

# DECK THE HALLS

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



WEEK  
**FIVE**  
DECEMBER 2023

SMALL GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO CONNECT  
25 MINUTES

## MADE TO CONNECT

an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding



## 3. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

[TALK ABOUT GOD | BIBLE STORY REVIEW]

**WHAT YOU NEED:** No supplies needed

**WHAT YOU DO:**

**Ask:**

- What can you learn from the wise men about celebrating Jesus?
- What are you looking forward to in the New Year?
- Before all of the Christmas decorations are taken down, think about keeping one thing out to remind you to celebrate Jesus all year long. What decoration would you choose? (Be sure to check with a parent to make sure it's okay.)

## TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

**Following Yonder Star**

Wise Men  
Matthew 2:1-12

## TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What are you looking forward to in the new year?

## TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Celebrate Jesus all year long.

## 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 9:6, NIV

## MONTHLY VIRTUE

Christmas—Celebrating Jesus,  
God's greatest gift

## BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

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## MADE TO PLAY

an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group



## 4. VERSES TO TAKE WITH YOU

[HEAR FROM GOD | MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY]

WHAT YOU NEED: Bibles

### WHAT YOU DO:

- Invite the kids to sit in a circle.
- Choose a kid to start an hour-by-hour countdown.
- Instruct the first kid to say: "12 o'clock."
- As soon as that kid speaks, instruct another kid (not the kid sitting next to the first kid) to say "11-o'clock."
- Continue the countdown until the group is back to 12 o'clock.
- If two kids speak at the same time, or if there is more than a two-second pause in the countdown, call out, "Stop the Clock!"
- Start the game over at 12 o'clock.
- Challenge kids to countdown as quickly as possible without pauses or repeats.
- Say: "Unlike the game, there's no time limit on celebrating Jesus. We can celebrate anytime, anywhere, all year long."
- Make sure each kid has a Bible,
- Together, look up Hebrews 13:15 following the Bible Navigation Tips below.

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**Finding verses with 4th-5th graders:** Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for. Once they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. First, have them find the chapter they're looking for. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

- Repeat the verse together a few times to help kids learn it.
- Ask:
  - As you think about the year ahead, when might you feel tempted to stop giving praise to God? What can you do when that happens?
  - In what ways is our praise an offering to God?
  - Giving praise to God in good times is not too hard, but what can we praise God for in bad times?
- Look up Isaiah 9:6 in your Bible.
- Read Isaiah 9:6 to the kids as you remind them of the hope, peace, joy, and love God has shown us in sending Jesus.
- Repeat the names given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6 then encourage kids to suggest ways those qualities of Jesus could be praise reminders in the days ahead.
- Repeat the game, but instead of calling out hours on the clock, choose one of the variations below.
  - Use the names of Jesus found in Isaiah 9:6.
  - Call out the words of Hebrews 13:15a in verse order.

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## MADE TO REFLECT

an activity that creates space  
for personal understanding  
and application



## 5. MAKE IT PERSONAL WITH PRAYER

[PRAY TO GOD | PRAYER ACTIVITY]

**WHAT YOU NEED:** No supplies needed

**WHAT YOU DO:**

- Invite kids to share some of the things they're looking forward to next year.
- Say: "We have hope, peace, joy, and love in Jesus—not just at Christmas, but all year long."
- Divide your group into four smaller groups.
- Assign each group one of the following words: hope, peace, joy, and love.
- Explain that you will lead them in prayer, asking God's help to keep their focus on Jesus and celebrating Him in the upcoming year.
- When you pause, instruct the kids to interject the word assigned to them one at a time as part of your prayer.
- Use the prayer below as a guide.

**WHAT YOU SAY:**

"Dear God, as we have celebrated Christmas this month, we have learned so much about *(Pause for kids to interject hope, peace, joy, and love.)* We want to keep celebrating You all year long. Help us to keep our focus on You. As we choose to follow You this year give us *(pause)* even if the things we're looking forward to don't happen. You are the God of *(pause)* and we know that we can trust You no matter what. We love You. Amen.

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