



Sermon Guide

WEEK 3

Key Question: **What makes your Christmas joyful?**

We sing songs like “Joy to the World” that can remind us why joy is such a huge part of Christmas. Beyond that, we want kids to start thinking about how they can personalize that joy through their own relationship with Jesus. That’s why we kick off Small Group with a question that gets them thinking about why they can have joy this Christmas. We pray this becomes a great conversation that leads them to a stronger relationship with Jesus, the most important reason we can find joy!

In week three, we head to the familiar Christmas passage in **Luke 2:1-7**. On the surface, it might have seemed like nothing was going right for Mary and Joseph: a census, no room for them to stay, not to mention giving birth in place where a whole lot of animals were sleeping. In spite of all that, Jesus was born! God’s rescue plan to save the world was in motion, and as we remember how Jesus was born, we can always find joy!

Bottom Line: **You can have joy because God sent Jesus.** We all know that Christmas is about Jesus, but sometimes it’s just too easy to think Christmas is only about lights, decorations, and presents. Those things aren’t bad, but it’s important that we use those things to stay focused on the truth of what we celebrate at Christmas. God loved us enough to send Jesus to rescue us. Knowing that can help us find joy no matter what is happening around us this Christmas season.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT CHRISTMAS WITH KIDS

The Christmas season can be an interesting time for families as they navigate how they’ll celebrate with their kids and extended family and friends. It’s important to keep in mind that not everyone will experience this season the same way. Some go all out with presents, while others keep it low-key. Christmas can be a time when people feel grief from losses over the past year or the pain of current health situations. Christmas can also expose some of the socioeconomic differences among the people who attend your church. It’s important to keep all of these things in mind as you talk about Christmas plans, what kids want for Christmas, or what kids are hoping for this year. Have a plan in place to make sure ALL kids feel at home in your church. Also, remind your Small Group Leaders and Storytellers that it’s not our job to tell kids what to think and believe about Santa Claus, Elf on the Shelf, or any of the traditions that people have. Just meet kids where they are and direct them back to their parents for these sorts of questions.

TODAY’S BOTTOM LINE

You can have joy
because God sent Jesus.

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Christmas—Celebrating Jesus,
God’s greatest gift

TODAY’S KEY QUESTION

What makes your
Christmas joyful?

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

“A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace.” Isaiah 9:6a, NIV

TODAY’S BIBLE STORY

Repeat the **Sounding Joy** Jesus Is Born
Luke 2:1-7

TEACHING GUIDE:

KEYSCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-7.

This message should be 15-18 min. More time for small group is key. Remember the lead small model.

SLIDE: KEYQUESTION

“What makes your Christmas joyful? How does knowing God gave us the greatest gift in Jesus give us joy? You might be having a hard time finding joy right now, and that’s okay. God is with you, even when life is hard. God also wants you to find joy because of Jesus. You’ll get to talk more about that in Small Group. Before you head out, let’s pray and thank God for sending us Jesus, the greatest gift ever! Let’s pray!”

“Today as you go to groups, think about this: What makes your Christmas joyful?”

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Repeat the Sounding Joy
Jesus Is Born
Luke 2:1-7

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What makes your
Christmas joyful?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

You can have joy
because God sent Jesus.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"A child will be born to us. A son
will be given to us. He will rule over
us. And he will be called Wonderful
Adviser and Mighty God. He will also
be called Father Who Lives Forever
and Prince Who Brings Peace."
Isaiah 9:6a, NIV

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Christmas—Celebrating Jesus,
God's greatest gift

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

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, a viral video on YouTube, etc. 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.

OPENER

HOST: "What is going on, my people? So good to be with you today as we continue to Countdown to Christmas. Today is all about JOY! When I think about joy, I think about music. And the holiday season has some of the best music out there! How many of you love Christmas songs? (Pause for responses.) How many of you—or your family members—have been listening to Christmas music since the start of November? (Pause for responses.) That's awesome! It's one thing to listen to Christmas songs, but how many of you love to SING Christmas songs? (Pause for responses.) Well, I have a game for YOU. I call it 'Christmas Carol Chaos.'

SLIDE: "CHRISTMAS CAROL CHAOS"

"Who wants to play a game that will test your Christmas song skill?"

Communicator chooses four volunteers to participate and introduces them to the rest of the group.

"Alright, let's put you in two teams of two. Here is how it works. I'll give one person a Christmas song to sing. Their partner has 15 seconds to guess what

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

the song is. I'll keep time. For every song you get right, you'll get a point. We'll trade teams and then trade who is singing every song. We'll play several rounds and then determine a winner!

"Ready . . . set . . . OH! I forgot a pretty important rule. You can't actually SING the lyrics of the song. I will give you one word. You may sing that word over and over again to the tune of the song. Your partner will guess the name of the song based on you singing just that word. Make sense? Any questions? Great! Let's play!

Host can keep a 15-second timer on their phone or watch.

Song List with the single word they are allowed to sing to the song's melody:

- All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth (*dentist*)
- Angels We Have Heard on High (*halo*)
- Away in a Manger (*donkey*)
- Deck the Halls (*tinsel*)
- Frosty the Snowman (*snowball*)
- Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (*yuletide*)
- Jingle Bells (*ding*)
- Joy to the World (*happy*)
- Oh Christmas Tree (*spruce*)
- Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (*nasal*)
- The Little Drummer Boy (*mallets*)
- We Wish You a Merry Christmas (*pudding*)

(After the game) "That was so much fun! But we can only have one 'Christmas Carol Chaos' Champion. The winning team is [Name of Team]! Let's give them a hand as we stand together and get ready to worship our amazing God—with the right words to the songs this time!"

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE

DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

10 MINUTES

WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: "This season is so fun. There's joy in the air. You can feel it wherever you go! Let's kick off our worship time with 'Christmas This Year.' Come on and clap your hands.

AUDIO: "CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR" / TRACK 5 FROM JINGLE JAM WRAPPED UP

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR" LIVE LYRICS VIDEO

"That was so fun! We have so much to celebrate this time of year. Listen to these words from Psalm 95:1: 'Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord. Let us give a loud shout to the Rock who saves us.' (NirV) Let's sing about the joy we have because Jesus came to the world.

AUDIO: "JOY TO THE WORLD (GLORY TO THE KING)" / TRACK 1 FROM JOY TO THE WORLD (GLORY TO THE KING) SINGLE

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "JOY TO THE WORLD (GLORY TO THE KING)" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Jesus is the most amazing gift from God to us. Jesus gives us peace, love, and joy. He gives us hope that nothing can take away. He is the GREATEST gift that's ever been given! Let's sing about that now."

AUDIO: "GREATEST GIFT REMIX" / TRACK 1 FROM GREATEST GIFT REMIX SINGLE

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "GREATEST GIFT REMIX" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "Hey, everyone! I loved hearing you all sing those Christmas songs!

SLIDE: VIRTUE

"Christmas music is definitely a way to celebrate Jesus, God's greatest gift. As well as a great way to talk about our next countdown to Christmas word: JOY!

SLIDE: JOY

"This makes me wonder. I know some people are crazy about Christmas music. How many of you have been listening to Christmas music for weeks now? *(Pause for responses.)* Has anyone been listening for a few months, maybe since October or November? *(Pause for responses.)* Wow! How about all year?! *(Pause for responses.)* I see those hands. That's amazing! I get it, though—some of those Christmas songs are just too good to listen to them only during the Christmas season.

"You know what? I have an idea. I think we need a 30-second Christmas dance party to wake us up a bit and get us in a JOYful mood. Let's do this! GO!

AUDIO: UPBEAT CHRISTMAS SONG

(After dance party) "Whew! I see that joy! Nice moves, everyone! That was great."

Instruct everyone to sit down.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "Now, it was fun to see you have no problem jumping up and busting out some Christmas dance moves. Music this time of year has a way of putting a smile on our faces and making us feel happy. But let's be honest, sometimes life can be hard, especially at Christmas. And joyful music or not, we might not feel like getting up and dancing around.

"This brings up a pretty big question: How can we still find a way to have joy even when we're not happy or life is difficult or we're just not in the Christmas spirit? Now, this isn't meant to be a downer, but it's important to remember that this season can be hard on some of us. Thankfully, finding joy—the sort of joy God can give us—isn't based on what we're going through. But that doesn't mean we won't still have questions and need some help to figure out how to find that joy.

"If that's you, I'm glad you're here. We have an amazing story from the Bible to help answer our questions about joy. In fact, we can find all sorts of answers in the Bible to some of our biggest questions in life. Let's head there now and UNWRAP some answers together."

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

Communicator starts laughing to self.

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: "That pun will make more sense in a moment. Alright, let's get into this very familiar story, but I do need some help to tell it. Okay? Okay.

Communicator takes out present #1 and chooses a volunteer.

"Could you open this for me please?"

Volunteer opens the gift, revealing a long list of names.

"Do you know what it is?"

Volunteer responds, possibly confused.

"Well, let me take that (*taking the list*) and let's start reading the story. Maybe it will make more sense.

Open the Bible to Luke 2:1 (NIRV) and read.

"In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world."

"Oh, you know what this is? (*holding up list of names, waiting for response*) It is a census! A census is when you count all of the people in the country you're in charge of to see how many there are. Now remember, at this time, the Romans ruled over the land of Israel, and so when Caesar Augustus decided to count the people, this is what happened . . .

Open the Bible to Luke 2:3 (NIRV) and read.

"Everyone went to their own town to be listed."

"That might be confusing to some of us. Think about it this way. Let's say your family was originally from a town near the Sea of Galilee in the north of Israel but had moved because of work or some other reason down to Judea near the capital city. Well, this census meant you needed to take a road trip back to the place where your family was from! Chances are that news like this would not bring a smile to your face or joy to your life.

"Okay, let's unwrap another gift.

Communicator chooses a volunteer to stand and unwrap present #2, revealing its contents. It is a small suitcase with a luggage tag that reads "Joseph."

"I'm guessing you can figure out what this is for. Let's keep reading.

Open the Bible to Luke 2:4 (NIRV) and read.

"So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was."

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

“Okay, you all get it? So Caesar Augustus might have counted the people in his empire to show his greatness or to get information for collecting taxes. But no matter what the reason, off went Joseph to the land of his family's heritage. Anyone know who this Joseph was? You guessed it! This was Joseph, as in Mary and Joseph. You might remember how we talked about Mary finding peace last week. Joseph had been living in Nazareth near Mary, but his family was FROM Bethlehem.

“But actually, did you catch what Bethlehem was called?

Wait for responses.

“The town of David! Why did that matter? Well, let's open another present first . . .

Communicator chooses a volunteer to stand and unwrap present #3, revealing its contents. It is a king's crown.

“Bethlehem was King David's hometown, too. The KING's hometown. And Joseph was from that family line and tribe . . . does anyone catch what's happening? Bethlehem was a small town, but it was a really important town, just like we heard the prophet Micah share two weeks ago. He told the people: ‘Out of [Bethlehem] will come for me a ruler over Israel’ (Micah 5:2 NIV). Could this all be happening? Could the promises be coming true?

“Okay, let's unwrap another one . . .

Communicator chooses a volunteer to stand and unwrap present #4, revealing its contents. It is a stuffed animal donkey.

“Interesting! Let's keep reading.

Read directly from Luke 2:5 (NIV)

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

“Ah, okay. We're not sure if there was any animal involved, but somehow Joseph and Mary (*holding donkey*) definitely traveled all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of the census. By the way, the fact that the couple traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem doesn't take long to read, but Mary was pregnant and that's at least a 70-mile trip! Plus, one of the ways they might have traveled would have led them through the mountains! The trip would have been quite intense for her!

“Who would like to open another gift . . .

Communicator chooses a volunteer to stand and unwrap present #5, revealing its contents. It is a clock or watch.

“Fun! Let's keep reading.

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

DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK
THREE
DECEMBER 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

"While Joseph and Mary were there, the time ("Oh I get it . . . 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."

"And who was that Boy who was born? (Pause for responses.) Right! Luke was giving us a firsthand look at how Jesus came into the world! The strips of cloth. The bed in the manger. It was not how you would imagine a king coming into the world. But it was into this mess, our mess, that God sent Jesus."

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: "This was the first Christmas. This was how Jesus, God's one and only Son, came into the world . . . into the mess, to save us. There may be some pretty cool gifts you receive this month, and some of those will make you really happy! But make no mistake . . . THIS is how God gave us the GREATEST gift . . . and we can have joy because God sent Jesus. And even when we don't feel like celebrating . . . or dancing . . . even when life doesn't turn out the way we hoped . . . we can still have JOY because God sent Jesus!"

"And you know what? Now we get to be like God in how we share this great gift with others! Two thousand years ago, God GAVE the greatest gift. But now we have the opportunity in so many ways to show God's love and share with others. And remember, this isn't just something we do in December. Jesus matters throughout the entire year. God giving Jesus to rescue us matters in your classroom, on the soccer field or basketball court, in your home and with your friends. This is the GREATEST gift . . . and Jesus can bring you JOY all year long!"

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "Today as you go to groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"What makes your Christmas joyful? How does knowing God gave us the greatest gift in Jesus give us joy? You might be having a hard time finding joy right now, and that's okay. God is with you, even when life is hard. God also wants you to find joy because of Jesus. You'll get to talk more about that in Small Group. Before you head out, let's pray and thank God for sending us Jesus, the greatest gift ever! Let's pray!"

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP