



CHRISTMAS | WEEK 3 | DECEMBER 17, 2023

## Elementary Lesson In Excelsis Deo

**Monthly Virtue:** Christmas: Celebrating Jesus, God’s greatest gift

**Bible Story:** In Excelsis Deo (Shepherds and Angels) • *Luke 2:8-20*

**Key Question:** How can you share God’s love this Christmas?

**Basic Truth:** I am made for a purpose so I can tell people about God.

**Memory Verse:** A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace. *Isaiah 9:6 (NirV)*

### LEADER BIBLE STUDY

*With the busyness of the Christmas season, it’s easy to lose sight of why we celebrate in the first place. We forget that at the time of the first Christmas, God’s people were anticipating a Rescuer who would come and save the world. That’s what makes a countdown like an advent calendar so powerful. It allows us daily moments to stop and reflect on God, who loved us so much and sent Jesus to be our Savior. That’s why this December, we’re “decking the halls” and taking the whole month to focus on nothing but Christmas. We’re celebrating Jesus, God’s greatest gift! We can’t wait to shine a spotlight on crucial moments in the story of Jesus’ birth as we count down to Christmas. The best gift God ever gave was Jesus. Because of Jesus, it’s possible for us to have a relationship with God that will last forever. As we take this month to count down to the fun of Christmas Day, let’s take time to remember the reason we celebrate in the first place: Jesus, the greatest gift the world has ever known.*

**Key Question:** How can you share God’s love this Christmas? On Christmas weekend, it can be too easy to forget that Christmas isn’t all about us. We hope to remind preteens that Christmas is ultimately about God’s love for us that allowed Jesus, God’s only Son, to come to earth and rescue us from the consequences of sin. When we think about Christmas like that, we can discover that we should be sharing that same love with others.

For Christmas weekend, we continue the story in **Luke 2:8-20**. Jesus was born, and it was now time to announce it to the world. Instead of heading to the palaces and mansions, God’s angels visited the shepherds and announced Jesus’ birth! Christmas reminds us that God’s love isn’t just for the people who think they have it all together. Jesus came to show God’s love to everyone!

#### Pre-Service Check List

- HUDDLE AS TEAM → You’re in this together! Pray together and talk about the activities for the day.
- PLAY MUSIC
- PUT OUT TOYS → A welcoming environment is important! We want it to be obvious from the moment kids walk in that they belong HERE!
- PUT ASIDE DISTRACTIONS
- ENGAGE WITH KIDS

#### Morning Flow



## LARGE GROUP

### COUNTDOWN AND WELCOME (3 Minutes)

(VIDEO: COUNTDOWN, SLIDE: KIDCITY EXPECTATIONS)

LGL: “Welcome everyone! I’m so glad you are able to come hang out with us in KidCity today. My name is [INSERT NAME]. We are going to have a lot of fun today, but before we do let’s go over these announcements/KidCity Expectations.

**(SLIDE: BAPTISM)** *(Said on the fourth weekend of the month only)* “Today are baptisms at Hope. Baptism is a way of telling the world that you love God and have made the decision to follow Him with your life. It’s a big deal! Is there anyone here who is getting baptized today? *(Pause and if someone is, go ahead and give them a high five and get the kids to clap).* Awesome!”

**(SLIDE: KIDCITY EXPECTATIONS)** “Now, let’s quickly go over our KidCity Expectations (rules) so we can make sure that we make the most of our time today: *(Don’t dwell on these too long, but make sure you review them briefly so we can set everyone up for success.)*

1. Be Kind
2. Be Safe
3. Have Fun

### LARGE GROUP GAME (6 Min)

#### OH, CHRISTMAS TREE

(Christmas Decorations - A Random Assortment for Each Small Group)

“The countdown to Christmas continues! Only 1 more week to go. Let’s remind ourselves of this...

**(SLIDE: VIRTUE)** “Christmas is celebrating Jesus, God’s greatest gift.

“God promised that a Savior - called the Messiah - was coming, and He let His people know what to look for through different prophecies. Our memory verse for the month describes who Jesus was to be...

**(SLIDE: MEMORY VERSE)** “*A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace. Isaiah 9:6 (NIRV)*”

“That’s good news and a reason to celebrate! Before we talk about that, let’s play a game.

**(SLIDE: OH, CHRISTMAS TREE)**

**(VIDEO: CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN)**

### HOW TO PLAY:

- **SPLIT INTO SMALL GROUPS.** Give each group an assortment of wrapping paper, bows, and other décor.
- **YELL "GO!"** Kids will wrap their SGL! Give kids 3 minutes (countdown on Playlister) to decorate their leader and make them as festive as possible. Walk around and comment as they decorate. Be sure to take pictures and send them to your campus staff coordinator!
- **JUDGE.** Just for fun, determine who you think is the most festive!

"That was so fun! Now everyone stand up and we will sing some Christmas worship songs!"

## WORSHIP (6-7 Minutes)

(VIDEO: JOY [Christmas], SILENT NIGHT)

## BIBLE STORY (12 Minutes)

(Nesting Christmas Boxes with 'Hope', 'Joy', and 'Love' - 4 boxes total)

"So far in our Countdown to Christmas we've used the words HOPE and JOY. Today's word is...LOVE!

*Each week you will open the Christmas box that has more boxes nesting inside of each other. Pull out the one corresponding to that week and stack them. Week 1 should have 2 boxes (the plain, big one and the one that says 'Hope'). Week 2 should have 3 boxes, etc.*

### (SLIDE: LOVE)

"LOVE is pretty important when it comes to Christmas, and it's the next word we'll talk about as we countdown to Christmas. Now, you might be wondering: But I thought Christmas was about candy and presents, trees and lights, fun songs and parties . . . did I mention presents?"

"Sure, those things are great, but there's more—so much more. Remember, we take this month to celebrate Jesus, God's very own Son. And how God sent Jesus into the world to rescue us and make a forever relationship with us possible. And that comes down to LOVE. God's love was—IS—the reason we can even celebrate Christmas at all.

"But if love is such a big part of Christmas, how come it's one of the things we focus on least? How can we make a big deal about love during the Christmas season? How can we make sure that when it comes to celebrating Christmas and Jesus that we don't get so caught up in the other stuff we forget about God's love for us and our love for others?"

"These are good questions for us to ask, especially at this time of year. And when we have good questions to ask, we need a good place to find answers. Thankfully, we do: the Bible. Remember, the Bible contains writings from all sorts of people who experienced God's love and wrote down those experiences for others so they can get to know God for themselves. And today's story really gets us thinking about God's love at Christmas time. Let's watch."

## **(VIDEO: BIBLE STORY 5 MIN)**

“You know, the shepherds were probably not first on many people’s list to be entrusted with news like this. But this story goes to show God’s love is for everyone. Before anyone else, God chose the shepherds to get the biggest invitation of the year—to see and experience the newborn King. They got to experience the good news before anyone!

“And here is the thing about good news . . . you want to share it. Think about it: if you get a good grade on a test, you probably can’t wait to tell your parents. Or if you get to that next level on a video game you’ve been trying to beat, you can’t wait to tell your friends. If you won tickets to see your favorite sports team, I’m sure you’d tell everyone! Those are great, but we have the greatest news you could ever have to share—God loved us and sent Jesus into this world for us to save us. We can have a relationship with God because of Jesus, God’s very own Son. What could be better news than that?! So shouldn’t we want to share that with everyone, just like the shepherds did? And who knows . . . maybe the people we share it with will be amazed and then go share it with others as well.

“It’s what Christmas is all about! We receive the good news of God’s love. Now we get to share the good news of God’s love!

‘Our Basic Truth today says it this way...

**(SLIDE: BASIC TRUTH)** ‘I am made for a purpose so I can tell people about God.

“Before we go to small groups, let’s answer our Key Question for today.

**(SLIDE: KEY QUESTION)** ‘How can you share God’s love this Christmas?’

*Have kids turn and talk to their shoulder partner for 60 seconds. Your KQ slide on Playlister will keep track of time for you. While kids are talking, walk around and listen in to what they are saying and give prompts if needed. Don’t try to resolve anything, kids will have a further discussion within their small group time.*

“Ok friends, come back together in 3, 2, 1....

“I heard some great thoughts floating around. You are going to have more of a chance to talk about this in small group time, but for now let’s pray and dismiss.

“Dear God, thank You for loving us enough to send your Son, Jesus to be Immanuel: God with us. Help us remember that we are not alone, because You are always there and you LOVE us more than we can ever imagine! You showed the shepherds that night that Your love is for ALL of us, and Jesus is a gift for the whole world. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

## **DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS**

## SMALL GROUP

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Kids learn best through play and through conversation. Both are equally important, so be sure to give time to both!

### KEY QUESTION (K-5<sup>th</sup>)

(No Supplies)

Spend some time coming together and talking about the Key Question. There aren't any right or wrong answers but use this time to help kids have a discussion about what they just learned and encourage them to grow in their faith. Try to keep the conversation spiritually based. Why does what we are talking about matter in light of what God has done for us?

**Key Question:** 'How can you share God's love this Christmas?'

*(Answers will vary: tell someone the Christmas story, serve somewhere as a family, send someone a note saying that you are thinking of them and that God loves them, etc.)*

### SHEPHERD DIORAMA (K-1<sup>st</sup>)

("Shepherd Diorama" Activity Page – precut and folded, 1 per kid [cardstock preferred];

"Diorama Label" printed on Avery® #5160 labels; Tape)

**What You Do:**

- Have kids cut out the diorama and make a slit along the dotted line. After kids color the scene they can fold up their diorama and tape/glue where it indicates. See our Pinterest board for a demonstration. <https://pin.it/rkExDOu>
- Have kids put the 'Diorama Label' sticker on the bottom section and read what it says (I can share God's love with everyone!)



**What You Say:**

- How do the shepherds in today's story help us see that God's love is for everyone?
- Where will you be today that you can share God's love?
- What character in the story of Christmas do you think is a good example of someone who shared God's love?

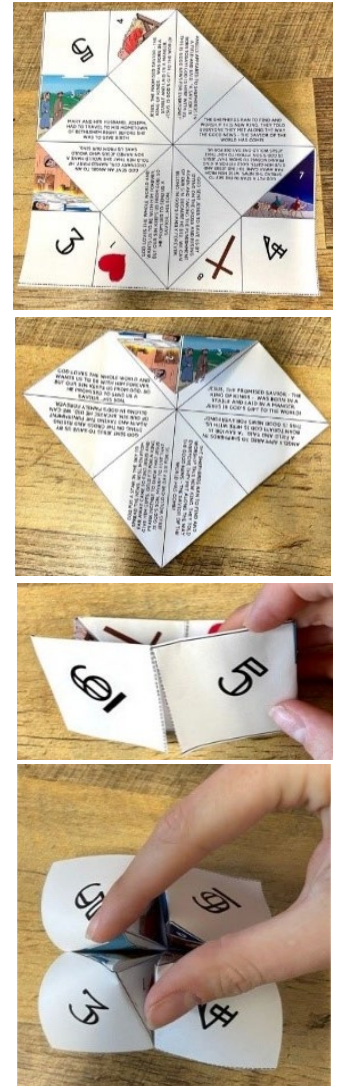
God sent Jesus as a gift for EVERYONE! Everyone includes the quiet kid, the bully, your little brother who bugs you, the neighbor down the street, the kid who always answers questions correctly, your best friend, people who look or dress differently than you, people who speak different languages or eat different foods, kids on your sports team and in your school. Everyone includes EVERYONE! As you celebrate with your family, remember that every single person is created in God’s image. We were made for a relationship with God. Like the shepherds in our story today, you can share God’s LOVE with everyone you meet.”

God’s love is big enough to reach every single person. God sent Jesus to prove it! Let’s remember to share that love as we remember that God’s love is for everyone.”

## CHRISTMAS STORY TELLER (2nd-5th)

(“Christmas Story Teller” Activity Page – 1 per kid, scissors)

- Pass out the “Christmas Story Teller” activity page to each kid along with scissors.
- Instruct kids to cut along the dotted lines so they are left with a square.
  1. Fold the 4 corners backwards along the solid line.
  2. Now fold the new 4 corners forward so they meet in the middle. The story images should be all you see when you finish.
  3. Fold the paper in half both ways so the next step is easier.
  4. Gather all 4 corners up and together in a pinching motion. Once you make final creases, you should be able to put your fingers into the little pockets you’ve created.
- To play with it, use both hands and put your fingers in the pockets. Open and close them according to the number that was chosen, first the top numbers and then the numbers on the inside. (Hint, the numbers on the inside are in story order!)
- Encourage kids to take their story teller home and share it with friends.



## FINAL ACTIVITY: Biblical Literacy (K-5th)

(Supplies Vary)

### What You Do:

- Follow the instructions of the “Books of the Bible” activity that is in your bin.

## PRAY

“Dear God, we want everyone to know that You love us so much that You gave us Your Son, Jesus. Help us tell everyone about Jesus. We love You, God. In Jesus’ name, amen.”