



DECEMBER THEME

UNBOXED

Find the Joy

BIBLE STORY

Matthew 2:1-12

Led by the Light | The Wise Men Visit Jesus

Spark Story Bible, pg. 218-223
Wise Men

BOTTOM LINE

You can have joy when you search for God

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 need to make the wise choice and with God's help...I can!

FOR LEADERS ONLY

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

Key Question: How can you find joy all year long? Joy isn't something we can only find during the Christmas season. God offers joy to us each and every day. Sometimes we just aren't sure where to start. We pray that families discover how they can choose joy as they grow in their relationship with Jesus.

In **Matthew 2:1-12**, we see how the announcement of Jesus' birth was far-reaching. Wise men from the East saw a star that set them on an adventure to find a promised King of Israel. When they finally found Jesus, they worshiped him as king. God protected Jesus and the Wise Men from Herod's plot to kill Jesus.

Bottom Line: You can find joy when you search for God. Jesus is the promised One sent from God to show us how to live and love. That story isn't something we can keep to ourselves. It's a story we need to share with everyone.

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. Ask God to help kids understand that they can keep the joy they feel at Christmas time all year long! Pray that your kids will feel God's presence each and every time they seek God, and that this would bring them joy throughout their lives.

•• EARLY ARRIVER IDEA

Made to Play | An activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Play a game of "I Spy," with you being the first "spy."
- Say, "I spy with my little eye, something that is _____." Fill in the blank with the item's color, size, first letter, or another descriptor.
- Allow kids to take turns asking yes-or-no questions and/or guessing what the item is until someone guesses correctly.
- The winner gets to be the next spy.
- Continue playing as long as you have time.



●● SEARCH AND FIND

Made to Explore | An activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need: “Search-and-Find Picture” activity pages, “Search-and-Find answer key,” crayons

What You Do:

- Give each kid a “Search-and-Find Picture” activity page and a crayon.
- Challenge kids to find and circle all of the items noted on the page.
- *(Keep the answer key hidden and encourage kids to help one another as needed. Only use the key if nobody is able to find an item.)*
- As kids finish, they can color the page.

What You Say: “What were some of the items you searched for and found in that picture? *(Pause for responses.)* [Transition] **Today in Sunday CM worship/WOW family worship, we are going to hear/we heard about something else we can search for.”**

[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.

●● FOLLOW THE STAR [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Imagine | An activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: “Gift” coloring pages, “Star” activity page, Location signs, Spark Story Bible, crayons

What You Do:

- Hand out a “Gift” activity page to each group member. Set out crayons where everyone can share them.
- Encourage kids to color a “gift” for baby Jesus as you read aloud “Wise Men” (p. 218-223) from the Spark Story Bible.
- After kids have finished preparing their “gifts,” give the “Star” activity page to one of your kids. Tell kids that they are going to follow the “Star” as they search for Jesus and take their “gifts” to him.
- Give “The East” sign to a second group member and have him hold it up high *(like a sign post)*. Guide kids to line up next to the sign holder. Make sure they bring their “gift” with them!
- Re-read page 218 from the Spark Story Bible.
- Put away the “The East” sign and lead your group on a short walk around your small group space, with the kid holding the “Star” leading the way.
- Give another kid the “Jerusalem” sign. Have kids gather around the “sign post” as you re-read page 220 of the story. Put away the “Jerusalem” sign and go for a short walk behind the “Star” again.
- When you get to “Bethlehem,” choose a sign holder and finish the story. Encourage kids to set their “gifts” on your small group table, just like the wise men did, when you get to that part of the story.
- Before reading the last paragraph, go for one last walk to return “home.” Read the last paragraph and follow up with the discussion below...

What You Say: “The wise men searched for Jesus. Where did they find him? *(Pause.)* Yes, Bethlehem! And they gave him gifts. Did you know that we can give gifts to Jesus, too? Yes! When we search for Jesus and find stories about him in the Bible, we are giving him the gift of our time and attention. Isn’t that amazing? It brings him joy and it brings us joy when we search for and find Jesus, just like the



wise men did! **[Bottom Line] You can have joy when you search for God.**"

•• **SEARCH IN GOD'S WORD** *[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: "Paper Chain" strips, clear tape

What You Do:

- Give each kid a set of "Paper Chain" strips.
- Show kids how to bend the first strip into a circle and tape the ends together. Help with this as needed.
- Then show them how to slip the second strip through the circle and bend it around to make another circle, or another link in the chain.
- Help kids finish making their chains.
- As kids work, point out that the strips contain Bible verses that tell the story of Jesus' birth and today's Bottom Line.

What You Say: "This month, we searched for God in the Bible, and we found the baby Jesus! We can always find God in scripture. We can learn all about God and God's Son, Jesus. We can discover how much God loves us! When we search for God, we will always find what we are looking for! I want you to take this paper chain home with you and use it to help decorate your house for Christmas. But don't just use it as a pretty decoration! Use it with your family to read all about the birth of Jesus. The last part of the story tells about how the wise men searched for Jesus...and found him! **[Bottom Line] You can find joy when you search for God.**"

•• **CROWN PHRASES** *[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: "Crown Phrases" activity cards

What You Do:

- Give each kid a "Crown Phrase" activity card.
—If you have fewer than 10 kids, you can give kids more than one phrase, but make sure any groupings are in numerical order.
- Arrange kids in a random order.
- Tell kids to hold their crown(s), with the words facing out, on their foreheads.
- Read the crowns out loud to your group and talk together about how they don't make any sense in this random order.
- Challenge the kids to change places so they are in Memory Verse order.
- If they have some trouble with this, point out that the crowns are numbered in the bottom right corner.
- Once they're in order, say the verse together.
- Instruct kids to switch crowns and get themselves in order again.
- Repeat as long as you have time and/or interest holds.

What You Say: "The wise men in today's story went on a search for Jesus, and they found him! We can search for God, too, and one of the ways we can do this is by talking about God with people who are older and wiser. They can help us know more about God and Jesus, and they can help us read and understand God's Word, the Bible. **[Bottom Line] You can find joy when you search for God.**"

PRAY AND SEND

Bring your time to a close with prayer and encouragement to live out in your daily lives what you've experienced and learned in your time together

