



**DECEMBER THEME**

**PUT A BOW  
ON IT**

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 2:1-7

(Luke 1; Matthew 1:20-21)

#JOY (Jesus is Born)

Spark Story Bible: Jesus is Born (p. 212)

**BOTTOM LINE**

I can choose joy because God sent  
God's Son

**MEMORY VERSE**

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it  
again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:4, NIV

**LIFE APP**

Joy—Finding a way to be content  
even when things don't go your way

**BASIC TRUTH**

I can trust God no matter what

**FOR LEADERS ONLY**

**GOD VIEW:** the connection between **JOY** and God's character, as shown through God's big story

**This WEEK:** In **Luke 2:1-7**, we read Luke's account of Jesus' birth. Jesus was God's Son, yet God chose to have him born in a place where they kept the animals. It was dirty and smelly, but that didn't matter. Mary and Joseph were thrilled because they had a Son, Jesus. And Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to rescue the world.

**Bottom Line:** I can choose joy because God sent God's Son. Christmas lights and presents are fun and can bring joy during the Christmas season. But none of that compares to the joy we experience when we believe that Jesus is God's Son.

**SOCIAL: PROVIDING TIME FOR FUN INTERACTION**

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today's story.

Before kids arrive, **PRAY** for each regular attendee by name. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. Pray that your kids would not just hear the story of God sending Jesus, but that they would understand the depth and importance of God's Son being given to us. Ask God that each kid would lean into the childlike joy God has placed in each of them and that they would be full of life as everyone encounters them this week because of the great news they heard today!

•• **EARLY ARRIVER IDEA**

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

**What You Do:**

- Ask:
  - What is your favorite thing about Christmas and why?
  - What's your favorite family Christmas tradition and why?

•• **BALANCING BOWS**

**What You Need:** Stick-on bow

**What You Do:**

- Hand the bow to a group member.
- Instruct him to balance a bow on his head and walk around the small group table back to his original spot.
- If the bow falls, the player must return to his seat and try again.
- When he successfully makes it around the table, he should pass the bow to the person to his right.
- Continue play, with kids balancing the bows on their heads and passing them off until everyone has had a turn.



- If time allows, play again but change up how they travel. Have them walk on their knees, walk backward, take baby steps, etc.

**What You Say:** “Great job! That was fun EXCEPT when you dropped the bow. Were you happy when you dropped it and had to start over? No way! **[Transition] Today in Large Group Worship/WOW Family Worship we’ll hear/we heard about the best reason to have joy, even when things might not go as planned.**”

*[Sunday Leaders: Lead your group to the Family Room for Large Group Worship. Wednesday Leaders: Continue with the study.]*

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## GROUPS: CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO CONNECT

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

•• **GUESS WHO** *(application activity/review the Bible story)*

**What You Need:** “Guess Who” activity cards

**What You Do:**

- To review the story, kids will guess people, places, and things in today’s Bible story.
- Choose a volunteer and have him close his eyes. Show one of the “Guess Who” cards to the rest of the group.
- The volunteer can ask only YES or NO questions to try and guess who/what was on the card.
- The goal is to figure out the person, place, or thing in the least amount of questions.

**What You Say:** “The story of Jesus’ birth is probably one many of you know inside and out. You can name the people, places, and things in the Christmas story with your eyes closed. It’s easy to forget how huge of an event it was. Instead of giving our attention to the greatest gift ever given, we tend to want to focus on the lights, gifts, and tinselly stuff that isn’t as important. Celebrating Christmas might make us feel happy for a while, but knowing the Savior of Christmas is the only thing that can give us joy all year long.

“Mary and Joseph may have wished they could have changed some of the crazy, unexpected things that happened to them—an angel, a long trip to Bethlehem, having a baby in a stable with a bunch of animals hanging around. But they were able to have joy because they could see past all of that to what really mattered: God had sent God’s Son! They chose to have joy because that one thing was bigger than anything else they were experiencing. The same goes for us. **[Bottom Line] I can choose joy because God sent God’s Son.** God sent Jesus to live with us and to love us through the pain and messiness of our own lives. And that’s always worth celebrating!”

•• **LEFT, RIGHT, AND A CROSS** *(application activity)*

**What You Need:** “Left, Right, and a Cross” activity page, gift

**What You Do:**

- Give one group member a gift. Tell them to not open the gift.
- Explain that you will be reading a story and they will be passing the gift continuously in one direction or another.  
—Whenever they hear the word RIGHT they should pass the gift to the right.  
—When they hear the word LEFT, they should pass the gift to the left.  
—Whenever they hear A CROSS, they should pass the gift to someone across the circle from them.
- Read the script directly from the “Left, Right, and a Cross” activity page.
- At the end of the story, whoever is holding the gift gets to keep it.

**What You Say:** “Everyone likes to receive a gift. We get excited when we’re given something we really want or need. Jesus is the gift



everyone needs. When we know Jesus we can say: **[Bottom Line]** ‘I can choose joy because God sent God’s Son.’”

**[Make it Personal]** *(Tell kids how knowing Jesus changes the way you feel about Christmas and the way you celebrate his birth. For example, is there a unique way your family reaches out to others over the holidays? What do you do to keep Christ at the center of your celebrations?)*

•• **JOLLY JUMBLED JOYFUL JAWBREAKERS** *(memory verse activity)*

**What You Need:** Bible

**What You Do:**

- Have kids race to find Philippians 4:4 or ask for a volunteer to find it and read it aloud.
- Practice saying the verse a few times or until kids can recite it with little or no help.
- Discuss the verse by having kids share what they think the key or most important words are in Philippians 4:4 and why.
- Finish by having kids work together in pairs to create a tongue twister about being joyful. For example, “Jolly jumbled joyful jawbreakers,” or “Joyful Joyce’s voice rejoices.”
- Then let them challenge the other teams to say their “Joyful Jawbreakers” as fast as they can, three times.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Everyone feels sad or gets discouraged at times. Philippians 4:4 tells us to ALWAYS be joyful. When everything is going wrong, why can we still have joy?
- What are some things that would completely change for you if God had never sent Jesus?
- If someone asked you what the secret to happiness is, what would you tell them?

**What You Say:** “Trying to recite a ‘jolly jumbled joyful jawbreaker’ can get your tongue in a twist. It’s pretty funny, too. Listening to the weird way your words came out made us all laugh. Is laughing always the same as rejoicing? *(Pause as kids answer.)* Sometimes there’s nothing funny about the way your life is going. You’re sad, angry, or disappointed. BUT if you face those hard things knowing that God is there too, you can have joy even when life is far from fun or funny.

“Being joyful is a choice you can make each day—whether you feel like laughing or not—because you know God loves you and you’re never alone. Another translation of Philippians 4:4 is “Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!” Perhaps the most important words in this translation is, ‘you belong to the Lord.’ Without Jesus, it’s impossible to keep rejoicing ALL the time. But, with Jesus, you and **[Bottom Line]** I can choose joy because God sent God’s Son.”

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## PRAY AND SEND

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

**What You Do:**

- Remind the kids to look at tough situations this week with joy!
- Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help them find the joy this week, even when things don’t go their way.

**What You Say:** “Dear God, thank you SO much for the greatest gift we’ve ever been given—your only Son Jesus. Thank you for the opportunity to celebrate that gift this week. Help us to remember that I can have joy because YOU sent us Jesus. If we’re faced with situations that don’t go our way, help us to remember that we can choose joy with your help. Thank you for sending Jesus, our Savior, so that we could have a relationship with you. We love you, God. And it’s in your precious Son’s name we pray. Amen.”

