

Gospel Light

“Have mercy
on me, O GOD”

teacher guide

preteen | Grades 5 & 6 • Ages 10-12

Gospel Light's
the edge

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FOCUS ON EVANGELISM

 Sessions marked with this symbol provide special opportunities to reach out to children and their families with the good news of Jesus.

Leading a Student to Christ
page 105

Small group Discovery

5-15 minutes

Goal: Discover reasons a Savior is needed

Activity Overview

Option A

Open wrapped boxes to uncover sentences that reveal our need for a Savior

Option B

Collect evidence of sin that is reported in newspapers and newsmagazines

Materials

Option A: Index cards, markers, individually wrapped candy, two small boxes, wrapping paper, tape

Option B: Lesson 1 *Student Guide* pages, pens, newspapers, newsmagazines, scissors, tape

Lesson 1 ★ Unit 1
the gift

Wonderful
Counselor

Large group Study

20-30 minutes

Goal: Realize that one way to “prepare the way for the Lord” is to accept Jesus as the only provision for our sin problem

Unit Bible Passage

Read **Isaiah 9:6-7** and discover what Isaiah said about the coming Messiah

Skit Option

Read a skit about John’s importance in preparing the way for the Messiah

Character Study

Study **Isaiah 40:3-5; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:15-31** to discover how Jesus solves our sin problem

Unit Bible Passage: Isaiah 9 Poster from *Poster Pack*

Skit Option: Lesson 1 *Student Guide* pages

Character Study: Bibles

Small group Application

20-30 minutes

Goal: Identify what to do to “prepare the way for the Lord” in our lives

Discussion Option

Talk about ways to prepare for a guest and preparing for Jesus

Active Option

Carry balloons without using hands and discuss ways to change in response to Jesus’ coming

Drama Option

Rehearse a Christmas drama and discuss ways to show love for Jesus

Discussion Option: Bibles, Lesson 1 *Comics*

Active Option: Bibles, slips of paper, marker, masking tape, balloons

Drama Option: Bibles, Lessons 1-4 *Student Guide* pages, costumes, props

Distribute copies of the
Sonic Edge #2 CD to new students!

Jesus provides the only way
to solve the problem of sin.

**Life
Focus**

Character Study

Isaiah 40:3-5; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:15-31

John the Baptist helped people prepare for the coming of One who would take away sin.

**Teacher
prep page**

Sin is an ongoing problem for all of us. We see sin's horrid effects around our world, and if we are honest, we see its effects in our own lives, too. Although we learn right from wrong and hopefully learn to make good choices, we still sin. No one is exempt.

Likewise, no one is exempt from the high price sin exacts. Only one person could pay—and He did. Jesus' supreme gift of Himself paid for every wrong thing we have done or ever will do.

Before the holiday rush begins, we need to take time to reflect on God's forgiveness and love. Thus we "prepare the way for the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3) in our daily lives. Let the good news of Jesus' birth and what it means to be able to know Him personally take first place above every other worthy goal that you pursue in this lesson. Although some preteens may know many Bible facts about the Christmas story, they still may not understand that they can receive forgiveness for their sins and that they can know Jesus personally. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their understanding to the forgiveness that is offered to them. You can count on God to help you tell your preteens in a way that they can understand why Jesus came to Earth. He has done everything that could be done to lift the effect of sin and darkness from our lives. And He longs, more than we can begin to imagine, for all of us to understand and receive this from Him!

Unit Bible Passage

Isaiah 9:6-7

NIV: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

KJV: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."



Option 2 Rip-Off Relay

Materials

Index cards, markers, individually wrapped candy, two small boxes, wrapping paper, tape.

Preparation

Write the following sentence starters on index cards, one sentence per card: "She makes me so mad I want to . . .," "Mean kids at school cause trouble when . . .," "If they thought they could get away with it, some kids would . . .," "I try to be good, but my friends. . . ." Equally divide cards and candy and place in two small boxes. Wrap boxes with six to eight layers of wrapping paper (each box needs the same amount of wrapped layers, and each layer needs to be taped separately). Place boxes near one wall in your room.

Procedure

1. Divide group into two teams. Teams line up opposite from where the boxes were placed.
2. Players take turns running to their team's box and removing only one layer of paper.
3. After the box is unwrapped, the next student runs to retrieve the box, opens it and then distributes the candy inside the box. Ask a volunteer to read aloud one of the sentence starters found on the cards. Volunteer tells ways to complete the sentence. Repeat with other volunteers and other sentence starters. Ask the questions below.
 - **How do you feel when you are in situations like those on the cards?** (Discouraged. Sad. Angry. Afraid.)
 - **What do these situations have in common?**

Small group Discovery

5-15 minutes

Goal: Discover reasons a Savior is needed

4. Conclude the activity by saying,
 - **These sentences all describe problems that are the result of sin—our own or the sin of others.**
 - **But God had a plan for how He would deal with our sin problem. Let's discover it!**

teaching tips

1. If several small groups meet in one room, play game as a large group. Increase the number of wrappings on each box to allow each student to participate in the relay. After the relay, divide into small groups to conclude the activity.
2. If space is limited or if students prefer less activity, play game with students sitting in a circle and passing boxes while you play music. When music stops, students holding boxes remove one layer of paper. Continue until boxes are unwrapped.

Mentoring Tip

As we enter into the season of Advent, you have an opportunity to help redirect your students' thoughts from the holiday's trappings to that of preparing their hearts for the coming of Jesus. Focusing on the spiritual over the material during this hectic season will help your students see the true importance of Christmas. You can give no better gift than this to your preteens!



Option b evidence search



Materials

Lesson 1 *Student Guide* pages, pens, newspapers, newsmagazines, scissors, tape.

Procedure

1. Distribute *Student Guide* pages and pens. Students form pairs or trios. Introduce the activity by saying,

- When a person is on trial for a crime, lawyers seek evidence to prove that the person did the crime.
- Today you will act like lawyers collecting evidence for the existence of sin (actions that show disobedience to God). Look for examples of ways people have disobeyed God's commands.

2. Students look through newspapers and newsmagazines, searching for evidence of sin in the world. Students follow instructions and complete the activity on pages 1 and 4 of their *Student Guides*.

3. Allow several minutes for students to work. Then ask for volunteers to present the evidence they discovered. Ask the questions below.

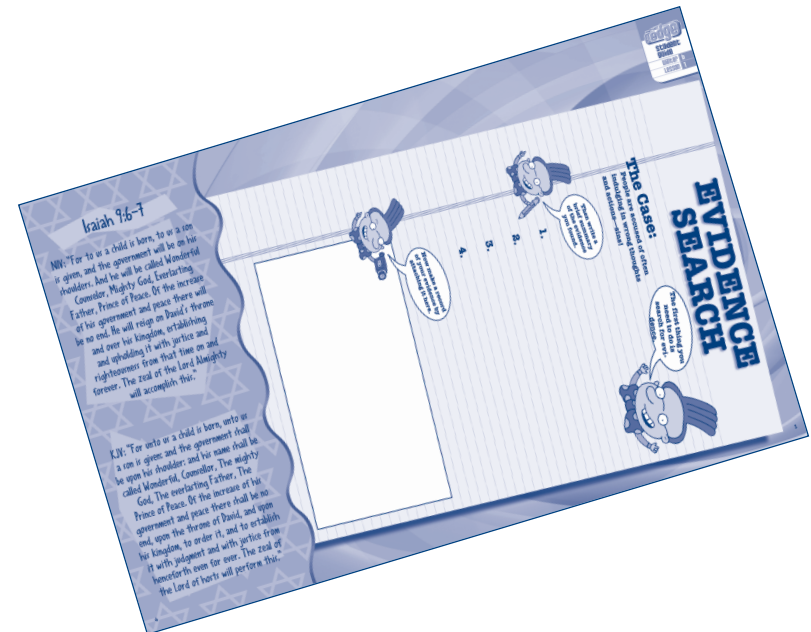
- What are some things people say to explain away, or excuse, their sin? ("I didn't mean to do it." "It's not my fault." "I forgot.")
- Why do people try to cover up their wrong actions? (They don't want to get into trouble. They feel bad about what they did.)
- How many people do you know who have sinned? (Sin is a problem for everyone. We have all sinned.)

4. Conclude the activity by saying,

- The evidence shows we are all guilty of sin. And it is a problem that we can't solve on our own.
- But God had the perfect solution to forgive our sin. Let's find out what the Bible says God's perfect solution was.

enrichment idea

Create a courtroom look and feel for this activity. Bring in a black graduation gown for a volunteer judge to wear. Set up long tables in front of the judge and have students present their evidence from the table. **Tech Tip:** Show clips from TV courtroom dramas (such as the opening credits for *Perry Mason* or *Judge Judy*) to create the atmosphere.



Character Study

Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 40:3-5; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18;
John 1:15-31

Materials

Bibles, Isaiah 9 Poster from *Poster Pack*; optional—Lesson 1 *Student Guide* pages, *Sonic Edge #2* CD and player, *Extra Edge #2* DVD and player, CD of Handel's *Messiah*.

Lead students to read and discuss the Bible verses listed. Extend the discussion with the questions and comments provided, and refer to the poster as indicated.

Introduction

What's a prediction you've heard about? How often do people's predictions come true? People's predictions may not always come true, but when God gave a prophecy, or message about the future, you could count on it to be true!

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah was a prophet of God. He told people God's messages and he wrote them down. (Students read Isaiah 9:6-7 from Bibles or Isaiah 9 Poster. Optional: Play "To Us a Child" song from CD or DVD.)

- **Isaiah was a prophet who told of the coming of the Messiah, the Savior God had promised to send. Who is this Savior?** (Jesus.)
- **What does verse 6 of this prophecy say Jesus will be like?** (Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace.)
- **Verse 7 talks about Jesus taking David's throne. Who was David?** (Famous king of Israel who loved God very much.) **Isaiah was saying that Jesus would be a descendant of David and would be an even greater king than David.**

Large group Study

20-30 minutes

Goal: Realize that one way to "prepare the way for the Lord" is to accept Jesus as the only provision for our sin problem

- Unlike David, whose kingship ended when he died, Jesus would be King forever. God would do all this because He loves us very much. That's what "the zeal of the Lord . . . will accomplish this" means.

Isaiah 9:6-7 tells us a lot about Jesus and how He would be able to solve the world's problems of sin. The best part about the prophecies Isaiah wrote is that they came true.

Isaiah wrote these words about 750 B.C. when the Assyrians, enemies of Israel, were conquering most of the area we now call the Middle East. With Jesus, many of Isaiah's prophecies came true.

(Optional: Explain that many years ago, a composer named George Handel wrote *The Messiah*, a collection of songs telling the story of Jesus. Students read Isaiah 40:3-5 in their Bibles. **Listen to the music as you follow along in the Bible. Handel used the King James translation of the Bible, so the words may be different from the words in your Bible.** Play "Comfort Ye My People," beginning with the words "The voice of him," and "Every Valley Shall Be Exhorted." **Let's find out what these words meant.**)

Isaiah 40:3-5

Read Isaiah 40:3-5 to find out what Isaiah prophesied about someone who would call out an important message. Where is this person going to be? Who is this person preparing the way for? How does the person say the way should be prepared? How might it be easier to travel a road without hills or valleys or isn't crooked or rough?

These words might not make a lot of sense to us at first, but people in Bible times understood what they meant. People in Bible times prepared for the arrival of a visiting king by rebuilding roads so that the coming king would have a level, smooth ride into their town. So in this prophecy, Isaiah was talking about the arrival of a king. When this king was coming, someone would call out and announce that the king was coming and tell others what to do to prepare for the king.

mark 1:1-4 How do you think this prophecy came true? Read Mark 1:1-4 to find out. Who was the “voice of one calling in the desert” that Isaiah talked about? We call him John the Baptist because he baptized people as a symbol of their changed lives.

DVD

Let’s read (watch) a skit to see what some people might have thought about John the Baptist. Distribute *Student Guide* pages. Let volunteers choose parts for the skit on pages 2 and 3. Students read skit aloud (or watch “A Voice Calling” on DVD). Now let’s find out what really happened.

Skit
option

mark 1:5-7 Read Mark 1:5-7 to find out more about John the Baptist’s message. John preached to crowds of people. He told them they were not living according to God’s plan and that they needed to change. He warned, “Repent! Stop doing wrong things!” If you were in that crowd, how would you feel? What would you say?

LUKE 3:11-14 Luke 3 tells us even more about John’s preaching. “What should we do?” the people asked John the Baptist. Read Luke 3:11-14 to find out the practical things John told various people to do. How would these actions show the people’s repentance? John told the people that just being sorry for what they’d done wasn’t enough. They had to change what they were doing!

LUKE 3:16 When the crowds heard these words, they wondered if John the Baptist was the Christ, or Messiah—the Savior Isaiah prophesied God would send. Read Luke 3:16 to discover how John responded. What do you think John meant by saying the One who was coming would baptize with the Holy Spirit? John baptized people in water to show that they were truly sorry for their sins. However, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to those who followed Him.

john 1:29-31 Read John 1:29-31 to see what John said when Jesus appeared. What did John mean by calling Jesus “the Lamb of God”? John meant that Jesus would be the One who would take the punishment for our sins! For centuries, following God’s commands, Jews had sacrificed lambs in payment for people’s sins. Jesus came as God’s perfect lamb (see Hebrews 9:11-14) to be the final perfect sacrifice for all of us. John wanted everyone to know that the Messiah was here!

conclusion Isaiah and John the Baptist told people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah—the Wonderful Counselor. God loved us so much that He didn’t want our sin to keep us from Him. When we are truly sorry for our sins and accept Jesus as our Savior, we can become members of God’s family and be forgiven.

People in Bible times prepared for the coming of Jesus by repenting and being baptized in water, showing that they wanted to stop doing what was wrong and start doing what was right. As we think about celebrating the birth of Jesus, we need to get ready for His coming, too. While it’s fun to prepare gifts, cards and decorations at Christmas, it’s even more important to prepare ourselves for Jesus’ coming with attitudes and actions that show our love for Him.



Tear out this Bible Tuck-In™ and place it in your Bible for class use.



Talk with students about putting into practice the Bible truths discovered in this lesson. Use these **discussion questions** as you lead students to complete one of the activities on the following pages. Conclude the activity with the Life Application Challenge below.

small group application

20-30 minutes

Goal: Identify what to do to “prepare the way for the Lord” in our lives

- **As the Wonderful Counselor described in Isaiah 9:6-7, how has Jesus solved the problem of sin for you and everyone in the world?** (Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. By admitting that we have sinned and believing in Jesus, our sins are forgiven.)
- **What did John the Baptist tell the people to do to get ready for the coming of Jesus?** (He told the people to repent, or turn away from, the bad way they were living.)
- **What wrong actions does God want people to stop doing? After a person repents, what will God do if that person sins again?** (1 John 1:9 says that when we confess [admit] our sins to God, He forgives us.)
- **What are some attitudes and actions that show love for Jesus?** (Showing kindness to someone. Forgiving someone who hurt me.)
- **What are some ways you can prepare for Christmas that will remind you of Jesus’ birth?** (Sing Christmas carols. Use an Advent calendar. Give money and food to the poor and homeless.)
- **How can you encourage friends or family members to prepare for Jesus?**

life application challenge

What is something that God can help you do to prepare for Christmas?
Invite volunteers to pray aloud, asking God to help them prepare for Christmas by showing love for Jesus. Close prayer time by thanking God for sending Jesus.

discussion option a royal tale

Materials

Bibles, Lesson 1 *Comics*.

procedure

1. Distribute comics. Students read page 1 of “A Royal Tale” and then tell what they think will happen.
2. Students choose characters in the comic and read roles aloud. Ask the questions below.
 - **What did Lord Davidson tell Victoria when she asked him about the stuff under her bed?** (He told her that he thought she learned a lesson about preparing for a guest.)
 - **Victoria shoved her extra stuff under the bed. What did Lord Davidson compare this to?** (Hiding our sin.) **What did he mean?** (Just as it was easier to hide stuff rather than put it away, it might seem easier to try to hide sin rather than confess it and ask for God’s forgiveness.)
 - **How would you prepare your room for a guest to visit? How is that similar to what people can do to prepare themselves to live for Jesus?**
3. Ask the **discussion questions** to extend the conversation about preparing for Jesus.



enrichment ideas

1. Students think of ways the comic story would be told in the present or in the future. Challenge students to create a situation of preparing for a visiting relative who grew up in the home they live in, as in the comic.
2. For fun, students talk about stuff they would shove under their beds, if someone was coming to visit them.



active option Share the balloon

Materials

Bibles, slips of paper, marker, masking tape, balloons.

Preparation

Print the **discussion questions** on separate slips of paper. Roll up papers and slide each one inside a separate balloon. Inflate and tie balloons, at least one balloon for each



student (add balloons without slips of paper as needed). Make two masking-tape lines 10 to 15 feet (3 to 4.5 m) apart.

Procedure

1. Students stand behind the first taped line. Place the balloons in between the two lines. Assign each student a different number.
2. Call out two numbers. Students with the called numbers run to the balloons and work together to pick up one balloon without using their hands (using heads, shoulders, knees, elbows, etc.). Balancing balloons between themselves, pairs move to other masking-tape line and then work together to pop the balloon. If balloon does not have a slip of paper inside, students return to the first line. If balloon does have a slip of paper, students stay where they are. Continue calling numbers until all the balloons have been collected and popped.
3. Invite pairs to take turns reading aloud questions from slips of paper and asking other pairs to tell answers.

enrichment idea

Students try different ways of moving during the game (walking backwards, hopping, etc.).



drama option greatest gift

Materials

Bibles, Lessons 1-4 *Student Guide* pages, costumes, props.

Preparation

Read through the skits on Lessons 1-4 *Student Guide* pages.

Procedure

1. Distribute Lessons 1-4 *Student Guide* pages and assign or let students choose roles for the characters in act 3 of each skit (be sure to include roles from Lessons 2-4 *Student Guide* pages). Have each actor plan for more than one role to accommodate the possibility of future absences.
2. Students practice lines a few times for the first rehearsal. Use the **discussion questions** as students practice, to help them explore the purpose of the dramatic production.
3. Plan to practice skits each week and perform at the end of class during Lesson 4. Collect all *Student Guide* pages before students leave.

enrichment ideas

1. Paint colorful backdrops on white sheets and hang them from simple wood or PVC-pipe frames. Or use an overhead projector with scene backdrops colored on transparencies.
2. Plan a time to perform skits for family and friends.

Tech Tip: Set up a video camera to record the practice rehearsals to help students see how they are performing. Be sure to record the actual drama presentation as well.



Leading a student to Christ

Many adult Christians look back to their upper elementary years as the time when they accepted Christ as Savior. Not only are preteens able to understand the difference between right and wrong and their own personal need of forgiveness, but also they are interested in Jesus' death and resurrection as the means by which God provides salvation. In addition, students at this age are capable of growing in their faith through prayer, Bible reading, worship and service.

However, preteens are still limited in their understanding, and immature in following through on their intentions and commitments. Therefore, they need thoughtful, patient guidance in coming to know Christ personally and continuing to grow in Him.

1. Pray.

Ask God to prepare the students in your class to receive the good news about Jesus and prepare you to effectively communicate with them.

2. Present the good news.

Use words and phrases that students understand. Avoid symbolism that will confuse these literal-minded thinkers ("born-again," "ask Jesus to come into your heart," "open your heart," etc.). Discuss these points slowly enough to allow time for thinking and comprehending.

a. "God wants you to become His child. Do you know why God wants you in His family?" (See 1 John 3:1.)

b. "You and all the people in the world have done wrong things. The Bible word for doing wrong is 'sin.' What do you think should happen to us when we sin?" (See Romans 6:23.)

c. "God loves you so much, He sent His Son to die on the cross for your sins. Because Jesus never sinned, He is the only One who can take the punishment for your sins." (See 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 John 4:14.) The Bible tells us that God raised Jesus from the dead and that He is alive right now. We can come to know and love Him today!

d. "Are you sorry for your sins? Tell God that you are. Do you believe Jesus died to take the punishment for your sins? If you tell God you are sorry for your sins and tell Him you do believe and accept Jesus' death to take away your sins, God forgives all your sins." (See 1 John 1:9.)

e. "The Bible says that when you believe in Jesus, God's Son, you receive God's gift of eternal life. This gift makes you a child of God. This means God is with you now and forever." (See John 3:16.)

Give students many opportunities to think about what it means to be a Christian; to aid their understanding, expose them to a variety of lessons and descriptions of the meaning of salvation.

3. Talk personally with the student.

Talking about salvation one-on-one creates the opportunity to ask and answer questions. Ask questions that move the student beyond simple yes or no answers or recitation of memorized information. Ask what-do-you-think kinds of questions.

- "Why do you think it's important to . . . ?"
- "What are some things you really like about Jesus?"
- "Why do you think that Jesus had to die because of wrong things you and I have done?"
- "What difference do you think it makes for a person to be forgiven?"

Answers to these open-ended questions will help you discern how much the student does or does not understand.

4. Offer opportunities without pressure.

Preteens are still children, vulnerable to being manipulated by adults. A good way to guard against

coercing a student's response is to simply pause periodically and ask, "Would you like to hear more about this now or at another time?" Loving acceptance of the student, even when he or she is not fully interested in pursuing the matter, is crucial in building and maintaining positive attitudes toward becoming part of God's family.

5. Give time to think and pray.

There is great value in encouraging a student to think and pray about what you have said before making a response. Also allow moments for quiet thinking about questions you ask.

6. Respect the student's response.

Whether or not a student declares faith in Jesus Christ, there is a need for adults to accept the student's action. There is also a need to realize that a student's initial responses to Jesus are just the beginning of a lifelong process of growing in the faith.

7. Guide the student in further growth.

There are several important parts in the nurturing process.

a. *Talk regularly about your relationship with God.* As you talk about your relationship, the student will begin to feel that it's OK to talk about such things. Then you can comfortably ask the student to share his or her thoughts and feelings, and you can encourage the student to ask questions of you.

b. *Prepare the student to deal with doubts.* Emphasize that certainty about salvation is not dependent on our feelings or doing enough good deeds. Show the student places in God's Word that clearly declare that salvation comes by grace through faith (see John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:11).

c. *Teach the student to confess all sin.* This means agreeing with God that we really have sinned. Assure the student that confession always results in forgiveness.