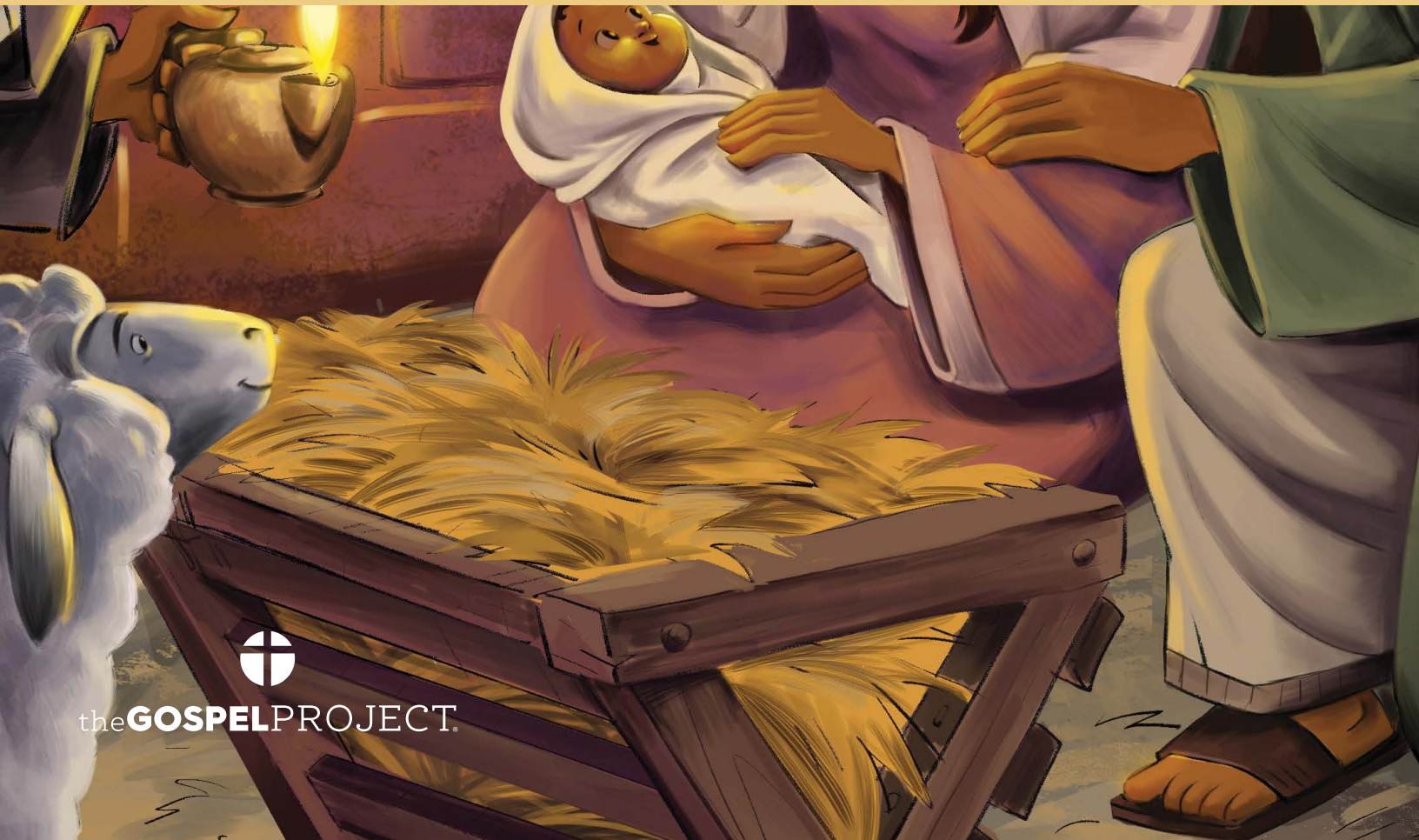


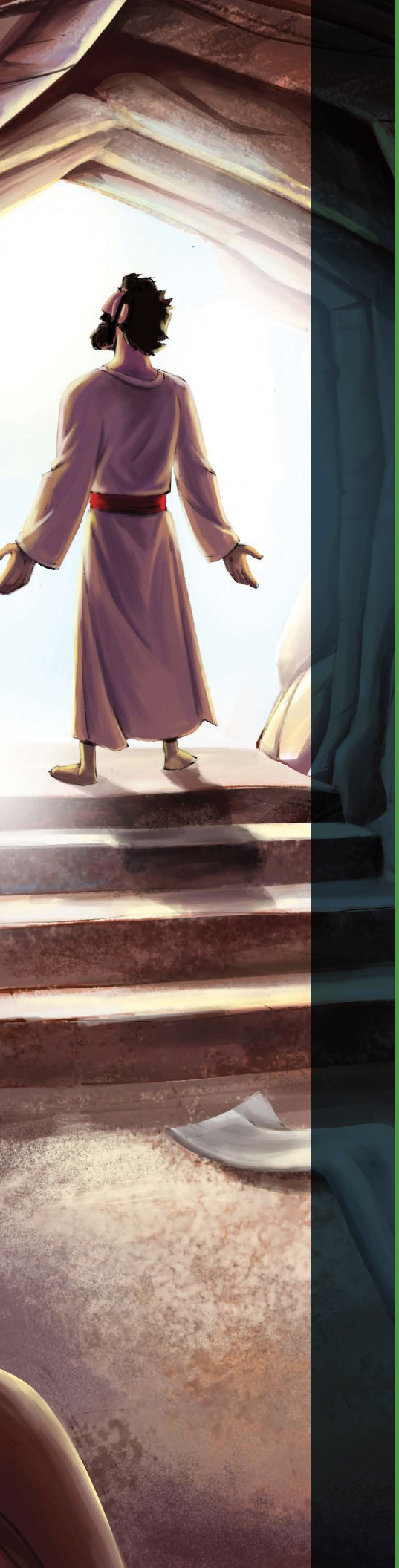
CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

KIDS

WORSHIP GUIDE



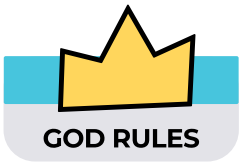
theGOSPELPROJECT®



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 SUBSTITUTE

LUKE 2



STORY POINT: Jesus was born to save us from sin.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus has always been and always will be God, but He also became a human and was born as a baby to save people from sin. As Jesus grew up, He lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 8:31b-32a

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: *What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.*



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

PLAN the Session

1. Read the Leader Bible Study and review the session plan.
2. Check out the session-by-session training available on Ministry Grid.
3. Pray for yourself, your group, and the other leaders and kids in your ministry.

LEADER Bible Study

Though the world often views the nativity story as a mere Christmas decoration along the same lines as snowmen and gingerbread houses, followers of Jesus recognize Christ's birth is the true and wondrous account of the long-awaited Savior, born to die so that we may find life in Him. From before the creation of the world, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was always God's plan for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-20).

The story of the birth of Jesus isn't as glamorous as people might have expected for the arrival of a royal king; instead, it's a humble story of an ordinary young woman giving birth among animals and common shepherds witnessing this event. In calling shepherds to marvel at the arrival of Jesus, God didn't summon those with power, wealth, and positions of great influence in society. Instead, He invited the lowly and humble, and they responded to God's invitation to experience the glory of His Son.

Whereas Caesar Augustus called the people of his kingdom to travel far and wide for his goal of conducting a census—a measure of an earthly ruler's power—Jesus was humbly making His way to His people in the greatest act of power the world has ever seen: God becoming man. Christmas is the story of Immanuel, which means, God with us.

Though the Christmas season comes each year, we must continually bring ourselves to recount the wonder, majesty, and grandness of the nativity story—the awe that our Creator would make the way to forgive us and to bridge the gap between God and sinners by becoming a human, living a perfect life, dying for our sins, and rising again.

Pray that the boys and girls you lead will experience the story of Jesus's birth and find their place in His redemption story. May they receive His love and—like the shepherds in this story—share the story of Christ with others.



THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session.



20–30 MINUTES

Teach kids how and why we worship.



25–30 MINUTES

Lead kids to love God by worshiping Him.



10 MINUTES

Lead kids to live worshipful lives for God.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.

PREPARE

FOR THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

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

LEARN

Countdown
- ☐ countdown video

Worship through music
- ☐ "Best Gift Ever (I Am Never Alone)," "Our God Is Holy," or other high-energy worship songs of your choosing

Introduction and big picture question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Tell the Bible story
- ☐ "Jesus Is Our Substitute" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Group demonstration
- ☐ Christmas ornaments, 2

LOVE

Group activity
- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ small bins, 2
- ☐ baby dolls, 2

Respond in worship
- ☐ "Worthy of All Praise," "Your Glory Is Forever," or other slower worship songs of your choosing
- ☐ offering basket or collection box (optional)

LIVE

Key passage
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "For Us All (Romans 8:31-32)" song

Additional activity
- ☐ small bins, 2
- ☐ Christmas ornaments



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN through Worship

1 COUNTDOWN

Show the countdown video as kids arrive and set it to end as worship time begins.

2 WORSHIP THROUGH MUSIC (5–10 min.)

Choose a few high-energy worship songs—such as "Best Gift Ever (I Am Never Alone)" or "Our God Is Holy"—to sing with your group. Lead motions enthusiastically and encourage kids to join you. Between songs, help the kids think through what it means to worship God and why we often use music to help us do so. Talk through lyrics that may be challenging or confusing.

3 INTRODUCTION AND BIG PICTURE QUESTION (3 min.)

SAY *"Think about the people in your life that you love—family, friends, and neighbors. What are ways you show them you love them? How do they show their love for you?* ***[Allow responses.]*** *You might give hugs, help someone in need, use kind words when you talk to them, spend time together, or give gifts to show love.*

During this special season of Advent, we celebrate the greatest gift of all—the gift that comes from God. But this gift isn't a new toy, game, or decoration. It is God Himself. God loves us so much, and He showed His love by coming into this world as a human baby to live, die, and rise from the dead to rescue us from our sin. That baby's name is Jesus. Christmas reminds us that Jesus didn't just come to show us how to love—He came to save us. Jesus was born to save us from sin. From the very beginning, God had a rescue plan, and Jesus is the center of that plan.

Our big picture question will help us remember this important truth: ***What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.*** *Because of what Jesus has done, forgiveness is possible, and we can have a right relationship with God.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN**, *and everyone who follows Him finds peace with God and with other people. As we learn today, we'll discover why Jesus's birth is such good news for every one of us.*

Our story comes from Luke 2. Grab your Bibles, let's turn there together and get ready to learn from God's Word!"



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

4 TELL THE BIBLE STORY (10 min.)

Open your Bible to Luke 2. Tell the Bible story using the script provided, or expound upon the "Kids Sermon Outline" in the margin to teach a more in-depth message. You may choose to play the Bible story video "Jesus Is Our Substitute." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

"In the days when Herod was the king of Judea, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that everyone in the empire should be counted. Every person had to go to his hometown for the census.

In a town called Nazareth, a young woman named Mary was expecting a very special baby. God told Mary that her baby would be God's Son. He would be the Savior of the world!

Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, and they traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to the city of Bethlehem in Judea, because that was where Joseph was from. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. There was no guest room available for them, so Mary gave birth to Jesus in a place where animals were kept.

Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Baby Jesus was the person the Old Testament promised would come who would also be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." God had come to live as a human to save sinners!

In the nearby fields, some shepherds were watching their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them and told them the good news: "Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born. He is the Messiah, the Lord!" The angel told them they would find the baby lying in a manger.

Suddenly, there was a large number of heavenly creatures praising God with the angel, saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!"

The shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem and found Baby Jesus lying in a manger, just as the angel had said.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which happened exactly like they had been told. They worshiped God for sending Jesus to the world!"

KIDS SERMON OUTLINE

God showed His love by sending Jesus to rescue us from sin. (John 3:16): Christmas is about more than gifts or traditions—it is about God giving us Himself. Because sin broke our relationship with God, He sent Jesus into the world as a baby to save us. Jesus's birth was part of God's rescue plan from the very beginning, showing His great love and desire to be close to us.

Jesus is our substitute who did for us what we could not do ourselves. (1 Peter 2:24): Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life and took the punishment our sin deserves. We cannot fix our brokenness or earn forgiveness on our own. Jesus took our place so that we could be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God.

Everyone who trusts in Jesus can have peace with God and new life. (Romans 5:1): When we believe in Jesus and repent, God forgives our sin and makes our hearts new. Because of Jesus, we can have peace with God and live in close relationship with Him. Christmas reminds us that Jesus came close to us so that we could be brought near to God—and that is the greatest gift of all.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY "Jesus has always been and always will be God, but He also became a human and was born as a baby to save people from sin. (Read Luke 2:4-7.) Where was Jesus born? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem. His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, had traveled there for the census, but there was no room for them in the inn. So, Jesus was born in a stable, and Mary laid him in a feeding trough for animals. Does it surprise you that the Son of God would come into the world this way?

As Jesus grew up, He lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God. Let's practice our big picture question to help us remember this truth. **What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.**"

6 GROUP DEMONSTRATION (5 min.)

Display two of the same Christmas ornaments, one whole and one broken. Ask the kids to compare and contrast the two. Take a vote on which one the kids would rather hang on their tree at home. Then move into the teaching portion of the demonstration.

SAY "Do you like to decorate a Christmas tree? I like to put pretty ornaments on the tree, but this first one is broken. You can see the cracks, and because it's broken, it can't really be used the way it was meant to be used. We wouldn't want to hang it front and center on the tree because it's damaged.

The Bible tells us that sin does something similar to our hearts. Sin breaks our relationship with God. Even when we try really hard to be good, kind, or obedient, we can't fix that brokenness on our own. Just like this ornament can't repair itself, we can't fix our sin problem by ourselves.

The other ornament is in perfect condition. It's whole, the way it was designed to be. At Christmas, we celebrate that God sent Jesus into the world—not just as a king with a crown, but as a baby lying in a manger. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He was never broken by sin.

JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN. Jesus took the punishment our sin deserves. He came to restore what was broken and make a way for us to have a right relationship with God again.

Christmas reminds us that God didn't ignore our brokenness. He loved us so much that He sent His Son. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives us and begins to make our hearts new—not because we fixed ourselves, but because Jesus took our place."

LOVE with Worship

1 DISCUSSION (10 min.)

Consider forming smaller groups to discuss the following questions to encourage open communication. Prepare leaders for sensitive conversations that may require follow-up.

1. **What did we discover about God in this passage?** *God is loving, humble, faithful, and keeps His promises. He cares about ordinary people and comes close to us.*
2. **How does knowing that Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead motivate you to learn more about God or pursue Him more faithfully?**
3. **What is keeping you from trusting God completely? When is obedience to God most difficult?**
4. **The gospel is the good news that Jesus made the way for anyone who believes in Him to be restored to a right relationship with God. Would you like to learn more about following God? Who needs to hear this great news in your life?**

After the kids have time to discuss, direct their attention back to the leader for the group activity. If you formed smaller groups, you may choose to regather as a larger group depending on your ministry context.

2 RESPOND IN PRAYER (3 min.)

Encourage the kids to sit with their eyes closed as you pray over them. Read Romans 8:31b-32a.

> **SAY** "*We don't have to jump through hoops or say a complicated prayer to receive Jesus as the greatest gift. We just need to tell God that we need His help and want to be close to Him. He forgives us and heals our hearts. Let's respond to God in prayer and thank Him for His great love for us! You can talk to God on your own for a few moments, then I will pray for us too.*"

Allow a few moments for kids to pray on their own.

> **SAY** "*God, thank You for Your great love for us! Help us to receive the gift of Your Son through faith in Him. Amen.*



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

3 GROUP ACTIVITY: MANGER DASH (5–10 min.)

> **SAY** *"Today we've learned that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN**. *Let's play a fun game to help us remember more from our Bible story."*

Create a starting line using painter's tape. Form two or more teams and instruct each team to line up single-file at the starting line. Set up a simple path to follow using painter's tape. At the end of each line, place a small bin labeled MANGER. Give the first child in each line a baby doll. When the leader says "Go," the first player carefully carries the baby along the path, places it in the manger, then runs back along the outside of the course to tag the next teammate. The next player retrieves the baby from the manger, carries it carefully back along the path to the start, and tags the next person. Continue until every child on the team has completed the course.

> **SAY** *"Great job, everyone! You all worked together to carry the baby safely to the manger. I noticed something important during this game—you had to be careful. You couldn't just rush or throw the baby down. You had to slow down, hold the baby gently, and make sure it arrived safely.*
>
> *That helps us remember something true about the Christmas story. When Jesus came into the world, He didn't come as a powerful king riding a horse or living in a palace. He came as a baby—small, humble, and dependent on others. God chose a surprising way to send the Savior.*
>
> *The manger reminds us that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN**. *We can't fix our broken relationship with God on our own. Only Jesus can fix what sin broke. That's what it means when we say Jesus is our substitute.* **What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.** *Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves, and when we follow Him, He sets us free from sin and brings us near to God.*
>
> *Christmas isn't only about a baby in a manger—it's about God showing His great love by sending Jesus to save us. When we trust in Him, God forgives us and invites us into a right relationship with Him. That is the greatest gift of all."*

4 RESPOND IN WORSHIP (3 min.)

Choose slower worship songs—such as "Worthy of All Praise" or "Your Glory Is Forever"—that will help your kids reflect on the concepts they have learned about during this session. Encourage kids to respond however they feel God leading them, whether in prayer, quiet thought, or song.

> **SAY** *"Today we learned that Jesus is our substitute. He lived perfectly and took the punishment for sin so we could be forgiven. As we worship, think about God's love shown at Christmas. You can thank God quietly, pray, or sing along. Worship is one way we respond to God's great love for us."*

As you continue playing music, allow the kids a few minutes to pass an offering basket, bring offerings to a collections box, or collect offerings in another way.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE in Worship

1 KEY PASSAGE (5 min.)

> **SAY** "*Our key passage reminds us why Jesus came. This passage comes from a letter Paul wrote to the church in Rome. He wanted to help believers understand God's great love and His plan to save us. Listen closely as we read it together and think about what it tells us about Jesus.*"

Read Romans 8:31b-32a and encourage the kids to read along. Display the Key Passage Poster for kids to read. You may also sing the key passage song, "For Us All (Romans 8:31-32)."

2 APPLICATION (2 min.)

Spend time following up with kids on last week's application challenge. Encourage each kid for his or her efforts and remind kids to keep seeking ways to worship God each day.

> **SAY** "*Our weekly application challenges help us take what we learn about God and practice it in our everyday lives. Worship isn't just something we do at church—it's how we respond to God's love with our words, choices, and actions every day. Check out your challenge for this week.*
>
> *This week, your challenge is to thank God each day for sending Jesus. You can pray, sing a worship song, or tell God thank You in your own words. If you want, share that good news with someone else by telling them why Jesus' birth matters to you.*"



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 PRAYER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (2 min.)

> **SAY** "*God, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus. Help us to trust Him and grow closer to You each day. Thank You for Your forgiveness and grace. Amen.*"

Make any announcements from your kids ministry before dismissing. If there's significant time between dismissal and pickup, consider using the additional activity to keep the kids engaged.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

ORNAMENT RESCUE

Before the session, mark Christmas ornaments with a crack, sad face, or *X* to represent being broken. During the session, scatter the ornaments around the room. Label one area of the room as the *Rescue Station* and place a small bin there. When the game begins, kids may move around the room and collect the broken ornaments, bringing them one at a time to the Rescue Station. At the station, a leader or helper exchanges the broken ornament for a whole ornament, which the child then places in a second bin labeled *Restored*. Continue until all broken ornaments have been rescued.

> **SAY** "*Great job everyone! You 'rescued' a lot of broken ornaments, and when you did, something special happened: the broken ornament was exchanged for a whole one. That's a picture of what Jesus came to do. The Bible tells us that sin breaks our relationship with God. Sin doesn't always look the same in everyone, but it always leads to brokenness. We can't fix that brokenness by ourselves, no matter how hard we try. Jesus is our substitute. That means He takes our brokenness and gives us forgiveness instead. In the game, the broken ornament wasn't cleaned up or fixed—it was exchanged. In the same way, we aren't saved by fixing ourselves. We are saved by trusting in Jesus. Christmas reminds us that God sees our brokenness and loves us too much to leave us that way. Jesus came to rescue, restore, and bring us back to God.*"