

Alley Rundown - December 16-17, 2017

Bible Story: Miracle from Heaven (Jesus is Born) • *Luke 2:1-18*

Bottom Line: God gave us Jesus.

Key Question: What does Christmas mean to you?

Memory Verse: "Command the rich to do what is good. Tell them to be rich in doing good things. They must give freely. They must be willing to share." *1 Timothy 6:18 (NIRV)*

Prep needed before service... Need table and 2 chairs

Supplies Needed: 12 candy canes, Paper Plates (4 total per service), Christmas Peeps for winner and their small group.

Worship Experience Supplies: Candy Cane on Cardstock, Markers, Pens

CONNECT TIME: Candy Cane Hook 'Em (to be played at start of service)

"OK, show me those hands; who enjoys a good candy cane this time of year? Candy canes, peppermint bark, peppermint mochas, or hot chocolate . . . this is basically *the* flavor of the Christmas season. And today I need two volunteers to play a candy-cane extravaganza!

- *Leader chooses **two players** (boys vs. girls, 4th vs. 5th grade, or whatever makes sense in your service), has them come forward, and introduces them to the rest of the group.*

"Alright, each of you can take a seat at this table here. You are about to get the best Christmas feast ever! Bring out the candy canes!"

- *Small Group leaders (or other volunteers) bring out 4 paper plates and set them side by side in front of the players. One plate needs 6 candy canes and the other is empty.*

"Okay, maybe not the best Christmas feast ever . . . but candy canes for dinner/breakfast? Oh yeah!"

"Here's how this will work. When I say GO, you need to move all of your candy canes from this plate, to this empty one. Sounds easy, right? Well, maybe not so much. There's a catch: you can't use your hands. Take one of those candy canes and stick it between your teeth with the hook side hanging out. This is called "Candy Cane Hook 'Em" because you gotta use the candy cane in your mouth to hook 'em off of the plate and move them to the empty one. The first player to move all of his or her candy canes wins! Got it? Okay, ready set GO!"

CG: Candy Cane Hook 'Em Slide with Game Music

- *Leader comments on the game play and gets the rest of the group cheering for the person they hope wins. After the game, count and declare a winner. (Both players keep candy cane that was in their mouth. Save the other candy canes for next round. If they break, you can tape them to be sure they have a "hook".)*

"Wow! That was a close one! But we do indeed have a winner! (*To winner*) You and your small group will get a gooey delicious Christmas surprise...Christmas Peeps! You can head back to your seats. Let's get started today!"

Begin Rundown...

“Merry Christmas, everyone! Can you believe that it is Christmas Time already?! As the old song says, *(singing optional)* ‘It’s the most wonderful time of the year!’ And whether you can sing or not, this time of year is special! Think about something for a moment: what makes this time of the year wonderful for you? What do you love most about this time of year?”

For me, it’s my family. What I love about this time of year is spending time with my family! I love picking out the perfect gifts for them, watching them open them, and seeing their eyes light up when they see what’s inside. So much fun! Now, how about you? What’s your favorite part of the Christmas season?”

Call on kids to share examples.

“Yeah . . . those are great!

“Christmas is such a great time of year, but is Christmas still a great time of year even when things don’t go your way? Maybe a gift someone ordered doesn’t arrive on time, the turkey burned in the oven, and your flights were cancelled. Maybe even someone got sick . . . like this one time . . .

PERSONAL STORY: Christmas disaster. Use this as a third-person hypothetical situation or insert your own.

“Right before my family and I went on Christmas break, the stomach bug tore through our family. It was the worst! Not one of us escaped its treachery . . . And let me just tell you: the treachery was great. We thought we were cleared to head out, and the stomach bug had passed. We were wrong. Two days before Christmas, we packed our bags, loaded up the minivan, and arrived safely at the grandparents’ cabin in the mountains, where our entire family was waiting for us. We had fun playing games and eating snacks and desserts and went to bed not thinking anything of it. The next morning, my Uncle doesn’t come down for breakfast . . . He’s been up all night experiencing first-hand the treachery of the stomach flu . . . Turns out we must have had some lingering germs and passed the flu to our relatives. By the end of the week, not a single person escaped. Christmas was officially a disaster. No Christmas dinner. Just ginger ale and saltines for us. It. Was. The. Worst.

“Have you ever had a Christmas like that? If you have, take a minute and share with your small group.

Give groups a chance to share some Christmas disaster stories.

“(After a few minutes) Alright, leaders—who has a good story that was shared with your group that everybody should hear?”

Give the leaders a chance to share a few of their group’s stories with everybody.

“Wow! Those are great . . . but awful! I certainly would say that those are great examples of things NOT going the way you expected! Thanks for sharing.”

“Did you know that the very first Christmas didn’t go as expected either? I know that might seem crazy to say. In our minds, we usually have a picture of Christmas something like this:”

CG: Classic Nativity picture

“Look at that! (*Referencing the details in the picture*) Mary and Joseph gathered around the baby Jesus. Everybody has halos. The animals are perfectly behaved, all looking at baby Jesus. Mary’s hair is on fleek—the perfect first Christmas.”

“But what if it wasn’t? What if things didn’t go as expected?”

“Let me explain. Let’s go to the story in our Bible. This one comes from the gospel of Luke in the New Testament.”

“(Read from Luke 2:1,3-4.) In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world . . . Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was, (NlrV). ”

“Okay, you might have read this before. But you might not know that what you read starts out with a bit of a challenge. The Caesar, the king of the entire Roman Empire, decides that he wants to take a census. In other words, he wants to count all the people in his empire so that he knows (and the world knows!) just how big and powerful of a kingdom he has. To do so, he commands every person to return to his or her hometown to be counted there. That may not seem like a big deal, but Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary live in Nazareth. That’s what this week’s episode is all about. Let’s take a look...”

CG: Week 4 Lesson Video (Runtime: 9:52)

“Let’s go back to that original picture . . .”

CG: Classic Nativity picture

“See, we often talk about the first Christmas as if everything was perfect. But as we’ve seen, I think it went very differently from what Mary and Joseph expected. A 70-mile journey when pregnant? Mary would have been exhausted and worn out . . . and then, some time later, she had to give birth! Joseph had the burden of trying to care for his wife and find somewhere for them to stay on top of registering for the census. They ended up surrounded by stinky animals . . . and stinky people . . . and used a food trough for a bed for the baby Jesus. The sounds . . . the sights . . . the smells . . . it was all a bit unexpected.”

“And, yet, we can’t miss the most important thing—this is how Jesus entered the world! *This* is how God chose to send His own Son to us to save us. Out of the unexpected, God did the most amazing thing. God gave us Jesus.”

“We don’t celebrate this first Christmas because every detail was perfect. We celebrate this first Christmas because God gave us Jesus. And it gives us hope that God can continue to do amazing things in the midst of the unexpected.”

“When we first started this morning, I asked you, “What is your favorite part of Christmas?” There are so many things that could fit into that category, right? Family, friends, presents, the music, or maybe reading the Christmas story early tomorrow morning before the craziness of the day sets in. As you get ready to head to small group, let’s take a few minutes to worship. Here’s what we’re doing this week...”

CG: Worship Experience Video

(Students will color a candy cane, write gifts they can give to Jesus on them, and hang on your environment's tree)

"Time to head to Small Group! Have a great time talking more about what Christmas means to you. Have a wonderful Christmas everyone! Remember, we won't be meeting here in the Alley, next weekend. We'll see you next week for one of Parkview's Christmas services!"

(PRAY AND DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS)