

Bible Study

Explorers Camp 2023



Day 1

Why we celebrate

Welcome to camp and our first day of Bible Study!! The theme of this year's camp is "Celebrate Jesus!" What do you think of when you hear the word "celebrate?"

What are some ways to show someone you are celebrating? (Decorations, balloons, party favors, food...)

What are some things you celebrate? (allow children to respond and share your own reasons to celebrate)
(Birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Weddings, Graduations, Baptisms, New Year...)

We can celebrate big things and little things. Do you have a little brother or sister who just started walking? Celebrate!

Did you make good grades on your report card? Celebrate!

Did you learn something new, like swimming, skating...? Celebrate!

What are some other things to celebrate that may seem small to someone else, but was important to you?

If you could make up a holiday, what would it be called, what would you be celebrating, when would it be and how would you celebrate it?

This week we will dive into why we celebrate certain holidays. We will learn about Christmas, which is Jesus in the cradle; Easter, when Jesus was on the cross; and why we should celebrate His return, as King of Kings with His crown.

Did you know that in Old Testament Bible times, God's people were actually COMMANDED to celebrate holidays? They were called "feasts". God told them to come together to thank Him, to spend time together and to rest from their work. (Numbers 28:16-29:12)

Some of their holidays were Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Festival of Trumpets, Festival of Lights... Their holidays began at sundown on the evening the day before and all of their special celebrations were to show their gratitude to God and some holidays were to help them remember how God took care of them. Each holiday or celebration period had specific guidelines given by God.

While Christians don't really celebrate those specific holidays anymore, we do have very special holidays, many which relate to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These holidays also have certain colors used as visual reminders of the reason for each season.

Do any of you celebrate these holidays and can you guess the colors associated with them? (Some of these below are celebrated by Roman Catholics or Lutherans.... Ask children if they KNOW the reason for each of the following.)

Advent? This is a 4-week period before Christmas. It is a time preparing for the birth of Christ. Advent means “coming”. The time of Advent varies from late November to early December. The colors of Advent are purple, to honor Jesus’ royalty, or blue, to signify Mary’s faithfulness.

Christmas? We will learn a lot about Christmas tomorrow. This is the day chosen to celebrate the birthday of Jesus. White or gold is used to reflect the joy of His birth. Christmas and the days through January 5 are part of the season called Christmastide.

Epiphany? On January 6, many celebrate the magi’s visit to the Christ child (Matthew 2:1-12). Since the Day of Epiphany comes at the end of the Christmas season, white or gold is still used. The season of Epiphany lasts until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, and the color for the remainder of the season is green.

Ordinary Time? The time after Epiphany and Pentecost are known as Ordinary Time – the time between holidays. During this time, ministers and priests wear green robes.

Lent? This is a 40 day season of fasting and prayer before Easter, observed in February and March. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. Purple is used as a symbol of penitence, sorrow for wrongdoings.

Maundy Thursday? On the Thursday before Easter, Christians remember the Last Supper of Jesus and his apostles. White is the color for Maundy Thursday.

Good Friday? On this day, many recall the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus on the Friday before Easter. Many churches strip their altars of all color or use black to symbolize mourning and death.

Easter? Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It’s called a “moveable feast” because the date isn’t fixed. We will learn more about the death and resurrection of Jesus in 2 days! White or gold is used to reflect the victory of Jesus’ resurrection.

Pentecost? This season is a reminder of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13). The Day of Pentecost takes place 50 days after Easter. Red is the color for Pentecost Sunday.

We have so many reasons to celebrate! The greatest day to celebrate is when you ask Jesus to be a part of your life! That is your second birthday! (Ask the children if any of them have already accepted Jesus and give them a chance to share what that day was like. Share your story as well!)

With all the holiday and celebrations that God gave His people in the Bible days, and all the celebrations we have today, God wants us to celebrate and He wants us to have fun! Let’s look up some verses about celebrating:

Have different children look up the following verses and answer this question, “What reason does this verse give for celebration?”

Philippians 4:4 (The Message reads: "Celebrate God all day, every day." The Passion Translations reads: "Be cheerful with joyous celebration in every season of life. Let your joy overflow!") So God alone is reason to celebrate! No other reason is necessary. Celebrate all God has done for you every single day!

Psalms 126:3 ("The Lord has done great things for us; We are glad.") Another verse about being happy over who God is and everything he has done.

Psalms 118:24 ("This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it." The Message reads: "This is the very day God acted – let's celebrate and be festive!") Celebrating just because it's a new day! God created each and every day.

Psalms 68:3 (The Message reads: "When the righteous see God in action, they'll laugh, they'll sing, they'll laugh and sing for joy.") Celebrate what God has done and is doing.

Luke 15:9b ("Rejoice with me because I have found the silver coin I lost!") [Briefly explain the story of the lost coin.] We can celebrate when we find something that we had lost.

Luke 15:10 ("In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." The Message reads: "Count on it – that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.") Celebrate when a person finds Jesus and changes their ways!

Luke 15:23-24 ("Bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! So they began to celebrate.") [Briefly explain the story of the prodigal son.] We can celebrate when someone comes home!

Ecclesiastes 11:8 (New Century Version reads: "People ought to enjoy every day of their lives, no matter how long they live.") We can celebrate life!

During holidays and celebrations, people sometimes stay home from work, you get to miss school, you gather with your friends and family...can you think of a time each week when you don't go to school, people gather together and celebrate??

Coming together for church on Sunday is a weekly celebration! Worship lets us celebrate who God is! What are ways we can celebrate God at church? We celebrate Him by singing, reading our Bibles, going to Sunday School, praying, giving our offerings. Going to church gives us a break from our daily routine of work and school and allows us time to focus and renew our relationship with God!

We are going to do some celebrating this week at camp!

Day 2

The Cradle: Christmas

What is the first thing that pops in your head when you hear Christmas?
(allow responses: gifts, trees, Santa, reindeer, time off from school...)

What is your favorite thing to do during the Christmas season?

Does it always seem like it takes forever for Christmas morning to get here?

Christmas is very hard to wait for, isn't it? Waiting to open all those presents – it's so difficult! I mean, the best part about Christmas is presents, right? Because, you see, Christmas is all about a present – a Gift! The GREATEST, most MAGNIFICENT, IMPORTANT Gift there has EVER been! We are going to learn about the birth of Jesus, God's Son!

We count down the days...We can't wait! But do you know how long God's people in the Bible days had to wait for Christmas? How long they had to wait for the Gift God promised them?

Weeks?.....no

Months?....nope

Years?...no, even longer than that!

They had to wait centuries and centuries....hundreds and hundreds of years! Can you imagine how excited they were when Christmas finally arrived? But was it the gift they expected?

Have you ever received a gift you didn't like? What was it?

For centuries, God's people had been promised a Messiah, a Savior. They were expecting a mighty king, a warrior. Instead, they got a baby born to a poor family. They got the son of a carpenter, not a prince. They got a miracle-working preacher, not a brave warrior. But even though Jesus was not what the people expected, He was exactly what they needed. He was approachable, not someone high and mighty on a throne.

Why do you think God sent the Savior of the world as a tiny baby?

Let's imagine that each of you created a colony of ants in your backyard. You love your creation. You feed them, you protect them, you help them. You want to tell them just how much you love them, but you are so much bigger than them, that everything you try doesn't work. Your voice is loud to those tiny ants and you appear to them as a giant! So how could you tell them how much you love them?

The only way would be for you to become an ant yourself! Put aside your size, your strength, your power and become a tiny ant in the dirt.

That's what Jesus did! He left his heavenly home and became a baby human! He was still God, but He made himself humble and approachable!

Now let's read about Mary from the Christmas story, straight from our Bibles. Read or have children take turns reading Luke 1:26-38.

Who brought Mary a message?

What did the angel tell Mary?

What was her reaction?

If you could meet Mary face-to-face today, what would you ask her?

Here is what we know and don't know about Mary. We don't know for sure how old Mary was, but she was probably around 12-14 years old. We know she had a sister (John 19:25), but we don't know if she had more siblings. We don't know if her parents were still alive. We know she was brave and wasn't afraid of what people would say about her. (The virgin birth can be a difficult subject to talk to kids about, but it is one of the things that makes Jesus different from every other human.) We do know she was engaged to Joseph.

How would you have reacted to the angel's message?

Would you have been scared?

Let's read about Joseph. Matthew 1:18-24

How was the angel's visit with Joseph different from Mary's?

Here is what we know and don't know about Joseph. We don't know much except that he was from Nazareth, he was a carpenter, and he was engaged to Mary. When he found out that Mary was pregnant, he could have divorced her. Even though they weren't married yet, to get out of an engagement required divorce.

Let's see what happens next! Read Luke 2:1-7

Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. If you had to go back to the town you were born, where would you have to go? How long would it take you if you had to walk or ride a donkey? For Mary and Joseph, traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem wouldn't have been easy, especially when she was about to have a baby. The easiest route would have been the longest route: 90 miles, traveling about 5 days through the Jordan River valley. The direct route – about 60 miles – ran south through the rugged hills of central Israel. *See image next page*

There were so many people in Bethlehem to be counted that no one had a room for them. Have you ever gone on vacation and couldn't find a place to stay? How do you think they felt?

How many of you raise animals for 4-H? Are the animal troughs for food clean enough for a baby? We aren't sure if they were in a stable, or a cave, just that Mary "laid Him in a box where animals are fed." Just imagine how smelly this place was!

Let's see what happens next: Read Luke 2:8-20

What did the angel tell the shepherds? How would they recognize Jesus?

Being a shepherd at the time of Jesus' birth was a terrible job. Shepherds had to sleep outside, were in contact with dirty, smelly sheep, their manure, probably bloody from cuts and scrapes, and buzzing insects. In big families, the youngest sons were given the job of shepherd and the older kids got promoted to better jobs. Shepherds were considered unclean and couldn't worship with God's people. They were treated as outsiders. Shepherds weren't even allowed to testify in court!

So why do you think the Shepherds were the first to hear the Good News that the Savior had been born? (they represent the outcasts and sinners and that is who Jesus came for!)

Now let's read Matthew 2:1-12

How did the wise men know where to go? (they followed the star)

Why do you think king Herod was disturbed or troubled by the news of a new King? (he wanted all the worship!)

How did the teachers and priests know where the Christ would be born? (It was foretold by prophets centuries before! Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah. A ruler will come from you. He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites.")

Was Jesus still a baby when the wise men found him? (No, scripture says he was a child in a house.)

Were there 3 wise men? (Scripture doesn't say, just mentions three gifts.)

What did they do when they saw Jesus? (They bowed down and worshiped Him)

What did they bring to Jesus? (Gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.)

What would you have given to Jesus?

What can you give Him now?

Jesus fulfilled over 350 prophecies from the Old Testament. Here are just some concerning His birth:

Prophecies Concerning His Birth	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Born of the Seed of Woman	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4
Born of a Virgin	Isa. 7:14	Matthew 1:18, 24, 25
Son of God	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:17
Seed of Abraham	Gen. 22:18	Matthew 1:1
Son of Isaac	Gen. 21:12	Luke 3:23, 34
Son of Jacob	Nm. 24:17	Luke 3:23, 34
Tribe of Judah	Gen. 49:10	Luke 3:23, 33
Family Line of Jesse	Isa. 11:1	Luke 3:23, 32
House of David	Jeremiah 23:5	Luke 3:23, 31
Born at Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Presented with Gifts	Psalms 72:10	Matthew 2:1, 11
Herod Kills Children	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16

Day 3

The Cross: Easter

What is the first thing that pops in your head when you hear Easter?

What special things do you do at your house at Easter?

Easter can be a busy time. There are egg hunts to attend, candy to buy, eggs to decorate and new outfits to pick out. It's easy to get lost in the beautiful colors and candy during Easter and it can get confusing as to why we celebrate. We celebrate because death has been conquered! Jesus died, even though He was the ONLY person to ever live that didn't deserve to die. But...three days later, He came back to life! He came back to life and He showed Himself to His friends who thought He was gone forever! Easter is what gives Christmas its meaning. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. But at Easter, we celebrate the whole reason why Jesus came to Earth! Without Easter, Christmas wouldn't mean nearly as much as it does.

A lot has happened since Jesus was born. He grew up! He taught, performed miracles, raised people from the dead, healed the sick! He was very busy! Jesus chose 12 men to be His key disciples or students. He taught them and trained them. Jesus had a lot of people who believed He was God's son but there were a lot who didn't believe and they wanted Jesus to die!

Let's read about what happened during Jesus' final week. This is also known as The Passion Week. Sunday is also known as Palm Sunday.

Read Matthew 21:1-11.

What were the people shouting as Jesus rode into town?

What was the crowd spreading along the road?

Palm branches symbolize victory, the cloaks on the road symbolize their submission to Him as King. Jesus riding on a colt also showed that He was arriving in the city as a peaceful King.

Read Matthew 21:12-17

Why do you think Jesus was upset with the money changers? (The temple is a house of prayer and they were using it for the wrong reasons)

What are some ways we can use the church for the wrong reasons today?

What else did Jesus do at the temple? (He healed many people)

What were the children doing? (praising Him)

Why do you think the leaders and priests were so angry?

Read Matthew 26:1-5 and 26:14-16

Judas was one of Jesus' friends. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? How did that feel?

How much did Judas get for betraying Jesus?

The Passover Meal

Read Matthew 26:20-30

The Passover Meal is now referred to by Christians as The Lord's Supper. Have any of you participated in The Lord's Supper at church?

What does the bread represent? What about the wine?

Read Matthew 26:36-46

Jesus and His followers went to a place called Gethsemane. He asked His followers to sit while He went off to pray.

Why was He so sad? (He knew he was about to die)

In His prayer, Matthew 26:39, Jesus asked, "My Father, if it is possible, do not give me this cup of suffering. But do what you want, not what I want."

What do you think He meant by "this cup"?

What did Peter, James and John do while Jesus was praying? (fell asleep)

Read Matthew 26:47-50

What was the sign Judas used to tell them who to arrest?

What are some ways we betray Jesus today?

Good Friday.

After Jesus was arrested, He was handed over to the authorities and condemned to death on made up charges.

Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? How did that make you feel?

Read Matthew 27:28-31

He was humiliated, spat on, made fun of, beaten... They forced Him to wear a crown made of thorns that tore the flesh on His head.

Then after all that, He was nailed to a cross! This is called crucifixion. If there is a way to die more painfully or slowly than crucifixion, the Romans couldn't find it. This was used for the worst criminals. Jesus hung on that cross for OUR sins.

Read Matthew 27:45-50

Why do you think we call this day Good Friday? (He died thinking of every one of us! And He died so we can one day live with Him in Heaven forever!)

Read Matthew 27:57-66

Who asked for Jesus' body? (Joseph of Arimathea)

What did he do with the body of Jesus? (wrapped it in clean linen cloth and placed Him in a tomb)

Why was the tomb guarded? (They were afraid someone would steal the body and lie saying He had risen from the dead)

Easter Sunday

Read Matthew 28:1-10

What did the women find when they went to the tomb? (an angel on the stone, empty tomb)

What did the angel tell the women?

What feelings did the women have? (they were afraid but also very happy)

Who did they meet as they were leaving? (Jesus)

What did Jesus tell them to do? (Go and tell the disciples that He would soon see them)

Understanding Jesus' death and resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sin through His death on the cross, BUT that was NOT the end! He conquered death to give us everlasting life through His resurrection! Jesus' whole purpose for coming to earth in the first place was to save us from our sin! Why did He have to die? Why couldn't He just say, "You are forgiven"? God is just and He requires a payment for sin. According to His Word, the payment for sin is death. Romans 6:23 He

may be just, but He is also loving and that is why Jesus was willing to die in our place. He did this so we could be forgiven. Jesus paid the price for our sins.

Jesus fulfilled over 350 prophecies from the Old Testament. Here are just some concerning His death:

Prophecies Concerning His Death	Prophecy	Fulfillment
That He would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-11
He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12-13	Matt. 27:3-10
That He would be pierced (nailed)	Zech. 12:10	John 19:34, 37
That His clothes would be divided by casting lots	Psalms 22:18	Matt. 27:35
That He would cry out on the cross	Psalms 22:1	Matt. 27:46
That He would be thirsty	Psalms 69:21	John 19:28-29
That His bones would not be broken	Psalms 34:20	John 19:30-36

Day 4

The Crown: He's Coming Back!

After Jesus rose from the dead, He was seen by a lot of people. Read Acts 1:2-3

What are some things that Jesus did after He rose from the dead? (talked to the disciples and told them what they should do, showed Himself to them – proof that He was alive)

How long did He stay around after His resurrection? (40 days)

Read Matthew 28:16-20

This is known as the Great Commission.

Commission is a direction or an order given with authority. So what did Jesus tell us to do? (Go and make followers of all people. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit)

Now read Mark 16:19-20

Where did Jesus go? (ascended to Heaven)

What did the disciples do after Jesus went to Heaven? (spread the Good News)

What should we do also??

What happens next?

Read Matthew 24:36; 42-44

When will Jesus return? (we don't know!)

How should we be until He returns? (we need to be ready! Love God, love one another)

How do we know for sure He is coming back? (Jesus said He was and we believe His Word)

Who will go with Jesus when He comes back? (people who are saved, ask Jesus to in their lives)

What if someone doesn't have Jesus in their heart? (they will not go to Heaven)

To show someone you are ready for something, like going to school, they will see you have a backpack, some notebooks maybe, pens, pencils....

If you are ready for a vacation, how can people tell? (packed, swimsuits, suitcases...)

How can they tell if you are ready for a party? (gifts, decorations, balloons...)

How can they tell if you are ready for the return of Jesus? Tell others about Jesus, love others, listen during Bible study and worship, pray, tell Jesus you love Him, kind to your siblings, obey your parents and teachers, invite your friends to church....

Jesus could come back before we leave camp, or it could be when you are old with grandkids. We just don't know but we have to be ready.

Read Matthew 25:13

The Bible tells us to watch for His return. That doesn't mean we need to stand outside staring at the clouds every day and night. Instead, it means that we should be ready. Here's a question that can help. We can ask ourselves, "Is this something I would want to be doing if Jesus came back right now???" We might live differently if we expect Jesus to arrive at any minute. Are you ready? If you are, then when Jesus returns, it will be the biggest celebration ever!!

So how do you know if you're ready? If you're a Christian? God makes it really clear that salvation – being saved from your sins and getting to go to Heaven – is a free gift.

A - Admit -- Admit to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin. Sin is when we say, do or even think anything that goes against what God wants us to do. We ALL sin!

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins." Ecclesiastes 7:20

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

"Repent, then, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," Acts 3:19

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

B - Believe -- Believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that He died for you and rose again after 3 days. Believe and accept God's gift of forgiveness from sin.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can

boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

C - Confess -- Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Tell people!

"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is

with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved . . . for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Romans 10:9-10, 13

We receive Christ through personal invitation. To accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, pray the following:

"I know I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe that you, Jesus, died for my sins. I choose to turn from my sins. I now receive you, Jesus, as my Savior and invite you to come into my heart and life. I choose to trust and follow you as my Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen"

By receiving Jesus Christ, you are born again into God's family. You can be sure of eternal life with God because He has promised it!

"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

1John 5:11-12

Now, if you prayed this and meant it, you are a child of God:

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." Colossians 2:6-7

How? Read, study and learn His Word. Find a church that believes and teaches the entire Word of God. Spend time in prayer, talking with the

Lord God. Spend time with other believers.