



DECEMBER THEME

PUT A BOW ON IT

BIBLE STORY

Luke 2:8-20

Sheepchat (Shepherds and Angels)
Spark Story Bible: Jesus is Born (p. 212)

BOTTOM LINE

I can choose joy because God's story is for everyone

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: We finish up the month in **Luke 2:8-20**. God wanted to announce to the world that God's son Jesus was born and God chose to do that through some shepherds. Now, shepherds were not that important, they weren't famous, and they weren't royalty. It was as if God was saying, "You can have joy because the gift of Jesus is for everyone—regardless of who you are."

Bottom Line: I can choose joy because God's story is for everyone. The birth of Jesus was good news for every person of every social class and nationality, regardless of their mess, regardless of their circumstances, regardless of their status. We want all kids to know that Jesus came for them!

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 develop a heart that would be about everyone knowing Jesus! Ask God to stir their hearts to not keep what they hear this weekend to themselves and for every kid to recognize that they were created to tell this news to the world!

•• EARLY ARRIVER IDEA

What You Need: Copy paper, pens

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of paper and ask them to fold it in half twice. When they open it back up, they'll have four equal sections.
- At the top of each section, have them write the following titles: Family, School, Neighborhood, and Sports Team or Activity (*they can write the name of the sport, like baseball, or the activity, like ballet*)
- Challenge the kids to write down the names of as many people as they can in each of these categories in five minutes.
- **[Make It Personal]** (*Create your own list (you may want to change "School" to "Work"; "Activity" to "Hobby" etc.), as the kids are creating theirs.*)

•• CHRISTMAS BOW RELAY

What You Need: Bow, craft sticks

What You Do:



- Give one kid in your group five bows, and then give each kid a craft stick.
- Explain that they will be using the sticks to pass bows to one another.
- The goal of the game is to get all five bows around the table back to the kid who started with them.
- The only person who is allowed to touch the bows is the first kid in line, who will use his hands to place a bow on the end of his craft stick.
- He will then carefully pass it to the kid next to him, who will pass it down the line from craft stick to craft stick. If the bow falls on the floor, the group must start again with that bow.

What You Say: “Great job getting those bows from one person to another! You moved the bows along as fast as you could and kept at it until the last bow made it around the table. **[Transition] In our story today, we’re going to hear/we heard about some people who were also in a hurry. They weren’t passing along bows, though. They were passing along some exciting news!”**

[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.

•• LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT *(application activity/review the Bible story)*

What You Need: Gift bag with candy inside, “Left, Right Story” activity page

What You Do:

- Circle up your group and explain that you will read a version of today’s Bible story as they pass the gift around the circle.
- Explain that you will be reading a story and they will be passing the gift continuously in one direction or another.
 - If you say the word “right” they must pass the gift to the right.
 - If you say “left,” they must change directions and pass the gift to the left.
 - If you say “across,” whoever is holding the gift must pass it to someone across the circle from them.
 - Inform the group that whoever is holding the gift when you say, “The end,” gets to keep what’s inside.
- Stand just to the outside of the circle, and ask the kids to begin passing the gift to the left as you begin reading the story from the “Left, Right Story” activity page.
- Watch to make sure the kids move the gift according to the directional words you say from the story.

What You Say: “You are GREAT listeners! *(To the kid holding the gift bag)* Hold onto that for just a second, but DON’T open it, okay?”

“I LOVE this story. Can you imagine how those shepherds must have felt, out in the field, tending to their flocks when an entire angel choir showed up across the sky with LIFE-changing news? Wow! What a moment. What JOY they must have felt. But the best part of this story is that God chose to announce the birth of Jesus to a bunch of smelly, humble, regular, everyday shepherds and not to a king or warrior or a wealthy guy with a bunch of land or someone in any kind of position of power. The story of Jesus is for everyone! Speaking of that, *(to the person holding the bag)* why don’t you open the gift to see what’s inside? *(Once the gift is revealed)* So this gift isn’t just for one person; it’s for everyone! Everybody gets a prize. *(Pass the candy around.)* This gift was for everyone! But the gift of Jesus is EVEN better! What a reason to have joy. **[Bottom Line] I can choose joy because God’s story is for everyone.”**

•• AN ORNAMENT TO SHARE *(application activity)*

What You Need: Red and white pipe cleaners, “Ornament Gift Tag” activity page, single hole punch, scissors, pens, yarn



What You Do:

- Pass out one red and one white pipe cleaner to each kid.
- Instruct kids to twist the two colors together and form them into a heart shape. (*Do this yourself while they watch and then let them try it on their own.*)
- Give each child a gift tag.
- Punch a hole in the top of the gift tag and let kids run a small piece of yarn through the hole and tie into a loop. Make it big enough to hang on a Christmas tree.
- Encourage them to read the tag they tied onto their ornaments. Explain that these ornaments are not to keep; they're to give away!
- Challenge the kids to choose one person on the list they made during the Early Arriver activity that they could give this ornament to and fill in the blanks on the tag.

What You Say: "God sent the angels to those shepherds to announce Jesus' birth because this amazing news was for everyone. JESUS is for everyone. God wants every single person God created to have joy and know that Jesus came to show God's love to everyone. So my challenge to you this Christmas week is to choose someone on your list and give them this ornament. If possible, tell them about Christmas and why you celebrate Jesus' birth. **[Bottom Line] I can choose joy because God's story is for everyone.**"

•• **MEGAPHONE MEMORY VERSE** (*memory verse activity*)

What You Need: Copy paper, tape, markers

What You Do:

- Hand out copy paper and set the markers where everyone can use them.
- Encourage kids to write JOY! on their paper in big letters.
- Give kids time to continue decorating the paper however they want.
- When they seem to be finishing up, help kids roll their papers into a cone shape with their decorations on the outside and secure them with tape, making "megaphones."
- Practice saying the memory verse until kids have it memorized.
- Use your megaphones to shout out the memory verse together from memory.

What You Say: "Our memory verse this month tells us that we can have joy because we belong to Jesus. When you tell your friends about the most amazing news and gift that's ever been given, remind them that they belong to Jesus, too. Tell them you and **[Bottom Line] I can choose joy because God's story is for everyone.**"

PRAY AND SEND

What You Need: Kids' lists from "Early Arriver Activity," ornaments from "An Ornament to Share"

What You Do:

- Ask the kids to grab their lists from Early Arriver and their ornament.
- **[Make It Personal]** (*Select someone from your own list that doesn't know the story of Jesus. Briefly explain how you know this person to the kids. Ask the kids to pray that you would be bold enough to invite this person to church and talk to him about what you believe or figure out some way that you could begin a conversation about Jesus.*)
- Give the kids a few moments to pray that God would help them give their ornaments away to the person they've chosen.
- Pray at the end, asking God to help you and the kids to share the story of Jesus with the people around you.

What You Say: "Dear God, thank you SO much for sending Jesus for everyone! Help us to share this story so that the people on our

