



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!

•• JUST FOR FUN

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: build the largest "tower of marshmallow joy" without it falling over!
- If it topples, start again.

•• GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME



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

What You Need: Masking tape, gift bows

What You Do:

- Form two teams.
- Place a line of masking tape down the center of your small group table to divide your game area in half.
- Ask teams to stand on opposite sides of the dividing line.
- Give each team a bag of gift bows.
- Explain that when you signal them to begin, everyone will start tossing their team's bows across the line and into the opposing team's zone. The goal of the game is to have the lowest number of bows on your side at the end of 30-seconds.
- Redistribute bows and repeat as time allows.

What You Say: "Sometimes Christmas can feel like a crazy game of 'grab-all-you-can.' If we're not careful, it's easy to get caught up in the Christmas frenzy instead of gratitude and joy. We think about the presents we hope to get, the places we'll go, and all the fun stuff we'll be doing over Christmas break. There's nothing wrong with looking forward to Christmas morning and being excited about all the celebration unless that's the only kind of joy we have when we think about Christmas. **[Transition] Today in Sunday CM worship/WOW family worship, we are going to focus on/we focused on Jesus, the real reason we celebrate Christmas.**"

[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.

●● **TAKE A SNAPSHOT** [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Ask kids to take turns sharing:
 - A favorite memory from a Christmas past
 - The best thing that has happened so far during this Christmas season
 - What Christmas traditions they hope to carry on when they are adults or what traditions they would like to start in the future.

What You Say: "Presents are fun to give and receive. We'd all agree that lights and decorations and parties and carols make Christmas something we look forward to. We'd also agree that more than anything, we celebrate because long ago, God sent God's Son to show us God's great love for us and to teach us how to love God and others in return. Of all the gifts ever given, that one is the best. So, if you don't get every other kind of present that you asked for this year, you can still have joy. You don't have to feel bad if the kid next door has more stuff under their tree or if their house is lit up so brightly it can be seen from Mars. Just stop and remember why we even have Christmas in the first place. It's because Jesus came for you and for me! When we receive that one gift, we can have joy on Christmas morning and every day after for all of eternity."

●● **BIBLE STORY EXTENSION** [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: Bible, copy paper, markers



What You Do:

- Explain that your group will draw things related to today's Bible story.
 - One at a time, they will work on the drawing; however, only one person in the group will know what the end result is supposed to be.
 - The other group members will try to guess what it is without asking any questions, then continue creating whatever they think it is once it's their turn.
 - They will rotate between working and watching, switching roles every five seconds until the picture goes around the circle.
- Choose one person from the group to begin and secretly tell them what to start drawing.
- Some ideas include: Manger, Stable, Angel, Star, Sheep, Shepherd, baby Jesus
- Signal them every five seconds to pass the paper to the left.
 - When it reaches the original drawer, let him or her reveal what it was and how it connects with the story.
- Repeat until each person has had a chance to lead, or as time allows.
- Discuss the last part of today's story by reading Luke 2:17-20.
- Challenge kids to listen for words that describe the different responses people had to the birth of Jesus. Some of the answers you're looking for are as follows:
 - When the shepherds believed what the angels said, they hurried to tell the good news to others.
 - People who heard it were amazed.
 - Mary treasured, pondered, and thought about all that had happened.
 - The shepherds praised and glorified God.
- Encourage the group to consider the way they respond to Christmas and choose to follow the examples of those who were there on the first Christmas.
- Invite them to believe, "treasure," tell others, and praise God for the gift of a Savior.

What You Say: "God sent Jesus because people were separated from God. Though we don't deserve it, God loved the world so much that God wanted to make a way to bring us back to God. Jesus is the reason we can have a close relationship with God every day all through the year. Like the angels told the shepherds, it's good news for ALL people! So, this Christmas, let's treasure Jesus like Mary did, be amazed like the people in Bethlehem were, praise God like the angels, and tell everyone about the Savior the way the shepherds did. Christmas brings us joy, not just today, but all year long!"

•• DISCUSSION QUESTIONS [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Ask some of the following questions...
 - What is the most meaningful part of the Christmas story for you?
 - What are you most looking forward to about Christmas this year?
 - Christmas is so fun and wonderful, but it can also sometimes be disappointing. What can you do to have joy if/when you don't get everything you asked for, someone in your family isn't getting along, or something just goes wrong on Christmas Day?

•• VERSE TO TAKE WITH YOU [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, gift bows

What You Do:

- Sit together in a circle.
- Place a stack of gift bows in the middle of the circle—one fewer than the number of kids.
 - Make sure kids can all reach the bows from an equal distance away.

