

Age-Level Overview

	Open the Bible	Activate Faith
Lower Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: God's world reflects God's love.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles	SPARK RESOURCES: None
MAGNIFIED: Kids get a close-up look at God's Christmas creation.	SUPPLIES: Old glasses or sunglasses, hand mirror	SUPPLIES: Magnifying glasses, basket, items to observe under a magnifying glass; greenery used in wreaths or garlands; pine cones or other conifer cones, glitter; newspaper; gift wrap; ribbons; tinsel; jingle bells; Christmas stampers
Upper Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: It's time for a celebration!	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
SHINE ON: Kids look up to recreate the stars that shone over the Nativity.	SUPPLIES: Books, posters or charts of the night sky and constellations, glow-in-the-dark stars, flashlight	SUPPLIES: Small flashlights, large flashlight or spotlight, black construction paper, scissors, paperclips, tape, constellation resource material
All Kids		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: God's world makes "scents."	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles, Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
SCENTS OF THE SEASON: Kids use their sense of smell to experience Christmas in a new way.	SUPPLIES: Plastic glasses with a nose attached or a red clown-type nose	SUPPLIES: Mortars and pestles, rolling pins, kitchen graters, conifer needles or other plants used for wreaths, oranges, garlands, peppermint candies, powdered hot chocolate mix, nutmeg, cinnamon, newspaper, paper lunch bags, whiteboard, markers



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.

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: Remove the lenses of the old pairs of glasses or sunglasses, making sure you have a pair for each kid to wear.

Activity Instructions

Greet kids as they arrive and gather them together with you in a circle. Hold up the hand mirror. **Welcome to our Science Workshop today! I'm glad to be here and I'm especially glad that you're here. Look! I have a mirror here.** Look at yourself in the mirror, then hold the mirror so that kids can see themselves in the mirror as well. **A mirror is one way to see things. What are some other ways to see things?** (*our eyes, glasses or contacts, microscopes, telescopes, magnifying glasses*) **There are a lot of different ways to see things. Let's use these silly "magic glasses" to help us read the Bible story today so we can see God's story in a new way.** Let kids put their glasses on. **Now let's open our Spark Story to Bibles to Jesus is Born on page 212. Let's read!** If you have time, let the kids read, or if not, read the story aloud to them as they follow along in their own Bibles. After reading ask kids: **What was your favorite part of the story? If you could be anyone in the story, who would you want to be?**

Collect the glasses before moving on to the next activity.

Spark Resources
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies
Old glasses or sunglasses, 1
per kid
Hand mirror

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Magnified

Set Up: Check at a dollar store or other department store for inexpensive magnifying glasses that the kids can keep. Collect the assortment of Christmas season items for kids to examine with their magnifying glasses. Find a basket for collecting the items when you have completed the activity.

Activity Instructions

Let's remember some of the details about the night when Jesus was born. What do you think it smelled like in the stable? (*straw, animals, dirt*) **If you had been there, what would you have heard?** (*angels singing, animals eating, a baby crying*) **Our five senses help us learn and remember things. We can imagine what it might have been like to be in the stable on that night when we think about what we might have seen or heard or smelled. Today for our Science Workshop, we're going to examine things using one of our important senses, our sight! I have collected things that remind me of Christmas, and I have a magnifying glass for each of you to use.** Set out the items on a work table, identifying any that the kids may not be familiar with. Once they have looked at everything with their magnifying glasses, talk about what they saw.

Which of the things you looked at seemed pretty much the same, whether they were magnified or not? Which things looked really, really different up close? Why do you think I have the newspaper in this collection? (*to represent the good news*) **Magnifying glasses can help us see things differently. Sometimes when we look really closely at Bible stories, we can see things differently, too!** Pass around the basket to collect the items the kids were examining. You will use them in the Wrap Up activity.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Magnifying glasses, 1 per kid
Basket
Items to observe under a magnifying glass:
Greenery used in wreaths or garlands
Pine cones or other conifer cones
Glitter
Newspaper
Gift wrap
Ribbons
Tinsel
Jingle bells
Christmas stampers

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page to this story if the kids haven't already received it, and come together for Wrap Up. **What did you see in our science activity today that surprised you? God's world reflects God's love. Was there anything in today's Bible story that surprised the people in the story? What surprises do you think God has for us today?**

If there's time, post a piece of chart paper in the room. Have the kids use thick glue from glue sticks to glue some of the items you examined with magnifying glasses onto chart paper to make a collage.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

Chart paper, glue sticks

Prayer Time

Gather together and pray:

**Dear God,
You surprised many people in the Bible
And you surprise people today, too.
Keep our eyes focused on you
So that we can see your surprises for us!
Amen**

Workshop Focus: It's time for a celebration!

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)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: Display the posters, books or charts of the night sky and constellations in your meeting room. If possible, get permission to attach “glow-in-the-dark” stars to the ceiling of the room. If you can display them in common constellation patterns, they will make a nice addition to this activity.

Activity Instructions

Welcome, welcome, welcome! I love science and studying God's Word. I'm excited to be here in our Science Workshop to talk about both of these things. Have you ever been outside when it was very, very dark and you could see all kinds of stars in the sky? Look around the room at all of the books and pictures of the stars in the night sky! What do we call some of the star pictures that we can see in the sky? That's right; we call them *constellations*. People have watched the stars ever since time began. Have you ever thought about what it might have been like to see the stars on the night when Jesus was born? The Bible tells us that there were bright stars and angels singing. Let's pull out our Spark Bibles and read about this. Turn to page 1130 in your Bibles, the second chapter of Luke. What verses tell us about the angels and the glory of the Lord? (Luke 2: 9-15) Does this passage tell us that there were stars? No, you're right,

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

Books, posters or charts
of the night sky and
constellations
Glow-in-the-dark stars
Flashlight

not really. This version says “the glory of the Lord shone around them” and we can take that to mean the bright shining of the stars. I’m going to turn off the lights now, and let’s all look up at the ceiling. What do you see? Do you see the stars shining there? If you were able to put any common constellation patterns on the ceiling, turn off the lights and point out familiar constellations to the kids with a flashlight (Big Dipper, Little Dipper, Orion’s belt). Encourage the kids to add an “I Read This” Spark Bible sticker to the Bible pages. **We can celebrate God’s creation and God’s son, Jesus.**

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Shine On

Set Up: Cut black paper into circles that will fit the lighted end of the small flashlights. Choose several common constellations for the area where you live and make patterns of them (either by tracing or on a copy machine). Make sure you have one black circle and pattern for each kid.

Cut a black paper circle to fit the lighted end of your larger, demonstration flashlight. Lay a constellation pattern on top of the black circle and, using the sharp end of a paper clip, poke small holes or dots to represent stars through the black circle paper. Tape your black circle to the lighted end of the large flashlight, so you’re ready to turn the flashlight on and project the constellation on the ceiling of a darkened room.

Activity Instructions

I’m sure you’ve all looked up into the dark sky at night before and seen the constellations. What are some of the constellations you have seen? Many kids will have seen the North Star, and perhaps the Big Dipper. If not, be prepared to show them these constellations in a book or on a star chart. **Today we’re going to make our own constellation lights.** Shine the large flashlight and constellation you have prepared on the ceiling.

1. Let each kid choose a flashlight and several black paper circles.
2. Have them decide which constellation they would like to make and give them a paper copy of that constellation to tape to a black paper circle.
3. Once their pattern is taped to the circle, show kids how to push the paperclip carefully through the paper and recreate the star patterns on the black circles.
4. When each constellation pattern is complete, have the kids tape the black paper circle to the lighted end of the flashlight.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Small flashlights, 1 per kid
Large flashlight or spotlight
Black construction paper
Scissors
Paperclips
Tape
Constellation resource material

5. Turn off the lights in the meeting room and have the kids turn on their flashlights so everyone can see all of the stars and constellation in the night sky!
6. If you have time, encourage kids to make more than one constellation. They can find a flashlight at home and continue the process.

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

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

Today we talked about the night sky and the stars that shone on the night when Jesus was born. It must have been an exciting time for Mary and Joseph, but also for the shepherds who first came to see this new baby. What exciting things God has in mind for all of us! We can celebrate with God, night or day.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Prayer Time

When we pray today, I'd like to turn off the lights. I'll leave a space in the prayer for anyone who wants to pray. If you want to add to our prayer, you first turn on your flashlight and shine it on the ceiling for everyone to see. You can pray your prayer out loud by yourself and at the end of it, we'll say all together, "Thank you, Lord!" I hope that by the time our prayer is done, the ceiling will be filled with stars!

**Dear God,
It's us again.**

Thanks for giving us so much to celebrate!

We give thanks individually for: Allow this time for kids to shine their lights and add their individual prayers; when you feel everyone who has wanted to has added a prayer, close it.

And all together, we say, "Thank you, Lord!"

Amen

Workshop Focus: God's world makes "scents."

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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: None

Activity Instructions

Welcome to our Science Workshop! I'm glad you're all here. How many of you know how many senses we have? If you guessed five, you're right! Can you name our five senses with me—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. God really knew what he was doing when he created us with these senses. Imagine how boring the world would be if we didn't have them! Today we're going to focus on one sense. Let's see if you can figure out which sense I'm talking about if I put these glasses on. Hmmm . . . no, it isn't seeing! What is this big thing attached to my glasses (or the red thing on my nose)? Yes, today we are going to talk about our noses and our sense of smell. But first, would you join up with someone else and let's read the Bible story Jesus Is Born from Luke 2:1-20 together. It's on page 212 of the Spark Story Bible and page 1130 of the Spark Bible. Think about smells when you hear the story. Circulate around the group, helping anyone who might have trouble finding this passage or reading it aloud together. When all have read or reviewed the story, gather together again.

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies

Plastic glasses with a nose attached or a red clown-type nose

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Scents of the Season

Set Up: Set up a work table with a variety of items that kids can smell, sniff, and crush. Ask the cooks you know if you can borrow mortar and pestles or rolling pins and graters for the kids to crush and grate some of the items and notice how the scents change when they do so. Cover the work table with newspaper.

Activity Instructions

Do you know much about your nose, besides the fact that it smells for you? God made all of our amazing bodies with such complex and intricate systems. We are truly amazing! Your nose is one fine instrument and it works extremely well with your brain. Use a whiteboard and markers to illustrate the process of smell and the words related to the process. **Here's how it works: Your sense of smell is called *olfaction*. Smell happens when chemicals floating in the air enter our nose and dissolve in a membrane called the *olfactory epithelium*. Can you say that big word? Our olfactory epithelium is located about 3.5 inches (7 cm) up into the nose from our nostrils. Tiny hair cells called *cilia* wait for the smell chemicals to arrive in the olfactory epithelium. They pass on the smell information to 40 million receptors and these receptors work with the brain. Is it a new smell? Old smell? Inviting smell? Dangerous smell? Christmas smell? Our noses and brains sort this out.**

Let's experiment with our nose today! What smells did you think about when you heard the story? Discuss stable smells and tell kids that frankincense and myrrh also had smells. (Bring some to class if you can.) **Does anyone know another word for smells? Smells can also be called scents. I'd like you all to gather around the table to see what kinds of scents we have to work with.**

Discuss the items you have brought, and talk about their connection to the holiday season. Invite kids to smell each thing and see if it smells the way they guessed it would. Then invite the kids to use the kitchen tools to crush or grate these things to try and release more of the scent. Be sure to demonstrate how to use the tools for those who may not have much experience in a kitchen. Remind kids not to eat or inhale any of the items.

Mmmm . . . it smells great in here. In fact, it smells a lot like Christmas, doesn't it? Were you able to choose a favorite smell? Now I'd like us to make our very own mixture, called a *potpourri*, of several of our favorite smells. To make your own potpourri, choose pieces of the items that smell the best to you and put them into a paper bag. When you have several things inside, fold the top of the bag over and shake-shake-shake to mix the ingredients. Now open up the bag, stick your nose down into the bag and take a whiff. Does it smell like Christmas? What a great reminder of this time of celebration! God's world sure makes "scents."

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Mortars and pestles
Rolling pins
Kitchen graters
Conifer needles or other plants used for wreaths
Oranges
Garland
Peppermint candies
Powdered hot chocolate mix
Nutmeg
Cinnamon
Newspaper
Paper lunch bags
Whiteboard
Markers

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page to this story if the kids haven't already received it, and come together for Wrap up. **Today we learned about the Christmas story with our noses! God gave us Jesus and today we read the story of Jesus' birth. We're waiting for Christmas. This is a good time of year to learn about God and remember all the gifts that God has given us, including smell. God's world makes "scents."**

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Prayer Time

Pour any leftover items into a large mixing bowl or paper bag and mix together. Pass this bag or bowl around during the prayer time and encourage the kids to take in the smells as you pray together.

**Dear Lord,
Thank you for always hearing our prayers,
And for creating us to enjoy the world you have made.
In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.**

