

amazing news to Mary and Joseph. **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Give each kid his journal page and a pencil. Review the big picture question and answer.

SAY • *Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.* Think about a way that you have sinned against God in the past few days. [*Allow time for kids to think.*]

The Bible tells us that before God even created this world, He planned to send Jesus to rescue us from sin. The Bible describes sin as being a master over us. Before Jesus sets us free, we are slaves to sin.

Guide kids to write on their journal page about the most exciting news they have ever heard. How did it make them feel? As time allows, lead kids to complete “The Other Half” on the activity page.

Give each kid the big picture card for today’s Bible story so families can interact with the Bible content at home this week.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “The Other Half” activity page, 1 per kid
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids

Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20

MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

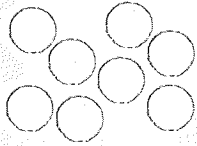
KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

2

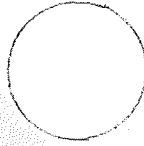
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 108



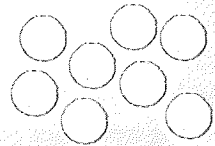
LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 110



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 116



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Do you think it was just by chance that Caesar Augustus called for a census? Did it just so happen that Mary and Joseph were traveling to Bethlehem—the very place the Messiah was prophesied to be born? (Micah 5:2) God is in control of all things, which He showed by using a pagan emperor to bring about His plan.

After Jesus was born, Mary laid Him in a manger. A king in a manger! It was so unlikely. But Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent in the most humble of positions, "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Imagine the shepherds' surprise when an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared. The Bible says that they were terrified! But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David" (Luke 2:10-11).

What a relief! This angel had come to bring good news. First, he proclaimed a Savior. The people of Israel were well aware of their need for a Savior. They made sacrifices daily to atone for their sin. Finally, a Savior had come who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, once and for all.

Jesus was also Messiah the Lord. The word *Messiah* means "anointed one," especially a king. The Deliverer and Redeemer would be King over His people. And this was all happening in Bethlehem, the city of David—just as the prophet Micah said.

This is the best news ever! An army of angels appeared, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors" (Luke 2:14). The purpose of Jesus' birth was twofold: to bring glory to God and to make peace between God and those who trust in Jesus' death and resurrection.



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Jesus Was Born

Luke 2:1-20

During the time Mary was pregnant with Baby Jesus, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, announced that everyone needed to be registered for a census. Every person traveled to the town where his family was from. Since **Joseph** was a descendant of King David, he **and Mary** left their home in Nazareth and **traveled to Bethlehem**, the city of David.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place for Mary to have her baby, but every place was full because of all the people who were in town to be counted.

So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby. She wrapped Baby Jesus snugly in cloth, and she laid Him in a feeding trough.

In the same region, some shepherds were staying out in the fields and watching their sheep to protect them from thieves and predators. **All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them. A bright light shone around the shepherds, and they were terrified!**

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.”

Then the angel said, “You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.” A king in a feeding trough? That was no place for a king!

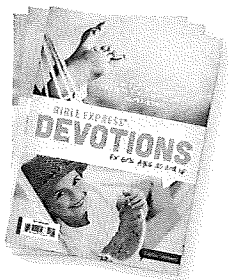
All of a sudden, many angels appeared, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!”

So the shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus. They found Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus.

Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. Mary thought about everything that was happening and tried to understand it.

The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Christ Connection: The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to save people from their sins and to be their King.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Jesus is God's one and only Son. Everyone who believes in Jesus will not perish but will have life forever with God. (See John 3:16.) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20

MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY • At Christmas, we celebrate how God provided His Son, Jesus, at just the right time. Who can tell me about a time that God provided for you or your family at a time when you needed Him to provide?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Comic Strip" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Comic Strip" on the activity page.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we will hear how an angel announced that Jesus had been born. How would you announce such amazing news?

Instruct the kids to color in the comic strip and fill in the speech bubble of the angel with the words that they think the angel might have said to announce Jesus' birth.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Road trip

Lead kids to sit in a circle.



SAY • Have you ever been on a road trip or in an airplane? What things did you take with you? How long were you in the car or plane? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

Imagine we are going on a road trip and you have to pack a few things to take with you. I'll start.

I am going on a road trip, and I'm going to take [*name an item*].

Point to the next player in the circle. Prompt her to say, "I am going on a road trip, and I'm going to take ..." Then she will name a new item as well as the item you named.

Continue around the circle. Each player will add a new item and repeat the previous items.

SAY • In our Bible story today, Mary and Joseph had to take a very long road trip on a donkey while Mary was pregnant with Jesus. Listen to the Bible story to find out where they traveled and why.

OPTION 2: No room!

Blindfold one kid who will be the innkeeper. Tell boys and girls that an inn is a place where people pay to stay overnight, similar to a hotel. Point to one kid (the traveler) who will approach the innkeeper and say (in a disguised voice), "Do you have any room?"

• blindfold

The innkeeper should respond, "No room in the inn, [*guess name of traveler*]." If she guesses correctly, a new volunteer becomes the innkeeper.

SAY • In the Bible story today, Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to stay. Listen closely to find out what happened.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20

MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• red robe or cape
• goggles
• theme background
slide (optional)

[Large Group Leader enters wearing goggles and a red robe or cape. He or she looks around at the scene of the stable and manger with a puzzled look on her face.]

LEADER • Very interesting ... Well, hello there! Can any of you guess what I am? (*a superhero*) And how could you tell? Was it my amazing goggles, or my beautiful red cape? So, today I'm going to tell you where our true hero—our Rescuer—was born. But look at this! [*Point to the manger scene.*] So strange, isn't it? This isn't the place that I would have picked for the greatest hero to be born. I mean, the Son of God comes into the world, and this is where God chooses for Him to be born? In what kind of place would you expect a great hero to be born?

Giant timeline (1 minute)

• Giant timeline

LEADER • Let's see where we are on our timeline. Can anyone remember whom the people of God were

waiting for all these years? [*Pause for responses.*] (*the promised Messiah, or Savior*) In last week's Bible story, what good news did the angel bring? [*Choose a volunteer to answer.*] **(God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.)**

The people of God had been waiting for so long for this Rescuer to come, but they were on the lookout for someone who looked like a king! They were hoping for someone who would be powerful enough to rescue them from the Roman rulers—from high taxes and hard lives. But God chose Mary and Joseph, ordinary people in a small town called Nazareth, to be the parents of His Son. No one was expecting that!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • But you and I know that there is something bigger than taxes and unfair rulers that we needed to be rescued from. What do we need to be rescued from? [*Listen for kids' replies.*] Sin. So, *why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.*

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 2:1-20. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Was Born."

LEADER • Wow. Jesus was born to parents we would never have expected, in a place we never would have thought of. Did you hear the excitement in the voice of the angel who declared this news to the shepherds? This was no ordinary baby!

The angel called this baby the *Savior*, the *Messiah*.

- Bibles
- "Jesus Was Born" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Those are words that are similar to *Rescuer*. The shepherds probably heard about how God had promised through the prophets to send someone to save them.

And what did the shepherds do when they heard that this Messiah—this Savior, this Rescuer—was finally here? They dropped everything and hurried off to find the baby.

Ask the following review questions:

1. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
(*Caesar Augustus had ordered a census, Luke 2:1-3*)
2. What is a census? (*A census is a count of all the people who live in a certain place.*)
3. Which Old Testament king was Joseph's ancestor?
(*King David, Luke 2:4*)
4. What did Mary use as a bed for Baby Jesus?
(*a manger, a feeding trough; Luke 2:7*)
5. What is a manger? (*A manger is like a wide bucket or box which held animals' food.*)
6. ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***
7. What group of people first heard the message that God's Son was born? (*Shepherds who were out in the fields with their flocks, Luke 2:8*)
8. What message did the angel give the shepherds?
(*"Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David"; Luke 2:11*)
9. What did the shepherds do when the angels left?
(*They hurried to find Jesus, Luke 2:15-16*)

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Galatians 4:4-5.

LEADER • We needed a Rescuer to save us from our sins. At just the right time, God sent His Son into the world. Jesus was the Rescuer God had promised to send.

Review the hand motions from last week to help kids memorize the first part of the key passage. Then demonstrate motions for key phrases included in the last part of the passage. Consider these suggestions:

- **born under the law**—Crouch down and lift your arms as though carrying a heavy load on your back.
- **to redeem those under the law**—Throw off the heavy burden on your back and stand up straight.
- **so that we might receive**—Extend both arms with palms up and bring them in (like you are catching a football) to show you are “receiving.”
- **adoption as sons**—Hold out both hands with palms facedown and close them into fists as though you are grabbing hold of something.

LEADER • Great job! That is our whole key passage. As we sing our key passage song, do these motions when you hear these words.

Lead kids in singing “Adoption as Sons.”

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- “Adoption as Sons” song

• “Unit 5, Session 2”
discussion starter
video

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

Show the “Unit 5, Session 2” discussion starter video.

LEADER • Why is it so hard for us to wait for things? What can happen sometimes when something is promised but we don’t see it for a while? Why do you think God waited to send Jesus?

Emphasize that we may not always know or understand God’s plan, but we can trust He is good and in control.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Joy to the World” song

LEADER • Jesus came into the world—finally! People had waited so long. When the news of Jesus’ birth came, they sang and praised God. Let’s sing.

Sing together “Joy to the World.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Who can tell me the answer to our big picture question? *Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.*

Let’s pray. Father, we thank You that You knew we could never defeat sin our own. We thank You that because we couldn’t save ourselves, You planned to send Jesus to rescue us from sin. Please change our hearts to trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20

MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- 8-foot length of string
- plastic or paper ornaments
- ornament hangers

Display the key passage poster. Recite the key passage together two times as a large group.

Write each word of the key passage on plastic ornaments or paper ornaments with hangers. Lead two kids to hold each end of a string stretched across the room.

Distribute the ornaments. If your group is large, make multiple sets. Challenge kids to hang the ornaments on the string in the correct order until they complete the whole passage. Recite the passage together as a group.

For an added challenge, tell one volunteer to close his eyes. Remove several ornaments from the line.

Tell the volunteer to open his eyes and recite the key passage and fill in the missing words. Repeat the challenge with several kids and remove more ornaments to increase the difficulty of the challenge.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Direct kids to form groups of two or three. Guide kids to take turns sharing within their group the story of Jesus' birth, beginning with the angel's visit to Mary. What happened first? Then what happened?

When the kids finish, guide them to form one large circle. Instruct kids to begin telling the story of Jesus' birth by sharing one detail from the story at a time. (Possible starting details: "The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary" or "The angel told Mary she would have a baby.")

After each detail, gently correct any misinterpretation or ask kids if they have anything to add. Then call on a volunteer to share the next detail. When finished, she will call on the next volunteer to continue the story. Repeat this pattern until kids tell the whole story of Jesus' birth.

Consider emphasizing these key details:

1. The Roman emperor announced everyone needed to be registered for a census.
2. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem.
3. Mary gave birth to Jesus.
4. Mary wrapped Jesus snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.
5. An angel told some shepherds about Jesus and where to find Him.
6. The shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus.
7. The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: "With haste!" relay

Form two teams. Designate a start line and a turn-around line in the room.

SAY • Luke 2:16 says that after the angels had given the shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth, the shepherds hurried to find Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



• masking tape or painter's tape

They were excited to see the baby Savior whom everyone had been waiting for! **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Line up the teams behind the start line. Explain that the first person on each team must hurry to the turn-around line, reach down to touch it, and then return to the second player on his team.

He must announce to the second player, "Glory to God, Jesus is born!" and then tag his hand before that teammate may leave the start line. The second player will do the same. The first team to return every player back to its line wins.

OPTION 2: Nativity diorama

Invite kids to work together to create a diorama displaying the nativity scene.

- cardboard box
- construction paper
- glue sticks
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- play dough
- artificial grass, hay, or play sand (optional)
- Allergy Alert download (optional)

Tip: If your group is large, form smaller groups and provide supplies for each group.

1. Turn a cardboard box on its side. Instruct kids to use the bottom of the box as a background. They should cover the background with construction paper and draw scenery such as a stable or the city of Bethlehem.
2. Encourage kids to draw figures of Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, shepherds, animals, and so forth. Kids may cut them out, leaving a small tab along the bottom. Show kids how to press the tab into a lump of play dough to help the figure stand upright.
3. Consider providing artificial grass, hay, or play sand to cover the "ground" of the display. Post an allergy alert where parents can read it before class if you use nature items.

When groups finish, invite volunteers to share the scene and briefly explain what happened when Jesus was born. Encourage them to point out the details their group

included and to explain why they included those details.

SAY • Jesus was born to be God’s promised Savior. Even though Jesus is God’s Son, He wasn’t born in a fancy palace and the news of His birth wasn’t announced throughout the city with trumpets blaring and people celebrating. Jesus was born humbly. Mary laid Him where animals would have eaten their food. Angels announced Jesus’ birth to shepherds, and they came to see the baby.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Give each kid her journal page and a pencil. Remind kids that *Jesus was born to be God’s promised Savior*.

SAY • Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin. Before God even created the world, He planned for Jesus to be the Savior we needed. God knew all the ways that we would sin, or disobey Him. He knew we would not love Him or other people like we should.

Prompt kids to list a couple ways that they have sinned against God or against others. If kids struggle to think of experiences, ask them if they have recently acted out of anger or jealousy toward a sibling, talked back to a parent, or lied to a friend.

Encourage boys and girls to write a prayer to God, confessing and repenting of their sin and thanking Him for sending Jesus to rescue them from sin.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Plot the Journey” on the activity page. Kids will follow the instructions to explore key destinations in the story of Jesus’ birth.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Plot the Journey” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.