

A Child Called Immanuel

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference
Isaiah 7:10-17

Lesson Focus
Through the ages, God has provided signs of hope in dark times.

Bible Memory Verse
"...the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14b

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids will "draw" pictures with light.	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Flashlight, colored pencils
Circle Time Kids will be introduced to the idea of God sending hope in dark times.	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source
Opening Prayer Kids will join in an interactive prayer about finding hope in difficult times.	None	None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
A Child Called Immanuel Story Kids will learn about the historical context in which Isaiah's prophecy was given, and will learn the Bible Memory Verse.	Spark Story Bibles Spark NRSV Bible	None
Follow That Sign! Kids will make signs to give important information to people nearby.	Leaflets	Pencils, pens, colored pencils, markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
A Message in Dark Times Kids will create a message of hope using light.	Leaflets, Spark Bible Stickers	Paper clips, pencils
In Limbo Kids will play flashlight limbo.	None	Flashlight, music source (optional)

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids will be reminded to turn to God in dark times.	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids will pray an echo prayer.	Spark Family Pages	Flashlight

Bible Background

This text from the prophet Isaiah is a slice of a conversation between God and King Ahaz, who had become king of Judah at a young age during tumultuous times. When Ahaz considered an alliance with the Assyrians, who worshipped pagan gods, God warned that it would end badly. To convince Ahaz of this, God offered a sign—the birth of a child to be named “Immanuel.” Normally in Scripture, putting God to the test was a no-no, but in this instance, it was okay because the offer came directly from God.

Why This Story Matters

Though some Christian traditions interpret this text to point to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, Isaiah’s words were spoken to a specific time and place. That said, the birth of Jesus some seven centuries later echoed the promise of God in this text, reminding believers to look to God for the fulfillment of their hopes. Young kids can relate to the power of hope that sustains them in dark times.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

As kids begin to arrive, give a volunteer a flashlight and shut off the lights. Instruct the volunteer to “draw” a picture with the light on a wall or in front of other kids without talking. The first person to guess the image gets to use the flashlight in the next round.

Spark Resources

Spark Activity Pages
Spark Coloring Pages

Supplies

Flashlight
Colored pencils

Circle Time

Have any of you attended a Christmas Eve candlelight service? What’s your favorite part? Listen to kids’ responses, and if someone talks about when the candles are lit, use that example to continue. **I love it when the lights are lowered so it is very dark. Then one candle is lit. And then that candle lights another. And it continues until the whole church is glowing with candlelight. Can anyone guess why churches all over the world do this every year?** Listen to responses to see if anyone has grasped the symbolism. **The darkness represents hard times, the dark times. And the great thing about light is that it only takes one little light to break the darkness, one little light to shine hope on sadness. Today we’re going to hear a few words that would bring hope to people who heard them, to people later, and even to people today!**

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies

Music source

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: "Books of the Old Testament" (tracks 2 and 19 on Spark Song CD, page 13 in Songbook)

Song 2: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"—enjoy singing this traditional Advent and Christmas song.

Opening Prayer

Let's open with a prayer! I'm going to say a line, and I want you to respond, "Uh-huh!" Let's practice! Say "Uh-huh" in a deep voice, then point to the kids to repeat it back to you.

Dear God,

Whew! Life can be really difficult sometimes! (Uh-huh!)

Things look as grim as a surprise spelling test. (Uh-huh!)

We don't know if our up is down or our down is up. (Uh-huh!)

But a word, a word of hope... (Uh-huh!)

Will help us hang on until better times. (Uh-huh!)

Amen! (Uh-huh!)

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

A Child Called Immanuel Story

Invite kids with Spark NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible.

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah imagined a better world where everyone would turn to God, treat the poor kindly, and live in peace with one another. During Isaiah's time, the world was a long way away from that vision. God spoke through his messenger Isaiah to King Ahaz, a person in charge who could help God's people follow the rules that God had given them. God promised a sign. Let's find out what the sign was.

Older buddies, please open your Bibles to Isaiah 7:10-17 on page 742 of the Spark NRSV Bible. Younger buddies, you can open your Spark Story Bibles to page 168. Older buddies, let's read around the group, each taking one verse or saying "pass" if you don't feel like reading aloud today. I'll start with verse 10 in chapter 7. Make sure everyone has found it, then begin to read.

What sign did God promise in there? (*That a young woman would conceive and give birth to a son, who would be called "Immanuel."*) **That was a pretty good promise, in part because Immanuel means "God with us." Although these words were**

Spark Resources

Spark NRSV Bibles

Spark Story Bibles

Supplies

None

addressing a time, place, and situation long ago, this promise would come up again later. Does it remind you of anything? (*Baby Jesus born of Mary.*) Jesus was called “Immanuel,” born of the young woman Mary, and his birth would be a sign of God’s presence among us and that God was doing something great and new.

Let’s buddy up and read this story in the Story Bible. Older buddies, could you please help read it to your younger buddy? It is found on page 168 of the Spark Story Bible. After you’ve finished, talk about what you think of King Ahaz and what you might have done. Place a “Makes Me Wonder” sticker next to it in the Spark NSRV Bible.

Bible Memory Verse

“The young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14b

Let’s learn the Bible Memory Verse together. Older buddies, say, “The young woman is with child and shall bear a son...” and younger buddies, answer, “...and shall name him Immanuel.” Do this as a group, then direct kids to try it in buddy pairs.

Follow That Sign!

Have you ever been driving with an adult and talking or listening to music, when the driver suddenly realizes he or she missed a sign? Listen to kids’ stories and share one of your own. It’s easy to get lost if we’re not paying attention to the signs. There’s a fun activity in your leaflet that’s all about signs: see if you can create some hopeful signs that are hard to miss!

Invite kids to read and discuss the Bible Bits together.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Pencils
Pens
Colored pencils
Markers

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

A Message in Dark Times

Have you ever had the power go off at home so that you were left in the dark? How did it feel? Listen to kids’ responses. It’s good to have some flashlights or candles around for those times. As soon as just a little bit of light shines, we get the message that it will be okay.

Today we’re going to create a message using light. Find the starry night sky on your leaflet. You can use a pencil to write out a message or image, though you’ll just barely be able to see it. Using a paper clip straightened out, gently poke holes through the paper as if tracing the letters with dots. Be careful to space the holes out a little. When we’re all done, we’re going to make it dark and shine

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Paper clips
Pencils

light through the holes to see if we can figure out each other's messages! Shine the light through the holes onto a wall or toward the gathered group of kids.

Ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special marking next to the item they found most interesting.

In Limbo

Make the room as dark as possible or go to a space that can be darkened. Have the flashlight at the ready. Play some upbeat music for fun.

Hold the flashlight so the beam is horizontal at a height easy to limbo underneath. **Nobody likes living through dark times, but a little bit of hope and light can make it a whole lot easier. Today in the dark, we're going to play flashlight limbo!** Each kid will take a turn going under the beam of light, and after everyone has gone, the beam will be lowered. The last person who can limbo underneath the beam without the light shining on them will win the challenge!

If you have extra time, try to limbo yourself with kids taking turns holding the flashlight!

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Flashlight
Music source (optional)

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

God gives us surprises, sometimes when we least expect it. What are some ways you can surprise your friends and family with an act of loving kindness? Help students come up with some ideas of helpful surprises. **Be on the lookout this week for how God is active in the people you encounter. God promises to be with us!**

Let's check out the Faith on the Go! section of your leaflet. Which one do you think you'd like to try this week? Why that one?

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Closing Prayer

Distribute Spark Family Pages to kids and encourage kids to point out the discussion questions in the Family Conversations section. Challenge them to ask their family members about times when they were afraid.

Turn off lights, and use a flashlight to see the prayer below.

For our closing prayer, let's turn out the lights. I'm going to say a line of the prayer, and I'm going to ask you to echo just the last two words of each line in a whisper. Just the last two words—got it? Let's pray.

Dear God (Dear God)

Sometimes we sit and play in the dark (the dark).

But sometimes it seems like the entire world is sitting in the dark (the dark).

When we feel like we're not sure where to go (to go),

Or what to do (to do),

When everything feels pretty bad (pretty bad),

Help us to listen to the voices that speak your words of hope (of hope).

You are Immanuel, God with us (with us).

Amen.

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home their leaflets and Family Pages.

Spark Resources

Spark Family Pages

Supplies

Flashlight