# CHRISTMAS

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## OBJECTIVE

To teach children the true meaning of Christmas and teach them about Christian giving.

## PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Read Matthew 25:35-40 and be prepared to discuss it with the children. It would also be a good idea to read the passages in Matthew and Luke that tell of the events surrounding Jesus' birth.

Before the session, take some time to think about the children in your JOY group. As this session will be about helping people in need, it would be important to be sensitive of children in your group whose families may be struggling. You may not even be aware of it so discuss this matter with your parish priest. Although he won't disclose private information, he will let you know if there is a reason to be sensitive when approaching this topic. If you have children whose families cannot afford to bring a gift, you may want to have the group make gifts rather than have the children bring them.

### GATHER SUPPLIES

- Bibles- There should be enough for each child. These should all be the same version.
- Word Bank Cards
- Bible Folders
- Copies of Bible Verse Page (see below) - 1 per child
- Holy Bible Illustration
- Arts & crafts activity instructions (see below)
- Construction Paper
- Pens, Pencils and Scissors
- Paper Fasteners

**WORD BANK** (*Prepared a card for each highlighted word to post as it is introduced.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Christmas | celebrate |
| birthday | shelter |

**OPENING PRAYER**

*In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen*
*Glory to You, our God glory to You!*

*Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurities and save our souls, gracious Lord.*

*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3)*
*Lord, forgive our sins. Master pardon our transgression. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for the glory of Your name.*

*Lord, have mercy. (3)*

*Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*For Your is the kingdom, the power and the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

**STATE**

What an exciting time of year this is. A wonderful holiday is coming soon. What is that holiday? That's right, **Christmas**. What are some of the things you like best about Christmas?

***Allow the children to share the things they look forward to. Ask for any special customs that they may observe in their families (cutting a Christmas tree, making cookies, exchanging gifts, etc.). Share some of your own.***

**STATE**

Those are all wonderful ways in which we **celebrate** Christmas. Who can tell us about the very first Christmas?

***Have several children relate the story of the first Christmas. Add any important facts they may overlook.***

**STATE**

So the reason we celebrate Christmas is because it is the **birthday** of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

DISCUSS - *Give children time to think and respond. Accept all answers and reflect back.*

- How do you celebrate your own birthdays? *(party, gifts, etc.)*
- If you celebrate your birthday in these ways, and receive nice gifts, do you think that Jesus should receive nice gifts on His birthday?
- What would you give to Jesus for a birthday gift, if you could?

**STATE**

Jesus doesn't need things that can be wrapped up like presents, but He does tell us in the Bible a way that we can do something good for Him. Let's open our Bibles to Matthew 25: 35-40.

**BIBLE READING**

Distribute Bibles to the children. Refer to the Bible poster introduced in Session 1. Ask them to locate the book of Matthew in the New Testament. Write Matthew 25:35-40 on the board or post a card with this information. Ask the children to first find the title page of the book of Matthew. Encourage them to help one another as needed. When each child has located the Book of Matthew, ask them to notice the large numbers that identify the chapters and turn the pages until they come to the number 25. Next, ask the children to notice the small verse numbers and find the number 35. Make sure you provide guidance to children who may be

having a more difficult time. When all have located verse 35, ask several children to read a few verses while the others follow along.

After the passage has been read, guide the group to an understanding of its meaning as it relates to doing something good for Jesus; giving Him a gift.

## STATE

If Jesus tells us in the Bible that doing something good for people who are in need is the very same thing as doing something for Him, do you think this would be a way to give Him a good "birthday gift"? What are some things you can do to help others? *(Donate food to a soup kitchen, do chores to raise money to donate to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), or International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), collect children's clothing to donate to a* ***shelter****, bring a gift to donate to a shelter or the Salvation Army)*

At the end of last month's meeting, you were asked to bring an unwrapped gift for a child who has less than you. These gifts will be taken to the shelter and will be given to children who would not otherwise receive any gifts for Christmas. Can you imagine how you would feel if you woke up on Christmas morning and had no presents at all?

We are helping children in need at Christmas time because this is one good way to give Jesus a "birthday gift," It's important to remember that it makes God very happy when we help others who do not have the many blessings that we do. It is also pleasing to God when we offer help to our friends, relatives and members of our family. As you grow older, you will find more and more ways to help others. The Bible tells us it is a good and blessed thing to help others as much as we can. We must remember that children and grown ups are poor and suffering all year long not just at Christmas.

## CLOSING PRAYER *(teach the children the hymn)*

*Your birth, O Christ our God, brought to the world the light of knowledge. For through it those who had adored the stars were taught by a star to worship You,*

*The Son of righteousness, and to know You as the Dawn from Heaven, O Lord, glory to You.*
***- Dismissal Hymn, Christmas***

**CHRISTMAS: MATTHEW 25:35-40**

"I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me." The righteous will then answer him: "When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?" The King will answer back, "I tell you, indeed, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!"

## Draw or write some ways that you can help others

# Arts and Crafts: **Helping Hands**

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Construction Paper
- Pens
- Scissors
- Paper Fasteners

## DIRECTIONS

- Write the following poem for children to copy or type ahead for children to paste on to Helping Hands.

  ***Happy hands are helping hands,***
  ***and helping hands are blessed***
  ***so now I want to give my hands***
  ***to those I love the best.***
  ***Love,***

  ***Child's Name***

- Have children trace each of their hands once on the construction paper and cut them out.
- On one hand, children should write or paste poem. Make certain that the hands will fit together with the writing on the top of each.
- On the second hand, children should write ways they can be helpful at home. An example can be written on each finger.
- Fasten hands together at wrists with paper fastener: poem hand on top, examples beneath. The top hand will slide to reveal the child's promises.