

Advent and Christmas

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.

- 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.sparksondayschool.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: 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!

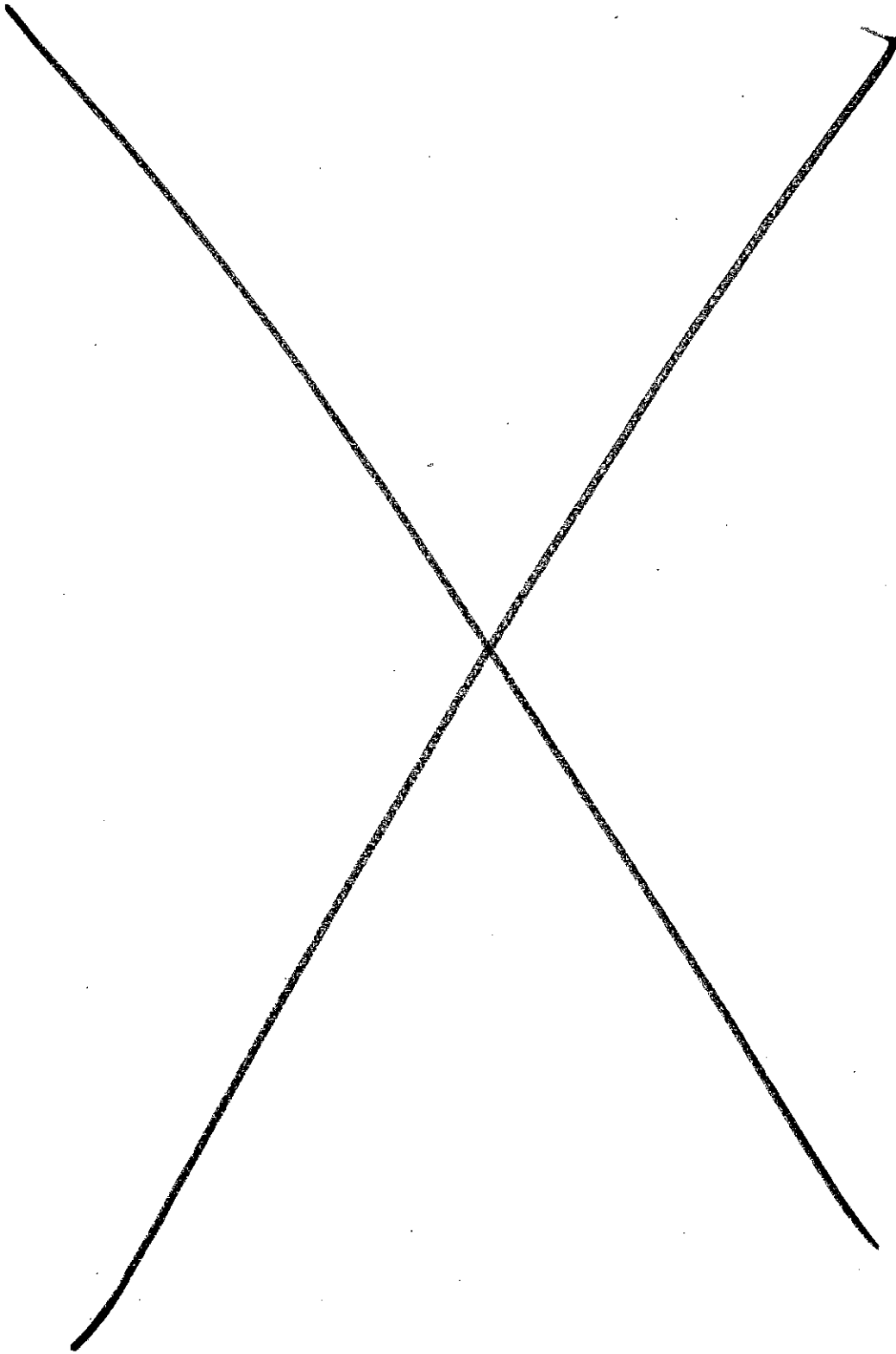
**Dear God,
It's us again.**

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 loves us . . . so celebrate!

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ART

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up: Put one nativity figure in each box or container and close the lid. (Ideally, you will have enough boxes and figures so that each kid can open one.) Set the boxes in a pile in the center of the meeting space

Spark Resources
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Activity Instructions

Welcome to Art Workshop today! I'm so glad you're here with us. I have a HUGE pile of boxes here, don't I? I wonder what's inside . . . Well, let's see what our Bible story focus for today is. Maybe that will give us a clue. Can you turn to page 1130 in your Spark Bibles? Let's see . . . that is the second chapter of Luke. Who might like to read Luke 2 starting at verse 1 and ending at verse 20? Allow time for kids to read. Invite kids to use the Spark stickers to mark passages of interest.

Supplies
Assorted boxes and containers
Nativity scene figures

Let's talk about the Christmas story. What is your favorite part? Allow time for kids to share their thoughts. **I wonder if these boxes have anything to do with the Bible story. Should we open them and see?** Hand the boxes to the kids to open and then have them put the Nativity scene together. **There! It looks great, doesn't it?**

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

It's a Wrap!

Set Up: Cover the worktable with newspaper. Mix and pour the assorted paint colors into the shallow plates or trays. Assemble the household items to be used for stamping. (Tip: You can cut sponges into shapes using cookie cutters as a pattern; then glue the sponge shapes to one end of a paper tube or thread spool for easier stamping.)

Activity Instructions

It's fun to get presents, isn't it? Today in Art Workshop we're going to make our own wrapping paper, using all of these interesting things to stamp our designs!

Demonstrate how to dip and press each of the items you have collected into paint and make your design on scrap paper or even on the newspaper you used to cover the worktable. Give kids assorted lengths of paper and the paper lunch bags. Have kids label their paper with their name. Let them have fun stamping and printing their own wrapping paper designs.

I hope your family has fun wrapping presents with the wrapping paper you've made today! We celebrate Jesus' love by giving gifts. Christmas is a great time to help others. (Find out about service projects at your church that you can share with the kids.)

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

White or brown butcher paper
Brown and white paper lunch bags
Green, red, and other colors of acrylic or tempera paint
Shallow pans or plastic plates
"Ordinary" objects to use for painting and stamping wrapping paper (shoe bottoms with a design, rubber band balls, kitchen utensils like potato mashes or whisks, bathtub "scrubbies," sponges)
Scissors
Newspaper
Pencils

Tear here for easy use!

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.

Hum the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and invite the kids to join in, then teach them this variation on the words and sing it through together:

**Jesus' birthday, celebrate!
All the fun, it's hard to wait,
Friends and family, church bells ring,
Happy carols, people sing,
Jesus' birthday, celebrate!
All the joy, it's hard to wait.**

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Prayer Time

Ask the kids to join you in a circle and place the nativity scene you built together in the center of the circle. **Would someone like to start a prayer today to thank God for the gift of his Son, Jesus? I can add the Amen when we are done.**

Workshop Focus: Jesus is our true Christmas gift.

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learn here for easy use!

BIBLE SKILLS & GAMES

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Advent and Christmas Storytelling

Set Up:

Sit with the kids in a circle on the floor with the Christmas present in front of you.

Activity Instructions

Welcome to Bible Skills and Games! Today we are going to talk about Christmas presents! Do you like presents? Tell me about one of the best Christmas presents you ever got. What are you asking for this year? Take the kids answers.

Those sound like some wonderful presents. Christmas time is about one extra special present. Let's read our story and see if we can figure out the extra special present of Christmas. Read Matthew 1:18-25 on page 1058 and Matthew 2:1-12 on pages 1058-1059 in the Spark Bible. Encourage the children to take turns reading aloud and to use their Spark Bible stickers.

What do you think is the extra special present of Christmas? Listen to kids' guesses. **The true present of Christmas is Jesus! Why is Jesus an extra special present?** Take kids' answers.

Spark Resources
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Wrapped Christmas present

Jesus is the true present. We call Jesus “Emmanuel”. Do you remember what Emmanuel means? (God with us) When you’re with someone, you say you’re present with that person. Jesus is an extra special present because Jesus showed us that God was present on earth. Do you notice how those words sound alike? Jesus is a present (like a gift) because God is present (there with us) in Jesus.

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Present Treasure Hunt

Set Up:

Place the wrapped boxes with the letters inside and the labels on the outside at one side of the room.

Activity Instructions

For our first game today we are going to answer some questions, open some presents, and solve a puzzle to discover the greatest present of Christmas.

Point out the pile of presents to the kids. Explain to them that each present has some words on the outside. The words on the presents are the answers to the questions you’re going to ask them. Explain that you will ask a question and if a kid thinks they know the answer, they can raise their hand. If the kid answers the question correctly, they can open the package and take out the clue letter. After all of the questions have been correctly answered the kids must collect all their letters and unscramble them to find the best Christmas present. Encourage the kids to use their Bibles if they need to look up the answers in the story we read today.

What is the greatest Christmas gift? (Emmanuel) Do you remember what Emmanuel stands for? (God with us) Why do you think it is so special that God came to be with us in Jesus? Take their responses. God chose to become human in Jesus Christ. This means that God truly wanted to be with us and save us. Jesus is God’s greatest present to us all—he loved us so much that he became one of us.

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles

Supplies

Present Treasure Hunt Clues
(page 43)

Wrapped present boxes
(wrap lids separately so
they can be lifted off), 8

Box labels:

Star

King Herod

Mary and Joseph

Wise Men

Angel

Bethlehem

Shepherds

Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh

Emmanuel Hot Potato

Set Up: Gather the kids in a circle.

Activity Instructions

We call Jesus a special name, "Emmanuel". Emmanuel means God with us. Part of the joy of Christmas is telling other people that God is with us. Many people believe that Christmas is only about Santa and presents. We know that the true meaning of Christmas is Jesus.

In this next game our job is to share Emmanuel with each other as fast as we can. To do this we will play a game of Emmanuel Hot Potato.

Number kids off to form two teams. Seat kids in alternating spots in a circle (team 1, team 2, team 1, team 2, etc). Explain that the kids will pass the Emmanuel Hot Potato (ball) around the circle while the music plays. Their goal is to pass Emmanuel on to the next person quickly, because we want to share the true gift of Christmas with everyone. When the music stops the team who is not holding the ball gets a point. The first team to get 10 points wins.

Jesus is the true gift of Christmas, but many people only think about Santa and presents under the tree when they think of Christmas. What are some ways that you can share the news that Jesus is the true gift of Christmas? Take the kids responses. **Those are some great ideas. I hope that you will take the time to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Do you remember what Emmanuel means? (God with us) Jesus is Emmanuel. He is God with us here today. Where can you see Jesus in the world today?**

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 sent Jesus to Mary, to the wise men, and to the whole world. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. We can share our gift of Emmanuel with the world and tell others about Jesus.

Prayer Time

**Dear God,
Thank you for being the true gift of Christmas.
Help us to share you, the true gift of Christmas.
Bless us, Emmanuel. Amen.**

Spark Resources
None

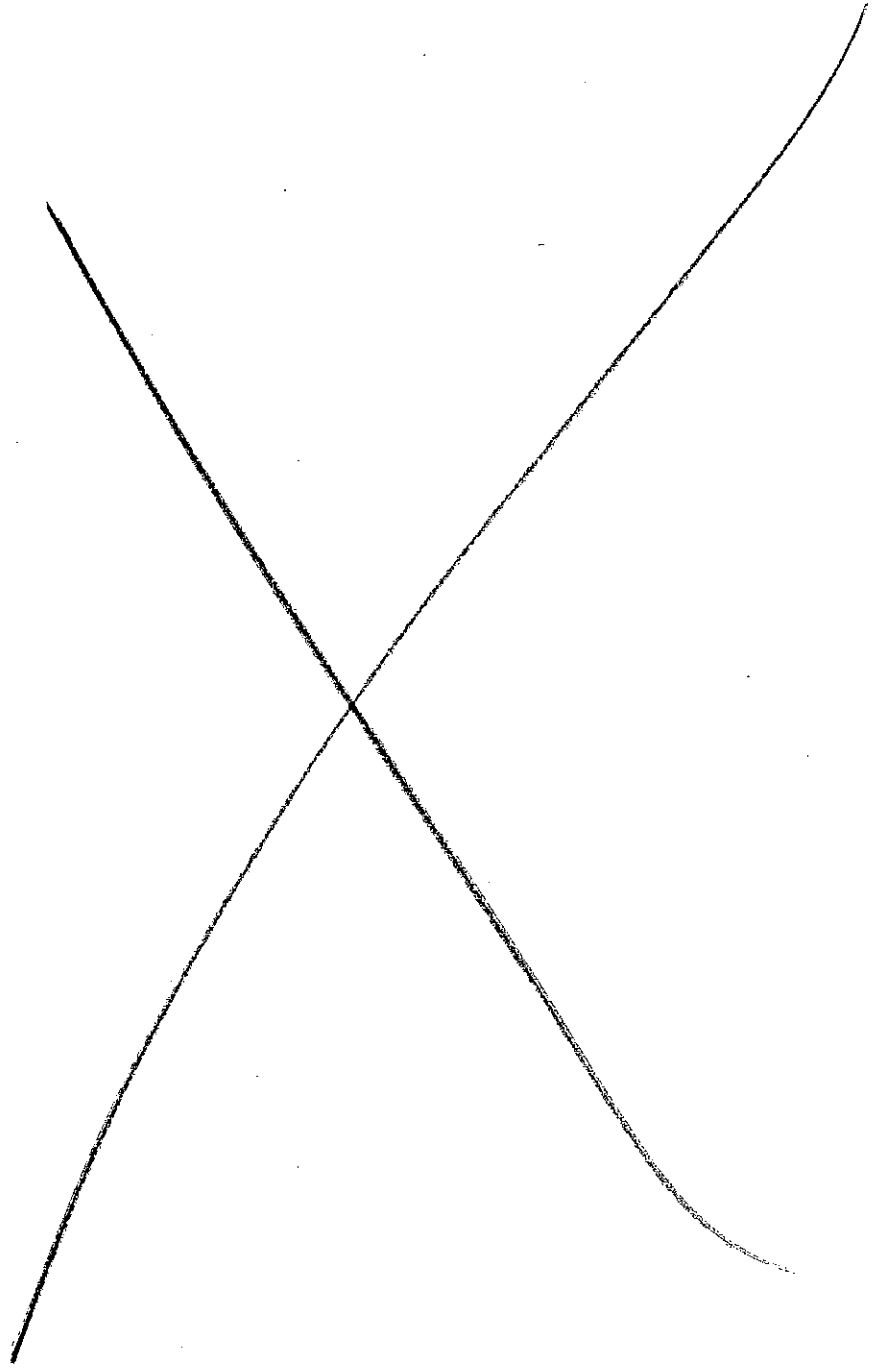
Supplies
Nerf or beach ball
CD player
Oh Come, Oh Come Emmanuel
on CD

Spark Resources
Family Pages



Supplies
None

learn here for easy use!



Workshop Focus: I can offer my gifts to Jesus.

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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

Tear here for easy use!