

A colorful illustration of a nativity scene. In the foreground, Mary is shown holding the baby Jesus, who is wrapped in a white cloth. Joseph stands next to her, looking on. A donkey and a sheep are visible on the left. A lantern hangs from the ceiling, and a city is visible in the background under a starry night sky.

23

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

KIDS MIDWEEK GUIDE



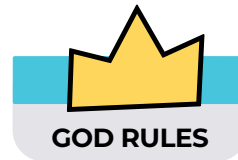
the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.



THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR US

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use these prompts to share the gospel with your kids.



Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR GREATEST GIFT

MATTHEW 1; LUKE 2



CHRIST CONNECTION: The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus, the promised Savior, came into the world to show us what God is like and to deliver us from sin and death.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 34:17

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: Celebration



PLAN the Session

- Pray, asking God to prepare your heart to teach and the hearts of kids to receive His Word.
- Read the *Leader Bible Study* and review the session plan.
- Prepare the *Welcome* activity for the session.
- Familiarize yourself with the *Learn* section enough to teach naturally.
- Organize discipleship groups, including a plan for new kids.
- Print a copy of the *Live* section for each discipleship group leader.

LEADER Bible Study

Celebration: the act of praising God, enjoying His presence, and acknowledging His good works

What makes a celebration truly meaningful? Take a moment to think about this question. As leaders, we have the unique opportunity to share the extraordinary celebration of Jesus' birth, found in Luke 2:1-20. Yet, the heart of celebrating Christmas lies not just in outward festivities, but in the deep love of Christ that transforms lives.

Read Luke 2:1-20.

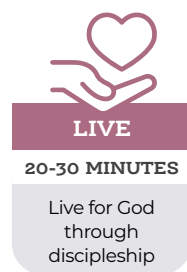
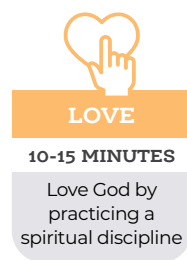
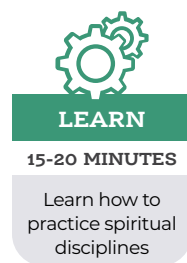
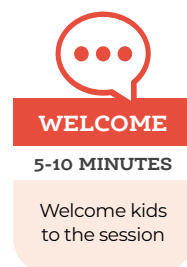
God's meticulous hand is evident in the Christmas story. A journey to Bethlehem, sparked by an earthly decree, unknowingly fulfilled the ancient prophecy in Micah 5:2. God's sovereignty is breathtaking, guiding even earthly rulers to achieve His plan.

Part of His plan included the humblest of settings, a simple stable. Jesus' birth both defies expectations and highlights God's unexpected ways. He reminds us that His kingdom is not built on worldly grandeur, but on humility and accessibility. He values simplicity and vulnerability, offering Himself to everyone.

Jesus' humble, but divinely orchestrated entrance into the world gives believers so much to celebrate. While it's easy to become distracted by outward traditions and festivities, the heart of celebrating Christmas as believers is revealed in God's boundless love and the quiet power of His Son's birth. The shepherds' awe and joyful eagerness to spread the good news teaches us how to respond to encountering Jesus.

As you prepare to share this story, meditate on the themes of humility, sovereignty, and pure joy. Allow them to guide your own celebration, one where the most profound gifts arrive not with fanfare, but with grace and love.

Remember, as leaders we model celebration rooted in a deep understanding of Christ's love. Let the Holy Spirit guide your discussions, inspiring hearts to overflow with genuine celebration for our Savior's birth. Challenge yourself and your kids to view celebration as more than outward festivities. Help them embrace the reason for Christmas: celebrating the salvation offered through Jesus Christ, the greatest Gift of all.





PREPARE

FOR THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Star of Bethlehem relay

- ☐ gift wrap bows
- ☐ hula hoops, 4



LOVE

Option 2: Celebration garland

- ☐ strips of paper, 10-15 per kid
- ☐ string
- ☐ hole punches



LEARN

Group game: Gift unwrap relay

- ☐ boxes, 3
- ☐ baby Jesus figurine
- ☐ gift wrap

Group activity: Light of the world lanterns

- ☐ paper cup, 1 per kid
- ☐ ribbon
- ☐ LED tea light, 1 per kid
- ☐ hole punches



LIVE

Get everyone talking

- ☐ dice (optional)

Discuss Learn time

- ☐ dry erase board (optional)
- ☐ dry erase markers (optional)
- ☐ rubber suction cup ball (optional)
- ☐ board game spinner (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Use this activity to engage kids as they arrive.

☐ **STAR OF BETHLEHEM RELAY**

Create a pile of gift wrap bows, or stars, in the middle of the game area. Then place a hula hoop, or stable, in each corner of the game area. Create four teams and assign each to a stable. Explain that the goal is for the teams to gather as many stars as they can into their stable in a set amount of time. Teams may only have one kid running at a time and kids may only pick up one star at a time. Players may also choose to steal stars from other stables during their turn. The team with the most bows when the game ends wins. If time allows, play multiple rounds using different motions, such as hopping on one foot, bear crawling, or skipping.



LEARN about celebration (15–20 minutes)

1 REVIEW SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

SAY “ During this time each week we come together to learn about and practice spiritual disciplines. ”

What is a spiritual discipline? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ A spiritual discipline is a practice, or a repeated action, we do to help us grow in love for God and godliness. Some examples of spiritual disciplines are worship, prayer, celebration, fasting, Bible study, service, rest, and generosity. ”

3 INTRODUCE THE DISCIPLINE OF CELEBRATION

What does it mean to celebrate? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ Great answers! Celebration is all about recognizing and rejoicing in the everyday blessings we receive from God. It’s like having a party every single day where Jesus is the special guest. Celebration isn’t just for special occasions like Christmas; it’s a way of life that recognizes the goodness of God in every moment. As we explore celebration together, let’s remember to find joy in the simple, everyday gifts from God and keep our hearts filled with thanksgiving for the greatest gift of all—Jesus! ”

2 GROUP GAME: GIFT UNWRAP RELAY

In three different boxes, place a Bible, a baby Jesus figurine from a manger set, and piece of paper with Luke 2:1-20 written on it. Wrap the three boxes in multiple layers of gift wrap and place the boxes on one side of the room. Create three groups of kids. Lead the kids to line up on the opposite side of the room and explain that the first member of each group will race to her team’s box and unwrap one layer of wrapping paper. She will then run back to her team and tag the next kid, who will do the same. The first team to reveal their box’s gift wins. Allow the other two teams to finish unwrapping their boxes. Lead the kids to share the items in their boxes with the larger group. Help kids draw conclusions about what those items might have to do with today’s session.

SAY “ This game reminds us of the excitement and joy of unwrapping a gift. Each layer we remove gets us closer to the precious gift inside, just like every day is an opportunity to uncover more of Jesus’ love for us. Today we’re going to read a passage from the Bible found in Luke 2:1-20 that tells us the story of how God saved the world through a baby. Let’s get started! ”

4 READ THE BIBLE

SAY “ It’s time to hear a story from the Bible! Can anyone guess which part of the Bible we’re diving into today? [Allow responses.] That’s right! We’re focusing on Luke 2:1-20, which is in the New Testament and tells us the story of Jesus’ birth. This isn’t just any story, it’s the night our world was



LEARN

| changed forever because the world received the greatest gift—Jesus! ”

Read Luke 2:1-20.

SAY “ There were lots of people in the city of Bethlehem because a command had been issued from the emperor for everyone to return to their hometown. Imagine how crowded that must have been! Mary and Joseph were among the visitors and they were searching for a place to stay. However, every inn was full! Where did they finally find shelter? **[Allow responses.]** That’s right, in a stable surrounded by animals. When Jesus was born, He was laid in an animal feeding trough.

Now, picture the shepherds in the fields that same night. Suddenly, an angel appeared, illuminated the sky, and announced the birth of Jesus! Soon after, many angels appeared, joining in praise to God. ”

If you saw that sight, what would you think? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ The shepherds, filled with wonder and excitement, rushed to Bethlehem to see Jesus for themselves. Once they met Him, they were compelled to tell others about this miraculous event. They wanted people to know that the Savior of the world had been born!

This is why we celebrate Christmas! We often celebrate through giving our family and friends gifts. But the greatest gift of all is Jesus, who came to rescue us from our sins. The shepherds were eager to spread the joyful news of Jesus’ birth. They were celebrating! Because of Jesus, every day offers a reason to celebrate. Like the shepherds, we’re invited to share this joy and announce Jesus to the world. Today we can celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, that Jesus is born! ”

5 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Jesus is God’s greatest gift to us. His birth brought hope and salvation to the world. Celebrating Christmas is more than just a fun time; it’s about remembering and being thankful for Jesus. Jesus was sent because God loves us so much. Sin separated us from God, He knew we needed a Savior. By choosing to follow Jesus, He offers us eternal life. Jesus’ coming isn’t just an event we celebrate—it’s a big part of what we believe and why we’re joyful as believers. We can celebrate because of the eternal life we have in Jesus! ”

6 GROUP ACTIVITY: LIGHT OF THE WORLD LANTERNS

SAY “ Today, we’re going to create lanterns to remind us to shine Jesus’ light and love to the world. ”

Give each kid a paper cup. Disperse hole punches and markers for the kids to share. Encourage the kids to decorate the cups using the markers and punch holes throughout to allow the light to shine through. Show them how to punch two holes at the rim of the cup across from one another. Lead them to tie a piece of ribbon into the two holes to create a handle. Once these steps have been completed, place an LED tealight inside each cup. Turn off the lights and let the kids see the lanterns shine in the darkness. (Be sure to follow any ministry or state risk management protocol.)



LEARN

SAY “ Notice how, even with simple cups and lights, we can create something beautiful that brightens the room. This can remind us of our lives when we choose to follow Jesus. Each one of our lanterns is different, just like each of us has our own unique way of celebrating and sharing Jesus’ love. Remember, at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. The Bible calls Jesus ‘the light of the world.’ When we follow Him, we can share that light with others by showing them love and kindness. Let’s be like these lanterns, shining brightly for Jesus and spreading His joy everywhere we go! ”

7 FOLLOW UP ON LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE

Who can tell me what our challenge was from last week? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ Great job! We learn a lot when we are together, but if we don’t do anything with what we learn, then there’s no point to it. Our challenges help us put action to what we learn about the Bible. ”

What did you find difficult about completing the challenge? What went well?
[Allow responses.]

8 INTRODUCE THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

SAY “ I’ve got a fun challenge for you this week called the ‘Celebrate Jesus Every Day’ challenge. Your mission is to find one special way each day to celebrate Jesus. This could be sharing a story about Him, singing a Christmas carol that honors His love, drawing a picture, or making a Christmas card for someone. I can’t wait to hear next week how you choose to celebrate Jesus! ”

9 CLOSE IN PRAYER

Use the scripted prayer below or pray in your own words.

SAY “ Jesus, thank You for coming into the world and giving us the gift of salvation. Help us celebrate You this Christmas! Amen. ”



LOVE God by practicing celebration (10–15 minutes)

Choose one of these two options as a way to lead children to practice the spiritual discipline of celebration.

☐ **OPTION 1: GO CAROLING**

Prior to the session, arrange for kids to carol to different groups in your church, such as younger classes, the student ministry, or adult classes. Explain to the kids that one of the ways we celebrate Jesus' coming is by singing songs. Lead the kids in practicing a few Christmas songs that they are familiar with. Then travel around the church singing the Christmas songs for the groups.

☐ **OPTION 2: CELEBRATION GARLAND**

Explain to the kids that they will be creating a Celebration Garland. Pass out 10-15 strips of colored paper to each kid. Lead them to write a different reason to celebrate God on each strip of paper. Show them how to punch holes on both ends of the strips. They will then string the strips of paper onto a piece of string. Encourage them to hang their garland in their home as a reminder to keep our hearts focused on celebrating Jesus' birth and everything He means to us.



LIVE for God through discipleship (20–30 minutes)

Form discipleship groups to provide a safe environment for kids to share with one another. Limit groups to ideally no more than five children and one adult leader. Prioritize forming groups according to gender first, then age. Adult leaders should never be alone with children.

1 EMPHASIZE HEALTHY DISCUSSION

Explain that discipleship time is a special time because we share our deep thoughts and feelings with one another. All must work together to create a safe place for sharing. Consider these three guidelines:

1. Listen when someone is talking.
2. Only comment when the person sharing invites you to do so.
3. In general, what is shared in the group should stay in the group. The only exception is talking with a trusted adult if it would help either you or the person who shared.

Note: Be sure to follow local laws and ministry policies concerning any report or suspicion of abuse or neglect.

2 GET EVERYONE TALKING

Choose one of the options below to encourage children to engage with one another.

☐ **OPTION 1: ROLL THE DICE**

Assign a different question to numbers one through six. Some ideas include: What was the best part of your day? What is your favorite holiday? What did you eat for lunch? What was the toughest part of your day? What are you excited to do this weekend? Lead kids to sit in a circle and take turns rolling the dice and answering the applicable questions.

☐ **OPTION 2: RUN!**

Lead kids to form a circle with their chairs and sit. The leader will stand in the middle and share a fact about himself, such as “I have a dog.” Everyone who also has a pet dog must stand up and race to sit in another chair. The person in the middle will also be trying to sit in a chair. The last one standing will now stand in the middle and share a fact about herself.

☐ **OPTION 3: THIS OR THAT**

Come up with a list of options. Some ideas include video games or television shows, pizza or chicken nuggets, chocolate or vanilla, dogs or cats, soccer or basketball, reading or math. Call out the pair of options and lead kids to choose one. You can either have them run to one side of the room or the other or stand up or stay seated based on their choice. Each time, encourage one or two kids to explain their choice.



3 DISCUSS LEARN TIME

Choose an option below to engage kids with the following questions.

1. What is something you learned today?
2. How can you celebrate Jesus this week?
3. Based on what you learned today, what do you think God is asking you to do?

☐ OPTION 1: STICK TO IT

Write the questions on a dry erase board. Invite the kids to take turns throwing a rubber suction cup ball at the dry erase board and answering the question the ball sticks to.

☐ OPTION 2: SPINNER

Using a spinner from a board game, assign each section a different question. Lead the kids in taking turns spinning the spinner and answering the question that applies to that section.

☐ OPTION 3: FOUR CORNERS

Assign a number, one through four, to each corner of the room. Lead kids to stand in the middle of the room. Close your eyes while they run to one of the four corners of the room. Call out a number. That corner of kids will each answer a question you give them.

4 WALK IN THE LIGHT

Read 1 John 1:7. Explain that this is a time for honesty with one another as we answer the questions: How has it been hard for you to obey God this week? Where are you struggling? Guide children not to offer advice or try to fix the problem but simply to pray.

Answer the question or confess sin in an age-appropriate way to model confession. Ask a volunteer to pray for you. Choose one of the following ways to lead children to walk in the light. Do not force a child to share or pray.

- Form a circle. Go around the circle, giving each child an opportunity to share her struggles. Ask a volunteer to pray for her.
- Form pairs. Take turns sharing and praying for each other.
- Give each child a sheet of paper. Allow children to write or draw their answer to the question. Mix up the papers and distribute one to each child to pray for silently.