

A colorful illustration of a nativity scene. In the foreground, Mary is shown in profile, looking down at the baby Jesus who is lying in a wooden manger filled with straw. Joseph is standing 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.

03

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

KIDS
MIDWEEK GUIDE



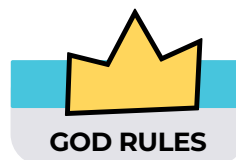
the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.



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 RESCUER

LUKE 2



CHRIST CONNECTION: The angels told the shepherds the birth of Jesus was good news for all the people. Anyone who believes the good news that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for their sin will be saved.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 10:31

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.
- Decide which *Welcome* activities to prepare 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* for each discipleship group leader.

LEADER Bible Study

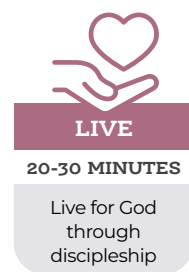
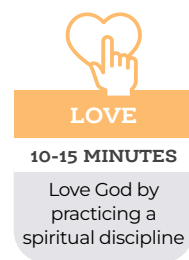
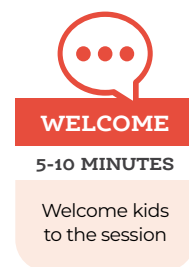
Celebration: the act of praising God, enjoying His presence, and acknowledging His good works

The spiritual discipline of celebration is defined as praising God, enjoying His presence, and acknowledging His good works. This week's Bible story not only gives us an easy story to celebrate, but also an excellent example of what celebrating God looks like in practice. We will look at the story of Jesus' birth found in Luke 2. Begin your preparation by reading Luke 2:1-20.

There is so much to celebrate in Luke 2:1-7. In this text, we see many of God's good works. There is the fulfillment of a prophecy, found in Micah 5:2, that claims Bethlehem as Jesus' birthplace. The Scripture reminds us of the many times in the Old Testament that connected the coming Messiah to the line of David. Then, in Luke 2:7, Jesus is born! The Son of God became like us so that He could save us. There is not a Christmas gift this season that could top the gift of salvation. At Christmastime, we get to celebrate a God who both keeps His promises and loves us enough to save us from our sins.

We will focus on Luke 2:7-20 with the kids this week. As Jesus was born, nearby shepherds were looking after their sheep, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared. The glory of the Lord surrounded them while the angel told them the good news of Jesus' birth. What happened next must have been an incredible sight to see. The Bible says that the angel, along with a heavenly host, celebrated God with praise. This sent the shepherds to Bethlehem, where they found themselves in the presence of God the Son. From there, the shepherds went out and acknowledged His good works by sharing the good news. Finally, they returned to their field and continued to celebrate and worship God.

When we praise God and enjoy His presence, it leads us to acknowledge His goodness to others. When we spend time sharing what God has done in our lives, it leads us back to praising Him. Christmas is the perfect time to encourage the kids to exercise the spiritual discipline of celebration. There are countless songs to sing, parties to attend, and opportunities for them to share the good news of Jesus with others. As you prepare for this week's lesson, find opportunities to celebrate God and share the good news with others.





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

Option 1: Shepherd round-up

- ☐ candy canes, 1 per kid
- ☐ Allergy Alert
- ☐ cotton balls
- ☐ large pieces of paper, 2

Option 2: All wrapped up

- ☐ rolls of wrapping paper, 1 per 4 kids
- ☐ tape dispensers



LOVE

Option 1: Shepherd's hook ornament

- ☐ white chenille stem, 1 per kid
- ☐ brown pony beads
- ☐ red ribbon

Option 2: Jingle bell worship

- ☐ jingle bells
- ☐ large craft sticks, 1 per kid
- ☐ chenille stems, 1 per kid



LEARN

Group demo: Which gift?

- ☐ gift bags, 2
- ☐ individually-wrapped candies, 1 per kid
- ☐ Allergy Alert



LIVE

Get everyone talking

- ☐ dice (optional)

Discuss Learn time

- ☐ dry erase board (optional)
- ☐ beach ball (optional)
- ☐ suction cup ball (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Choose one or all of these activities to engage kids as they arrive. You may choose to prepare all activities to repeat throughout the unit or prepare a different activity to use each week.



☐ **OPTION 1: SHEPHERD ROUND-UP**

Place a large piece of paper on opposite sides of the room and encourage the kids to create two teams. Assign each team a piece of paper, distribute a candy cane to each kid, and scatter the cotton balls throughout your space. Explain to the kids that the candy cane is their shepherd's staff, the paper is their field, and the cotton balls are their sheep. When you say Go!, each team will try and get the most sheep back onto their field. The trick is that they can only use their shepherd's staff to move the sheep. Give them a couple of minutes before calling time and counting the sheep each team collected. Play a few rounds if time allows.

☐ **OPTION 2: ALL WRAPPED UP**

Invite the kids to break into teams of four or five, depending on your group size. Supply each team with a roll of wrapping paper and a few tape dispensers. Encourage the kids to choose one teammate to become the present. They will have three minutes to wrap up the present using their supplies. At the end of three minutes let them show off their work to the rest of the group.



LEARN

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. ”

Why is it important that we talk about and practice spiritual disciplines? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ Those are great thoughts! Spiritual disciplines, like prayer, Bible study, worship, and others help us grow closer to God. ”

2 GROUP GAME: WHICH GIFT?



Prior to the session, fill one gift bag with enough of the same individually-wrapped treat, such as small chocolates or mini candy canes, for each kid to receive one. Leave a second bag empty. Keep the two gift bags hidden from the kids until you get to this activity.

SAY “ What is your favorite Christmas candy or treat? [Allow responses.] Those are great answers! One way we celebrate Christmas is by giving and receiving presents. I brought two presents today and I want to share one with all of you! [Pull out the two presents. Act like they are both heavy so the kids cannot tell which bag is empty.] I am going to allow you guys to choose which present you get. One has enough sweet surprises for everyone and the other is empty. Each of you must decide which present you want to pick. When I hold up the present you choose, you will celebrate and cheer loudly. When I hold up the bag you do not choose, you will be very quiet. Whichever present gets the most celebration and cheers wins! Ready? ”

Give the kids enough time to decide which present they are choosing. Then alternate holding up one present at a time. Do this several times until there is a clear winner. Reveal to the kids what was inside the bag. If they chose the filled bag, distribute the goodies to the kids. If they chose the empty bag, let them know that in the spirit of Christmas you will still give them each a treat.

SAY “ Celebrating and cheering for a surprise present was fun! No matter which bag you chose, I was always going to give each of you a little treat! At Christmastime, we celebrate the greatest gift ever: the birth of Jesus! Everyone can choose to receive the gift of Jesus, no matter what. ”

3 REVIEW THE DISCIPLINE OF CELEBRATION

We have been focusing on the spiritual discipline of celebration. Can someone share with me what we have learned so far? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ That’s great! We celebrate God when we worship Him, when we enjoy being in His presence, and when we acknowledge or talk about how great God is. ”



LEARN

What holiday are we celebrating right now? Can someone tell me what we celebrate during Christmastime? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ Yes, we celebrate the birth of Jesus every year at Christmastime. That is what makes it such a great Bible story to use as we practice the discipline of celebration. ”

6 GROUP ACTIVITY: WORSHIP FREEZE TAG

Explain to the kids that you will be playing a game of freeze tag with a twist. You will choose one kid to be the tagger and another kid to be the angel. The tagger can tag anyone except for the angel. Encourage the rest of the kids to run around while trying to avoid getting tagged. Once a kid is tagged, they must freeze in their spot and yell out, The Savior is born! The angel can unfreeze the kids by tagging them and saying, Glory to God! After a couple minutes, you can select a new tagger and angel and let the kids play another round.

SAY “ We celebrate God when we praise Him and when we talk about His good works. We did both of those things in our game when we shouted about the birth of our Savior, Jesus, and when we shouted glory to God! In today’s story, we are going to see an example of celebrating God straight from the Bible. ”

4 READ THE BIBLE

SAY “ Today we are going to use the same Bible story we talked about on Sunday but look at it in a different way. We will use the book of Luke to learn about the birth of Jesus and how this news led a group of shepherds to celebrate God. ”

How does your family celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmastime? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ Those are some fun answers. Let’s turn in our Bibles to Luke 2:8 so we can read about the very first Christmas celebrations. The start of Luke 2 tells us that Mary and Joseph were traveling to the city of Bethlehem. While they were there, Mary gave birth to a baby boy and laid Him in a manger. That baby boy was Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to save us from our sins. Sin is when we disobey God. God’s people had waited a very long time for Jesus to be born. Let’s read Luke 2:8-15. ”

The shepherds were watching their sheep at night when an angel of the Lord appeared. How do you think you would’ve reacted if you were one of the shepherds? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ The shepherds were terrified, which was understandable! The angel told them they did not have to be afraid. Then the angel told them the best news ever, that Jesus, their Savior, was born! The angel told them where they could find Jesus and then joined even more angels in celebrating God through worship by saying ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven.’ ”

What did the shepherds do after the angels left? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem so that they could see this wonderful gift. When they got there, the shepherds celebrated Jesus by enjoying His presence. Let’s read Luke 2:17-20 to see what



| happens next. ”

How else did the shepherds celebrate God? [Allow responses.]

SAY “ The shepherds celebrated God by telling others of His good works and by worshiping Him. It is easy to get distracted by all the decorations and presents at Christmastime. But we should celebrate like the shepherds each Christmas and all year round! ”

5 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ At the very beginning of the Old Testament, God promised that He would send someone to save His people from their sins. God kept that promise and sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life on earth so that He could give His life and save us from our sins. The birth of Jesus shows us that God loves us, He keeps His promises, and is the best present ever. ”

7 FOLLOW UP ON LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE

SAY “ Last week we issued a challenge to help you practice celebrating God. I hope it went well! ”

Who wants to share how you did with last week’s challenge? [Allow responses.]

8 INTRODUCE THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

SAY “ This week, we want to encourage you to practice celebrating God by telling someone the true meaning of Christmas. The true meaning of Christmas is celebrating the birth of Jesus! One way to bring this up is to ask someone what their favorite part of Christmas is. Then, you can share with them all about Jesus. ”

9 CLOSE IN PRAYER

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

SAY “ God, thank You so much for the birth of Jesus. Thank You for loving us so much that You sent Your Son to save us from our sins. Help us to celebrate You at Christmastime and all year long. 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: SHEPHERD'S HOOK ORNAMENT**

Read the angel's announcement to the shepherds, found in Luke 2:10-12. Pass out a white chenille stem, piece of red ribbon, and brown pony beads to each kid. Encourage the kids to curve the top of the chenille stem so that it resembles a shepherd's hook. Guide them to cover the stem with brown pony beads, leaving a little space remaining on the top and bottom. Next, the kids can bend the ends of the pipe cleaner over so that the beads will stay in place. Lastly, invite the kids to take the ribbon and tie a bow in the middle of the shepherd's hook. The kids can use the top of the hook to place it on their tree at home as a reminder to celebrate God.

☐ **OPTION 2: JINGLE BELL WORSHIP**

Give each kid a large craft stick, a few chenille stems, jingle bells, and markers. Guide the kids to string a jingle bell onto the middle of each of their chenille stems. Next, the kids can tightly wrap each chenille stem around the top half of the craft stick. Encourage them to leave space at the bottom of the craft stick to write on and decorate. Once the kids have attached all of their jingle bells, invite them to write the praise that the angels said, *Glory to God*, on the craft stick and decorate it however they want. Put on a worship song and invite the kids to use their instruments as they celebrate God through worship.



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 your favorite part of your day? What is your favorite season? What did you eat for breakfast? What was the toughest part of your day? What are you excited to do this month? Lead kids to sit in a circle and take turns rolling the dice and answering the applicable questions.

☐ **OPTION 2: NAME GAME**

Lead kids to stand in a circle. Explain that they will take turns saying their name and then something they like that starts with the same letter as their name. For example, “My name is Sophia, and I like strawberries.” For an added challenge, invite the kids to try and remember and recite everyone’s sentences that went before them.

☐ **OPTION 3: THIS OR THAT**

Come up with a list of options. Some ideas include videogames or television shows, hamburger or chicken nuggets, chocolate or strawberry, elephants or tigers, music or drawing, science or writing, summer or winter. 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 did the shepherds celebrate God?
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: BEACH BALL BONANZA

Write numbers 1, 2, and 3 all over a beach ball. Lead the kids to stand in a circle. Toss the beach ball to one of the kids. Whichever number his left thumb lands closest to, he will answer that question. Once he answers the question, he will toss the ball to another kid, who will do the same. Continue until everyone has had a turn.

☐ 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.