

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

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

10:15

Greatest Gifts

- Six to eight “gift” items, such as: toys, books, clothes, etc.
- Gift card with no dollar amount written on it (it should also be empty, though you will pretend otherwise)
- Paper
- Pencils

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

Wrapping Paper Verse Relay

- 10 Pieces of wrapping paper; two different designs of 5 each design
- Markers
- Bibles

10:15

Draw the Story

- 15-foot length of butcher paper
- Markers
- Bibles
- Wall tape

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

- Wrapping paper pieces from the “Wrapping Paper Verse Relay” activity
- Markers

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

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

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

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

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.

10:15**Greatest Gifts**

What You Need: “Gift” items (including gift card), paper, pencils

What You Do:

- Scatter the gift items around in the center of your group.
- Give each kid a piece of paper and a pencil.
- Instruct kids to make a list of what they consider the greatest gift to the least great gift from the items provided.
- Then allow kids to share their greatest gifts with the group and explain why they chose what they did.

What You Say:

“Those are all great reasons for choosing those gifts. But do you know which of these gifts is the greatest? It’s the gift card, because it has one hundred dollars on it! (*Pause while kids react.*) Ha. Not really. But it could have a hundred dollars, or even a thousand. The point is you don’t know. If it really did have a ton of money on it, it would be hard to tell, right? It’s not always easy to know what the greatest gift is until we know all the details. **[Transition] Let’s go to Large Group, where we’ll hear about the absolute greatest gift ever.**”

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

Simply the Best

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

GETTING READY

1. Opener/Closer

What You Need:

- Host
- Christmas suit or footy pajamas
- Christmas fedora (for the Host)
- Decorated Christmas tree on stage
- Two older kid contestants
- Ten wrapped banker's boxes with separately wrapped lids
- Table
- Five scripted "gifts":
 - Hawaii postcard
 - Football
 - Coffee mug
 - Empty ice cream carton
 - Two gift cards (which you'll give to two Small Group Leaders)
- Five miscellaneous "gifts," such as batteries, soap, slippers, sunscreen, a TV remote, Christmas tie, an onion, funny glasses, etc.

2. Bible Truth

What You Need:

- Bible
- Three kid volunteers to play Mary, Joseph, and Caesar Augustus
- For Mary and Joseph:
 - Two bathrobes
 - Stick horse
 - Two kid-size backpacks
- For Caesar Augustus:
 - Crown
 - Two scrolls (paper taped to dowels), with the two lines from the script written on them (see script)
- Three kid volunteers in the crowd
- For the crowd volunteers:
 - Index cards with the scripted lines
 - Fake fish
 - Fake broccoli (or other vegetable)
 - Beanie (or other hat)
- "Bethlehem" sign or banner
- Baby doll
- Blanket
- Wooden manger

- Prop bin
- Floodlight
- For the shepherd:
 - Shepherd costume (robe and staff)

3. Worship

What You Need:

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

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

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 Video

Host enters, wearing the same Christmassy outfit as in previous weeks.

CG: Countdown Video

CG: Theme Video

Opener

HOST: “Hello, friends! Christmas is a little over a week away, and I am both super-duper excited and also a little bit scared! You see, we’ve been talking all month about our undercover mission of compassion.

CG: Life App Video

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

CG: Theme TransBack Video

“With Christmas coming, I’ve been trying to be a good detective and find out what the people around me need. But as Christmas gets closer and closer, I’m getting a little worried that I won’t get the right gifts for the people I love. I mean, I want to make sure that I have the best, most awesome gifts for everyone!

“That’s where you come in. I thought maybe a couple of you could help me decide on some gift ideas. That’s why today’s game is called ‘Best Gift Ever.’ Who wants to play?

CG: “Best Gift Ever” Slide

SFX: Upbeat Christmas music

Choose two older kids and bring them up on stage to the table with the gift boxes.

(*To contestants*) “All right, [kid’s name] and [kid’s name]. We’ve got ten gifts up here, and we have five different people that we’re shopping for. I’ll call out the person the gift is for, and then you stand behind the box you think we should get for them. You won’t know what’s in the boxes ahead of time, so you’ve got to guess.

“Here’s the twist. There’s only ONE perfect gift for each person. So each time, you have a one in ten chance of finding it.

Note: It’s possible that you won’t have a winner in any of the rounds. If that happens, keep encouraging the contestants, and end on the positive note of celebrating their Leaders.

“Let’s start with our first gift. Let’s see if you can find the ‘Best Gift Ever’ for Mom. (*To contestants*) [Kid’s name], which box do you want?

Let the first contestant choose a box.

“All right. [Kid’s name], how about you? Which box do you want to pick?

Let the other contestant choose a box.

(*To contestants*) “All right, contestants. Show us—what’s in the box?

Contestants lift the lids off the boxes they’ve chosen and hold up their items.

“All right. [Nail polish] and [Hawaii postcard]. Both of those sound pretty good for Mom. But which gift is the BEST? Show us the ‘Best Gift Ever’ for Mom!

CG: Game Image #1 (Hawaii postcard)

“Amazing—[kid’s name], you got it! A vacation to Hawaii!

OR

“A vacation to Hawaii. Looks like neither of you won this round. But that was a good try. Let’s see what happens in round two! See if you can find the ‘Best Gift Ever’ for a little brother.

Let both contestants choose one of the remaining boxes for the next round. Ask them to reveal what’s in the boxes. The answer is the football.

CG: Game Image #2 (football)

For the next round, contestants are looking for the “Best Gift Ever” for Dad. Let both contestants choose one of the remaining boxes. Ask them to reveal what’s in the boxes. The answer is the coffee mug.

CG: Game Image #3 (coffee mug)

For the next round, contestants are looking for the “Best Gift Ever” for a best friend. Let both contestants choose one of the remaining boxes. Ask them to reveal what’s in the boxes. The answer is ice cream.

CG: Game Image #4 (ice cream carton)

For the final round, contestants are looking for the “Best Gift Ever” for a Small Group Leader. Let both contestants choose one of the remaining boxes. Ask them to reveal what’s in the boxes. The answer is a gift card.

CG: Game Image #5 (gift card)

“That’s right—our Leaders do so much for us. They deserve a treat. In fact, why don’t each of you (*contestants*) give one of these gift cards to your Leader?”

Give the two gift cards to the two contestants.

(*To audience*) “Let’s give both of our contestants a big hand!”

Dismiss contestants to their seats.

“Now it’s time for us to welcome [Historyteller’s Name].”

Host exits as Historyteller enters.

SETTING UP THE BIBLE TRUTH

HISTORYTELLER: “Hello, everyone. Are you ready for an epic adventure? I mean an EPIC adventure? (*Pause for response.*) Good. You see, a lot of us are pretty familiar with the events of the very first Christmas. (*Hold up Bible.*) God sent His Son, Jesus, to the world as a baby. Jesus was born in Bethlehem to be the Savior of the world. But how did this most-epic adventure take place? What led up to that famous first Christmas over 2,000 years ago? Let’s find out.

“I need a few volunteers who can help us bring the adventure to life! First, let’s find our Mary and Joseph.

Bring an older girl and an older boy to one of the side walls of the room. Give each of them a bathrobe to wear.

“Great. We’ve got Mary and Joseph. Our very real adventure begins in Nazareth.

SFX: “The Avengers”

Note: Use your best “movie trailer announcer” voice as you tell the Bible Truth—with lots of pauses—to match the drama of the music.

“Mary and Joseph were in the town of Nazareth, awaiting the birth of baby Jesus. They knew that Jesus wasn’t just any baby. He was the Son of God!”

COUNTING THE PEOPLE

HISTORYTELLER: “At that time, the Roman Empire ruled over all the land. The ruler of the empire, Caesar Augustus, had issued a law for all the people.”

Bring an older boy to the other side of the room and put the crown on him. Give him the first scroll. Cue him to open it and read it.

CG: Bible Story Slide #1 (“Make a list of everyone in the Roman world.”)

KID (as CAESAR): *(Reading the first scroll)* “Make a list of everyone in the Roman world.”

HISTORYTELLER: “Caesar Augustus wanted to count how many people there were in the empire. In order to get a correct count, he required that everyone had to return to their hometown.”

Give the second scroll to the boy. Cue him to open it and read it.

CG: Bible Story Slide #2 (“Everyone must return to their hometown.”)

KID (as CAESAR): *(Reading the second scroll)* “Everyone must return to their hometown.”

HISTORYTELLER: “That rule meant that Mary and Joseph had to take a journey to Bethlehem because that was Joseph’s hometown.”

Get Mary and Joseph’s attention and point to the screen to cue their line.

CG: Bible Story Slide #3 (“Let’s go to Bethlehem.”)

KIDS (as MARY and JOSEPH): *(Reading from the screen)* “Let’s go to Bethlehem.”

Hand the stick horse to Mary and Joseph. Give each of them a backpack to put on. Point to the “Bethlehem” sign on the stage and have them walk toward it.

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

HISTORYTELLER: “The journey wouldn’t be easy. They didn’t have a minivan. They had to travel on foot. That’s not easy to do when you’re like Mary and going to have a baby.

“The journey was long and hard. It would have taken almost a week! But eventually they arrived at the outskirts of Bethlehem—and the small town was PACKED. We can imagine there were a lot of people in the streets selling food and clothes and shouting loud for everyone to hear.”

Pass out the three index cards and props (fish, broccoli, beanie) to three different kids at the front of the room. Point to them to cue them to shout out their lines.

KID #1: *(Reading her index card) “Fresh fish!”*

KID #2: *(Reading his index card) “Who wants veggies?”*

KID #3: *(Reading her index card) “Hats for sale!”*

HISTORYTELLER: “What would Mary and Joseph do? *(Pause.)* Where would they stay? *(Pause.)* There were no guest rooms available ANYWHERE in town.”

CG: *Bible Story Slide #4 (“There’s no room.”)*

Get Mary and Joseph’s attention and point to the screen to cue their line.

KIDS (as MARY and JOSEPH): *(Reading from the screen) “There’s no room.”*

HISTORYTELLER: “So they did what they had to do. They trusted that God would take care of them. They found a place to stay, and it also happened to be a place where animals lived.”

Walk to the stage and set the wooden manger next to Mary and Joseph.

JESUS IS BORN

SFX: *Fade out “The Avengers”*

SFX: *“Away in a Manger” by The Piano Guys (keep playing through the prayer)*

HISTORYTELLER: “Soon the time came and Mary gave birth to Jesus—the Son of God—surrounded by animals. It probably didn’t smell great. There would have been a lot of noise and probably a lot of confused animals wondering what these people were doing in their home. But on this EPIC night in human history—on this MOST special night in Bethlehem—Mary gave birth to the Son of God. Jesus came to the world.

Hand the baby doll and blanket to Mary.

Open the Bible to Luke 2:7 (NIRV) and read.

“She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger.

Cue Mary to place the baby doll and blanket in the wooden manger.

“The King, the Savior of the world, God’s Son Jesus was born.”

CG: Bible Story Slide #5 (The greatest gift)

WRAPPING UP THE BIBLE TRUTH

HISTORYTELLER: “It was a very unusual way for God’s greatest gift to arrive. But that’s exactly who Jesus was: God’s greatest gift. He’s the greatest gift any of us could ever receive.

“You see, God knew what we needed. He knew that we needed a Savior. He knew that we needed Jesus. And because He loves us so much . . .

CG: Bottom Line Slide

[Bottom Line] “. . . God gave us the greatest gift.

“That’s why we celebrate Christmas. We celebrate how God had compassion on us and sent Jesus to be our Savior.

“Actors, all of you can put your props in here (*hold up the bin*) and head back to your seats. Great job!

Collect the props from Mary, Joseph, and Caesar Augustus, and dismiss them to their seats.

“Let’s pray and thank God for giving us the greatest gift of all.”

Pray

HISTORYTELLER: “Dear God, thank You so much for Christmas! Thank You for sending Jesus to meet our greatest need. We know that we sin and do things that are wrong, but through Jesus, You made a way for us to have a relationship with You. We know that Jesus died on the cross to take care of our sin problem, and all we have to do is believe what He did for us. Thank You for sending us the greatest gift—Jesus! We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name, amen.”

LIGHTS: Off

Host and one shepherd enter while Historyteller exits. He stands with his back to the audience, looking up, with his arms outstretched.

SFX: Fade out “Away in a Manger”

SFX: “The Avengers”

LIGHTS: Floodlight (on the shepherd)

Note: Host can shine a floodlight on the shepherd.

CG: Bible Story Slide #6 (“What in the world?”)

CG: Bible Story Slide #7 (Mary, Joseph, and Jesus will return . . . next week.)

“Shepherd” exits as lights come back on and Host continues.

LIGHTS: Up (normal)

CG: Blank Bottom Line Slide

SFX: Fade out "The Avengers" music

Closer

HOST: "Wow! Just like any epic superhero movie, we had a secret bonus scene and a teaser about next week's sequel! So cool!"

CG: Bottom Line Slide

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

"He really did give us the greatest gift EVER when He gave us Jesus. God saw our need. He saw that we have a sin problem. And He loved us enough to do something about it! It's like our Memory Verse says in John 3:16.

CG: Blank Memory Verse Slide

CG: Memory Verse Slide

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life."

"God gave us the ultimate example of compassion. He saw that we needed a Savior, so He sent Jesus.

"Here's the thing about compassion. We give to others not just to show them how much they mean to us, but also so we can show others how much God loves them.

"One way we can show compassion is to buy stuff—like presents—but that's not the only way. You can give your time. You can show others you care by spending time with them doing their favorite thing. You can use your talent to draw them something or write a song or story that will make them feel better or make them laugh. You can also give your energy by doing chores or tasks for them."

"Before I let you go off to your small groups, please stand with me and let's lift up some praise and worship to our well-deserving God."

Worship

SFX: "Hosanna Rock"

SFX: "Go Tell It"

SFX: "Down to Earth"

Closer

"I know all of you have some great ideas of how you can show compassion and do something about others' needs. That's great, because it's time to talk about it some more back in Small Group!"

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)

9:00 & 11:30

Wrapping Paper Verse Relay

What You Need: Wrapping paper pieces, markers, Bibles

What You Do:

- Divide the kids into two teams.
- Give each team a set of wrapping paper pieces, some markers, and some Bibles.
- Instruct each team to divide the verse up into ten phrases and write the phrases on the wrapping paper pieces.
- Then play a relay game:
 - Set each team’s pieces in a pile at one side of your space.
 - Guide kids to line up on the opposite side.
 - Instruct kids to relay to get the pieces. The first kid must grab the first phrase, the second kid must grab the second phrase, and so on.
 - The first team to get the entire verse put in order is the winner.

What You Say:

“God’s greatest give to us was Jesus. Everything God had been planning from the start was about Jesus and the plan to save the world. It’s so cool that this verse tells us something that God had planned thousands of years before it even happened. It wasn’t a spur of the moment thing. It was a well-thought-out gift from God to us. **[Bottom Line] God gave us the greatest gift** when He gave us Jesus.”

10:15**Draw the Story****What You Need:** Butcher paper, markers, Bibles, tape (*optional*)**What You Do:**

- Roll out the butcher paper and set out the markers.
- Use a marker to divide the paper into three equal sections. Label the sections:
 - Luke 2:1-3
 - Luke 2:4-5
 - Luke 2:6-7
- Divide kids into three groups, and assign a section of the Bible Truth to each group.
- Tell kids to read their verses and then draw what is happening.
- Give them several minutes to draw, and then ask them to show everyone else their pictures and tell what's happening.
- If possible, tape the paper on the wall for parents to see when they come to pick up.

What You Say:

[Bottom Line] “**God gave us the greatest gift** when He gave us Jesus. That was his ultimate act of compassion and care for us. Just like God cares for us and has met our greatest need, we are supposed to care for others and help meet their needs. God wants us to look around and see the very real and practical needs that other people have and then do something about those needs.

(If you're doing Activity Two) “We're going to get a chance right now to think about some of the ways we can meet others' needs.”

(If you're not doing Activity Two) “What are some things you can give to someone this week? Think beyond just physical objects to something you can't touch, like giving your time, energy, or attention to someone.” *(Allow kids to respond.)*

All Service Times

Pray and Dismiss (10 minutes)

What You Need: Wrapping paper pieces and markers

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of wrapping paper and a marker.
- Instruct them to write a prayer thanking God for giving us the greatest gift.
- Close with the prayer below.

What You Say:

“God, thank You so much for sending Jesus to us. He is by far the greatest gift ever. We praise You for your compassion toward us, and we ask You help us show compassion to others and tell them about the great gift of Jesus. In His name we pray, amen.

“I want you to take your prayers home with you as a reminder to keep thanking God for giving us the greatest gift.”

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage parents to ask kids about the prayer they wrote on the wrapping paper.