and God would do big things through them.
 - But suddenly Israel was conquered by enemy nations, divided, and struggling. People were turning their backs on God. The wealthy and powerful were taking advantage of people who were weaker or in need. Brokenness, fear, injustice, and sin were everywhere.

- In that moment, when the situation seemed beyond repair, God stepped in with some good news. A prophet named Isaiah was sent to speak to the people of Israel on God's behalf.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Isaiah 11:1-10.*
- The word "Messiah" refers to a person who would rescue God's people, make God's will happen on earth, and right all the wrongs sin had caused.
 - This Messiah wouldn't be like other rulers of the past though. He wouldn't be a king who sinned, turned away from God, or ruled unjustly. God's promised Messiah would be good, just, and faithful.
 - And the coming of this Messiah wasn't just wishful thinking. Through Isaiah, God promised a Messiah was on the way!
 - But since God didn't give Isaiah or Israel an exact date, God's people waited, trusted, and waited some more.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 1:26-38 & Matthew 1:18-24

- Prophets like Isaiah were one kind of messenger from God, but God sometimes used other kinds of messengers to speak to humanity too. Scripture tells us God often sent angels to communicate important messages to the world.
 - Last week, we met the angel Gabriel, who told the priest Zechariah he and his wife Elizabeth would be having a baby after a long and difficult period of waiting.
 - Today, we're going to see Gabriel make yet another pregnancy announcement to yet another couple — but this one was even more unexpected than the first.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Luke 1:26-38 & Matthew 1:18-24.*
- Okay, be honest. Have you ever gotten a Christmas present that was, um, not exactly what you were hoping for? Maybe the gift was wrapped beautifully and from someone you really love — but when you opened it, you were like, "Um, what is this? And why?"
 - Well, I wonder if that's how Mary and Joseph felt about this announcement — at least at first. Of course, it's really cool they were going to be having a baby who would grow up to save the whole world . . . but it probably didn't immediately sounded like good news to them.
 - Remember, Mary and Joseph weren't married, Mary was still a virgin, and this development in their social lives was definitely going to cause a scandal.
- Even though what Gabriel shared with Mary and Joseph was great news for the whole world, it took a minute for these soon-to-be-parents to process what was happening.
 - That's why Mary asked, "How is this even possible?" And it's why Joseph considered calling off the marriage. They both knew being pregnant under mysterious circumstances could permanently ruin their reputations.
 - Despite all that was on the line, Mary and Joseph both eventually realized that the angel's news wasn't an inconvenience or burden. It was good news. It was the best news!
- In the big picture of God's story, this is exactly what God's people had been waiting for! Jesus, the baby Mary and Joseph would parent, was the Messiah Isaiah had written about so many centuries earlier.
 - In Isaiah's time, the people of Israel couldn't have predicted how God's promise to send a Savior would one day come true, but the good news he was on the way was enough.
 - In the same way, Mary and Joseph couldn't fast forward to the future to see how a newborn baby could possibly change the world, but they trusted God's promise anyway.
 - In time, the baby God promised would grow up to change all of history and reconnect every human with the love of God.
 - Isaiah, Mary, and Joseph couldn't see the future, but they could sit in the present with the promise that the Messiah would be good news — in the past, in the present, and definitely in the future.

- Mary and Joseph realized the good news of Jesus wasn't just good news for them personally. He would be good news for the whole world, including for you and me. What Mary and Joseph learned on that first Christmas is what you and I might need to be reminded of today: that Jesus is good news even when . . .
 - We don't see how God is working.
 - We can't understand why things are going the way they're going.
 - We're afraid of what we don't know or can't predict.
- No matter how scary or confusing things seem, no matter what's going on in our lives or in the world, Christmas is a reminder that **Jesus is always good news.**

DISCUSSION

- Why do you think the announcement of Mary's pregnancy might not have felt like "good news" to Mary and Joseph at first?
- * How do you think Mary and Joseph were able to move beyond their fears to see baby Jesus as "good news"?
- Why was Jesus' birth good news for the whole world?
- * Why do you think some people don't see the message of Jesus as "good news?" What could Jesus' followers do to help change that?

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

STORY | Talk about a time Jesus was good news in your life.

- When we say Jesus is good news, we mean that in two ways:
 - Jesus is good news for the whole world! His gift of salvation is available to anyone and everyone, and Christmas is the day we celebrate him coming into the world for the very first time.
 - Jesus is good news every day, in every area of our lives. He didn't just come to bring eternal salvation. He also came to bring hope, peace, and restoration to our lives right now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time Jesus was good news in your life. This could be the story of how you came to know Jesus for the first time, or it could be a story about a time Jesus brought hope, peace, or restoration into a difficult situation. If you can manage to tell a story about a time Jesus was good news to you specifically during the Christmas season, that's even better!*
- When Jesus came into the world, the world was instantly changed. But people's lives continue to change every single day because Jesus is still good news, today and every day.

DISCUSSION

- What are some ways Jesus can be good news, not just for our eternal lives, but in our everyday lives too?
- Read John 10:10. If you know Jesus, what's one way he has given you the kind of life this verse describes?

REFLECTION | Good News Prayer List

- We can disagree about how soon you're allowed to play Christmas music, but one thing that is good in every season is Jesus.

- So let's make a list and "check it twice." This Christmas, how do you need the good news of Jesus to change your life (or the life of someone you love) for the better? What (or who) do you want to see Jesus . . .
 - Change?
 - Transform?
 - Rescue?
 - Fix?
 - Heal?
 - Save?
- Make a list. Then, after each one, write a one-sentence prayer asking Jesus to transform that situation with his good news.

RESPONSE | Good News Sticker Exchange

- As you leave this week, I wonder how you'll respond to the good news of Jesus. Do you need to . . .
 - **RESPOND TO JESUS FOR THE FIRST TIME?** If you're unsure what you think about Jesus right now, I hope you know his love for you is unchanging and unwavering. He is inviting you to experience the good news that comes through a relationship with him. It's a relationship that will change you forever and that relationship can begin today.
 - **ASK FOR JESUS' HELP?** Maybe right now you don't feel like there's a lot of good news in your life, either because of mistakes you've made or because of circumstances beyond your control. Jesus' birth is proof God has not abandoned us — or you. No matter what you are going through, Jesus is with you and able to help. So reach out.
 - **SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS?** If you follow Jesus, you have some good news to share with others. You can share that good news with your actions (by loving, caring, helping, or serving) or with your words. Try finishing the statement, "My life is different because Jesus . . ." If you're unsure how to answer that, try asking someone close to you how they see your life as different with Jesus in it.
- This week, choose one step to take. Then choose somewhere to put your "Jesus Is Always Good News" sticker as a reminder of the hope, peace, and salvation that is available to you.
 - If you need the reminder that Jesus is always good news, put your sticker somewhere you'll see it, like . . .
 - The back of your phone.
 - Your locker.
 - Your mirror.
 - A notebook or Bible.
 - If you know someone who needs some good news right now, give them your sticker with a note of encouragement.
 - Or if you want people in your school or neighborhood to know about the good news of Jesus, put your sticker somewhere public, where everyone can see it.
- The good news of Christmas is that Jesus is finally here. It was good news then and it's good news now, because **Jesus is always good news.**

DISCUSSION

- *** Has there ever been an area of your life you struggled to let Jesus change or heal? If so, what do you think was stopping you?**
- **What's one way you need the good news of Jesus to change your life (or the life of someone you love) right now? Now let's pray for each other!**