

Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

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

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 1:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)

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LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

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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 brought them "good news of great joy." (See Luke 2:10-11.) 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.

Not only did Jesus come into the world as the Savior, He came as our King. Some time after Jesus' birth, wise men came to worship Jesus. They brought Him gifts suitable for a king—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Jesus is the King who will rule forever, just as God promised King David. (See 2 Sam. 7.)

When you share this story with kids, remind them that Jesus came because we needed Him. 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. Celebrating the birth of Jesus is about rejoicing over the greatest gift we could ever receive. God's own Son came to earth to be our Savior and our King.



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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

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** Hold up Bible story props one at a time as you tell the Bible story. Suggestions for props include a clipboard, a baby bottle, a receiving blanket or cloth, a toy sheep, a newspaper, a star cutout, a paper crown, and a gift bag.
- **Display art:** Cut pictures of Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, shepherds, angels, and other Bible story elements from Christmas cards. Attach double-sided tape to the back and move them around on a focal wall as you tell the story.

Jesus Was Born

Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

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

In the same region, some shepherds were out in the fields watching their sheep. 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, “Don’t 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.”

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

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

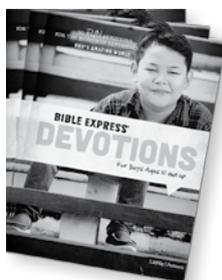
about Jesus was surprised and amazed. **The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God** because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Some time later, wise men came to visit Jesus. They had seen a star in the east—a sign from God that Jesus had been born. The wise men went to King Herod. “Where is the king of the Jews?” they asked. “We have come to worship Him.”

A new king? Herod was king! “Go and search carefully for the child,” Herod told the wise men. “When you find Him, report back to me so that I can go and worship Him too.” But Herod was lying. He didn’t want to worship Jesus; he wanted to kill Him!

When the wise men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him. Then they gave Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When it was time for the wise men to go home, God warned them in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was. So they took a different way home.

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



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

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that the wise men recognized Jesus as the King of the Jews. (Matt. 2:2) Jesus is King over all creation and is worthy of worship. (Heb. 1:8) 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: Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

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

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 1:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

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. Ask kids to talk about the farthest distance they have ever traveled. How did they travel? How long do you think it would take to walk that far?

SAY • In Bible times, people didn't have cars and they couldn't go to the airport and get on an airplane. Traveling anywhere took a long time! Think about that when we hear today's Bible story.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Jesus Was Born Word Search" on the activity page. Ask kids if there are any words they do not recognize. Which words have they heard before? Which words are the names of people? (*David, Jesus, Joseph, Mary*) Which words are the names of places? (*Bethlehem*) Which words describe Jesus? (*baby, King, Lord, Messiah, Savior*)

SAY • All of these words in the word search have something to do with today's Bible story. When we hear the Bible story today, listen carefully to see if you can hear them.

- "Jesus Was Born Word Search" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Gifts for a king

Form groups of four to six kids. Give each group a pencil and a piece of paper. Groups should each choose a kid to write. Instruct groups to make a list of items they might give as a gift to a two-year-old boy. (Examples: blocks, puzzles, toy cars, trains, books, and so forth)

Allow a few minutes for kids to work, then invite them to share their answers. List their ideas on a chalkboard or dry erase board. Then give a volunteer a Bible and guide her to read aloud Matthew 2:11.

SAY • In today's Bible story, some wise men came to visit Jesus when He was about two years old. They brought Jesus some gifts that seem pretty unusual. We are going to find out what they brought and why.

OPTION 2: Scavenger hunt

Make a list of scavenger hunt items related to the Bible story. Before the session, hide the items around the room. Give the list to kids and challenge them to find and collect the items.

Suggested items: clipboard, baby bottle, receiving blanket or piece of cloth, toy sheep, newspaper, star cutout, paper crown, gift bag.

SAY • Great job finding these items! All of these items are related to today's Bible story about Jesus' birth. Listen carefully to the Bible story to see if you can figure out what is important about these items.



LOW PREP

- dry erase board or chalkboard
- chalk or marker
- paper
- pencils

- paper
- pencil
- scavenger hunt items

Note: The Large Group Leader will explain the significance of each of these items after the Bible story.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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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
• backpack
• notebook
• Bible
• gift bag

[Large Group Leader enters carrying a backpack, notebook, Bible, and gift bag.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! I'm so glad to see you. *[Hold up the gift bag.]* I have good news; my family is growing! One of my relatives just had a baby, and I am trying to decide what gift to give her. Do any of you have any ideas? *[Allow kids to respond.]* Interesting thoughts. Thanks!

Set down the gift bag and hold up the Bible.

LEADER • You know, today's Bible story is about Jesus being born, and people brought Him gifts. Maybe I can get some ideas about what to give the baby as we listen to the story.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • First, let's review our big picture question: *What makes Jesus different?* That is a very good question

because we know that there are a lot of babies born every year. Have you ever thought about why Jesus was born? *What makes Jesus different?* Does anyone remember the answer? Yes! *Jesus is fully God and fully man.* God sent His Son from heaven to earth. Jesus became a man, but He did not stop being God the Son.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Display the giant timeline map or big story circle. Briefly review previous Bible stories, and then point out today's story, "Jesus Was Born."

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

LEADER • Remember that the Bible is made up of many smaller stories, but they all fit together to tell one big story—the story of how God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin. Last time, we heard about an angel who told Mary that she was going to have a baby who would be God's own Son and the Savior of the world. In today's Bible story, "Jesus Was Born," the angel's message came true!

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Was Born."

LEADER • Most of you have probably heard this story. What time of year do we celebrate Jesus' birth? (*Christmas*) Let's see how well you remember this story.

Hold up Bible story props one at a time as you talk about their significance. Consider calling eight volunteers to the front of the room to hold the props.

• Bibles
• "Jesus Was Born" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Bible story props: clipboard, baby bottle, receiving blanket or piece of cloth, toy sheep, newspaper, star cutout, paper crown, gift bag

LEADER • Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to be registered for a census. [*Hold up clipboard.*] A *census* is a count of all the people living in a certain area. When they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. [*Hold up baby bottle.*] When the baby Jesus was born, Mary wrapped Him snugly in cloth. [*Hold up receiving blanket.*]

An angel appeared to some shepherds in the region [*hold up toy sheep*] and told them the good news—“A Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David!” [*Hold up newspaper.*]

Some time later, wise men came to visit Jesus. They had seen a star in the east—a sign from God that Jesus had been born. [*Hold up star cutout.*] When the wise men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him as King. [*Hold up paper crown.*] Then they gave Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. [*Hold up gift bag.*]

Christ connection

LEADER • After the shepherds found Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus, did they just go back to their fields and carry on like nothing had happened? No! The Bible says that they went and told others about Jesus!

Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. The shepherds praised God because the birth of Jesus was good news!

Just like He had promised, God sent a Savior into the world. Jesus is God’s Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world because we needed Him. He came to save people from sin and to be our King. That is worth celebrating!

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Timothy 1:15.

- Key Passage Poster
- “This Saying” song

LEADER • This is such a great verse. If you haven’t already memorized it, try to do so this week. We heard in our Bible story today about what happened when Jesus was born, but this verse tells us why He was born. **Jesus was born to be God’s promised Savior.** He came into the world to save sinners! This is how God kept His promise to Abraham.

Lead boys and girls to sing “This Saying.”

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Think about how people reacted when they heard that Jesus was born. How did the shepherds and wise men react? How did Herod react? Watch this.

- “Unit 19, Session 3” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 19, Session 3” discussion starter video. Lead kids to discuss which of the gifts was suitable for a king. What would they bring if they were going to meet a king?

LEADER • The shepherds hurried to find Jesus, and they returned to their fields praising God. Later, the wise men came and brought Jesus gifts. They worshiped Jesus as King. Do you worship Jesus as King in your life? Why or why not? What can we offer to Jesus to show that He is our King?

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • One way we can worship Jesus is by singing. Let’s sing our unit song.

- “The Savior We Need” song

Sing together “The Savior We Need.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Your Son into the world to save us from sin. Your Word tells us that *Jesus is fully God and fully man*. He gave up His place in heaven to come to earth in the most humble way—as a little baby. We needed Jesus, and You gave Him to us because You love us.

Father, help us remember why Jesus was born. He is the answer to our greatest problem of sin. We bow before Him as Lord and Savior, and we give You glory. Amen.

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 3:18.



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

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- masking tape
- permanent marker
- dominoes

Write the words of 1 Timothy 1:15 on short strips of masking tape and attach the tape to the backs of dominoes. Position the dominoes words-down on a table. Invite kids to turn over the dominoes and arrange them in order.

When kids finish, guide them to say the key passage together. Then allow them to stand the dominoes on end and push them over to create a chain reaction.

SAY • We heard in our Bible story today about Jesus' birth.

Our key passage tells us why Jesus was born: Jesus came into the world to save sinners!

Every day, hundreds of thousands of babies are born around the world, but Jesus wasn't like other babies. Jesus could save us from our sin because He is different. *What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- chairs, 7
- red paper
- blue paper

Position seven chairs side by side. Form two teams of kids and distinguish each team by giving players a colored piece of paper to hold: red for team 1 and blue for team 2.

Explain that you will ask each team a review question.

If the team answers correctly, a player may sit in one of the chairs. Teams should try to sit three of their own players in a row. For a correct answer, a player may either sit in an empty chair or choose a chair occupied by the other team. The opposing player must stand and return to his team.

Begin by asking a question to team 1. Players may discuss before giving a final answer. If a team answers incorrectly, give the other team a chance to answer. If a team gets three players in a row, reset the game and continue until you ask all the review questions.

1. Who announced that everyone needed to be registered? (*Caesar Augustus, Luke 2:1*)
2. Mary and Joseph traveled to what city? (*Bethlehem, the city of David; Luke 2:4*)
3. Mary and Joseph came from what city? (*Nazareth, Luke 2:4*)
4. What happened while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem? (*Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son, Luke 2:6-7*)
5. Who appeared to the shepherds in the fields? (*an angel of the Lord, Luke 2:9*)
6. What good news did the angel tell the shepherds? (*“A Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David”; Luke 2:11*)
7. Where did the shepherds go when the angels left? (*to Bethlehem, Luke 2:15*)
8. What did the shepherds do when they left Bethlehem? (*They told others about Jesus, glorified God, and praised Him; Luke 2:17-18,20*)
9. How did the wise men know Jesus had been born? (*They had seen His star in the east, Matt. 2:2*)
10. Why did Herod say he wanted to know where

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

Jesus was? (*Herod said he wanted to worship Jesus, Matt. 2:8*)

11. What gifts did the wise men give Jesus?
(*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
12. Did the wise men tell Herod where Jesus was?
(*No, God warned them in a dream not to tell him; Matt. 2:12*)
13. Why was Jesus born? (**Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior, Luke 2:11**)
14. ***What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.***

SAY • We celebrate Jesus' birth every year at Christmas, but this good news is worth celebrating year-round! **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.



LOW PREP

- large piece of paper
- crayons or markers
- Bibles

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Giant storyboard

Hang a large piece of paper on a wall or lay it flat on the floor or a table. Use a marker to divide the paper into three sections. Label the sections with these Scripture references: *Luke 2:4-7; Luke 2:8-12; Matthew 2:1-2, 10-11.*

Form three groups of kids. Assign each group one section of the storyboard. Distribute Bibles and markers. Instruct each group to find their assigned Scripture reference and read it aloud. Then kids should work together to illustrate a scene from their part of the Bible story.

Allow several minutes for kids to work. Then call on each group to describe their scene.

SAY • Great work, everyone. These pictures show what happened in today's Bible story. God kept His promise to send a Messiah. He sent His Son into the world! **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

OPTION 2: Welcome bags

Invite kids to assemble welcome bags for new church visitors. Allow each kid to decorate a paper bag and fill it with a few welcome items. Consider these: card or brochure with information about the church, small notebook, pen or pencil, individually-wrapped candies, small bottled water.

Keep the bags in the classroom to be distributed to kids who are visiting for the first time.

SAY • In today's Bible story, what did the shepherds do after they met the baby Jesus? (*They told others about Jesus, Luke 2:17-18*) We can invite our friends to church and tell them the good news about Jesus. **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

- paper bags
- markers
- various welcome supplies

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to draw a picture of Jesus as a baby and a picture of Jesus as a king on a throne.

SAY • Jesus came into the world as a baby. But where is Jesus today? The Bible says that after His death on the cross to pay for our sins, Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven. He is alive today and He sits at the right hand of God. [See *Eph. 1:20; Rev. 3:21.*]

Let's pray. God, thank You for keeping Your promises and for showing us through Jesus that You love all people. We are thankful and happy to receive this good news. Amen.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Good News!" on the activity page. Kids will use words from the same word list used with the word search to fill in the blanks. The completed sentences reveal today's Christ connection.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Good News!" 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.