

# UNTO US CHRISTMAS CURRICULUM: LESSON 1

**Theme Verse:** Isaiah 9:6

**Theme Song:** Unto Us

**Story:** Isaiah the Prophet (Isaiah 6:1-8, 9:2-7)

**Big Idea:** Jesus is the promised Messiah.

## ACTIVITIES

Select some of the activities below to do before and/or after the lesson. Feel free to modify them or create your own!

### MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

*Time: 7-10 minutes*

#### **Directions:**

Break down the memory verse down into short phrases (suggestion below). Select volunteers for each phrase in the verse. Ask your volunteers to come up to the front of the room. Give each volunteer a word or phrase from the memory verse. Let the group assign an action to each child that corresponds with the word or phrase they have been assigned.

Once each person has their assigned action, go down the line, saying the verse together with each child acting out their portion. Do this several times until the children know the verse. Then have the entire group say the verse while each child does all of the actions. Children love to volunteer, so feel free to switch out volunteers and let multiple children participate.

#### **Examples:**

<b>Phrase</b>	<b>Action</b>
<i>For</i>	Hold out 4 fingers
<i>Unto us</i>	Stretch arms out straight, then draw them back to your chest in a grabbing motion
<i>A child</i>	Have children point to themselves
<i>Is born</i>	Cradle your arms like holding a child
<i>To us</i>	Same as "unto us"
<i>A son</i>	Act like you're putting on a baseball hat
<i>Is given</i>	Opposite motion of "unto us" - place palms up and together and push outward
<i>Isaiah</i>	Place palms together and then open like a book
<i>9</i>	Hold up 9 fingers
<i>6</i>	Draw a 6 in the air

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## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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### *For Younger Children*

#### Carry a Message

*Time: 10-15 minutes*

#### **Directions:**

As a group, decide on a message from the story that you would like to share with your church family (for instance, "God promised to send Jesus," "Jesus is God's son," "Jesus is coming," etc.). Go on a field trip around the church finding people to hear your message.

This may be accomplished easier in small groups with one adult assigned to 8-10 children. As you go around the church, find greeters, ushers, or anyone in the halls and share your message with them. (Be sure not to interrupt other groups that are in Bible study, though!) Afterward, talk with the children about how they carried the message to their church just like Isaiah the prophet!

### *For Younger and Older Children*

#### Secret Messages

*Time: 7-10 minutes*

#### **Supplies:**

- White paper
- White crayons
- Watercolors and brushes

#### **Directions:**

Using white crayons on white paper, have the children write secret messages about Christmas to each other. (Examples: "For to us a child is born," "Jesus is the Messiah," "Jesus is the Prince of Peace," etc.) Have each child pass the message they wrote to another child. Using watercolors and paintbrushes, paint over each message to find out what it says.

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**Younger Variation:** Have teachers or volunteers write or draw the message and let the children paint to discover what it is.

Talk about how God sent his message to his people. How does God send his message to us today?

## Telephone

*Time: 10 minutes*

### **Directions:**

Have the children sit or stand in a line of about 10-12 children. Use multiple lines if necessary. Remind the children that God gave Isaiah an important message to tell his people.

Have an adult whisper a sentence into the first child's ear. Then have each child whisper the secret to the next child in the line. Have the last child at the end of the line say the sentence out loud to see if the message was passed correctly. Repeat with several different sentences. If you have multiple groups, make sure they don't say the sentence out loud until everyone is done.

### **Sample Sentences:**

- God promised to send Jesus.
- For unto us a child is born.
- Jesus is the promised Messiah.
- God told Isaiah to carry a message.

## Sharing the Message

*Time: 10-15 minutes*

### **Supplies:**

- Card stock
- Old Christmas cards, glue, scissors, markers, and other items to decorate the card stock
- String (for option 2)

### **Directions:**

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As a group, talk about the message that Isaiah delivered to the people. It was a very important message, because God wants everyone to know about Jesus. That's why he gave his message to Isaiah, and now he has given us the same message.

**Option 1:** Using the card stock, help children create an invitation to share with others for a Christmas event at your church. Let them decorate it and take it home to deliver it.

**Option 2:** Have the children draw a picture of Isaiah's message (for instance, Jesus in the manger) and write the Big Idea from today's lesson. (Teachers can assist younger children by writing the Big Idea for them.) Help each child roll up the drawing and tie a string around it. Have the children take this home and encourage them to share their message with their friends and family, just like Isaiah did.

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## LESSON

### RELATIONAL TIME

*Time: Pre-service*

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#### **Display Welcome Still.**

Use the time before the official start of your programming to build relationships with kids. Engage each child as they enter your space. Call them by name or, if you don't know them, ask their name and introduce yourself.

#### **Advent Passport**

Give each child an Advent passport. You can create the passports in advance or allow the kids to cut out the pieces of the passport and staple it together. Invite them to draw a picture of themselves and fill out the information.

Use a fun stamp to stamp the page for week 1 in the space provided. Let the kids know that they should bring their passport back every week to get a new stamp. You may even provide a small prize for anyone who gets all five of the pages stamped.

**Optional:** Select one of the activities above to do during this time.

### GAME

*Time: 5 minutes*

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Get things started with some fun by playing one of the five included games from **Twelve:Thirty Kids!**

#### **Play the game video: [game name here].**

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## WORSHIP

**Time:** 5-20 minutes

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### **Display Title Still.**

**Welcome:** I'm so happy you're here with us! We're going to begin our time today by worshipping God. We have so many reasons to praise God, and the best part is that we don't have to wait! God is here, *with us!* We can't see him or hear him or touch him, but God promises us that whenever we gather to worship him, he will be there. And we know that God *always* keeps his promises.

**Prayer:** God, just being in your presence makes our hearts happy and joyful. Thank you that when we needed a Savior, you promised to send Jesus. And thank you for keeping your promise, just like you always do. We love you and we worship you, God!

In Jesus name, amen.

### **Play "Unto Us" Song Video.**

*(Play and sing "Unto Us" using either the lyric video or hand motions video. Lead the kids in singing and model a worshipful heart for them. You may want to expand this time by adding several songs, either from the included Unto Us Video Set or from your existing worship library. If you have multiple songs, be sure to highlight the theme song to draw their attention to the words.)*

### **Display Title Still.**

## STORY

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

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### **Prepare in Advance:**

Print or write out "Isaiah's Message" divided into five sections as shown below, including the number for each section. You may even seal them in a cool envelope or package to make it feel even more special. Before any organized activities start, speak to five children individually and tell them you have a special message for them to carry. Tell them to hang on to the paper until later in the lesson when you'll tell them what to do with it.

Isaiah's Message:

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- *The people*
- *Who were walking*
- *In darkness*
- *Have seen*
- *A great light.*

 **Play the Lesson 1 Opening Video.**

 **Display Isaiah 9:6.**

Take a look at our theme verse for this week. This was a part of the song we sang earlier. Do you remember it?

*(Read aloud or ask for a child to volunteer to read the verse aloud.)*

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” – **Isaiah 9:6**

Now let's all read it together. Say it with me! *(Lead the children in repeating the verse. For younger children, break the verse up into smaller chunks and have them repeat after you.)*

 **Display Title Still.**

Great job! Now I'm going to say the verse and you fill in the blanks:

For to (us) a (child) is (born), to us a (son) is (given.)

Hmm...a child? A son? But that's not all! The Bible says he's a Wonderful Counselor. The Prince of Peace! Who in the world could we be talking about? *(Allow the kids to respond, "Jesus!")*

That's right! Our theme verse today is a promise that God made *many* years before Jesus was born, and it's a promise he *kept*! In fact, that leads us to the Big Idea for this week:

 **Display the Big Idea.**

**BIG IDEA:** Jesus is the promised Messiah.

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Have you ever carried a message for someone? Maybe a friend asked you to tell something to another friend. Or maybe your mom gave you a message for your teacher. Or maybe you and your older brother broke your mom's favorite lamp, but your brother made you tell your mom even though he did it!

It's not always fun to be the one with the message.

## **Display Title Still.**

What if God gave you a message to carry? Can you imagine? You'd probably think that was pretty cool, and I'm sure you'd listen carefully to every word to make sure that you delivered the message correctly.

In the Old Testament, God's message carriers were called *prophets*. But it wasn't always fun to be God's prophet. Sometimes God's prophets had to tell his people things they didn't want to hear: they were making bad choices, they were worshipping idols, and that made God sad.

Year after year, God's prophets kept telling the people, "Don't worship idols. Worship God! Don't make bad choices. Make *good* choices!" Most of the time God's people didn't even listen, and sometimes they even *hurt* his prophets. Once in a while the people repented – that means that they said they were sorry, asked for forgiveness, and began to live in a way that pleased God – but that never lasted for very long. A few years later they would be back to the same terrible choices.

One of God's prophets was a man named Isaiah, and one day Isaiah had a very *personal* encounter with God. Isaiah walked into the temple and he actually saw God seated on a magnificent throne. Smoke was all around, and creatures with six wings called seraphim were singing praises to God.

Let's find out what happened next!

## **Play the Bible Story Video.**

## **Display Title Still.**

Now, let me ask you a question: what would you do if you walked into church and saw God on a throne surrounded by crazy looking creatures with six wings? *(Allow the kids to respond.)*



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Well Isaiah did something you might not expect. He was sad! You see, when Isaiah saw God he suddenly remembered all the bad choices that he had made and all the bad choices that his people had made. And he was worried. Was God here to punish him? Would God finally say, "Enough is enough! You keep making bad choices, so I'm through with you!"

Nope. That's not the kind of God he is. God never stops loving us, no matter what choices we make, and he was so determined to save us from our bad choices and bring us back into his family that he was about to do something *incredible!*

But first, he needed someone to carry his message.

Now you might think that Isaiah would *love* to carry God's message, but do you remember what we just said about God's prophets? Sometimes they had to say hard things to God's people, things God's people didn't want to hear. It took a lot of courage to be God's prophet.

God said to Isaiah, "I need someone to carry my message. Who will go for me?"

What do you think Isaiah said? Raise your hand if you think Isaiah said, "No way, God! Those people might hurt me if I carry your message!" (*Allow the kids to respond.*) Okay, how many people think Isaiah said, "I'll do it, God. I'll carry your message." (*Allow the kids to respond.*)

Let's find out what Isaiah said:

 **Display Isaiah 6:8.**

"Isaiah said, 'Here I am. Send me.'" – **Isaiah 6:8**

Sounds like Isaiah made the right choice! And God *did* give Isaiah a message for his people. It was a very special message.

 **Display Title Still.**

Before today's lesson I gave five of you a piece of Isaiah's message.

*(Have the children with the five parts of Isaiah's message stand and read their portion of the message, beginning with number one and going to number five. If*

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*the children can't read, have them come forward and bring their messages to you one at a time. Read each part of the message individually before putting it all together.)*

 This is a good picture opportunity! Post on social media or send in an email as a reminder about the lesson. Be sure you've notified parents about taking pictures and given them an opportunity to opt out before making any pictures public.

## **Display Isaiah 9:2.**

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." – **Isaiah 9:2**

Hmm. What did Isaiah's message mean? That's another thing about being God's prophet: sometimes God speaks in a way that might be hard to understand. But I think we can figure out this mystery.

Let's think about the first part, "The people walking in darkness." Walking in darkness sounds like a terrible idea! How would you see where you're going? You might trip and fall. You might run into a wall! If you were walking around in the darkness without a light, I would say you might have made a foolish choice.

That reminds me of God's people in the Old Testament. They were *always* making foolish choices. Instead of doing what God told them to do, they were always running off and worshipping other gods.

You know, that also reminds me of, well, *us*. We don't always do what God wants us to do. We make foolish choices that have bad consequences, just like people walking in the darkness with no light. Sounds like maybe the first part of Isaiah's message was talking about...*us*!

What about the second part, "Have seen a great light"? Well, if you were walking in darkness and you suddenly saw a great light, what would you do? *(Allow the kids to respond.)* You would run toward it just as fast as you could! Finally, a way out of the darkness!

Hmm. Who makes a way for us to get out of the darkness? Who can save us from the bad choices we make? Let's look at our theme verse for one final clue:

## **Display Isaiah 9:6.**

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“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” – **Isaiah 9:6**

Wait a second! I think I know the answer. Who is that verse talking about? (*Allow the kids to respond, “Jesus!”*) That’s right! It’s talking about Jesus. And that reminds me of something that Jesus said. Take a look:

 **Display John 8:12.**

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” – **John 8:12**

If the “people walking in darkness” is *us*, that means that the great light must be...? (*Allow the kids to respond, “Jesus!”*)

 **Display Title Still.**

You got it! Mystery solved! Jesus shows us the way to God, just like a light can show us the way out of the darkness. God knew that we could never make enough good choices on our own. We keep making the same foolish choices and getting ourselves lost in the darkness. He knew we needed a light to show us the way back to God, so he promised to send Jesus.

But Isaiah lived *hundreds* of years before Jesus was born. Back then, the people didn’t know who Jesus was, or even what his name would be. So they had another name for this person God had promised to send. They called him the Messiah, which means “saving one.” Jesus is the Messiah, the one God sent to save us and to lead us out of the darkness.

God gave Isaiah a special message for his people. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God made a promise: “You won’t walk in darkness forever. I’m going to send my son, Jesus. He will be like a light. He will show you the way back to me.” And if there’s one thing we know about God, we know that he will *always* keep his promises.

Let’s bow our heads and close our eyes for a time of prayer. Think about Jesus. Aren’t you grateful that God sent Jesus to show us the way out of the darkness? Let’s tell God how grateful we are. Pray this silently in your head, “God, thank you that you loved me so much you sent Jesus to save me.” (*Leave a moment of silence for kids to pray.*)

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God, sometimes our foolish choices lead to bad consequences, kinda like walking in the dark with no light. Thank you that you promised you wouldn't leave us in the darkness. Thank you that you promised to send us a light that would show us the way back to you. Thank you that you promised to send Jesus, and that you *kept* your promise.

In Jesus' name, amen.

 **Play the Lesson 1 Closing Video.**

 **Display Title Still.**

## SMALL GROUP

**Time:** 5-10 minutes

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Dismiss the children into small groups. Have your group leaders engage with the kids by asking these three questions:

1. What would you do if God asked you to carry his message? Would you be scared?
2. When Isaiah said we were "walking in darkness," what did he mean? Who is the "great light?"
3. If God kept his promise to send Jesus, what does that tell us about his *other* promises? Will he keep those, too?

**Optional:** Select one of the activities above for each small group to do.

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## DISMISSAL

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### **Display Closing Still.**

Be sure every child gets a take home sheet. Encourage them to come next week and bring their passports with them.

## FOLLOW UP

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A few days after this lesson, send parents a follow-up email, perhaps something like this:

*Parents,*

*Last week we had so much fun learning about the prophet Isaiah and how he carried God's message about Jesus. This week, read Isaiah 9:2 with your kids. Ask them what it means to be "walking in darkness" and who the "great light" is.*

*Next week we'll be learning about Mary and Joseph and how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. We can't wait to see you! And don't forget to bring your Advent Passport to get your next stamp!*

If you took a picture during the lesson time, include a picture in the email.