



DECEMBER THEME

UNBOXED

Find the Joy

BIBLE STORY

Luke 2:1-20

O Night Divine | Jesus is Born
Spark Story Bible, pg. 212-217
Jesus is Born

BOTTOM LINE

You can have 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 happy, 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.

Key Question: What's the best part of Christmas this year? No matter what is happening at home, Christmas can be a joyful experience because God sent Jesus to be our Savior. Because families might have a hard time seeing why they can be joyful, we start with a question that gets them thinking about the great things that might happen during Christmas this year.

In **Luke 2:1-20**, we read that God didn't announce Jesus' birth to kings or government officials. Rather, God sent an angel choir to announce this news to a bunch of shepherds on a hillside. The shepherds ran to find Jesus, where they worshiped him. They were so full of joy that they made sure to tell everyone what they saw when they left.

Bottom Line: You can have joy because God sent God's Son. Christmas is the perfect time to talk about joy. God's people had waited so long for God to send the Savior. When Jesus was born, the shepherds knew they needed to celebrate big. We pray that the families in your ministry will do the same when they remember the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

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 group member by name. Pray that your kids would not just hear the story of God sending Jesus, but that they would also understand the depth and importance of this miraculous gift. Ask God to be present in the joy that today's message brings. Pray that your kids, like the shepherds, will be inspired to worship Jesus and share the great news of Jesus' birth with others!

•• EARLY ARRIVER

Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: 2 large craft sticks, jumbo marshmallows

What You Do:

- Explain that each person in the group should share something that brings them joy and then stack a marshmallow using the 2 large craft sticks.
- Encourage kids to continue going around the circle, sharing things that bring them joy and building their tower higher.
- The goal is to build the largest "tower of marshmallow joy" possible without it falling over!
- If it topples, start again.



•• **JOYFUL GIFTS**

Made to Connect | An activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: Copy paper, markers

What You Do:

- Hand out copy paper and set the markers where everybody can share them.
- Ask kids to think about the gift or item they received this past year that brought them the most joy and invite them to draw it on their paper.
- As kids work, encourage them to tell everyone about the gift they chose and why.
- **[Make It Personal]** *(Do this activity with the kids, and make sure to share about your item.)*

What You Say: “Those are some great gifts. I can see why they filled you with joy. **[Transition]** Today in Sunday CM worship/WOW family worship, we are going to hear/we heard about the gift that brings the most joy ever!”

[Sunday Leaders: Lead your group to Fellowship Hall for Children’s Ministry worship. Wednesday Leaders: Continue with the study.]

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.

•• **THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING** [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Prepared paper bags with “The Gift that Keeps Giving” cards (etc.) inside

What You Do:

- Give each kid a paper bag “gift.”
- Instruct them to not open it until you say it is time.
- Tell kids that at the end of the game, the person who has the baby Jesus card inside their bag wins!
- You will be calling out various passing instructions that will keep the gifts moving all over the circle. *(Use the passing instructions below, or make up some of your own!)*
- When you are finished with the passing instructions, let your kids “unwrap” their gifts.
- Call out the winner and congratulate them! Make a big deal of asking everybody in your group to give the winner a big high five!
- For the kids who received review questions in their boxes, let them take turns reading those out loud, and let the group answer.

Passing instructions:

- Pass your gift to the right.
- If your first name has an “R” in it, trade gifts with the person sitting on your left.
- Pass your gift to the left.
- Trade gifts with anyone you choose.
- If your last name has an “A” in it, trade gifts with anyone you choose.

Review question answers:

- Why was Caesar Augustus making Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem? *(To be counted; for the census)*
- What went wrong when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem? *(There was nowhere to stay)*



- Where did Mary and Joseph end up staying? (*Place where animals were kept*)
- Who was born in Bethlehem later that night? (*Jesus*)

What You Say: “Awesome job, everyone! How many of you had an idea of which bag had Jesus inside of it? (*Allow time for answers.*) You are some pretty great guessers. The fun part of this game was that you had no idea what bag was going to be sent to you next, but you knew that finding Jesus would lead to the big win! Although a win does make us pretty happy, we learned today that **[Bottom Line] you can have joy because God sent God’s Son.** We don’t have to be guessing whether we’re going to receive the best gift that could ever be sent down to us. God already sent God’s one and only Son to bring us joy that will last way longer than this Christmas season. That’s pretty incredible!”

•• **Because of Jesus** [Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Create | An activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: “Because of Jesus” 2 -sided activity pages, brown markers or crayons, copy paper, markers

What You Do:

- Give each kid a “Because of Jesus” activity page. Set of the brown markers/crayons where everybody can share them.
- Point out that the back of their activity page gives them something to do and color on each day of the week ahead, beginning today!
- Encourage your group to color their “1”s brown.
- Next, pass out the copy paper and the rest of the markers.
- Instruct kids to complete today’s challenge by creating an invite card, which they can use to invite someone to come to church with them in the new year.
- Ask your group if anyone would like to share who they are going to invite to church using their invite card.

What You Say: “This will be such a fun activity to do all week long! Make sure you don’t forget any of the challenges so we can talk all about them next week. Each day this week, let this page be a reminder that **[Bottom Line] you can have joy because God sent God’s Son.** Christmas is a really fun, enjoyable time, but sometimes the things we hope for and expect don’t happen. Maybe you don’t get the gift you wanted most or maybe some of your family isn’t getting along. You can still have joy because of Jesus and how much God loves you.” **[Make it Personal] (Share a personal example from a time you were reminded to have joy in a disappointing situation and how you were able to because of Jesus.)**

•• **CHRISTMAS DANCE OFF** [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Bible, mobile device (*optional*)

What You Do:

- Guide kids to look up Philippians 4:4 in their Bibles.
Finding verses with 2nd + 3rd graders: Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. (*Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.*) When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find Philippians in the list under “New Testament.” When the kids find Philippians, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Philippians. Help the kids find the page. When they find Philippians, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 4. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 4 in chapter 4.
- Read Philippians 4:4 together several times aloud until everybody has it memorized.
- Divide the group into teams of three or four.
- Instruct the teams to come up with their own dance or motions to represent the memory verse.
- Explain that whatever they come up with can have actions that describe some of the words or it can be a dance that describes how the verse makes them feel.

