

Share the Joy!

Excitement is in the air. Christmas is coming!

And one of the best ways we can celebrate Jesus's birth is by showing His love to everyone.

Share the Joy! A Christmas Lift-the-Flap Book helps little ones see just how fun it can be to care for our neighbors at this special time of year. On each page, favorite Christmas traditions, like carols and cookies, become ways to “share the joy” and spread the love of Jesus.

Reading Together: Pause, Point, Ponder

Christ-centered books like *Share the Joy!* hold lots of potential for inspiring faith and compassion in our kids. But they are incomplete without you! When you read *Share the Joy!* with your family or classroom:

- **Pause** to see what kids notice and what questions they have
- **Point** to details in the illustrations and help kids make connections to their own feelings or experiences
- **Ponder** with kids what's happening in the story and how it relates to God's truth

This interactive approach creates fun memories and deepens understanding. It's great for grown-ups too! We grow in wonder as we learn from kids' valuable insights.

Not sure how to begin? Start small. A few pauses are all you need to create a meaningful experience. Here are some ideas to try:

- **What decorations** do you notice on the Christmas tree?
- **What are you curious about** on this page?
- **Look at her happy face.** Why do you think she is so happy? Can you tell us about a time you were happy like that?
- **Wow! I love all the gifts she made.** When have you made a gift for someone?
- **Hmm...I thought he would buy a toy with those coins.** But look, he's giving them to help people.
- **This family is sharing their cookies with friends.** What a great way to show God's love! How else can we show God's love at Christmas?

Activity Pack: Hands-on Fun Helps Hearts Grow

Few things help a lesson stick more than practicing it right away. So this packet is full of hands-on activities to help young hearts grow in kindness. As children create, give, serve, and share, they will reflect Jesus's love and discover the joy of Christmas in new ways.

Finally...

I'm grateful for the many ways you care for the children in your life. I hope *Share the Joy!* helps your family or classroom celebrate Christmas more fully as you come together to love like Jesus.

Yours at Christmas and always,



“We love because God first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

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Share the Joy! JAR




Instructions

- 1) Print and cut apart the cards.
- 2) Select the ones that work best for your family or classroom and place them in the jar. (We've provided a variety of options so you can tailor the jar to your group.)
- 3) Decide how often you want to draw from the jar. Some ideas include Sundays after church, twice a week after dinner, all the Friday mornings of Advent, or every day of the 12 days of Christmas.
- 4) Consider marking it on your calendar or setting a reminder on your phone to help you follow through.

Other ideas for using the "Share the Joy" jar:

- 1) Make a paper chain. After completing an activity, write or draw about it on a strip of paper. You can add how it made you feel or how you experienced God's presence. Use the papers to make a paper chain to add to your Christmas decor.
- 2) Take a photo of your family or classroom during one of the activities and post it on the fridge or bulletin board.
- 3) Instead of drawing from a jar, let kids read the options and choose one or two that appeal to them. Work together as a family or classroom to share the joy in your home, community, and school!



Purchase gift cards for a specific store and hide them in that store. Before you find great hiding places (inside a shirt pocket, taped to a cereal box), attach notes about God's love. After you find the hiding places, you can leave the store knowing you have blessed someone. Even though you won't know who, you can still pray for them. God knows who they are!


Decorate rocks with cheerful pictures and encouraging words. Leave them on a park bench or on your neighbors' doorsteps.

Make treat bags, hot chocolate jars, or another small gift for your neighbors. Include a picture or note to share God's love. When you deliver them, check on your neighbors to see how they are doing. You can even pray for them as you walk from house to house.

Get the entire neighborhood involved in collecting canned goods, coats, or whatever else your local nonprofit organization might need. You can deliver a flyer to your neighbors about a week beforehand so they will have time to prepare. Then celebrate coming together to share the joy and make a difference.

Share something you appreciate about the person on your right.

Pray for the person on your left.



When you make cookies, double the recipe and bring some to a neighbor or friend who may need Christmas cheer. Attach a tag or card to share that God loves them.


Make bags of snacks and water for people who are unhoused in your community. Keep them in your car to give away when you see someone in need. Attach a tag or card to share that God loves them.

Call a local food pantry or shelter to see what items are needed and give a donation.

Make a Christmas card for someone who may need a reminder that God loves them.

Share your joy with Jesus! Draw a picture or write a letter to Jesus. Why do you like celebrating his birth? What do you love about Him?

Find one person to encourage today. Share about it with your family or group.



Play music or sing carols at a nursing home or assisted living facility. (Call to coordinate with them first.)


Help a neighbor with mowing, snow shoveling, raking, or another job.

Think of a family that is new to the neighborhood or church. Invite them over for dinner or dessert. It doesn't have to be fancy!

Look for a ministry to donate money to this Christmas. If your piggy bank is empty, ask your parents if you can do chores or jobs around the house to earn money to give.

Call your local children's hospital to see if they need cards or small gifts for patients.

Secretly do a chore for a family member and leave a cheerful note for them to find.



Draw or color
a picture for a
family member
and hide it for
them to find.

Clean up a park or
neighborhood. Bring
along printed or
handmade cards,
so you can share
God's love with those
walking by.

Donate gently used
books to a local school or
shelter. Or buy one of your
favorite Christmas books
to give away. (Place a
caring note inside before
you wrap it up.)

Sing your favorite
Christmas Carol
as a prayer for
someone who
needs some
JOY today.

Whoever you meet and
talk with today, wish
them a "Merry Christmas"
some time during your
conversation and make it
a prayer in your heart to
wish them JOY.

Share the Joy! with an animal
friend today -- put some
birdseed in a feeder, or share
an extra treat with a dog
or a cat (with their owner's
permission) -- and remember
that animals were there and
rejoiced when Jesus was
born, too!

Share the Joy! PARTY

Have a “Share the Joy” party for your Sunday School class or neighborhood friends.

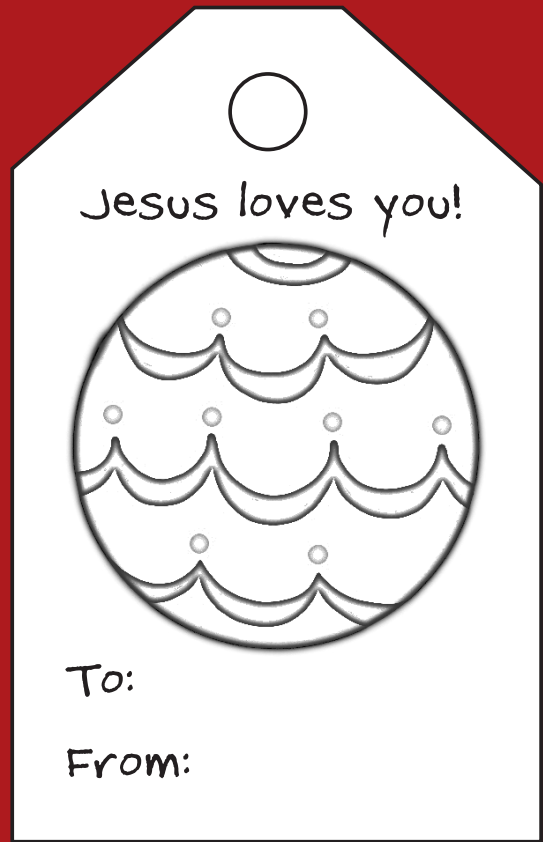
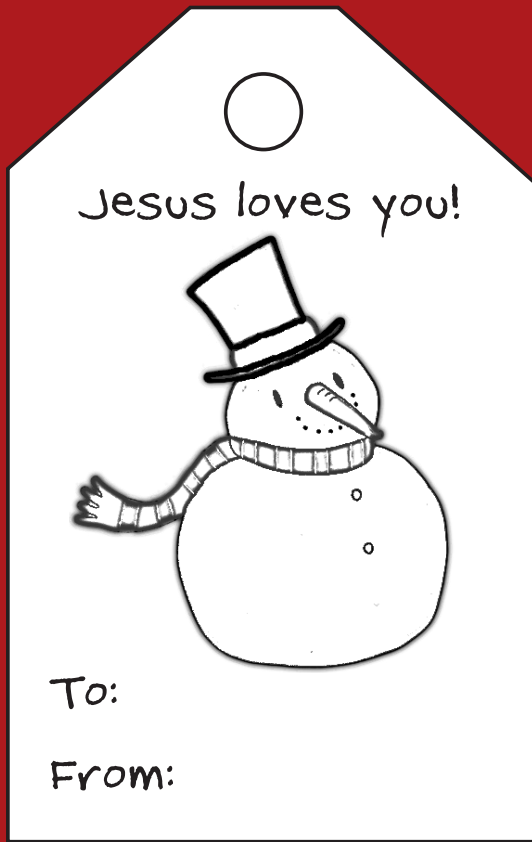
Party ideas include:

- **Read** Share the Joy! A Christmas Lift-the-Flap Book.
- **Color** tags to attach to gifts from the “Share the Joy” activity pack to give away.
- **Collaborate** on a service project idea such as making care packages for kids at a hospital, families at a shelter, or people who are unhoused.
 - Provide the items and allow kids to package them.
 - Have kids color gift tags to include in the package to share God’s love.
- **Share** your joy with Jesus! Sing a song to celebrate his birth and/or post a large paper on the wall and have kids draw a picture as a way to worship Jesus.
- **Play** a game. *For each of the following, divide into smaller groups if you have a large group.*
 - Let children work together to stack cardboard boxes. See how high they can make their tower. Say, “Let’s pretend we’re sharing the joy of Christmas with others by delivering a tall stack of presents. How high can we make our stack?” For extra Christmas cheer, place bells inside the boxes before you tape them up.
 - Blow up a red or green balloon. Work together as a group to keep the balloon in the air. Say, “An ‘uplifting’ word or deed is another way to say an ‘encouraging’ word or deed. Let’s work together to keep the balloon up as a reminder to say kind, uplifting words to show God’s love.”
- And, of course, **share a yummy snack together!**

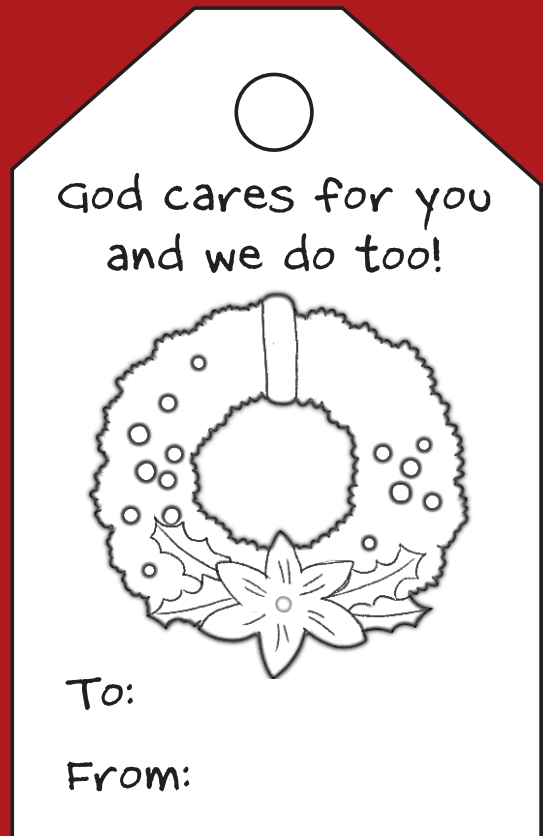
Key Verses and Phrases to highlight at your Share the Joy Party:

- “We love because God first loved us.” | **John 4:19**
- “...I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you...” **Luke 2:10-11**
- We love others because God first loved us!
- Good news of great joy! Jesus the Savior has been born to us!

Share the Joy! TAGS



Print, color, cut out and send with your gift!





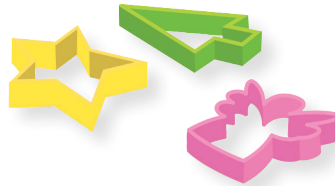
“Share the Joy” Cookies!



Ingredients

Cookies

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 sticks butter room temperature
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp almond extract



Glaze

- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 tbsp light corn syrup
- 1 to 2 tbsp milk or water
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp almond extract (if desired)
- dash salt
- Food coloring & Sprinkles of your choice

Instructions

1. Beat the butter and sugar in mixer bowl until light and fluffy; add egg and flavorings and beat until smooth.
2. Reduce mixer speed to low, and after sifting flour, baking powder and salt together, add slowly until just blended.
3. Divide dough in half, forming 2 disks, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour, until firm, or longer if need be. It will need to be pliable to be able to roll out.
4. Preheat oven to 350°.
5. Using a sprinkling of flour, roll out dough to about an 1/8 inch thickness. Cut out your desired shapes; place on baking sheet and bake for about 15 minutes or until slightly golden. Let cool for a few minutes before glazing them.
6. In a medium size bowl, mix by hand, the sifted confectioners' sugar, corn syrup, milk or water, salt, and flavorings until smooth and well blended. Depending upon the colors you're using, divide glaze into separate dishes, adding colors
7. Holding the cookie, gently lay it on top of the glaze, so that surface is covered. Set aside for a few minutes and then decorate with colored sprinkles of your choice, before glaze sets too firmly.

