



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.]

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.

•• WHO AM I? *(application activity/review the Bible story)*

What You Need: “Nativity Characters” cards

What You Do:

- Shuffle the cards and pass them out by placing them FACE DOWN in front of each kid. Make sure they do NOT turn them over.
- Explain to the kids that on each card, there is a character from today’s Bible story. Each kid will take a turn picking up their card and holding it to their forehead so that everyone in the group *(except the person holding it)* can see the card.
- The kid holding the picture can ask questions to try and figure out who or what is on their picture.
- Let each child ask five questions.
- If he can’t guess the character after five questions, allow the kids to give him clues, one at time, to see if he can figure it out.
- Once all the characters have been identified, instruct kids to put their cards in the center of the circle and quickly review today’s story.

What You Say: “I LOVE the story of Christmas. I love that God chose to send Jesus as a baby in the craziest way. Can you believe Jesus was born in a stable with animals? God sent God’s only Son, Jesus, to the world to bring us joy. **[Bottom Line] I can choose joy because God sent God’s Son!** We can choose to have joy, no matter what, because of this amazing gift—the gift of God’s Son Jesus to us.”

•• HALF FULL OR HALF EMPTY? *(application activity)*

What You Need: “Half Empty Scenarios” cards

What You Do:

- Ask your group: If I had a bottle of water and drank half of it, what would I have? *(Kids should answer, “a half full bottle” or, “a half empty bottle.”)*
- Tell the kids that part of having joy is choosing to look at situations as “half full” rather than “half empty.”
- Let the kids take turns drawing a “Half Empty Scenarios” card and then reading the scenario to the group.
- Ask the kid to come up with a way to find the joy in that situation and turn it around so that it can be seen as “half full.” If a kid has trouble coming up with a joyful solution, allow her to “phone a friend” and choose a friend to answer for her or give her an idea to get her started.
- Continue until all the scenarios have been read and answered.

What You Say: “There are two ways you can look at a half filled bottle of water. You could say, ‘Ah, man, half of my water is gone. That stinks!’ Or you could say, ‘That’s awesome! I still have half left!’ It’s all about your attitude or how you choose to see things. All of these



situations seemed like ‘half empty’ situations but the truth is, you can always find a reason to see them as ‘half full’ and have joy! **[Make It Personal]** *(Share your own “half empty” scenario and how you turned it around to see it as half full. Talk about how you chose to have joy even though things didn’t go your way.)*

“Joy isn’t about everything working out or going exactly as planned. Sometimes joy is making the choice to look at things a little differently. Because joy is finding a way to be happy even when things don’t go your way. I’m so thankful for Christmas and for the opportunity to celebrate Jesus’ birth. That’s the BEST reason to choose joy. So remember, **[Bottom Line]** **I can choose joy because God sent God’s Son.**”

•• **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.

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.**”

PRAY AND SEND

What You Need: Copy paper, pens

What You Do:

- Hand out copy paper and pens.
- Ask kids to draw a picture of a glass that is half full.
- Remind the kids to look at tough situations this week with joy—with a half full attitude!
- Invite kids to share with one another about a time when they had the opportunity to look at a situation as “half full”...but chose to see it as “half empty” instead. Then, have them reverse the scenario.
- 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 to have a ‘half full’ attitude with your help. Thank you for

