



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Shake It Up / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

## SERIES SUMMARY

A 3-week series about the joy of Jesus coming to Earth.

WEEK 1: Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

WEEK 2: Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.

WEEK 3: Jesus shows up in the middle of the mess.

## SCRIPTURE

*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:1-3 NIV).*

*Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him” (Matthew 2:7-8 NIV).*

*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi (Matthew 2:16 NIV).*

## TEACHING SLIDES

\*All scripture, bottom lines, and prompts that are bolded in this script are also provided as teaching slides for premium tier\*

## OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA for this week available for purchase through the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Shake It Up Countdown (10 minutes)
  - Shake It Up Teaching Video – Week 2
  - Shake It Up Integrated Teaching Videos
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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- We celebrate the joy of Jesus coming to Earth all year, but especially at Christmas.
- Tell a personal story about the thing you most look forward to and focus on at Christmas.

### TENSION

- Shopping, decorations, presents, movies, time off school, treats—these are things that we can't wait to enjoy during the holiday season.
- While all of that stuff is awesome, packing our holiday season full of stuff can leave little room for what Christmas is all about: Jesus.
- Christmas can start to be less about Jesus and more about us.
- There's nothing wrong with filling our holidays with the things we enjoy, but we don't want those things to get in the way of the joy Jesus brought to the world and how that joy turned everything upside down.
- How do we make room for the things that bring us joy at Christmas and still remember the birth of Jesus as the source of our joy?

### TRUTH

- When Jesus was born during the first Christmas, there was a man name King Herod who wanted to be the center of attention. King Herod was a brutal king who killed anyone who got in his way, because in his mind, he was the most important person. *[Give background context on King Herod.]*
- The story starts here: *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:1-3 NIV).*
- The Magi, or Wise Men, were advisors to royalty. They heard that the Savior God's people had been waiting for had been born, and they wanted to find and worship Jesus.
- When the Magi delivered the news of Jesus to King Herod, he felt threatened and jealous. He realized the story wasn't about him anymore, so he created a plan: *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him" (Matthew 2:7-8 NIV).*
- The Magi knew King Herod was lying and was up to no good, so they didn't tell Herod where Jesus was. Herod came up with an even more horrible idea: *When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi (Matthew 2:16 NIV).*

- Herod's selfish desire to stay in the center of the story was so intense that he was willing to order the killing of innocent babies.
- Even though we aren't anywhere near King Herod when it comes to making Christmas about ourselves, we can struggle with putting the focus on Jesus this time of year.
- When we make Christmas about ourselves, it brings frustration and disappointment, but when we make Christmas about Jesus, it brings us joy and celebration.
- Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.
- When we focus on Jesus, the joy He brought turns every part of our world upside down, including how we celebrate Christmas.
- God wants us to enjoy all of the good and fun parts of the Christmas season, but we should do it with gratitude and love for Jesus in our hearts.
- Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.

## APPLICATION

- When you find yourself putting all of your attention on other things this Christmas season, pause and focus on Jesus, too.
- Use Christmas as an opportunity to experience the joy Jesus came to bring.

## LANDING

- Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.
- When you keep your focus on Jesus, you won't miss out on the joy of the season.
- Experience the joy of Jesus in your small group and during our Christmas party! Celebrate the Good News that brings great joy this Christmas.
- What's one way you can focus on Jesus this Christmas?

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## THINK ABOUT THIS

The goal this week is to encourage your students to find balance. It's certainly not to give them a guilt trip about enjoying any of the traditional, exciting parts about Christmas. There's nothing wrong with Christmas movies, time off school, presents, treats, and more. We simply want students to know that there's so much more for us in Jesus. At times, the Christmas season can make that harder to see simply because there are so many things competing for our attention. Be careful not to shame students who fully embrace the fun of Christmas or speak about any parts of the season as if they're "bad" or "wrong." Rather, encourage them to look for ways to invite Jesus into their season. Help them find ways to experience Jesus in every part of this Christmas and the ones to come!

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## INTERACTIVE 1: CAN'T CONTAIN THE EXCITEMENT!

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll emphasize how easy it is to get excited about Christmas by showing someone from Instagram or TikTok who was really excited about the holiday season.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A video of someone on TikTok or Instagram who's really excited about Christmas (Try searching #christmas, #christmasmorning, #christmastime to find a clip.)
  - A way to show the video to your whole audience
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## INTERACTIVE 2: COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll poll the students in your ministry and share what they're looking forward to most this Christmas season.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- All of your middle schoolers
- A way to poll your students about what they're looking forward to most this Christmas (See below for options.)

### HOW-TO

- If polling your students prior to your talk, conduct your survey and gather the responses.

### STUDENT POLLING OPTIONS

- Use the Question feature on Instagram stories prior to your gathering time
  - Ask students to write down their responses as they enter your environment on a wall using sticky notes
  - Ask students to shout out their answers live during your talk
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## INTERACTIVE 3: KING HEROD AND THE MAJI

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll interact with props that represent King Herod and the Magi any time you mention them during your talk.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A prop that represents King Herod, like a crown
- A prop that represents the Magi, like a gift
- A small table

### HOW-TO

- Place the props on a table in front of your audience.
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## INTERACTIVE 4: SNOW GLOBE SHAKE UP

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll interact with a snow globe to help explain the feelings we experience during the Christmas season.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A snow globe
- A small table for the snow globe to be placed on

*Note: This Interactive is part of the "Shake It Up" suggested set design found in your Ministry Leader Guide.*



# TEACHING SCRIPT

Shake It Up / Week 1

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PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

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## BOTTOM LINE

JESUS IS THE CENTER OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

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## INTRODUCTION

5 MINUTES

Hi everybody! I'm so glad you're here to celebrate the Christmas season with us. We're moving through a series called *Shake It Up* that's all about the joy of Jesus coming to Earth. That's something we celebrate all year round here, but we get especially excited about it at Christmas!

In fact, let me ask you this: On a scale of 1-10, just how excited are you for Christmas? *[Pause to give students time to shout out their answers. Feel free to interact with students shouting out their answers by responding or asking them questions.]*

### **INTERACTIVE: Can't Contain the Excitement!**

*This is where you'll emphasize how easy it is to get excited about Christmas by showing someone from Instagram or TikTok who's really excited about the holiday season.*

I can totally relate to that kind of joy and excitement for the season!

### **TELL A PERSONAL STORY**

*Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or idea . . .*

- Talk about your favorite thing about Christmas (tree decorating, holiday movie marathons, presents, etc.). Share something that you look forward to and focus on during the holiday season.
  - Make sure it's relatable to middle schoolers and something that they'll understand.
  - The goal is to illustrate how much focus you put on this particular thing every Christmas.
  - Or instead of sharing your own story, consider asking someone like a volunteer or small group leader to share to add some variety to your talk.
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## TENSION

3 MINUTES

Like me, you're probably counting down to something specific this holiday season.

### **INTERACTIVE: Countdown to Christmas**

*This is where you'll share what students in your ministry are looking forward to most this Christmas season.*

Let's find out what it is! *[Share some of the responses you got from students before your talk or ask students to shout out their answers. Be sure to respond to or interact with any students who share in front of everyone.]*

I love your answers! They're all honestly super relatable! Shopping, decorations, presents, movie marathons, time off school, fun holiday desserts, *[insert a few examples your students shared.]* That's the fun stuff about the holiday season we can't wait to enjoy!

But while all that stuff is awesome (and believe me, I do think it's awesome!), sometimes packing our holiday seasons full of stuff can leave little room for anything else. When we fill our Christmas schedules with so many things, even the good things can cause us to leave little room for what Christmas is all about: Jesus. And without even realizing it, Christmas can start to be less about Jesus and more about us.

Believe me, I get it! I am all about cozy Christmas pajamas, Christmas cookies, Christmas break, and Christmas movies. I love to fill my calendar full of Christmas fun every year. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with any of that stuff! These are things we should love about celebrating the season each year. But what I don't want for us is for that stuff to get in the way of remembering what Christmas really means for us. I don't want it to cause us to miss the joy Jesus brought to the world that first Christmas or how that joy turned everything upside down.

So the question is this: How do we find the balance? How do we make room to experience all the things that bring us joy every Christmas and still remember the birth of Jesus as the source of our joy? How do we make sure we're keeping the best thing at the center of our Christmas?

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## TRUTH

6 MINUTES

Honestly, things have been like this since the very first Christmas when Jesus was born! In fact, there was a man back then who struggled to keep his focus in the right place. And let's just say this guy actually took things to the extreme!

### **INTERACTIVE: King Herod and the Magi**

*This is where you'll interact with props that represent King Herod and the Magi any time you mention them during your talk.*

His name was **King Herod**, and he was someone we don't talk about that often at Christmas. Why? Well, he was a guy who didn't want Jesus to be any part of the story, let alone the center of it! You might even say he was the villain of the Christmas story. Someone who didn't want there to be a Christmas story at all!

See, King Herod was a mean, brutal king. Picture the worst villain in any story you've ever heard and multiply it by a thousand. *That* was King Herod! He killed anyone who tried to get in his way, including his father-in-law, his brother-in-law, a few of his ten wives, and even two of his sons. Eventually he killed thousands of innocent children in an effort to protect his position as King. Why? Because in King Herod's mind, the world revolved around him. In his mind, *he* was the most important person in the story, and he was willing to do whatever it took to keep it that way.

Now remember, this is a true story. And here's where that story starts for us:

***After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:1-3 NIV).***

So the **Magi**, also known as Wise Men, were really smart guys who usually became advisors to royalty in countries in the East. Here, these guys were looking for Jesus. They'd heard that the Savior, the King God's people had been waiting for, had been born. And they wanted to celebrate by worshipping Jesus. But when they delivered this news to King Herod, it shook things up in a not-so-great way.

Asking Herod where they could find Jesus meant that an important prediction had come true: A new King had been born. But the Roman government had already given Herod the title of "King of the Jews." You can imagine how mad Herod must've been when the Magi showed up and said they were looking for a different "King of the Jews." Suddenly, Herod realized that the story wasn't about him anymore, and that wasn't how he planned it. People were supposed to be worshipping and talking about him, not some baby!

So what did Herod do? He totally freaked out! Herod called a meeting with his counsel to make sure the news of Jesus' birth was true. When they all told him it was, he created a plan.

***Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him" (Matthew 2:7-8 NIV).***

Of course, this was all a lie! Herod didn't want to put Jesus at the center of the Kingdom. Herod wanted to remove Jesus completely.

Good thing the Magi were wise and knew something wasn't right. God warned them in a dream not to report back to Herod, so when the Magi found Jesus, they didn't tell Herod about where He was. In fact, God told Joseph to take Mary and the baby Jesus out of town to protect Him from Herod, so they hit the road, too!

But when Herod found out the Magi had figured out his plan, he came up with another, even more terrible idea.

***When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi (Matthew 2:16 NIV).***

This is just awful, right? Herod selfishly wanted to stay in the center of the story so badly that he was willing to be responsible for the death of babies. He was willing to do whatever it took to keep the focus off Jesus and on him.

You see, there were two very different responses to the news of Jesus' arrival into the world. The Magi saw the star pointing to Jesus, and they became overjoyed. Jesus was at the center of their thoughts and hopes, and it brought them great joy and happiness.

But King Herod heard about the star pointing to Jesus and became angry and jealous. He saw Jesus as someone who might interfere with the plan he had for his own life. Jesus was a threat to everything Herod loved about his life, and he didn't like it one bit.

And now here we are, over 2,000 years later, and I think we struggle sometimes in the same way. No, I'm not saying we're anywhere near as bad as Herod was. We are not the villain of our own Christmas story!

But what I am saying is that it can be easy to have one of two responses to the holiday season: It's about us, or it's about Jesus. One response brings frustration and disappointment, while the other brings joy and celebration to our season. I don't know about you, but I'd prefer joy!

You see, **Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.** That's what the Magi taught us all those years ago. When it's about Jesus, we have a reason to celebrate. We have joy that turns every part of our world upside down, including the way we celebrate Christmas!

See, King Herod's focus caused him to try to erase the main character of the story. He placed himself at the center of his universe. He lived according to all his own desires, and it caused terrible problems in the story he was trying to write for himself. When the Magi were overjoyed at the news of the Messiah coming into the world, Herod was full of stress and jealousy.

And when we make Christmas all about us, we risk feeling the same way! Why? Because placing ourselves at the center of the story will cause us to miss what matters most. So to experience the real joy of the season, we need to remember that **Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.**

Does that mean we can't enjoy a good Christmas movie, or a cup of hot chocolate, or a couple weeks off to sleep in, or even the presents we get under the tree? Of course not! In fact, I think God wants us to enjoy all the good and fun parts of every season, but especially Christmas!

What I think this means for us is simply this: We do it all with gratitude and love for Jesus in our hearts. We celebrate the joy Jesus brought to us at Christmas by experiencing that joy in everything we do. We remember that **Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.**

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## APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

So what can we do to find the right balance this season? What can we do to keep Jesus at the center of our story this Christmas?

### **INTERACTIVE: Snow Globe Shake Up**

*This is where you'll interact with a snow globe to help explain the feelings we experience during the Christmas season.*

**Focus on Jesus.** All of the things we love about Christmas are not bad things, but they can sometimes get in the way of keeping Christmas focused on Jesus. Kind of like this snow globe! It's fun to shake it up and see everything swirl around. [*Shake the snow globe.*] But to see clearly, you have to slow down and focus. When you find yourself centering Christmas on things other than Jesus, look for ways to pause and focus on Jesus, too! Enjoy everything you love this time of year! Just try to see it all as an opportunity to experience some of the joy Jesus came to bring.

# LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.** And when you keep your eyes on Jesus, you definitely won't miss out on the joy of the season.

So today, brainstorm how you can experience the joy of Christmas by focusing on Jesus with your small group. Small groups are a great place to share your thoughts, come up with some steps you can take in your own life, and encourage one another as you give it a try. So I hope you'll do that today!

Another great way to experience the joy of Christmas is to have a party! And that's exactly what we're going to do here next week. So invite your friends to come hang out with us and celebrate the Good News of Christmas that brings great joy next week. We can't wait!

Now, as you head to small group, I want you to think about this question: **What's one way you can focus on Jesus this Christmas?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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