

## Age-Level Overview

|                  | Open the Bible  | Activate Faith  |
|------------------|---|---|
| Lower Elementary | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Story Bibles</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Birthday party decorations, party hats</p>  | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> None</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> <i>A Charlie Brown Christmas</i> OR <i>The Santa Clause 2</i>, video source and large screen, favorite Christmas ornament or decoration, green and white striped candy canes</p>  |
| Upper Elementary | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Things that help us see more clearly: Eyeglasses, magnifying glasses, telescopes, binoculars, microscopes</p> | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> None</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> <i>The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement</i> OR <i>National Treasure</i>, video source and large screen, map, compass, pictures of road signs, snack (optional)</p>  |
| All Kids         | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Story Bibles</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Pictures of some famous friends: Batman and Robin, Phineas and Ferb, Dora and Boots, Teletubbies, Kermit and Miss Piggy</p>   | <p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> None</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> <i>Elf</i> OR <i>A Charlie Brown Christmas</i>, video source and large screen, Christmas items in boxes, wrapped (ornaments, tinsel, lights, candy), a Jesus symbol: baby doll, cross, or picture, snack (optional)</p> |



Looking for additional Spark content to further engage kids? Visit [www.wearesparkhouse.org](http://www.wearesparkhouse.org) to learn more about these options for purchase.

- The Director CD-Rom contains Activity Pages, Coloring Pages, Family Pages, Large Group Openings, and two additional in-class activities for each lesson.
- A Sparkhouse Digital annual subscription gives you access to all content contained in the Director CD-Rom and the Spark Leader Guides, plus administrative tools and other extras.



**Workshop Focus:** God gave us the greatest gift, baby 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.

## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Advent and Christmas Storytelling

**Set Up:** Decorate the meeting space with balloons, streamers and other birthday party decorations. Give each participant a party hat to wear when they arrive.

#### Activity Instructions

Invite participants to sit in a circle. **Welcome to Video! Today we are going to celebrate a very special birthday!**

**What's your favorite thing to do on your birthday? How do you celebrate birthdays in your family?** Invite participants to share their favorite birthday traditions.

**Today we are going to celebrate the birthday of someone who is very special to us. Every year, millions of people come to this person's birthday party, which we usually celebrate together with our congregation on December 25. Can anyone guess who I'm talking about?** Invite participants to guess.

#### Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible

#### Supplies

Birthday party decorations  
Party hats

**It's Jesus! Thousands of years ago, God came to live with us as a real person. That person was Jesus! He was born, just like you and me, as a little tiny baby. When he was born, there was a huge celebration! Jesus' parents, some shepherds, and even heavenly angels were there, singing for joy that God's love came to earth as this baby boy in a manger!**

Read Jesus Is Born on page 212 in the Spark Story Bible. Show the pictures as you read.

**Jesus' birthday is a very special day. Just like the angels and the shepherds, we celebrate our Savior's birthday and remember God's love for us on Christmas, and every day!**

## Activate Faith (25 minutes)

### It's Party Time!

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**Set Up:** Prior to the lesson, preview and select the video clip you will use. Set up the video source and large screen so that everyone in the room will be able to see it. *Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.*

**Video Option 1: A Charlie Brown Christmas** (1965, animated, Not Rated)

**Start cue:** (7:44) "I was looking for you, Big Brother!"

**End cue:** (24:53) "Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!"

**Scene set-up:** Charlie Brown is stressed out! There's a lot to do to get ready for Christmas! But is there a deeper meaning, beyond the need to buy things?

#### **Activity Instructions for A Charlie Brown Christmas**

Show your favorite Christmas ornament or decoration to the class and explain its significance. **Do you have a favorite Christmas ornament or decoration that you put out every year? Christmas is a very special holiday. We put up trees and lights and decorations. We buy presents for loved ones. And we look forward to getting presents too!**

**Do you know what the first Christmas gift was? It actually wasn't a "what." It was a "who"! Jesus, our Savior, who came on the very first Christmas. He was God's gift of love to all people.**

**We celebrate Christmas every year to remind us of God's love. When we decorate our houses, it's like we're getting ready for Jesus' birthday party! And when we give gifts, we remember God's gift of love to us through Jesus.**

**In our video today, we're going to see some friends getting ready for Christmas. Let's see what they do to celebrate!**

#### **Spark Resources**

None

#### **Supplies**

Option 1: A Charlie Brown Christmas

Video source and large screen  
Favorite Christmas ornament or decoration

Option 2: The Santa Clause 2

Video source and large screen  
Favorite Christmas ornament or decoration

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

**Why were Charlie Brown and his friends so busy?** *(They were getting ready for Christmas.)* **Who reminded the gang that Jesus is “the reason for the season”?** *(Linus reminded the gang that Christmas is about God coming to earth in baby Jesus.)* **What happened when everyone heard this good news?** *(They left behind all their stress and sang together, “Glory to the newborn King!”)*

**Video Option 2: *The Santa Clause 2*** (2002, live action, PG)

**Start cue:** (1:17:17) “19 MINUTES TIL CHRISTMAS” scrolls across the display.

**End cue:** (1:33:44) End credits.

**Scene set-up:** Santa has a lot to worry about this Christmas: his son is on the naughty list, a fake Santa has taken over the North Pole, and he has to get married if he wants to stay Santa. With all that happening, it would be easy to forget about what is important.

### **Activity Instructions for *The Santa Clause 2***

Show your favorite Christmas ornament or decoration to the class and explain its significance. **Do you have a favorite Christmas ornament or decoration that you put out every year? Christmas is a very special holiday. We put up trees and lights and decorations. We buy presents for loved ones. And we look forward to getting presents, too!**

**Do you know what the first Christmas gift was? It actually wasn’t a “what.” It was a “who”! Jesus, our Savior, who came on the very first Christmas. He was God’s gift of love to all people.**

**We celebrate Christmas every year to remind us of God’s love. When we decorate our houses, it’s like we’re getting ready for Jesus’ birthday party! And when we give gifts, we remember God’s gift of love to us through Jesus.**

**In our video today, we’re going to see some friends getting ready for Christmas. Let’s see what they do to celebrate!**

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

**There was a lot going on at the North Pole! What did you notice?** Listen to kids’ responses. **Despite all that, Santa had a really important realization. What was it?** *(Family and love are more important than everything else.)* **Charlie also realized that, and he promised to stop misbehaving. How do you think that is similar to the Bible story about Jesus’ birth?** *(Jesus’ parents loved him, and God also loved Jesus.)*

**What is your family doing to get ready to celebrate Jesus’ birthday this year? It’s fun to get ready for Christmas! We call the time before Christmas *Advent* and we can light one more *Advent* candle each week. During *Advent* we are waiting for Jesus. When we do these things, we remember God’s special gift of love, baby Jesus. Our Savior was born on Christmas and we celebrate Jesus’ birthday each year on Christmas Day!**

# Send (5 minutes)

## Wrap Up

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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.

**The candy cane is a special Christmas treat. Did you know that the candy cane has a special meaning? The white stripe reminds us that God's love washes away our sins. The green stripe reminds us we have new life in Jesus. And the shape, a shepherd's staff, reminds us that Jesus always watches over us like a shepherd.**

**One candy cane is for you to enjoy. The other is for you to give away, as a reminder of God's gift of baby Jesus!**

## Spark Resources

Family Pages



## Supplies

Green and white striped  
candy canes, 2 per kid

## Prayer Time

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Invite participants to form a circle. Ask kids to say "Happy birthday, baby Jesus" when you point to them.

Happy birthday, baby Jesus!

**Angels sang a happy song!**

Happy birthday, baby Jesus!

**Shepherds joined to sing along!**

Happy birthday, baby Jesus!

**Thank you for the love you bring!**

Happy birthday, baby Jesus!

**Let us all your praises sing!**

**Happy birthday, baby Jesus!**

**Amen.**

**Workshop Focus:** God makes the impossible possible.

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.

## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Invite participants to sit in a circle. **Welcome to Video! Today we are going to talk about seeing and believing!**

Show the various seeing-more-clearly props. Invite participants to identify their possible uses. **How do these things affect the way you see? When might you use them?**

**In our story today, God helps someone see the future in a new way. God's promises might have seemed impossible, but God helped Mary to have faith that these incredible promises would come true.**

Read Luke 1:26-35 on pages 1127-1128 in the Spark Bible.

**Why was God's message hard for Mary to believe?** (*God said she would have a baby, even though she wasn't married. God said the baby would be God!*) **If Mary had had a magic telescope to see her future, what might she have seen?** (*that this baby would become the Savior of the world, that he would be a special friend to all, that he would be loving and compassionate, that he would heal the sick and preach good news*) **Mary's life would change in a big way! But she trusted that God had a**

**Spark Resources**  
Spark Bibles  
Spark Bible Stickers

**Supplies:**  
Things that help us see more clearly:  
Eyeglasses  
Magnifying glasses  
Telescopes  
Binoculars  
Microscopes

**special plan for her and her baby. Mary did not need a magic telescope; God's word was enough.**

Invite kids to mark the story with their Spark Bible Stickers, and to share about which stickers they used.

## Activate Faith (25 minutes)

### Mission Possible

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**Set Up:** Prior to the lesson, preview and select the video clip you will use. Set up the video source and large screen so that everyone in the room will be able to see it. If desired, you can prepare a snack for kids to enjoy while they watch the video. *Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.*

**Video Option 1: *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*** (2004, live action, G)

**Start cue:** (1:29:50) The choir starts singing "Pachelbel's Canon in D," and everyone stands.

**End cue:** (1:47:33) End credits.

**Scene set-up:** Mia is being forced to marry someone if she desires to be Queen of Genovia. However, with the support of her Grandma, she realizes that she doesn't need to give in to pressure or others' ideas in order for her dreams to come true.

#### **Activity Instructions for *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement***

**Have any of you taken a trip recently? Where did you go? How did you find where you were going? How might you use these things on a trip?** (*road signs tell us where to stop and where to turn, maps show where places are located, compasses point us in the right direction*) **We trust that our destination will be there, just as the map says. We use these tools to help us find it.**

**When we go on a trip, there are many tools that help us find our way. In our Bible story today, Mary receives a word from God that takes her on quite an unexpected detour! She is unsure at first, but later in the story, we learn that she trusts God.**

**In our movie today, who didn't know how to follow their dreams. They felt pressured to do what other people expected of them, even if it didn't seem like the right path for them.**

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

#### **Spark Resources**

None

#### **Supplies**

Option 1: *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*

Video source and large screen  
Map  
Compass  
Pictures of road signs  
Snack (optional)

Video Option 2: *National Treasure*

Video source and large screen  
Map  
Compass  
Pictures of road signs  
Snack (optional)

**Some people thought that Mia needed to be married before she could be queen. For a while, she did too. But then what did she realize?** (*Her grandma had been a great queen without a husband, so why couldn't she?*) **What happens instead of Mia getting married?** (*Her grandma got married to Joe.*)

**Mia followed her dream of being a queen without a husband, and her grandma got to follow her dream of marrying a man she loved. They didn't let the rules dictate who they could be, even if it meant it was not as easy.**

**Think about our Bible story. Do you think it would have been easy or hard to believe that a squirmy, fussy, helpless, baby was actually the Savior? What hope did Jesus bring to the world?**

**In our video clip, we saw characters who thought it was impossible to live the life they wanted. In our Bible story, God promised something that seemed impossible. Mary trusted that God's word was true. Like Mary we need to look with eyes of faith to see the treasure that is ours through Jesus Christ!**

**Video Option 2: *National Treasure*** (2004, live action, PG)

**Start cue:** Opening credits.

**End cue:** (14:14) Ben says, "It's a riddle. I need to think."

**Scene set-up:** The opening scene flashes back to Ben's grandfather passing on the story of a hidden treasure while present-day Ben journeys across the Arctic in search of the treasure. While others have trouble interpreting the clues, Ben feels hopeful that they are getting close to what they seek.

#### **Activity Instructions for *National Treasure***

**Have any of you taken a trip recently? Where did you go? How did you find where you were going?** Show the road signs, road map, and compass. **How might you use these things on a trip?** (*road signs tell us where to stop and where to turn, maps show where places are located, compasses point us in the right direction*) **We trust that our destination will be there, just as the map says. We use these tools to help us find it.**

**When we go on a trip, there are many tools that help us find our way. In our Bible story today, Mary received a word from God that took her on quite an unexpected detour! She was unsure at first, but later in the story, we learn that she trusted God.**

**In our movie today, we'll see characters that believe that something better is coming but have no idea what it is. They have faith in their dreams, even when they can't see how their dreams will come true.**

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

**Which people in the movie believed that the treasure existed? What signs showed them that the treasure might really exist?** (*Ben and his grandfather believed that there was a real treasure. Ben's dad didn't believe the treasure existed, and some of Ben's colleagues seemed skeptical. But Ben found great hope in the promise of the treasure. The ship, the inscription, and the message on the pipe all supported the reality of a treasure.*)

**Think about our Bible story. Do you think it would have been easy or hard to believe that a squirmy, fussy, helpless, baby was actually the Savior? What hope did Jesus bring to the world?**

**In our film clip, we saw characters that believed in something impossible, even though they couldn't see it. In our Bible story, God promised something that seemed impossible. Mary trusted that God's word was true. Like Mary (and the treasure hunters in our film), we need to look with eyes of faith to see the treasure that is ours through Jesus Christ!**

## Send (5 minutes)

### Wrap Up

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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 promised us something that seemed impossible. God promised to live with us as a flesh-and-blood human being. God made the impossible possible! God came to live with us as a real live person, Jesus. And God is with us now, too! At Christmas (and always) we celebrate God's great love and presence with us.**

Spark Resources  
Family Pages



Supplies  
None

### Prayer Time

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Invite participants to respond to each petition with these words:  
"Let me be just like you."

**Jesus, you were just like me**

*Let me be just like you*

**Born into a family**

*Let me be just like you*

**Born to serve and love and give**

*Let me be just like you*

**Born a Godly life to live**

*Let me be just like you*

**Amen**

**Workshop Focus:** God is always with us.

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.

## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Advent and Christmas Storytelling

**Set Up:** Separate the famous-friend pairs.

#### Activity Instructions

Invite participants to sit in a circle. **Welcome to Video! Today we are going to talk about our best friend, Jesus! Who are your friends? What do you like to do together? Today I brought some pictures of famous friends. Can you help me match them up correctly?**

Show one member of the friend group and ask participants to find the other friend.

**When someone is your friend, they want to spend time with you! Did you know that God is your friend too? God is a great friend who is *always* with us! Soon we will celebrate Christmas, a time when we remember that God came to us as baby Jesus. God wanted us to be with us so much that God showed up in person!**

**Everyone celebrated on the day when Jesus was born! Even the angels got in on the party, because they knew what an important day it was. Let's listen to the story of this first Christmas!**

#### Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible

#### Supplies

Pictures of some famous friends:

Batman and Robin

Phineas and Ferb

Dora and Boots

Teletubbies

Kermit and Miss Piggy

Read Jesus Is Born from the Spark Story Bible on page 212 or Luke 2:1-20 in the Spark Bible on page 1130. Show the pictures as you read.

**God came to be with us, to be one of us. What do you think that Jesus was like as a little kid? How was Jesus just like you?**

## Activate Faith (25 minutes)

### God Gives Christmas Presence

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**Set Up:** Prior to the lesson, hide the Christmas boxes around the room. Preview and select the video clip you will use. Set up the video source and large screen so that everyone in the room will be able to see it. Hide the wrapped boxes around the room. One box should contain some representation of Jesus—a baby from a manger scene, a baby doll, a cross, or a picture. If desired, you can prepare a snack for kids to enjoy while they watch the video. *Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.*

**Video Option 1: *Elf*** (2003, live action, PG)

**Start cue:** (1:12:00) “I’m sorry I ruined your lives and crammed eleven cookies into the VCR.”

**End cue:** (1:29:05) “I guess we’ll never know for sure what happened this Christmas Eve in Central Park.”

**Scene set-up:** When Santa Clause crash-lands in the middle of Central Park, Buddy and his family work together to teach New York the true meaning of Christmas.

#### **Activity Instructions for *Elf***

**What are you doing to get ready for Christmas? Christmas time can be very busy! There’s a lot to do: prepare for guests, cook special meals, attend church activities, and share family time! It’s easy to get all wrapped up in the busyness, and to forget why we’re doing it all! One thing that we think a lot about at Christmas is . . . presents! Can you find some presents hidden around the room? They contain some of the things that are special to us during this season.**

Invite volunteers to search for the presents. Open them and display their contents.

**These things are all part of our Christmas celebrations. But which is the most important? In our video today, some folks try to answer that question. Let’s watch to see what they find out.**

#### **Supplies**

Option 1: *Elf*

Video source and large screen  
Christmas items in boxes,  
    wrapped  
Ornaments  
Tinsel  
Lights  
Candy  
Jesus symbol: baby doll,  
    cross, or picture  
Snack (optional)

Video Option 2: *A Charlie Brown Christmas*

Video source and large screen  
Christmas items in boxes,  
    wrapped  
Ornaments  
Tinsel  
Lights  
Candy  
Jesus symbol: baby doll,  
    cross, or picture  
Snack (optional)

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

**What do the people of New York learn about Christmas?** *(It is about spending time with people you love and sharing joy. They learned that while they have lots going on in their lives, they don't know everything, but together they can make amazing things happen, like powering Santa's sleigh.)*

**What (or who!) is the real "Star of Christmas"?** *(Jesus! Christmas isn't about what we do, or how big a show we can put on. It's about how God came to live with us in a baby named Jesus.)*

Take another look at the contents of the boxes from the earlier activity.

**Remember the question I asked earlier? Which of these things represents the real reason we celebrate at Christmas?** *Allow kids time to respond. God came to be with us, as a tiny baby on the first Christmas. Our best friend, Jesus, is still with us today. That's what Christmas is really all about!*

**Video Option 2: A Charlie Brown Christmas** (1965, animated, Not Rated)

**Start cue:** (7:44) Sally greets Charlie Brown. "I've been looking for you, Big Brother."

**End cue:** (24:53) "Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!"

**Scene set-up:** Charlie Brown is stressed out! There's a lot to do to get ready for Christmas! But is there a deeper meaning, beyond the stress and commercialism?

**Activity Instructions for A Charlie Brown Christmas**

**What are you doing to get ready for Christmas? Christmastime can be very busy! There's a lot to do: prepare for guests, cook special meals, attend church activities, and share family time! It's easy to get all wrapped up in the busyness, and to forget why we're doing it all! One thing that we think a lot about at Christmas is . . . presents! Can you find some presents hidden around the room? They contain some of the things that are special to us during this season.**

Invite volunteers to search for the presents. Open them and display their contents.

**These things are all part of our Christmas celebrations. But which is the most important? In our video today, we're going to see some folks who are trying to answer that question, too. Let's watch to see what they find out.**

Show the video clip. After viewing, discuss the video clip.

**Why were Charlie Brown and his friends so busy?** *(they were getting ready for Christmas)* **Who reminded the gang that Jesus is "the reason for the season"?** *(Linus reminded the gang that Christmas is about God coming to earth in baby Jesus.)* **What happened when everyone heard this good news?** *(They left behind all their stress and sang together, "Glory to the newborn King!")*

Take another look at the contents of the boxes from the earlier activity.

**Remember the question I asked earlier? Which of these things represents the real reason we celebrate at Christmas? Allow kids time to respond. God came to be with us, as a tiny baby on the first Christmas. Our best friend, Jesus, is still with us today. That's what Christmas is really all about!**

## Send (5 minutes)

### Wrap Up

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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.

**Our friend, God, is always nearby. At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birth as a real live baby. God must really love us a lot to want to be with us!**

Spark Resources  
Family Pages



Supplies  
None

### Prayer Time

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Invite participants to repeat the phrase, "God is with us! God is with us!" after each petition of the closing prayer:

**Precious Jesus, friend so dear**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**You are with us, far and near**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**Born a baby long ago**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**With us now, wherever we go**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**Help us ever praise your name**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**And with confidence proclaim**

*God is with us! God is with us!*

**Amen!**