Happy Birthday, Jesus

This event outline provides ideas for an hour-long program based on the theme *Happy Birthday, Jesus*. It’s perfect for . . .

- Happy birthday party for Jesus
- Children’s Sunday school the weekend between Christmas and New Year’s
- Parents Day Out before Christmas
- Adapting for a day or two of VBS (“Christmas in July”)

The ideas that follow include suggestions for decorations, activity booths, snacks, and other fun ways to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. Accompanying downloadable extras are available at www.CTAinc.com/FREE. May God work through you as you share the love of his Son with kids in a brand-new way!
Preparation

Think about creative ways to decorate your space, carrying out the Happy Birthday, Jesus theme in your setting. For example, plan to serve birthday party food. (See “Snack Options” below.) Hang colorful streamers, strew confetti, and use other decorations appropriate for a children’s birthday party. If possible, let the children help you decorate.

Make your event as elaborate—or as simple—as you like. The ideas below and the Happy Birthday, Jesus items available from CTA are designed to intrigue the children who attend, introduce the Savior to those who don’t know him, and encourage faith in the hearts of those who already believe.

As children arrive, give everyone a Happy Birthday, Jesus goodie bag (Item # HBJ4TS16P) to collect treats and prizes and keep them safe along the way. You may want to use a permanent marker to write each child’s name on his or her bag.

NOTE: This event outline includes suggestions for crafts, games, snacks, and Bible Time. There are too many options to complete all of them in an hour. Choose which to execute, taking into account the size of your group, the children’s ages and interests, their background knowledge, skill levels, and the time available. If yours is a large group, consider dividing the group into smaller “families” and rotate through the activity centers described below.

Craft Options

Make Your Own Ornament

After you distribute the kits (Item #HBJ4AK), guide the children to put the train together. Explain the meaning of the colors as the children work:

The Bethlehem star reminds us that Baby Jesus came to be our Savior on the very first Christmas. Each of the colors in this ornament kit reminds us of another wonderful gift God gives us through Jesus:

• White is a peaceful color and it reminds us of the peace that is ours because we belong to God’s family. We have peace in knowing our sins are forgiven and Jesus is our forever Friend.

• Green is a joyful color, all bright and full of life. It reminds us that knowing Jesus’ love and care makes even the best of days brighter—and we have eternal life through what he did for us!

• Red is the color of love. God’s love is greater and truer than any other love we’ll ever know, and God’s love, shown when Jesus died for us, will never, ever end.

As the children work, talk with them about the colors and what each means. Practice telling one another about the colors, so each child can share these meanings at home and with friends. When they finish, explain that they can take the ornament home and use it to decorate their Christmas tree or place it on a bed stand or dresser to remind them of the real reason for all the celebrations on Christmas.
Color-Your-Own Party Hat

Be sure to have one color-your-own party hat and elastic (Item #HBJ4CT8P) for each child. If you are nervous about letting very young children play with the elastic straps, keep them out of reach and let them hold their hats on their heads once they’ve colored them.

Have crayons, kid-friendly markers, paints, and other art supplies available. (Some children will work more quickly than others, so plan to let those children make two or more hats, encouraging them to give one to a grown-up at home.)

Talk to the children about why we celebrate at Christmas time, and why Jesus’ birthday is so important to us Christians. Help them to assemble their hats once they’re finished coloring, taping the seam where the sides come together and tying the elastic bands through the holes. Encourage each child to wear his or her hat throughout the party!

Bible Truth Time

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today. Luke 2:11

Ahead of time, decorate a corner of your space with a “happy birthday, Jesus” banner (check out CTA’s free, printable option at www.CTAinc.com) and be sure you have enough Happy Birthday, Jesus Gospel Fun books (Item #HBJ4GF) for each child to receive one.

When the children are seated, ask volunteers:

• What happens at a birthday party?
• What’s a good place for a birthday party?

Then say, I am going to read a story about the birthday party that happened when Jesus was born. It didn’t happen in Jesus’ backyard or at a local pizza parlor. It happened in a shed where animals were kept. It was dark and maybe even smellly in that shed.

Jesus’ mother, Mary, loved Baby Jesus, and Joseph loved Baby Jesus, too. There were no clowns or puppets at this party. There were no games or snacks. There weren’t even other kids there! But some very special visitors celebrated Jesus’ birthday! Listen to hear about those unexpected, happy guests.

Read Luke 2:1–20 from a children’s Bible, if possible, or from A Night like No Other (Item #NLN4SCTS). Then, review together who the special guests were (angels and shepherds) and how they helped celebrate the Savior’s birth.

Say, There’s something strange about Christmas. Have you ever noticed? Christmas is Jesus’ birthday, but WE get all the gifts! Jesus is God’s gift to us. He is our Savior from sin. He came to bring us God’s forgiveness. With forgiveness, we receive peace and joy and love. Jesus makes us kids of the King, just like he is! Because he loves and forgives us, one day we will live with him in our heavenly home. Wow! That’s a LOT of gifts!

This Christmas, I would like to give Jesus a gift! Wouldn’t you? However, I wonder what to give him. He’s a great King. He is God! He doesn’t need toys or books or socks.

What do you think Jesus would want most? (Let volunteers answer.) We can tell Jesus how much we love him and how thankful we are for all he has given us. We can also show
his love to other people. That makes Jesus so happy! What are some ways you could show Jesus' love to people you know? (Let volunteers answer.) That’s right: we can forgive people when they hurt our feelings; we can share our coolest toys; we can obey our moms and dads. And we can learn more about our Savior, who was born for us that very first Christmas! I’m going to give you something to help you do that.

Give each child a *Happy Birthday, Jesus* Gospel Fun book (Item #HBJ4GF) to take home. If time allows, read one of the pages and explain that they can complete all of the activities. Before you dismiss the group, pray for the children, asking Jesus to help them see many ways to share his love this Christmas.

**Games**

**Pin the Star on the Christmas Tree**

Play this like the perennial birthday favorite, “Pin the Tail on the Donkey,” but use a Christmas tree and star in place of the donkey and tail.

**Button, Button**

The object of this game is simply to pass the button from it to another person secretly. Everyone tries to guess who has the button. Use a white button and a permanent marker to draw a Christmas star on it.

Help the children form a circle with one child in the center (it). Each child in the circle should put his or her hands together, palms touching and thumbs up.

It holds his or her hands in the same way, but with the button between them. It then walks around the circle, gently putting the heel of his or her hands on top of every other child’s index fingers, in turn. At some point, it secretly drops the button between another child’s hands. Throughout the process, all the children are to keep their palms together, not letting anyone know whether they have the button or not.

When it gets all the way around the circle, all the children say in unison, “Button, button, who’s got the button?” Children who think they know may say something like, “Mary’s got the button!” If that’s correct, the guesser becomes the new it and the game starts again. If no one can guess, the child who has the button wins and becomes the new it.

As the game ends, talk briefly with the group about ways they can “pass on” the joy of Christmas and the Christ Child, just as they passed the button from person to person.

**Bethlehem Star Beanbag Toss**

Make several small beanbags by tying dried beans or rice into small, colorful socks. Use poster board to make a target. Draw a Bethlehem star about eight inches across at the very center of the poster. Further out, label places in the Holy Land like Jerusalem, Mount Sinai, Egypt, and Babylon. Lay the poster on the floor.

Affix a strip of colored tape (for example, painters tape) to the floor several feet from the poster/target. Tell the children they must stand behind this line as they toss the beanbags. Form teams and let the children take turns trying to get each beanbag to land as close to the Bethlehem star as possible.
You may or may not want to award points and keep score. If so, label the number of points earned for each destination. Younger children will likely just enjoy the challenge of the toss.

**Song Time!**

Spend a few minutes singing to Jesus before you distribute the snacks. Start off with CTA’s free, original song “Happy Birthday Jesus” (sheet music and recording downloadable at www.CTAinc.com/FREE). Sing it a few times in a row until everyone knows the melody:

Happy birthday Jesus.
Happy birthday Jesus.
Happy birthday Jesus!
Happy birthday; we love you!

Then ask the group, **Who can name one gift from God that you are very thankful for right now?**

Listen to volunteers, then sing the song again. Ask for a different answer and repeat the song after each child says what they are thankful for, until any child who wants to has had a turn to suggest a gift he or she is thankful for.

**Snack Options**

Be sure to give each child a *Happy Birthday Jesus* paper napkin (Item #HBJ4NK16P) with their snack. As the children eat, consider playing or singing favorite Christmas songs.

**“Happy Birthday, Jesus” Cake**

What’s a birthday party without a birthday cake? Here are several variations the children at your party might enjoy:

- Make your favorite cupcake recipe, and on each cupcake place one letter of the phrase Happy Birthday, Jesus!—H on one cupcake, A on the next, and so on. In between each word, place a cupcake with a lighted candle.
- Make a regular birthday cake and add 21 candles—one for each century Jesus’ love has impacted our world.
- Decorate a sheet cake or cupcakes with gumdrops. Try to use the candies to make a manger scene.

**Birthday Punch**

Put a half-gallon of softened strawberry sherbet into a large punch bowl. Add two 64-ounce bottles of fruit punch and one two-liter bottle of chilled lemon-lime soda pop. Stir a bit. Let the sherbet melt as the party proceeds. Another option would be to simply serve red fruit juice.

Whatever the beverage, CTA’s *Happy Birthday, Jesus* paper tumblers (Item #HBJ4PT8P) make great party cups.