

LIVE AND LEARN

The text from Isaiah 9:2–7 is one of many Old Testament prophecies foretelling the coming of the Messiah. Share this might-have-been story with the children. Connect it to the excitement they feel anticipating Christmas and the celebrations that accompany Jesus' birthday.

Long ago things were hard for the Jewish people in Bible times. They often prayed, "God, we wish you were closer. We wish you could come and help us." They wanted God to come down and chase away all their enemies. They wanted to be left alone to live in their land and be peaceful and happy.

God wanted the world to be like that too. Not just for the Jewish people, but for all the people on the earth. God wanted people to share the earth and be kind to each other. But they just weren't getting it. They didn't seem to know what to do.

So God did something very special. God said to Jesus, "The people just don't understand. I've sent the prophets to tell them what they should do. I've given them simple laws to follow. But what they really need is someone to show them how it's done."

Jesus understood. He knew it would soon be time for him to visit the earth and live there with the people. "I'll do my best," Jesus said, "but how will they know you sent me?"

"I've been telling them you were coming for years and years. My prophet Isaiah tried to tell them when he wrote:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.—Isaiah 9:2

"He tried to tell people how wonderful it would be when he said:

You have made the people great and you have filled them with joy.—Isaiah 9:3 adapted

"But the best part of all came when Isaiah said:

A child has been born for us, a son given to us.—Isaiah 9:6

"That's you, Jesus. You will go to earth and be born as a baby. You will grow up and teach people to love each other. You can tell them how wonderful it will be when things are done on earth the way they are here in heaven."

"I'll be glad to go," said Jesus. "I know you will be with me, teaching me and reminding me of what you want people to know. I hope I can do the job."

"You are their hope, Jesus—and I love you," added God.

STORY TALKING

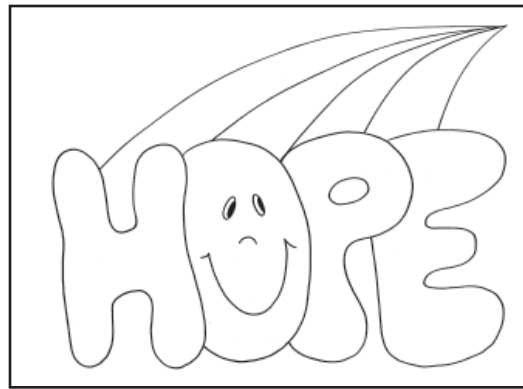
Imagine the prophets were telling you that Jesus was coming back soon. Pretend it would be before this Christmas. What would you do to get ready for a visit from Jesus? What would you want to show him? What would you want to talk about? What do you think he would want to do?

UP AND AT 'EM

Decorate the room together. Include the symbols of Christmas, a manger scene, places for peace, joy, and love additions. Visit the rest of the church to see what decorations are being added.

SENSE-A-TIONS

Give each child a copy of the Hope rainbow picture to color.



THERE WE GO

Ask the children to share their picture of hope with others. Some may want to make a second picture to give away.

Hope, Come Down

