

Age-Level Overview

	Open the Bible	Activate Faith
<p>Lower Elementary</p> <p>WORKSHOP FOCUS: God guides us to Jesus.</p> <p>A-MAZE-ING STARS: Kids create a star maze to remind them of the wise men's journey.</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles</p> <p>SUPPLIES: Astronomy resource books (optional): <i>The Christmas Sky</i> by Franklyn M. Branley, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1990. ISBN 0-690-04770-3; <i>Astronomy in the Bible</i> by Joan Andre Moore, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1981. ISBN 0-687-01950-8; <i>365 Starry Nights: An Introduction to Astronomy for Every Night of the Year</i> by Chet Raymo, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1982. ISBN 0-13-920520-9; internet photos of constellations or stars (optional)</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: None</p> <p>SUPPLIES: Computers with Kid Pix, Publisher, or Paint; computer clip art of the wise men and baby Jesus; computer star template; printers (color if possible); paper; staplers; whiteboard; markers; paper stars; hole punch; ribbon</p>
<p>Upper Elementary</p> <p>WORKSHOP FOCUS: God came as a fragile baby.</p> <p>CHRISTMAS CHUCKLES: Kids create a cartoon about the Christmas story.</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers</p> <p>SUPPLIES: Baby supplies (bottle, diaper, clothes)</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bible</p> <p>SUPPLIES: Computers with Paint or Kid Pix, printers, <i>Far Side</i> cartoon books or other single-frame cartoon examples, whiteboard, markers</p>
<p>All Kids</p> <p>WORKSHOP FOCUS: Jesus brings joy to the world.</p> <p>JOY TO THE WORLD: Kids take photographs and make a Joy to the World Power Point slideshow.</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles, Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers</p> <p>SUPPLIES: None</p>	<p>SPARK RESOURCES: None</p> <p>SUPPLIES: "Joy to the World" music and lyrics (page 63), computer with Power Point or other slide show program, digital camera(s) and cord, "Joy to the World" download</p>



Visit www.sparksundayschool.org for more Spark content. Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find a downloadable Family Page for this rotation's story filled with ideas for families to use to explore this story and live out their faith at home.

Workshop Focus: God guides us to Jesus.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
- If kids have heard the story several times during previous weeks, read it again! Kids learn through repetition, and every workshop will explore the Bible story in a slightly different way.
- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
- Be sure to visit www.sparksundayschool.org to download the Family Page for this story. Make copies of it and ask Shepherds to distribute it during the Wrap Up.

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: Download pictures of the night sky onto the leader's computer and boot up the rest of the computers. Keep the monitors turned off until it is time to use them.

Activity Instructions

Have you ever gone stargazing? There are many things to see in the stars. There are constellations that form pictures. There are shooting stars and planets and asteroids. With special telescopes you can even see nebula, galaxies and black holes.

For as long as people have been around we've looked at the stars. Many people tried to tell the future from the stars and stars are often used to show direction. Have you heard of the North Star? It is a star that always stays in one spot in our sky so you can use it to find your way. Show some of the images of the night sky either from the books or on the computer during this time.

One part of the Christmas story involves a star. Have you ever heard of the three wise men? They followed one star all the way to Jesus. Let's read about their story in our Spark Story Bible on page 218.

How did the star help the wise men in our story? (It led them to Jesus.) God sends us what we need to find Jesus!

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles

Supplies

Astronomy resource books (optional)

The Christmas Sky by Franklyn M. Branley, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1990. ISBN 0-690-04770-3

Astronomy in the Bible by Joan Andre Moore, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1981. ISBN 0-687-01950-8

365 Starry Nights: An Introduction to Astronomy for Every Night of the Year by Chet Raymo, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1982. ISBN 0-13-920520-9

Internet photos of constellations or stars (optional)

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

A-maze-ing Stars

Set Up:

Create a basic star template as the foundation for the star maze. Save this template on each computer so that it can be found easily for the children. Familiarize yourself with the program so you know how to import clip art to place at the entrance and exit of the star maze. Also double check that the printer has toner and is hooked up to all the computers. Have the star template open on the screen and turn off the monitor until the computers are ready to be used.

Activity Instructions

In our story today the wise men followed the star to Jesus. God showed the wise men the star, stayed with the wise men as they made their journey, and warned the wise men in a dream to stay away from King Herod after they saw Jesus.

God did all of these things for the wise men. God helps us to find out about Jesus, too. What are some ways God helps us to find out about Jesus today?

(God gives us church, the Bible, parents, pastors, teachers, friends, music, nature, etc.)

Write down kids' answers to use later during Send.

Sometimes finding Jesus is a little like going through a maze. We know there is a way to get to Jesus, but it takes some time. Today we are going to make a star maze to remind us about our story.

Instruct kids to turn on their computer monitors and view the star template.

Explain that this is the basic shape for their maze. Kids then follow these steps:

1. Kids pick a place at the outside edge of their star to start their maze.
2. Kids insert computer clip art of the wise men at the starting place.
3. Kids find the center of the star. This will be the end point of their maze.
4. Kids insert computer clip art of baby Jesus at the ending place.
5. Kids use the drawing tool to create the path for the wise men. Encourage kids to create dead ends or multiple paths along the way. They can make their maze as hard or as simple as they choose.
6. Kids print out a copy of their completed maze for each member of the class (or print out one copy and someone photocopies the mazes).
7. Kids decorate a cover for their maze book. After all the mazes are printed and gathered, the leader staples them together with the cover.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Computers with Kid pix, Publisher, or Paint
Computer clip art of the wise men and baby Jesus
Star Template saved on each computer
Printers (color if possible)
Paper
Staplers
Whiteboard
Markers

When the maze books are completed, gather again as a group. **You kids made wonderful mazes! Today we learned about the wise men and how God sent a star to guide them to baby Jesus. God also helps us find Jesus. God stays with us when we get lost in life's maze. God sends us just what we need.**

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

Let's thank God for the people whom God sends to help us find Jesus. On your star, write the name or draw the picture of a person who has taught you about Jesus. Use the list from Open the Bible to help remind the kids of some of their options.

We are going to hang these stars in our classroom to remind us that God guides us to Jesus during Sunday School.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

Paper stars
Hole punch
Ribbon
Markers

Prayer Time

Prepare kids for the prayer by telling them that when you pause, they will say the name of the person they put on their star.

**Dear God,
Thank you for sending us guides to help us find Jesus.**

(One by one, kids say their guides' names.)

**In your name we pray,
Amen**

Don't forget to hang up the stars!

Workshop Focus: God came as a fragile baby.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
- If kids have heard the story several times during previous weeks, read it again! Kids learn through repetition, and every workshop will explore the Bible story in a slightly different way.
- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
- Be sure to visit www.sparksundayschool.org to download the Family Page for this story. Make copies of it and ask Shepherds to distribute it during the Wrap Up.

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: Have the computers on in advance with Paint or Kid Pix loaded but turn off the monitors during our opening. Invite kids to gather around you for the opening.

Activity Instructions

Welcome to Computer Lab! Today we are going to learn about the Christmas story and make cartoons to illustrate the story.

What do you remember about the Christmas story? Allow the kids to tell you about the Christmas story. Ask follow-up questions and clarify story parts when needed. **That is wonderful! Every year we read the Christmas story in the Bible, and every year we learn something new.**

Let's read Luke 2:1-20 on page 1130 and Matthew 2:1-12 on pages 1058-1059 of our Spark Bibles. Encourage the kids to take turns reading aloud and to use their Spark Bible Stickers.

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

Baby supplies (bottle, diaper, clothes)

Today I want you to think about what it means that Jesus was a baby. What are some things we need to take care of a baby? Show kids' the baby-care items you brought. **Babies can't do anything on their own. They rely on others for everything—their food, their warmth, and even their safety. Being a baby is a very fragile thing. We know that God is powerful and strong, so it was very special that he came to earth as a fragile baby, Jesus.**

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Christmas Chuckles

Set Up: Place cartoon resource books near the kids' computers for reference.

Activity Instructions

What are some words you would use to describe God? Listen to kids' responses.

We know that God is very powerful. God created the whole world and God's goodness won over evil. So it seems a bit strange that God, who is very powerful, became a baby, who is very fragile. Why do you think God came to the world as a tiny baby? Listen to kids' responses. **It is a mystery why God was willing to do this, but we do know that God loves us and came to earth to save us.**

Sometimes strange things can seem funny, in a good way. God must have a good sense of humor to be both powerful and fragile! Cartoons can remind us about life's funny parts. Today we're going to make a funny animal cartoon about the Christmas story. We will make single-frame cartoons; that means we only use one picture and one funny caption.

In our cartoons we will use the animals from the Christmas story. We will think of funny things for them to say about the Christmas story.

Show kids some *Far Side* cartoons, so they get an idea of the type of cartoons they are making. Spend some time brainstorming on the whiteboard some of the funny parts that could be used in the story. List animal options from the Christmas story—Mary's donkey, the animals in the stable, sheep, and the camels who carried the wise men.

Give the kids plenty of time to create their cartoons using Paint or Kid Pix and print them out. Allow kids who wish to do so a chance to share their cartoon.

Cartoons use things that are strange to find humor in the world. The fact that our powerful God came to us as baby Jesus is one of those mysterious, funny-in-a-good-way things.

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles

Supplies

Computers with Paint or Kid Pix

Printers

Far Side cartoon books or other single-frame cartoon examples

Whiteboard

Markers

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

God did something strange and special. God sent a baby named Jesus. But Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was God's son. Babies need a lot of things, but the most important thing they need is love and attention. God loves us and we love baby Jesus.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Prayer Time

Let's sing today's prayer together to the tune of Rock-a-Bye Baby.

**Dear baby Jesus
Asleep on the hay
Thank you for coming
To us in this way.**

**As a baby you need us,
And we need you, too.
So, love us Lord Jesus,
And we'll love you, too.
Amen (spoken)**

Workshop Focus: Jesus brings joy to the world.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: Have one computer booted up in a central location so that the class can gather around it.

Activity Instructions

Welcome to Computer Lab! We are going to have a joyful day today because we are going to learn all about the Christmas story. The Christmas story tells of a time of great joy when Jesus was born.

Do you know what the word joy means? Accept all answers. **Joy is sort of like being happy, but it is a BIG happy. It is like being so happy that all you can do is smile and laugh! Have you ever been that happy?** Ask the kids to share some times when they have experienced joy.

Joy is an important word during the Christmas season. It describes how happy we are that God sent Jesus. Let's read Jesus Is Born on page 212 of the Spark Story Bible. We can listen for joy in the story. Encourage older children to follow along in Luke 2:1-20 on page 1130 in the Spark Bible. Don't forget the Spark Bible Stickers, too!

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

None

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Joy to the World

Set Up: Be sure you know how to set up a slideshow in your program of choice and how to add music to it. For information about adding music to Power Point slide shows visit http://www.presentationmagazine.com/powerpoint_music.htm. Estimate how many photos you will need to fill verses 1, 2, and 4 of the arrangement of *Joy to the World* you are using. Download a version of "Joy to the World" onto the computer. Print copies of the lyrics to "Joy to the World" (4 verses).

Activity Instructions

Who are some of the people in our story who felt joy about Jesus' birth? (*Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angels*) **Jesus' birth gave us all a reason to feel joy!**

Jesus' birth brought joy to the world because the people were waiting for the Messiah who would save them. Have you ever heard the phrase "joy to the world" before? This phrase is the start of a well-known Christmas carol. Play one verse of the "Joy to the World" download. **This Christmas carol reminds us that all of creation celebrated Jesus' birth. Today we are going to make a musical slideshow of "Joy to the World."**

Divide the kids into three groups, one group each for verses 1, 2, and 4. See page 63 for the words and music to "Joy to the World" and give each group copies of the song and a camera. Give each group the words for their verse and a camera. Encourage kids to take "joyful" pictures to illustrate the words. For example, kids can pretend to be smiling rocks, as in verse 2, or simply photograph themselves being joyful. Groups can look around for creative ideas. Remind kids to be careful with the cameras! Tell each group how many pictures they need to take!

Upload photos as groups finish. Enlist the help of a couple older kids to help you combine the downloaded music with the photos in Power Point.

While you are preparing the Power Point, groups who are done can pair off at the other computers (*older kids can work with younger kids*). Kids can use Word to write additional verses for "Joy to the World."

When the Power Point slideshow is completed, gather the kids together to watch it. Invite any kids who'd like to share their additional verses to do so.

Christmas has a lot that can make us happy, but it is the fact that Jesus was born that makes us joyful! We feel joyful like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the whole earth! When we sing "Joy to the World" this Christmas, I hope we will sing it loudly and joyfully!

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

"Joy to the World" music and lyrics (page 63), 1 per kid
Computers with Power Point or other slide show program
Digital camera(s) and cord
Joy to the World download

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

Jesus' birth brought joy to the world. It was a time of great happiness and we celebrate Jesus' birth every Christmas. How can we share our joy with others this Christmas? Listen to kids' ideas.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Prayer Time

For our prayer today we are going to sing the first and last verses of "**Joy to the World**" together!

Verse 1

**Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.**

Verse 4

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.**

Joy to the World

Joy to the World

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,

