

BIBLE STUDY MEDIA

LOWER ELEMENTARY

HEARTS

A GOSPEL LECTIONARY CURRICULUM

ALIVE

YEAR A | WINTER

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WELCOME TO HEARTS ALIVE



In the line of Christian formation resources for children, the *Hearts Alive* curriculum is something brand-new! We have listened to the desire of churches to have a fully integrated weekly worship experience in which children and adults are engaged in exploring the same scriptural texts. Each lesson in both the Sunday school and Children's church curricula is built on one or more readings taken from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), a three-year cycle of Bible readings used by churches across denominations and around the world to guide weekly worship. By aligning the lessons of *Hearts Alive* to these common readings, families are able to have cross-generational discussions related to the worship service message, Sunday school, and Children's church teachings.

While *Hearts Alive* is a natural fit for churches in the liturgical tradition that incorporate regular use of the RCL, its appeal is much broader. *Hearts Alive* is evangelical in its interpretation of Scripture and contemporary in its teaching style and life application. By using a sequential approach to Scripture teaching, *Hearts Alive* seeks to help churches train up young disciples in the whole Word of God, emphasizing a high view of scriptural authority and a gospel focus. The weekly age-specific lessons support and even elevate liturgical traditions as well as important observances in the church calendar while using clear and contemporary teaching techniques to present the Word of God in ways that will produce lifelong followers of Christ. *Hearts Alive* is flexible enough to fit any congregation, no matter how large or small, of any Christian denomination.

HEARTS ALIVE IS:

- ▶ Gospel-centered, emphasizing the story of salvation through Jesus Christ in every lesson.
- ▶ Scriptural, teaching the full scope of the Bible over a 3-year span following the RCL.
- ▶ User-friendly, making it easy for teachers and Christian educators to implement.
- ▶ Fun and engaging for children, offering age-appropriate storytelling, crafts, and activities.
- ▶ Family-oriented, providing a Take-Home page so parents and children can apply the lesson with activities throughout the week.
- ▶ Varied, offering both small- and large-group moments so children stay interested and engaged.
- ▶ Cost-effective for both small and large churches, available for quarterly purchase with price adjustments for volume.
- ▶ Downloadable, in a format that is easy to share with a whole team of leaders and volunteers.



What Each Lesson Provides

Each weekly *Hearts Alive* lesson provides two hours of material for children ranging from Pre-K/Kindergarten through Grade 6. The curriculum is divided into two categories: Sunday school and Children's church. These two distinct curricula offer different themes for each week's lesson so that children participating in both programs have fresh, engaging material in each class.

Sunday School Curriculum:

The *Hearts Alive* Sunday school curriculum is designed to be used during the Sunday school or Bible study hour of a church's weekly worship time. It is divided into three separate age groups and perfect for use in classroom-sized group settings. The age divisions are: Pre-K/Kindergarten, Lower Elementary (grades 1–3), and Upper Elementary (grades 4–6).

Children's Church Curriculum:

The *Hearts Alive* Children's church curriculum offers a weekly church experience tailored just for young followers of Jesus. It is intended for a larger, age-inclusive setting for children from pre-K through grade 5 (ages 4 through 11) designed to help them learn the basics of an adult worship service, including Welcome, Worship, Scripture Reading, Lesson, Creed, Prayer, and Offering. The larger group setting encourages children of varying ages to worship together, mirroring the generational integration of the church. At the close of each lesson, an age-specific breakout time ensures that every child, from the youngest to the oldest, can take part in a follow-up game, craft, or activity that will help them apply the week's lesson to their own lives. Many churches hold Children's church during the first part of the adult worship service. After Children's church concludes, there is time to welcome the children into the adult service for the final portion, often the celebration of Communion/the Eucharist.

How To Use The *Hearts Alive* Curriculum

Hearts Alive follows the 3-year cycle of the RCL. Because liturgical dates vary from year to year, specific dates are not assigned to the lessons. Instead, lessons are numbered and an accompanying online chart identifies which lesson falls on which calendar date for that specific year. In the heading of each lesson, you will find the Lectionary Year, Season, and Week number, plus the associated liturgical day (if applicable) and lectionary reading. This information can help you design your entire congregation's weekly worship experience around shared themes all year, providing a fresh unity to your congregation's spiritual focus and growth.

The first page of each Sunday school and Children's church lesson includes Lesson Title, Key Scripture, Big Idea, Memory Verse, and Lesson Overview. The Big Idea summarizes in one or two sentences the main point you want the children to learn from that day's lesson. The Lesson Overview provides a more in-depth explanation of the key points of the lesson.



Next, there is a Lesson Outline chart to help you stay organized. It tells you what happens when. On this chart, you'll find each lesson component along with a time estimate for how long it will take, a list of the supplies you will need, and a list of the things you'll need to prepare before class for that activity.

A unique Bible Background study is provided for each lesson to help you prepare your heart and mind as a leader or volunteer before class. It aims to provide a thorough understanding of the biblical setting of the day's passage along with any helpful information to help you field questions the children may have about the lesson. (Detailed explanations of each lesson component follow below.)

Anything that needs to be printed and possibly copied for each lesson (the "printables") are included in the download of each lesson. They are designed to be effective using simple black and white printing on standard-sized paper.

Finally, each lesson has a Take-Home page designed to be copied and sent home with the child. The resource is directed either toward parents (Sunday school) or children (Children's church). Either way, parents are encouraged to use the resource to talk with their child about the week's lesson. The page also suggests ways to apply scriptural lessons all week through family discussions and activities.

The Sunday School Curriculum

The Sunday school curriculum is divided by age group into: Pre-K/Kindergarten, Lower Elementary (grades 1–3), and Upper Elementary (grades 4–6). The lessons are designed for use in small group settings of approximately 10–12 children. If you expect more than 18 children in a room, we recommend dividing into smaller groups so all children feel engaged in the activities. If your group is smaller than 9 or 10, the games and activities can be adapted for fewer children.

Each weekly Sunday school lesson contains the following sequential Lesson Elements:

- ▶ **Welcome Activity** – An attention grabber designed for the beginning of class as you wait for latecomers to arrive.
- ▶ **Lesson Introduction** – A group activity to start the children thinking about the Big Idea and its application.
- ▶ **Scripture Story** – An engaging way to tell the story of the Key Scripture passage. It may include visual aids, drama, costumes, simple experiments, or props.
- ▶ **Story Discussion** – Discussion questions varied according to age group. We provide suggested answers for some of the trickier questions to aid you in your discussion with the children.



► **Variable Elements** – The below elements are variable to keep each week's approach fresh.

- **Memory Verse Activity**
- **Snack**
- **Craft** – Step-by-step directions and illustrations are provided at the end of each lesson.
- **Music** – You may choose to find your own recordings or sing the songs with instrument accompaniment or without musical background.
- **Game**
- **Other Lesson Application Activities**

► **Closing Activity** – A simple and quick activity that allows you to bring the lesson to a close. Hand out the "Live It All Week" Take-Home page during this part of the lesson, and make sure children take home any crafts or activity pages.

A Special Note to Leaders

Congratulations on your role in helping to shape young hearts and minds in the Christian faith. Sunday school is a time-honored tradition of inviting the youngest of Christ's family to get to know their Savior, their church family, and their place in the Kingdom of God through weekly teaching and hands-on participation. We have specifically designed the *Hearts Alive* curriculum to be everything you need to confidently lead an engaging time of worship, learning, and fun in the service of Christian formation. Here are a few specifics about the curriculum to help you in your role:

- *Hearts Alive* uses the New International Reader's Version (NIRV) of The Holy Scriptures, believing it is the easiest translation for children to read and understand while remaining faithful to the original text. If you choose, you may use a different version in your lessons.
- We have included a unique Bible Background section specifically to help you get familiar with the background of the week's passage of Scripture. It provides the setting of the passage in the overall story of the Bible, the connection to the life and work of Jesus Christ, and how the passage speaks to the church today. We recommend taking some time to read, pray through, and digest this information to help you be prepared for questions and good discussion.
- Much of the Lesson Content is bolded and prefaced by words like "Say:" or "Continue:" These sections are designed for you, the leader, to speak aloud. However, we suggest that you use



the words as a guide rather than reading directly from the page. The most effective way to communicate with children is by making eye contact. Try reading the lesson several times to get a good idea of what you want to say and the main points of the Bible teaching. You may want to highlight the sections you want to be sure to mention specifically. Other parts you can put into your own words. Have the lesson handy to refer to on paper or electronic device as you go.

- Feel free to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of your class. If a different approach to the lesson works better, go for it! For example, you may choose to swap out drama for a visual aid in the lesson or vice versa. Use what is written as a guide to present the beauty and power of God's Word to your group of children in the most effective way possible.

Jesus said to "*let the children come to me.*" What greater calling can there be than helping to lead precious young souls to the heart of God and the joy, peace, and power of living the Christian faith? We pray that you will find the *Hearts Alive* curriculum an exciting and effective way to bring the wonderful message of salvation to the children of your congregation and community even as your entire church body unites in the weekly exploration of God's Word as one.



Prophecy and Expectation: The Mountain of the Lord

Isaiah 2:1–5

Big Idea:

One day, on God's holy mountain, all nations
will worship together and live as God desires.
Praise God—this time is coming!

Memory Verse:

"Let us go up to the LORD's mountain."
Isaiah 2:3a



Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces the meaning of *advent*: coming. This year, the Advent lessons focus on God's promises. We should wait with expectation for those promises because we have seen repeatedly that God always keeps his promises. This first week of Advent centers on God's promise to rule and reign from his holy mountain in the New Jerusalem. Though now we have war and strife, God promises a future of peace with Jesus as King.



Week 1 Lesson Plan	Activity and Supplies	To Prepare
1 Welcome Activity (5 minutes)	Build a Mountain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic building bricks (e.g., Legos) and construction base plate • Bowl or bin 	Set the building bricks in the bowl or bin.
2 Lesson Introduction (5 minutes)	Climbing Everest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain from the Welcome Activity 	
3 Scripture Story (15 minutes)	The Mountain of the Lord <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible • Mountain from the Welcome Activity • A variety of mini-figures that can attach to the mountain made of building bricks • Additional building bricks 	Create a small building out of the additional building bricks.
4 Discussion (5 minutes)		
5 Memory Verse Activity (5 minutes)	“One for All” Chant	
6 Snack (10 minutes)	Cracker and Cheese Mountain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small plates • Cheese cubes • Round crackers • Paper cups • Pitcher of water 	Gather the supplies.
7 Activity (10 minutes)	Maze Up the Mountain Printables: Maze Up the Mountain (one for each child) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils 	Copy the printables.
8 Closing (5 minutes)	How Do We Wait? Printables: Take-home page (one for each child)	Make enough copies of the Take-home page for each child.



Continuing his discourse from the previous chapter, Isaiah the prophet speaks to the Jews of his day. While the Jews were outwardly keeping traditions, they were not following God's law in their hearts. Isaiah reminded them of their position among the nations, the chosen people of God: The Lord and his holy mountain, Zion, are higher than all the other gods and their mountains (Isaiah 2:2). Mount Zion is not the highest mountain because of its physical height; rather, it is "the mountain of the Lord," the dwelling place of the God of Israel, the god higher than all other gods. As his people, the Jews ought to live as God taught them, as a guide to all nations. They ought to be aware that, in the end, God's ways will be the ways of all people.

Old Testament. Old Testament prophets were people from every walk of life. Unlike the Levitical priesthood, which was hereditary, prophets came from a variety of backgrounds. Most often the prophets spoke to the nation of Israel on God's behalf. They also spoke to Judah after the kingdom was divided. Isaiah is one of the "major prophets," a designation determined by the length of his writings. Prophets were considered God's voice for their generation; yet, we need to consider and carefully interpret their words as God's voice to all generations, since there are events still to come.

In the first chapters of Isaiah, the prophet exposes the wrongdoing and wandering hearts of God's people. They were content in their sin. Isaiah's prophecy is to his generation, but also for the future. God desires a relationship with his people and his plan is that all nations, not just Israel, will know him through Christ Jesus. In Israel's history, Mount Zion was the physical mountain where the temple stood and the place where God's presence was known to dwell. Isaiah is prophesying about the future when

God's people, the church, will be made up of all nations. There will be no more war; everyone will live together in peace because everyone will know and love the God of their salvation. Considering this, Isaiah tells the people to live now as God has taught them.

Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus referred to believers as a city set on a hill (Matthew 5:14) and a light to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47). These and other metaphors indicate that God's fame would spread throughout the nations. The coming of all nations to Zion (his church) occurs between the two advents of Jesus—his first as the babe in the manger and the suffering servant, and the second as Judge and King (Isaiah 2:4).

The Church and the World. When the word *Zion* is used prophetically in Scripture, it refers to the church and coming kingdom of God. While we wait for the Second Advent, we can experience the kingdom of God in our lives by the Holy Spirit's power. The presence of God lives no longer on the temple mount, but in us. God teaches us how to live, both by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit's prompting. As the apostle Paul says in Romans 14:17, "God's kingdom is not about eating or drinking. It is about doing what is right and having peace and joy. All this comes through the Holy Spirit."

We are the city on a hill; we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). This is what Jesus said about us. We are to live as he taught us to live, to treat others as he demonstrated. There is a peace—an absence of turmoil and war where the Holy Spirit dwells. This makes God famous and draws others to want to know him. This has been God's plan from the beginning. As believers in Jesus, as the citizens of God's kingdom on earth, and as the Zion of God, the church is to live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ and be his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth.



1 Welcome Activity

To Prepare:

Set the building bricks in the bowl or bin.

Build a Mountain

Set the building bricks and base plate on the table. Allow several minutes for the children to make a mountain out of the bricks. Then leave it out for display.

2 Lesson Introduction

Climbing Everest

Say: **You built a very tall mountain, but it is tiny compared to the tallest mountain in the world. Do you know the name of that mountain?** Let the children respond. **The tallest mountain is Everest. It is in the Himalayan mountain range, on the continent of Asia.**

Mount Everest is over 29,000 feet tall and is extremely difficult to climb. Not only is the mountain peak over five miles high, but it is also very cold. The mountain is covered with ice and snow all year. High-speed, hurricane-force winds whip over the mountain; blinding snowstorms happen without warning; and avalanches rain down tons of snow and ice. Only the best mountain climbers in the world try to climb Mount Everest because of its many dangers.

If you are one of the few to make it to the top of Everest, what can you see? You can see the tops of nearby mountains and, below, you see clouds! You have climbed through the clouds to get to the top. You see ice, snow, and bare rock. There is not a single tree or animal; it is too cold for anything to survive. There are no buildings at the top of the mountain, no houses (for no one lives there). There is no restroom and no visitor's center. The tallest mountain peak in the world is not a pleasant place to be.

In our Bible story today, we will read about another mountain—the highest mountain of all! God has not yet made this mountain, but he promises that he will. What will it be like? Will it be like Everest—cold, empty, and dangerous? Who will go there? And what will be at the top? Let's listen to the story and find out. Keep the mountain on the table for the Scripture Story.



3 scripture story

To Prepare:

Create a small building out of the additional building bricks.

The Mountain of the Lord

Set the mini-figures and small building to the side. Open the Bible on your lap.

Say: **Christmas is coming in four weeks. Now we are in the season of Advent. Advent comes right before Christmas. The word advent means coming.**

We often want to know what is coming up, don't we? We want to know what we will have for dinner, how many days until Christmas or our birthdays, or when we can visit a friend or have a friend come play at our house. We want to know what's coming and when!

That is true for every person. God understands us and often tells us what is coming. Listen to this story. Long ago, before Jesus came to earth, God spoke to his people through a prophet named Isaiah. Do you know what a prophet does? Let the children respond. (A prophet listens to God and tells his words to the people.)

Isaiah the prophet spoke the words of God to the people. God's words were a promise not just for the people of his time, but for all God's people in the future—for you and me too.

Look around at the world and what do you find? Hold up the mini-figures. **Do you find that every single person loves God?** (No.) **Does everybody worship him?** (No.) **Does everybody live as God wants and make good choices?** (No.) **No, they do not. But God promises that one day this will change.**

During the time of Isaiah, the only people we know who worshiped God were his special people, the Jews. They all lived in the same area. The rest of the world—Africa, West Asia, Europe, and the Americas—didn't know about God. Set the mini-figures around the table. But today, there are Christians all over the world. People travel to new places to tell others about Jesus. The kingdom of God is spreading.

God promised that people of all nations would one day worship him, and they would gather at his holy mountain. Stick the mini-figures to the mountain. His holy mountain will be the highest mountain in the land. Where is that mountain? Is it Mount Everest? No, it's not. One day, God promises he will make a new heaven and a new earth. Our earth is broken in places. There are earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, sickness, sadness, and death. There is sin and the consequences of sin. But God will make a new way.



Look what he has already done! He has sent Jesus, and Jesus has paid the price for our sins. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are free to love and serve God! We are no longer doomed to death. We have life forever with Jesus!

If God has already done all this, we can believe that he will keep his promise to gather people from all nations to his holy mountain in the new heaven and earth. Hold up the little building. He promises that at the top of that mountain, you will not find a cold, empty wasteland, but a temple-church where God will live. God promises that he will live with his people once again. Remember, Jesus came to earth on Christmas Day and lived with his people. It will be like that again, only better, because we will live with Jesus forever and ever.

This Advent, we will learn about God's promises. We can count on them and believe in them because God always keeps his promises. One day, on God's holy mountain, all nations will worship together and live as God desires. Praise God—this time is coming!

Now, let's see if you can help me answer some questions about today's story.

4 story discussion

- ▶ **Have you ever been on a mountain?** (Let the children share.)
- ▶ **Can we go to God's holy mountain now? Is it here on earth?** (No.)
- ▶ **Where will it be?** (It will be on the new earth.)
- ▶ **What will be at the top of that mountain?** (God in his temple)
- ▶ **Who will gather there?** (People who love God—people from all the nations of the world)
- ▶ **Will there be sin and sadness there?** (No.)
- ▶ **How do we know God will keep this promise?** (Answers will vary.) Possible answers might include: He always keeps promises, the Bible tells us so, and we can see how he kept his promises in Jesus.

Close in prayer: Dear Lord, thank you that you keep your promises. We are so happy that people all over the world will know and love you, and that there will be peace in the new earth. Help us wait with excitement and get ready for that time! Amen.



5 Memory Verse Activity

“One for All” Chant

“Let us go up to the LORD’s mountain.” Isaiah 2:3a

Say: **We learned about a promise God has made to us. One day, on God’s holy mountain, all nations will worship together and live as God desires. Praise God—this time is coming! Our memory verse has to do with that. “Let us go up to the LORD’s mountain” (Isaiah 2:3). Repeat after me.**

“Let us go up . . .	Children repeat.
to the LORD’s mountain.”	Children repeat.
Isaiah 2:3a	Children repeat.

Recite the verse several times. Then gather the children in a tight circle. Show them how to pile their hands in the middle of the circle, one on top of the other, to make a stack of hands. If it turns into chaos, have them add hands in order, moving clockwise around the circle. Each person adds one hand and then waits until their turn again to add the other hand.

Once the children understand the process, practice saying one word of the verse each time a hand is added. When you finish the verse, everyone lifts their hands out of the circle (like a team cheer). Repeat this activity several times.

6 snack

To Prepare:
Gather the supplies.

Cracker and Cheese Mountain

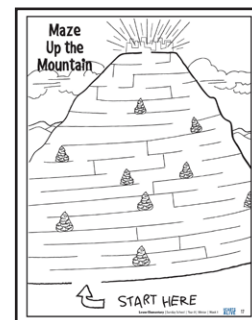
Say: **We learned about a promise God has made to us. One day, on God’s holy mountain, all nations will worship together and live as God desires. Praise God—this time is coming! Let’s make a snack that reminds us of a mountain.** Distribute the snack. Have the children build a tower or mountain with their snack. Then, enjoy!

7 Activity

To Prepare:
Copy the printables.

Maze Up the Mountain

Say: **Distribute the printables and pencils. Remember, we are in the season of Advent. Advent means coming. God’s promises are all sure to come true. Look how he kept his promise by sending Jesus**





our Savior on Christmas Day long ago! He will keep his promise that all nations will worship together and live as God desires. Praise God—this time is coming! Let's complete a maze that gets to the top of God's holy mountain. When you finish, turn over the paper and design your own maze.

8 CLOSING

To prepare:

Make enough copies of the Take-home page for each child.



How Do We Wait?

Say: **Advent is four weeks long. It is a time of waiting. We wait to celebrate Christmas, but we also wait for other things. We wait for God's promises to be fulfilled. Today, we learned about a promise of God. What is it?** (One day, people from all nations will gather on his holy mountain. They will worship him and live as he desires.)

We wait for that wonderful future to happen. But what do we do while we wait? How do we wait?

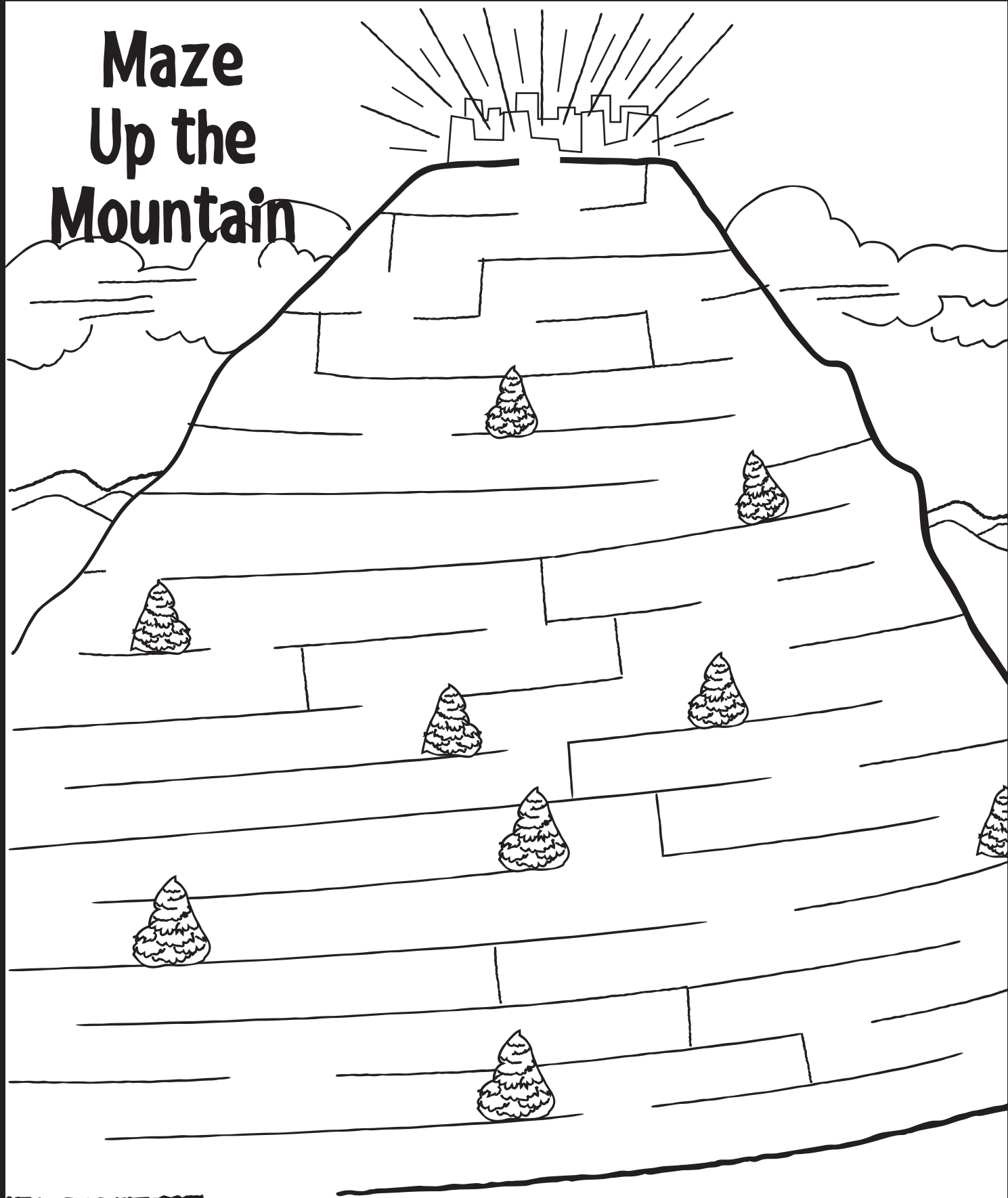
Have you ever waited for a school bus, a train, or an airplane? Or waited in line at the store? Usually, you just stand around and do nothing. You might tap your foot impatiently. You might feel bored.

Have you ever had a family member or friend visit your house? While you wait for them to arrive, you have to get ready! You have to make beds, tidy the house, and make sure you have enough food to feed them while they are there. You are busy while you wait!

How should we wait for God's promises? Should we sit around and check our watches, tap our feet, and do nothing? Or should we get ready by loving him *now*, worshiping him *now*, and living as he desires *now*? (We should get ready!)

Children line up to meet their parents. As the children leave, hand out their Take-home pages and remind them to bring home their mazes.

Maze Up the Mountain



START HERE

WEEK 1

Live It All Week

Lower Elementary Take Home Paper for Families



What Your Child Learned Today

The word *advent* means coming. During the season of Advent (the four weeks before Christmas), we *remember* that Jesus came to earth on Christmas Day long ago. We look *forward* to when he comes back again, and we are *thankful* that he is with us even now. Jesus's first coming was a promise God fulfilled on Christmas Day. His second coming is a promise yet to be fulfilled. Today your child learned of another promise spoken through the prophet Isaiah: believers from all over the world will someday unite in worship of God. We will live as God desires—at peace with God and with one another.

Table Talk

- ▶ **Advent means coming. Have you ever looked forward to the coming of a special visitor? Share your memories together.**
- ▶ **People often make promises. Do people always keep their promises? Why or why not?**
- ▶ **Does God always keep his promises? Why? See 1 Chronicles 29:11–12. (God is powerful and rules over all things.)**
- ▶ **We know that God keeps his promises because he kept his promise in sending a Savior. Who is that Savior? (Jesus)**
- ▶ **God promises that he will bring people from all over the world into his family. They will worship him and live just as he desires. Do we see this already happening? (Yes, there are Christians all over the world.)**

Try This

Your child learned that Advent is a time of waiting, but it is not like waiting for a bus. As you wait, you get ready by loving and serving God now. Ask your child to help you prepare a special meal. Do a few things to make the meal extra special: light a candle, make a dessert (kids love to make instant pudding!), or set name cards at each person's place. Explain to your child that, as you wait for dinner, you are getting ready for it. Advent is a time of waiting, but it is also a time of getting ready. How can you get ready for Christmas this year? How can you put Jesus at the center of Christmas?

Prophecy and Expectation: The Mountain of the Lord

- Scripture: Isaiah 2:1–5
- Big Idea: One day, on God's holy mountain, all nations will worship together and live as God desires. Praise God—this time is coming!
- Memory Verse: "Let us go up to the LORD's mountain." Isaiah 2:3a

SOMETHING ELSE TO DO

This Advent, learn some traditional carols that have words rich with meaning. You can play the carol during dessert, at bedtime, or during family devotions. This week's carol is the traditional Christmas hymn, "Joy to the World." It celebrates that God kept his promise to send a Savior—Jesus!