

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

Age-Level Overview

	Open the Bible	Activate Faith
Lower Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: Jesus brings joy.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles	SPARK RESOURCES: None
HAPPY TOMATO HEADS: Kids show their Christmas joy by making a happy vegetable face.	SUPPLIES: None	SUPPLIES: Serrated knife, cutting board, melon ballers or teaspoons, table knives, plates, tomatoes, frozen peas, yellow peppers, stalks of celery, black beans, cream cheese, salt, pepper
Upper Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: I can offer my gifts to Jesus.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
THE GIVING STAR: Kids bake a Nativity star and cover it with yummy dip and fresh vegetables.	SUPPLIES: Giving Star Recipe Cards (page 79), wrapped box with activity recipe inside	SUPPLIES: Baking sheets, aluminum foil, mixing bowl, large mixing spoon, measuring spoons and cups, tablespoons, table knives, cutting boards, pizza cutter, plates, napkins, crescent rolls, cream cheese, cheddar cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream, dry onion soup mix, seasoned salt, dill, chopped yellow peppers, cauliflower, baby carrots, note cards, pencils, manger
All Kids		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: I can tell the Christmas story.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles, Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
CHRISTMAS STORY COOKIES: Kids decorate Christmas cookies with Nativity images.	SUPPLIES: None	SUPPLIES: Tablespoons, table knives, paper plates, napkins, plastic wrap, round sugar cookies, frosting, decorator gels, sprinkles, colored sugar



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: Jesus brings joy.

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)

Mary Visits Elizabeth Storytelling

Set Up: None

Activity Instructions

Greet kids by name. **I'm so happy to see you! Today, we are going to talk about happiness. What things make you happy?** Encourage conversation around this question.

In the Christmas story, we talk about how God came to earth as the baby Jesus. There is a lot of happiness and joy in that great story. Today, we are going to look at part of the story.

This part happens before Jesus is even born. His mother, Mary, is expecting him. Her belly is full with the growing baby insider her. And while she is expecting him, she is so happy that she goes to see her relative, Elizabeth. Let's open our Spark Story Bibles to Mary Visits Elizabeth on page 202.

Now I want you to listen as I read it to you. Whenever you hear the word "wiggle" I want you to stand up and really wiggle. Let's practice. Wiggle! Good. Now whenever you hear the word "joy" I want you to jump up and down. Let's practice. Joy! Good. Now whenever you hear the word "happy" I want you to

Spark Resources
Spark Story Bible

Supplies
None

smile and hold your hands up by your face with your fingers spread open and your palms facing forward. Let's practice. Happy! Good! Now we are ready to listen to this story and do the actions for wiggle, joy and happy. Read story, putting special emphasis upon those words.

Why is Mary happy? *(She is going to have a baby who is from God.)*

Why is Elizabeth happy? *(She is also going to have a baby and she is happy about Mary's baby who will bless everyone.)*

Why is Elizabeth's baby happy? *(He knows that baby Jesus is near him.)*

Wow, this is a really happy story. It shows us that Jesus brings joy to the world, starting even before he was born. Let's stand up and jump for joy to show our excitement about this!

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Happy Tomato Heads

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

Ingredients

- Medium-sized red tomatoes with stems, 1 per kid
- Bag of frozen peas
- Yellow peppers, 1-2
- Celery stalks, 3-4
- Black beans, 15 ounce (450 gram) can
- Cream cheese, 1 tub
- Salt
- Pepper

Set Up: Carefully cut the top off each tomato with serrated knife; thaw frozen peas; cut yellow peppers into small wedges (for noses) and celery into thin slices (for smiles); spoon some cream cheese onto plates and set them around the work area; set the other ingredients out in a central place.

Activity Instructions

We will make a healthy, happy tomato head snack to show our joy about Jesus.

1. Have kids thoroughly wash hands.
2. Give each kid a plate with a tomato and the "hat" (top of tomato) that's been cut off. Have them carefully scoop out the insides of the tomato with a teaspoon. Throw all the "tomato guts" into a separate container to be composted or cooked later.
3. Bring the bag of peas around as kids finish scooping. Have kids fill their tomato with the peas, and then place the tomato's hat back on.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Serrated knife
Cutting board
Melon ballers or teaspoons
Table knives
Plates

4. Tell kids it's time to add eyes to their happy tomato heads. Select a volunteer to help open the can of beans. Ask another volunteer to deliver two beans to each kid. Kids can use their fingers to grab a pinch of cream cheese from the plates around the area. It will serve as the glue for attaching the eyes.
5. Kids now glue on a yellow pepper nose by using a bit of cream cheese.
6. Kids show that our tomatoes are happy about the Christmas story by selecting a thin slice of celery and "gluing" it on upwards so their tomato is smiling.

Put kids in pairs, assigning one in each pair to be the reporter. **Your happy tomato head is going to be interviewed. Gently wiggle your heads like they are puppets. The reporter in each group needs to ask the other tomato why he or she is so happy. Then that tomato will tell the reporter all about the Mary visits Elizabeth story.** Walk around with the shepherds and encourage kids to tell as much about the story as they can while the reporter nods and acts excited to hear it. Then have them switch parts and do it again.

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

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

Your happy tomato heads did a great job of telling the happy Christmas story. They've done their job. Now you can eat them with your hands! If it takes some coaxing to get kids to eat their healthy snack, encourage them to add a bit of salt and pepper.

Spark Resources
Family Pages



Supplies
Salt and pepper

Prayer Time

For our prayer let's do the same actions we did while we heard the story: wiggle when you hear the word *wiggle*; jump when you hear the word *joy*; and smile and put your hands up when you hear the word *happy*.

Dear Jesus,

Like Mary and Elizabeth, we are happy about your coming.

We are filled with joy that you bring joy. Because you bring joy, we can bring joy.

That's right . . . joy!

We wiggle and giggle and giggle and wiggle because we are happy that you are so good to us.

Thank you Jesus.

Amen

Workshop Focus: I can offer my gifts to Jesus.

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

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- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Wise Men Storytelling

Set Up: Wrap a box with the recipe found on page 79 inside it.

Activity Instructions

Welcome everybody! Look, I've brought a gift. It reminds me of a great gift I once received. Tell a personal story about a gift you received. **Now, I'm going to give everyone a chance to tell another person in the class about a great give you've received.** Let everyone have an opportunity to share with one other person about gift they received.

Wow, those are some great gifts. Now, how about a gift you've given? Let everyone have an opportunity to share about gift they gave someone.

In the Christmas season, we do a lot of gift exchanges. This tradition grew out of the Bible story itself. Let's check it out. Open your Spark Bible to Matthew 2:1-12 on pages 1058-1059.

How did the wise men find Jesus? (*They followed the star until it stopped.*)

How did they feel when the star stopped over the place where Jesus was? (*overwhelmed with joy*) **What gifts did the wise men bring Jesus?** (*gold, frankincense and myrrh*)

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

Wrapped box with recipe
from page 79 inside

These were very expensive gifts to give a baby but the wise men knew that Jesus was a king, so they were happy to give them.

Speaking of gifts, let's open the gift I've brought so we can find out what our cooking activity will be today. Allow kids to open package and discover the recipe. **Looks like we're making a Giving Star today.**

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

The Giving Star

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

Ingredients

(Serves 8)

- Crescent rolls, 1 package
- Cream cheese, 8 oz. (225 grams) package
- Grated cheddar cheese, 8 oz. (225 grams)
- Mayonnaise, 3 tablespoons (45 ml)
- Sour cream, 2 tablespoons (30 ml)
- Dry onion soup mix, 2 tablespoons (30 ml)
- Seasoned salt, 1 teaspoon (5 ml)
- Dill, 1 teaspoon (5 ml)
- chopped yellow peppers
- Cauliflower
- Baby carrots

Set Up: Set out supplies. Line one of the baking sheets with aluminum foil. Place the other baking sheet in the freezer. Preheat oven to 350° F. Copy and cut out the recipe cards, one per kid.

Activity Instructions

Since we are exploring the story of the wise men led by the star, we are going to make a big giving star to eat. We've got the recipe so let's get started! Each of you has a copy of the recipe we found in the box.

1. Have kids wash hands thoroughly.
2. Have them work as a team to arrange the can of crescent rolls into a star that fills the baking sheet. Offer kids the use of the table knives to cut straight lines.
3. Put it in the oven at 350 degrees F. (180 degrees C.) for 12-15 minutes or until lightly brown. (Bake the star ahead of time if you have time constraints.)
4. Meanwhile, have kids follow the recipe to make the cheesy spread. They can take turns adding the ingredients.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Baking sheets, 2
Aluminum foil
Mixing bowl
Large mixing spoon
Measuring spoons
Measuring cups
Tablespoons
Table knives
Cutting boards
Pizza cutter
Plates
Napkins

5. When this is completed, have kids carefully cut fresh vegetables into bite-size pieces up to 2 inches (4cm) long. (Make sure you have helpers to monitor kids closely, or do this ahead of time.)
6. Take the star out of the oven. Carefully remove it from the oven on the aluminum foil and place it onto a frozen baking sheet. This will help cool it quickly.
7. Have the kids use teaspoons to spread the cheesy mixture carefully over the star. It will get a little melted, but that's fine.

Our recipe is called the “giving star” because it reminds us of the story of the wise men following a star and giving gifts to Jesus. The shape reminds us of the star that led them to the baby Jesus. The vegetables symbolize the three gifts that the wise men gave Jesus. The yellow peppers are for the gold, the cauliflower is for the frankincense and the baby carrots are for the myrrh. Have kids creatively arrange the vegetables on top.

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

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

Use a pizza cutter to serve the star snack to the kids. As they are enjoying it, discuss these questions.

Why do you think the wise men brought such valuable gifts to Jesus? (*they knew he was a king, wanted to show respect, etc.*) **What about you? What gifts can you bring Jesus?** (*time, talents, money*)

Jesus told in Matthew 25:40 that when we give anything to anybody in need, we are giving it to him. Give each kid a note card and a pencil. **What gift could you give to Jesus by helping people who need it? On this card, write one gift you plan to give.**

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

Note cards

Pencils

Manger (if a prop manger is not available, use a box)

Prayer Time

Gather kids together for prayer. Set manger prop or box in the space. **Now we are going to pray. When I say “we offer you our gifts,” you may each walk up to the manger and place your folded note card into it. This is a symbol of the gifts you personally are offering Jesus. We’ll do it quietly and respectfully.**

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for the story of the wise men who followed the star from a far away land to find you and offer their valuable gifts to you. We have gifts too, our time, our talents and our treasures. And so now, we offer you our gifts.

Wait for kids to put their cards in the manger.

Please bless the gifts we have offered.

Amen

Workshop Focus: I can tell the Christmas story.

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

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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: None

Activity Instructions

Merry Christmas! And welcome to the Cooking Workshop. Since we are in the Advent-Christmas season, we are going to talk about Christmas. What do you know about Christmas? Encourage kids to tell what they know.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Let's read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20 on page 1130 of our Spark Bibles or "Jesus is Born" on page 212 of our Spark Story Bibles. We hear this section of Luke a lot at Christmas time, so it might sound familiar to you. I want you to listen carefully, and if you hear something you think you've heard before, I want you to grab your ears as if to say "my ears perked up." Ask volunteers to read the story from the Spark Bible. As kids are reading, show the illustrations in the Spark Story Bible. Encourage younger kids to help older kids place "I looked it up" stickers in their Spark Bibles.

This passage tells us a lot about the facts of Jesus birth. Put kids in pairs, preferably younger kids with older ones. **You and your partner will tell each other the Christmas story in your own words. Tell all the details you can remember,**

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

None

like where Jesus was born, why his parents were there, what baby Jesus wore, who came to visit him, and why they came.

Give kids a chance to tell each other the Christmas story. Circulate around the room with the Shepherd to answer any questions.

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Christmas Story Cookies

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

Ingredients

- Round sugar cookies, 2 per kid
- Frosting in various colors
- Decorator gels
- Sprinkles
- Colored sugar

Set Up: Set out supplies in areas where the group can easily share them.

Activity Instructions

You are really getting the hang of telling the Christmas story. Now we are going to decorate Christmas cookies, which is something a lot of people do. But we are going to make our cookies special, because our cookies will tell the Christmas story. For example, you could make an angel on your cookie, because the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds. Or you could make a cow because Jesus was born in a manger among the animals.

1. Have everyone wash hands thoroughly.
2. Give each kid one cookie on a plate.
3. Allow kids to decorate their cookie with frosting, decorator gels and other decorations.
4. After kids complete one cookie, they can decorate another. Remind kids that each cookie must have a different picture on it. Encourage them to be creative. Keep decorating until you've used up all the cookies.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Tablespoons
Table knives
Paper plates
Napkins
Plastic wrap

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

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

Bring your plate of cookies together for our wrap up. Invite kids to show their cookies and have them explain what part of the story it represents. Praise kids for both their decorating and their storytelling.

You really can tell the Christmas story! It is important that you tell it, especially to those who haven't heard it so they can learn about Jesus and how much God loves them.

Allow kids to eat at least one of their cookies and wrap their other cookies up with plastic wrap. **I invite you to share your extra cookies with someone and when you do, tell them the Christmas story.**

Prayer Time

Let's pray for God to bless these cookies we will be giving away. Hold your plate up in front of you as we pray.

Dear God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to be born in Bethlehem.

Thanks for the angels who sang and for the shepherds who ran.

Bless these cookies we have decorated.

May they help us tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Amen

Spark Resources

Family Page



Supplies

None

Giving Star Recipe Cards

Giving Star Recipe

1 package refrigerated crescent rolls
8 oz. (225 grams) package cream cheese
8 oz. (225 grams) grated cheddar cheese
3 tablespoons (45 ml) mayonnaise
2 tablespoons (30 ml) sour cream
2 tablespoons (30 ml) dry onion soup mix
1 teaspoon (5 ml) seasoned salt
1 teaspoon (5 ml) dill
chopped yellow peppers, cauliflower, and baby carrots

Spread crescent rolls on cookie sheet in the shape of a large star. Seal all seams. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit (180 degrees C.) for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Meanwhile, mix cream cheese, cheddar cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream, onion soup mix, seasoned salt and dill. Spread on baked and slightly cooled star. Top with fresh vegetables.

Giving Star Recipe

1 package refrigerated crescent rolls
8 oz. (225 grams) package cream cheese
8 oz. (225 grams) grated cheddar cheese
3 tablespoons (45 ml) mayonnaise
2 tablespoons (30 ml) sour cream
2 tablespoons (30 ml) dry onion soup mix
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