

# Simply the Best

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

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

**Key Question:** What are some ways you can give?

**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 can trust God no matter what.

## **Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (9:00, 10:15, 11:30)**

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Get Your Head in the Game**

- Small lollipop; one for each person
- Blindfold

**10:15**

### **Just for Fun**

- Adhesive-backed bow; one for each student
- 12-15-inch length of yarn; one for each student

## **Bible: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (9:10, 10:25, 11:40)**

- Bible Presentation in Large Group

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

**9:00 & 11:30**

### **Discussion Questions**

- No supplies needed

**10:15**

### **Take a Snapshot**

- Bells or bows; five to 10 for each person
- Gift bag to place the bells or bows

## **Prayer: Making it Personal (9:55, 11:10, 12:25)**

- One to two feet of wide, white ribbon; one for each person
- Pens

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

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## Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (Small Groups, 10 minutes)

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

*Before kids arrive, take some time to pray for your students. Ask God to help each one of them understand that the events of Christmas aren’t fictional. It really happened, and it can have an impact on their lives every day of the year and not just during December. Pray that God would give your students vision for how they can bring the history of Jesus’ birth into other areas of their lives.*

**9:00 & 11:30**

### Get Your Head in the Game

**What You Need:** Lollipops, blindfold

#### What You Do:

- **Ask** each student to come up with a unique baby cry or a distinct way of saying “mama.” Their baby sounds can be as silly as your preteens are willing to go.
- **Choose** someone to be the “parent” then blindfold him or her.
- **Select** another student to demonstrate his or her baby cry then have everyone rearrange around the room. The “parent” will have to find this cry.
- **Remove** any obstacles in the meeting area.
- **Tell** all of the students to begin making their baby sounds.
- **Challenge** the blindfolded student to move around the room in search of the baby cry demonstrated earlier.
  - When he thinks he’s found the right baby, he should offer him or her a lollipop.
  - If his guess is correct, the baby will take the lollipop.
  - If incorrect, choose a new parent and baby then play again.

#### What You Say:

“Have you ever wondered what baby Jesus sounded like when He cried? You made some great baby sounds, but I’m going to guess that none of them sounded like Him. We may not know the sound baby Jesus made when He cooed or cried, but there are other things we DO know. **[Transition] Let’s go to Large Group and celebrate the baby in the manger and the reason He came.**”

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

**10:15**

**Just for Fun**

**What You Need:** Bows, yarn

**What You Do:**

- **Ask** each student to tie the yarn onto a section of the bow then remove the backing from the adhesive strip.
- **Instruct** them to hold the end of the yarn between their front teeth. (Or if you prefer they don't put the yarn in their mouths, have them tape them to their chins.)
- **Challenge** them to hold their hands behind their backs then swing the bows in the air and try to get them to stick to their noses.
- **Consider** taking a group photo of those who succeed.

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

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## Bible: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (Large Group, 30 minutes)

### GETTING READY

#### 1. Opener/Closer

**What You Need:**

- Host
- Wrapping supplies (paper, tape, bows, etc.)

#### 2. Bible Truth

**What You Need:**

- Communicator
- Bible
- Nativity set (the larger the better)
- A table

#### 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, 30 minutes)**

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

CG: Theme Loop Video

CG: Countdown Video

CG: Theme Video

*Host enters.*

### **Welcome**

*Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening (*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*), or a viral video on YouTube, etc. Christmas is coming up, so obviously there is much to talk about there. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they’re there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what’s happening.*

*Host transitions to Worship.*

**HOST:** “Happy almost Christmas, everybody. People brought gifts when they came to see Jesus in the manger. We have a gift we can give Him today, and that’s our worship! Let’s all get loud and sing together.”

CG: “Hosanna Rocks”

**WORSHIP LEADER:** “Yeah, high fives. That was super fun. Let’s remember what that night must have been like when Jesus was born. This is a Christmas song I think you’ll know. Let’s not just sing and worship Jesus together, here, in this place. Let’s remember that it falls on us to go out and tell the world the good news of His birth and what that means.”

CG: “Got Tell It”

**HOST:** “What a special night it was. I would encourage you to check out *2 Corinthians 9* this week. It’s all about giving to others and about how you choose to give. But today while we talk and learn about God giving us the greatest gift, I want to share with you *2 Corinthians 9:15a* that says, ‘*Let us give thanks to God for his gift.*’ I invite you to do that. To give thanks, to honor and worship God for for being such a good, good father to all of us. Sing this with me.”

**CG:** “*Good, Good Father*”

### **Opener**

**HOST:** “Hey everybody! Can you believe how close we are to Christmas?! So how many of you had to wrap a present or two already? Good—consider that practice because today kicks off with an all-play! I need everybody up!”

*Host brings out the wrapping supplies.*

**HOST:** “Here’s how it works. When I say go, you are going to come and grab some wrapping supplies, and we are going to have a contest to see who can do the best wrapping job. One problem: I don’t have any presents. (*Look around*) Hmm . . . you know what we do have, though? Small Group Leaders!”

“That’s right. When I say go, you are going to grab some wrapping supplies and wrap your small group leader. We will then have a panel of judges who will determine the best Gift-Wrapping Small Group. Ready, set, GO!”

**SFX:** *Up-tempo Christmas music as kids play the game*

*After time is called, bring out a few adults to judge and declare a winning group. These can be people in your tech booth, Worship Leaders, or your Communicator.*

**HOST:** “Wow! That was highly entertaining. And educational—now I know how to wrap some of those awkward-sized presents this year. Not that you guys are awkward-sized . . . ah . . . never mind. Let’s just welcome [Communicator’s Name] to the stage.”

*Host exits as Communicator enters.*

**COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT****INTRODUCTION**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Hey, everyone! Christmas is almost here, and I will tell you . . . I am really in the spirit! I love everything about this time of year . . . decorating the house, brainstorming presents to buy for my family and friends, singing Christmas carols, and eating lots of good holiday food. Now by show of hands, how many of your families send out a Christmas card with your family photo on it?”

*Pause for response.*

“That’s great! So . . . did you ever have your photo session not go as planned? Maybe like some of these gems I found!”

**CG: Awkward Family Christmas Photos**

*As you click through the pictures, make comments. Be sure that the comments are of a positive nature and in good fun. If time allows, considering having several Small Group Leaders come up on stage and reenact a picture(s).*

“Those are awesome, right? You just gotta laugh when you see those pictures. Like I said, I love everything about this season!”

**TENSION**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Now as much as we get into the decorations and presents and food and pictures . . . Have you ever wondered if Christmas is more than just the Christmas season? What I mean is . . . are the events surrounding Jesus being born stuck in December only to be talked about once a year? Or is it a history that matters in March or July? For some of you, that may be a weird question. For others it may sound like an easy question to answer. Either way, it’s a good question for us to ask this time of year.”

**TRUTH**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Think about it like this. How many of you have one of these—or something like one of these—on display somewhere in your house?”

*Reveal nativity set (no figures in it yet).*

“Yeah, me too! Many of us have a nativity set on display during the whole season. We don’t know exactly where Mary and Joseph stayed, but they stayed someplace where people kept animals. Maybe even like this one I have here. Now, of course, I’m sure you’ve noticed by now that this one is empty. Yet over the course of the Christmas events, more and more people came and filled up this place. We can learn more about how those people got there as we check out the history of Christmas found the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament.”

*(Read from Luke 2:1, 3-4) “In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. . . . Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was.”*

*Pick up Nativity scene Joseph, who is across the room.*

“Here’s Joseph. Today’s focus of the Christmas events start out with a bit of a challenge for him. The Caesar—the king of the entire Roman Empire—decided that he wanted to take a census. In other words, he wanted to count all the people in his empire so that he knew (and the world would know!) just how big and powerful of a kingdom he had. But to do so, he commanded every person to return to his or her hometown to be counted there. That may not seem like a big deal, but Joseph and (*pick up nativity scene Mary*) Mary lived in Nazareth.

“Joseph’s family was from Bethlehem (*Point across to the table with the nativity scene on it*) . . . and now they had to travel there from Nazareth. That was almost 70 miles!”

“After a long and difficult journey, Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem. (*Walk them over to the table*) Let’s read . . . (*Reading from Luke 2:6-7 NIV*) ‘While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. 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. That’s because there was no guest room where they could stay.’”

“Okay, so most of us have heard this so many times before, but let that sink in. Not only did they have to travel all the way to Bethlehem, but also once they got there, they couldn’t find anywhere to stay! Did you catch where they put the baby after He was born? (*Pause and point to the nativity scene*) In a manger. What even is a manger? It is a food trough for animals. And in the part of the world where Jesus was born, they usually carved them out of rock! So what does that tell you about Jesus? He was born where the animals were kept in a place like this. (*Point to nativity scene.*)

“But THIS is where Jesus was born.”

*Put Mary and Joseph in the Nativity scene with the baby Jesus in the center.*

“And later on, the nativity scene starts to fill up as shepherds arrive (*Add shepherds to the nativity scene*) and even later on—maybe a couple of years later—the wise men show up, yet probably not to this place where Jesus was born. But at Christmas, we like to keep them all together. (*Add wise men to the nativity scene.*)”

“This is the first Christmas. This is how God sent His one and only Son into the world to save us. This is how God gave us the greatest gift.”

### **APPLICATION**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “But back to the question we started with. Is the birth of Jesus just about what happened in a nativity scene like this around two thousand years ago? Or does this event matter in other areas of our life here and now?”

**CG: Nativity scene set in Bethlehem**

“This is what we typically think of, right? The birth of Jesus certainly mattered that day. But does it matter here?”

**CG: Nativity scene in a classroom**



“Now that may seem confusing, but here’s what I mean. When you are sitting in your classroom at school or walking through the hallways, does the birth of Jesus matter? Does God sending His Son into the world to save us change the way we treat others at school or do our school work?”

“If the birth of Jesus mattered then, then it matters now, too!”

“What about here?”

**CG: Nativity scene on a sports field**

“When you’re playing on the team or going up against opponents, does the birth of Jesus matter? Does God sending His Son into the world change the way we act on the field, in the locker room, and toward people on the other team?”

“If the birth of Jesus mattered then, then it matters now, too!”

“What about here?”

**CG: Nativity scene in a family scene**

“When you’re at home with your family, does the birth of Jesus matter? Does God sending His Son into the world change the way we deal with the frustrations we have with our siblings or how we show respect to our parents?”

“If the birth of Jesus mattered then, then it matters now, too!”

“Two thousand years ago God gave the greatest gift. But now we have the opportunity in ALL of these areas to show God’s love and give to others. We can show compassion for those who are hurting, just like God showed compassion for us. And this is not just something we do only in December. The birth of Jesus matters in March and July. It matters in your classroom, on the soccer field or basketball court, in your home, and with your friends.”

## **LANDING**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “As you go to small group today, brainstorm some other places in your life that the birth of Jesus matters. Talk about how God gave and then discuss this question:

**CG: Key Question Slide**

**“What are some ways you can give?** God gave us Jesus, a gift that means a much on April 22<sup>nd</sup> as it does on December 25<sup>th</sup>. And as we respond to God’s gift, how can we have compassion toward others and give to them throughout the entire year. Think about how you can do that not just next week at Christmas but every day. Before we head to Small Group, let’s pray.

*Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard then dismisses them to small group.*

**SFX: Play high-energy music as the kids exit.**

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

**Basic Truth:** I can trust God no matter what.

## Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (Small Groups, 15 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**

### Discussion Questions

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

### What You Do:

#### Ask:

- What are some ways to show compassion to someone who doesn’t believe in Jesus?
- Who do you know that would be totally blown away if you gave him or her a gift? For example, a kid who’s hard to like or someone you don’t know very well such as your bus driver or the person who delivers your mail. What could you give that person or do for them throughout the year ahead?
- Share about a time when you had to give something up in order to show compassion to someone.
- What advice about showing compassion would you give someone a year younger than you?

**10:15**

### Take a Snapshot

**What You Need:** Gift bag filled with bells or bows

### What You Do:

- **Invite** students to take some jingle bells or bows from the bag, but don’t tell them why.
- For each bell, **ask** them to share one way to give to others—not only at Christmas, but also all year long.
- If they run out of ideas, **remind** them that there are more ways to give than by simply buying stuff.
- **Challenge** them to think of ways we can give our time, attention, talents, energy, and skills to meet other’s needs.

### Wrap Up and Say:

“It’s amazing how many ways there are to give. Even if we don’t have a lot of money, we can give some amazing gifts to others by sharing our time with them in some way. Everyone gets into the giving mood at Christmas, but true compassion is all about keeping the giving going all year long in many different ways.”

### **All Service Times**

#### **Pray and Dismiss (5 minutes)**

**What You Need:** Wide ribbon and pens

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

- **Give** each person two to three feet of wide ribbon and a pen.
- **Ask** them to write a prayer of praise and thanks to God for giving us the greatest gift.
- **Invite** those who are willing to pray their prayers aloud to do so when everyone is finished.
- **Suggest** that they take their ribbons home and use them to make a bow or decorate a gift they’re giving to someone.

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

*“Dear God, You always have been and forever will be the greatest gift-giver of all. We need Your help to be givers as well. Show us ways that we can share compassion this week before Christmas. Then keep opening our eyes to the needs of others all year long. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

Pass out Parent CUE and God Time cards as adults arrive for pick-up.