

# Simply the Best

**Bible:** Simply the Best (Jesus is Born) • *Luke 2:1-7*

**Bottom Line:** God gave us the greatest gift.

**Memory Verse:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” *John 3:16 (NIV)*

**Life App:** Compassion—Caring enough to do something about someone else’s need

**Basic Truth:** I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

## **Social: Setting the Tone for the Experience (9:00, 10:15, 11:30)**

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Gift Guess**

- Triple wrapped objects in Christmas-themed wrapping paper.
- Christmas music

**10:15**

### **Early Arriver**

- Six opaque plastic cups
- Small pieces of Christmas candy or prizes (small enough to easily fit under a cup); one for each kid

## **Bible: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (9:15, 10:30, 11:45)**

- Bible Presentation in Large Group

## **Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (9:40, 10:55, 12:10)**

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Gift Wrapped**

- Old-fashioned clothespins with no springs; one for each kid
- Prepared manger; one for each child
- 1x12-inch strips of muslin or white fabric; one for each kid
- Fine-tipped markers
- Short bits of raffia
- Craft or school glue

**10:15**

### **The Great Unwrapping Game**

- Plastic Wrap “Game Ball”
- Upbeat music or a timer

## **Prayer (9:50, 11:05, 12:20)**

- The baby Jesus figure

## **Dismiss (10:00, 11:15, 12:30)**

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## **Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (Small Groups, 15 minutes)**

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today’s Bible Truth.

*Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Thank God for the wonderful gift of His Son, Jesus, and for making a way for us to have a relationship with Him. Pray for God to give kids some ideas for how to respond to God’s amazing gift. Ask Him to bring to mind today some things they can do to give to others, even if they don’t have a lot of resources or time.*

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Gift Guess**

**What You Need:** Wrapped presents, Christmas music

#### **What You Do:**

- Guide kids to sit in a circle.
- Play the music and pass one present around the circle. (Save the baby toy for last.)
- When you stop the music, guide the child holding the package to gently feel it and guess what’s inside.
- Ask prompting questions that will encourage kids to narrow their options down as much as possible:
  - What kind of animal do you think it is? Why do you think that?
  - What kind of ball do you think it is? Why?
- After a few guesses have been made, invite the kid to unwrap the item and then set it in the middle of the circle.
- Continue with the remaining items. Be sure to end with the baby item.
- *NOTE: If you are doing the “Compassion Cards” activity in Groups time, save the wrapping scraps for use during the activity.*

#### **What You Say:**

“At Christmastime, we give all kinds of gifts to each other. Long ago, **[Bottom Line]** God gave US the greatest gift ever, and our last gift is a hint about what He gave. (Kids will likely shout out, ‘Jesus!’, and that’s great!) **[Transition]** Let’s go to Large Group and hear all about it.”

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

**10:15****Early Arriver Idea**

**What You Need:** Cups, Christmas candy/prizes

**What You Do:**

- Explain that you'll be playing a "shell game" with the cups and candy/prizes.
- Turn three cups upside down in front of you, and hold up a prize.
- Choose one kid to play first, and instruct him to sit facing you and the cups.
- Put a prize under one of the cups.
- Tell the kid to watch carefully while you mix up the cups. His job is to keep his eye on the cup with the prize in it.
- Scoot the cups around and mix them up as quickly as possible for 15-20 seconds.
- Ask the kid to guess which cup the prize is under. If he's right, he gets to keep it. If he's wrong, he'll get to play again later.
- Continue playing, and allow kids who win to take turns moving around the other three cups, challenging their peers to find the cup with the prize.
- Play until every kid has won a prize.

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

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## Bible: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (Large Group, 25 minutes)

### GETTING READY

#### 1. Opener/Closer

##### What You Need:

- Host
- Christmas attire for the Host
- Decorated Christmas tree on stage
- Clear plastic container filled with jingle bells; one for each kid plus 15-30 extras
- Index cards; one for each small group
- Markers; one for each small group
- Large bucket or bin to collect the bells

#### 2. Bible Truth

##### What You Need:

- Historyteller
- Bible
- One boy volunteer
- One girl volunteer
- Two biblical headpieces
- Large “Joseph” and “Mary” nametags
- Three index cards for the multiple-choice questions (see “What You Do”)
- Piece of cardstock with “THE LAW” in large letters (written on both sides)
- Piece of cardstock with a very rough map of Nazareth and Bethlehem, with a dotted line in between (written on both sides)
- Baby doll
- Blanket

#### 3. Worship

##### What You Need:

- “Hosanna Rocks”
- “Go Tell It”
- “Good, Good Father”

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## **Bible: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (Large Group, 25 minutes)**

Engage kids’ hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible Truth, worship, and prayer experience in a Large Group setting.

**CG: Theme Loop Slide**

*Host enters in Christmas attire.*

**CG: Countdown Video**

**CG: Theme Video**

### **Opener**

**HOST:** “Hello, friends! Christmas is coming, and I can’t WAIT! Raise your hand if you’re excited about Christmas. *(Pause for response.)* Yep. Me too.

“Raise your hand if you like hot chocolate. *(Pause for response.)* Raise your hand if you like snow. *(Pause for response.)* Raise your hand if you like sugarplums. *(Pause.)* Um . . . I’m not exactly sure what those are. *(Pause.)*

Wait—I know! Raise your hand if you like PRESENTS! *(Pause for response.)*

“I thought so! I love Christmas because we celebrate how God gave us the very BEST present we could ever receive. He gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus. It was the ultimate example of what we’re talking about this month: compassion.

**CG: Life App Video**

**“Compassion is caring enough to do something about someone else’s need.**

**CG: Theme TransBack Video**

“God knew we needed a Savior, and He did something about it. He sent us His Son. That’s why Christmas is such a super-awesome day—we get celebrate how God sent Jesus to save the world. That’s what I call an amazing gift!

“Speaking of gifts, I’m hoping you can help me with one of MY gifts that I want to give someone. You see, I’ve got this big container full of jingle bells.

*Pull out the container of jingle bells. Hold one up and jingle it.*

“Awesome gift, right? Well, I’ve got a question for you. How many jingle bells do you think are in here? Do you have any idea? Well, don’t say it out loud yet, because we’re going to try to guess. I’ll give you a hint. It’s more than zero, and it’s less than 500.

“Take a minute to circle up with your group and come up with a number. We’ll see which group can get closest to the actual number of bells.

**SFX: Fun Christmas music (suggestion: “Jingle Bells”)**

*Hand out an index card and marker to each Leader.*

“Leaders, go ahead and write down your group’s guess on this card. Put your name on it, too. Hold your card in the air when you’re ready.

*Collect all the index cards and markers. Quickly put the cards in numerical order so you can keep them straight.*

“Let’s see. [Leader’s name]’s group said [number]. [Leader’s group] said [number].

*Go through everyone’s guesses, from lowest to highest. As you do, take mental note of which one is closest to the answer.*

“Those were all really good guesses. Are you ready to hear the answer? *(Pause for response.)* There are [number] bells in this container, which means that [Leader’s name]’s group—you were the closest. Great job!

“Now, please give [Historyteller’s Name] a big round of applause because it’s Bible Time!!”

*Historyteller enters.*

**CG: Blank Bottom Line Slide**

### **SETTING UP THE BIBLE TRUTH**

**HISTORYTELLER:** “Hi, everyone! I just love the Christmas season with all the lights and decorations, all the fun music, and all the beautifully wrapped gifts under the Christmas tree.

“I love giving gifts, and I love receiving gifts. Don’t you? I’ve been given a lot of gifts over the years, but there’s one gift that stands out to me as the greatest gift EVER. As we get started, I need a couple of you to play a part. Who wants to be up here on stage?”

*Choose an older boy and older girl (with their hands raised) to be Joseph and Mary. Bring them up on stage.*

“Great! Just for today, we’re going to pretend that [boy’s name] and [girl’s name] are Joseph and Mary.

*Put the headpieces and nametags on “Joseph” and “Mary.”*

“Joseph and Mary lived in a town called Nazareth, and they were getting ready to have a baby. Who was the baby? *(Pause for response.)* Right—Jesus, the Son of God.”

### **CAESAR MAKES A LAW**

**HISTORYTELLER:** *(Hold up the Bible.)* “Let’s pick up the rest of the events in the book of Luke, chapter 2.

*Open the Bible to Luke 2:1-3 (NirV) and read.*

*“In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law.*

*Hold up “THE LAW” poster. Let the audience see it, and then hand it to Joseph.*

*“It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to their own town to be listed.*

“Let’s think about this for a second. *(Point to Joseph and Mary.)* Joseph and Mary were about to have a baby. They found out about this new law from Caesar Augustus. It said they had to travel all the way to BETHLEHEM to be counted. A trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have taken them almost a week! Let’s see if you can figure out what they did.

*Pick up the index card and read the three options.*

“Did they . . .

- a. Throw themselves on the ground and throw a temper tantrum?
- b. Pretend they didn’t hear about the new law?
- c. Obey the law and travel to Bethlehem to be counted?

“What do you think: A, B, or C?” *(Pause for response.)*

### **A LONG, LONG JOURNEY**

**HISTORYTELLER:** “Let’s look in the Bible and see what happened.

*Open the Bible to Luke 2:4-5 (NirV) and read.*

*“So Joseph . . .*

*(To Joseph)* “Raise your hand, Joseph!

*Joseph raises his hand.*

*“Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea.*

*Hold up the “map.” Let the audience see it, and then hand it to Joseph.*

*“That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary . . .*

*(To Mary) “Raise your hand, Mary!*

*Mary raises her hand.*

*“He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.*

*“All right—the correct answer was C! Joseph and Mary obeyed the law and traveled all the way to Bethlehem to be counted. They finally arrived, and Mary could tell that her baby was about to be born.*

*Pick up the index card and read the three options.*

*“Did they . . .*

- a. Stay in a super-nice, very expensive hotel so they’d be really comfy?
- b. Head over to the very best hospital in town to get the very best treatment for their new baby?
- c. Stay with smelly animals because there was no room for them anywhere else?

*“Believe it or not, the correct answer is C! They didn’t stay at a super-nice hotel or the best hospital in town. Nope. The city was full, and there was no room for them anywhere—except where the animals lived.”*

### **HE’S HERE!**

**HISTORYTELLER:** “What do you think Joseph and Mary did about that? How did they act?”

*Pick up the index card and read the three options.*

*“Did they . . .*

- a. Say, ‘No way!’ and turn around and go home?
- b. Stay in the barn but complain constantly about how terrible it was?
- c. **[Basic Truth] Trust God no matter what?**

*“Let’s see.*

*Open the Bible to Luke 2:6-7 (NirV) and read.*

*“While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby.*

*Hand the baby doll and blanket to Mary.*



*“It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That’s because there was no guest room where they could stay.*

“Once again, the answer is C! Joseph and Mary didn’t waste time complaining about their situation. They didn’t turn around and go home. They trusted God and believed He had a plan for them. And there, probably surrounded by piles of hay and with smelly animals all around, baby Jesus was born. Jesus—the greatest gift, God’s only Son.

“You did a great job guessing, everybody. Let’s give our volunteers a hand, too!”

*Take the props from Joseph and Mary and put them in the bin. Dismiss them to their seats.*

### **WRAPPING UP THE BIBLE TRUTH**

**HISTORYTELLER:** *[Bottom Line]* “**God gave us the greatest gift** when He sent us Jesus.

“For hundreds of years, God’s people had been waiting for God to send a rescuer. They thought He might send a mighty warrior. No one imagined that the Savior of the world would be a baby. But that little baby would grow up and change the whole world.

**CG:** *Bottom Line Slide*

**[Bottom Line]** “**God gave us the greatest gift.** He gave us Jesus so we could have a relationship with Him that would last forever.

“Let’s pray and thank God for sending us the best gift EVER.”

**CG:** *Blank Bottom Line Slide*

### **Pray**

**HISTORYTELLER:** “Thank You, God, for giving us the greatest gift. You sent Your only Son to be our rescuer—to save us from our sins so that we could be part of Your family forever. Thank You for giving us such an amazing reason to celebrate at Christmas. We love You, and we ask these things in Jesus’ name, amen.”

“If you have an offering with you today, raise your hand and we will bring the bucket over to you.”

Raise your hand if you like music. *(Pause.)* Me too! Hey, let’s sing, like right now. Everybody up on your feet.

### **Worship**

**CG:** *“Hosanna Rockt”*

“We have so much to sing about. This Christmas season is all about Jesus and how He was born for “us. Let’s spread joy in all we do. Everybody sing this loud with me!”

**CG:** *“Go Tell It”*

"I love that worship is part of the history of Christmas. In Luke 2:13-14, we read: *Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said, "May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"* (NirV). Let's use all that we are and what we have today to give worship and praise to our Savior and King, Jesus. He was born for us. He is why we celebrate. Let's give Him our praises now.

**CG: "Good, Good Father"**

### Closer

**HOST:** "It's true—Jesus is the best gift EVER in the history of the world! We give gifts today as a way to remember how God gave US the greatest gift when He sent His Son for us. When you're opening presents around the tree in just a few days, remember that the reason we give is because God gave us Jesus on that very first Christmas.

**CG: Bottom Line Slide**

**[Bottom Line] "God gave us the greatest gift.**

"He knew that we needed a Savior because of our sin problem. We sin—we do wrong things. And since God is perfect, our sin separates us from Him. But God made a way for us to have a relationship with Him without sin being in the way. He sent His Son, Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, He took care of our sin problem for good. All we have to do is believe and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Then we can have a personal relationship with God that will last forever!

"That's what our Memory Verse says in John 3:16. If you know it, say it with me.

**CG: Blank Memory Verse Slide**

**CG: Memory Verse Slide**

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV).*

"God showed compassion to us. We can show compassion to others, too. After all, presents don't just come in boxes under the Christmas tree. We can give the gift of compassion anytime. We give not only to show others that we care, but also to reflect to others how God gave us Jesus, the best gift ever.

"Think about how you can make others your mission. Think about how you can take on our Undercover Christmas challenge and **[Basic Truth] treat others the way you want to be treated**. Spend time with someone doing their favorite thing. Write a silly song to make someone laugh. Give your energy to help do chores around the house. Cleaning your room would be an awesome gift for your parents—believe me!

"It's time to head to Small Group now so you can talk some more about God's greatest gift. Have an awesome time!"

*Dismiss children to their Small Groups.*

**CG: Small Group Slide**

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**Life App:** Compassion—Caring enough to do something about someone else’s need

**Basic Truth:** I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

## **Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (10 minutes)**

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible Truth applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Gift Wrapped**

**What You Need:** Old-fashioned clothespins, strips of muslin, fine-tipped markers, prepared “mangers,” raffia, glue

### **What You Do:**

- Briefly explain that in Jesus’ time, loving parents wrapped their newborn babies in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes were long strips of soft cloth.
- Give each child a clothespin “baby Jesus.”
- Guide kids to draw eyes, a nose, and a mouth on the baby.
- Next, lead kids to snugly wrap the baby with the muslin strip. (It can help to thread one end of the muslin between the “legs” and then wrap the remaining fabric around the body.)
- When kids reach the end of the strip, guide them to glue the fabric in place.
- Finally, give each kid a “manger.”
- They can then glue some raffia “hay” to the Popsicle sticks and lay (glue) baby Jesus in the manger.

### **What You Say:**

“Long ago, God promised that He would send Someone to save us from our sins. Who did God send? *(Pause.)* Yes! God sent Jesus, His very own Son, who was the BEST gift of all time!

“When God gave us Jesus, He gave us the greatest gift ever! God gave us Jesus because He loves us SO much. Since **[Bottom Line] God gave us the greatest gift** because He loves us SO much, what gift can YOU give to others to show them God’s love? *(a toy, a card, a hug, a kind word, or spending time with someone)* Those are kind and thoughtful ideas!

**[Make It Personal] (Tell kids about a tangible or intangible gift you’ll give this season to show someone God’s love.)**

“So always remember that at Christmas, we give gifts to others because **[Bottom Line] God gave US the greatest gift** of all: JESUS!”

**10:15****The Great Unwrapping Game**

**What You Need:** Prepared ball of plastic wrap with prizes inside, upbeat music or a timer

**What You Do:**

- Gather your group in a circle.
- Hand the ball to the person on your left, and start the music (or the timer).
- The person with the ball should immediately begin unwrapping it, and they get to keep any prizes that come out in the section they unwrap.
- Keep the music or timer going until the first kid has unwrapped at least one prize.
- Then stop the music/timer and instruct the first kid to pass the ball to the next kid.
- Start the music/timer again while the second kid starts unwrapping.
- Mention that the best prize is the one at the heart of the ball. Kids will start to compete to unroll faster to get to it.
- Play until the ball is completely unrolled and someone reveals the baby Jesus figurine.
- Set aside the wrap and direct kids to put their prizes away until Groups is over.

**What You Say:**

"I like this game! How did you feel when you were unrolling the ball and found a prize? What about that greatest prize? How did you feel about that? Was it what you were expecting? *(Allow for discussion.)*"

"We all sometimes forget what an amazing gift Jesus is to us. Toys and games and candy are great, but they will all wear out, get lost, or get eaten. None of those things lasts forever. But **[Bottom Line] God gave us the greatest gift** because our friendship with Jesus will last our whole lives and into eternity with God. When you're really sad, when even a giant candy bar or awesome video game can't cheer you up, Jesus will be there for you. When you are so happy and excited that you forget to eat dinner and you can't sleep, Jesus will be there for you. **[Bottom Line] God gave us the greatest gift**, because unlike other gifts, Jesus doesn't wear out. He will be your friend forever."

**All Service Times****Pray and Dismiss (10 minutes)**

**What You Need:** The baby Jesus figure

**What You Do:**

- Gather the group in a circle for prayer, and remind them that **[Bottom Line] God gave us the greatest gift: Jesus.**
- Hold up the baby Jesus figure.
- Explain that the group is going to pass around the baby Jesus figure and say something they're grateful for about God's gift of Jesus. For example: I'm thankful for Jesus because He is always with me/forgives our sin/helps me love my family, etc.
- Don't force anyone to share. If a kid really doesn't want to speak in front of the group, encourage him to hold the figurine for a moment before passing it on.
- When everyone is finished, close in prayer.

**What You Say:**

Dear God, we are so grateful that You gave us Jesus. Help us keep Your gift at the center of all our celebrations this week. Amen."