

## 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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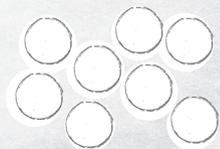
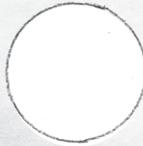
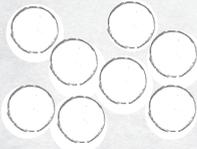
**LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY**  
(25–30 MINUTES)

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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.



**MINISTRY GRID**  
training made simple

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# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** Act out this story with kids. Use costumes and props like shepherds staffs, stick horses, hay, flashlights, or paper crowns to represent different characters and events in the story.
- **Sound effects:** If you have access to sound effect software, tell the story and provide a sound of a busy crowd as Mary and Joseph reach Bethlehem, barnyard animals for the manger scene, and other appropriate sounds.

## 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  
ADVENTURE!**

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](http://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.

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## 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. As kids arrive, ask them if any have ridden on a horse, donkey, or other animal. What was the occasion? How far did they ride?

**SAY** • In our story today, we'll hear about people who traveled very far. In Bible times, there were no airplanes or cars. People traveled on donkeys, horses, or other animals you can ride. Who do you think the travelers were?

## Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Follow the Star" activity page. Kids will draw a line through the stars that are different to make a path for the wise men to reach Jesus.

**SAY** • On a typical night, you can see many stars. Some are bright, and others are more dim. In our story today, we will hear about a group of wise men who followed a star unlike any other star. Why do you think they followed it? Whom do you think they met?

- "Follow the Star" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Census workers

Provide each child with a copy of the “Census Worker” printable. Kids will go around the room, counting the number of people who fit into each category and writing the numbers in the appropriate boxes on the sheet.

**SAY** • In our game you counted different people in the room. When a government counts all the people in a country, it’s called a *census*. A census helps a government keep track of who lives there. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. What do you think happened when they got there?



LOW PREP

- “Census Worker” printable
- pencils, pens, or markers

### OPTION 2: Star search

Before class, cut multiple star shapes from yellow construction paper. You may make one clearly larger and more ornate, perhaps using glitter pens to add some sparkle.

Hide the stars around the room. Challenge the kids to find them all and bring them to you. You may form two teams and assign point values to the stars, turning the game into a friendly competition.

**SAY** • Today we will learn about a group of wise men who saw a special star in the sky and followed it for miles and miles. What do you think they were looking for? We will soon learn what they searched for and if they found it!

- yellow construction paper
- scissors
- glitter pens (optional)

## 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

• catalog

*[Large Group Leader enters wearing a cardigan, gray wig, and thick glasses. He or she sits in the chair on stage, holding a catalog from a department store.]*

**LEADER** • Welcome back to my home, children. Last week I told you that I will have a new grandbaby soon. Today I was just browsing through this catalog, hoping to find the perfect gift for the baby shower coming up. What kind of gifts would you all get for a new baby? *[Allow responses.]* Those are some good ideas!

What do you think about giving gold or special perfume used to prepare bodies for burial? That would be strange, wouldn't it? In today's story, we will hear about some men who did just that!

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • Remember, we are learning about Jesus and

asking a very important question: *What makes Jesus different?* Who remembers the answer? [Allow responses.] That's right! *Jesus is fully God and fully man.* Maybe that's why He got such strange gifts.

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

**LEADER** • Last week we learned about Mary's response when **God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother.** [*Gesture to the giant timeline or big story circle.*] She praised God and told Him that she was willing to be used for such a wonderful job, even if she didn't understand how it would work. This week we will talk about the night when God's promised Savior finally arrived. Our story is called "Jesus Was Born." I can hardly wait to hear more!

- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20. Tell the Bible story using the Bible Storytelling Tips on the Bible story page, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Was Born."

**LEADER** • This is one of the most well-known stories in the whole Bible. Even though we know the details, it is important that we don't forget how important this story is. **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.** We even have an entire holiday to celebrate this momentous—that means very special—night. What holiday am I talking about? [*Allow responses.*] That's right! Christmas!

Jesus' birth was similar to other births, but it was very different too. No other person's birthday was marked by the stars in the sky, proclaimed by angels, and promised by God from the very beginning. Jesus

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

was laid in a feeding trough—a humble bed for any baby but especially for God’s Son, don’t you think? Jesus was visited by shepherds and even wise men with strange gifts! Jesus received gold, frankincense, and myrrh—symbols that Jesus was no ordinary baby. Those were gifts fit for a king. The wise men knew Jesus was different. ***What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.***

## Christ connection

**LEADER** • The shepherds who visited Jesus heard from the angels that Jesus is the Messiah. After meeting Him, they went out to tell others the good news. When the wise men saw the star, they knew that something special was going on. They went to visit Jesus, knowing He was a King. All along, God had made promises about a King who would reign forever. God had promised a Savior, the Messiah, who would rescue God’s people.

You see, even before Jesus was born, God had a special plan for Him. **Jesus was born to be God’s promised Savior.** Jesus would live a perfectly obedient life, teaching and preaching about God. Then He would die on the cross to pay for sin. On the third day, Jesus would rise again, defeating death and making the only way for us to be forgiven of sin and live forever with God.

When we trust in Jesus, He changes our lives just as He changed the lives of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men. Jesus changes our lives by giving us new hearts to love God and want to obey Him.

Note: You may use this opportunity to 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. Then sing “This Saying.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “This Saying” song

**LEADER** • God kept all His promises to Abraham, David, and the rest of His people. When we trust in Jesus, we are adopted into God’s family, and those promises are true for us! Our key passage helps us remember what we learned today about Jesus’ birth. Jesus came into the world to save sinners, like you and me, so we can live with God forever.

## Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

**LEADER** • Why do you think the shepherds and wise men reacted one way to the news of Jesus’ birth but Herod reacted very differently? Think about that as you watch this video.

- “Unit 19, Session 3” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 19, Session 3” discussion starter video.

Discuss what makes a gift suitable for a king. Ask what kids would bring if they were meeting a king?

**LEADER** • The shepherds and wise men all went out of their way to see Jesus, and they worshiped Him as King. Herod, on the other hand, didn’t want Jesus to be a king; Herod wanted to stay king. What do you think it means to treat Jesus as King in your life? What are ways we sometimes fail to honor Him as King?

## Sing (4 minutes)

**LEADER** • Let’s worship Jesus right now by singing praises to Him.

- “The Savior We Need” song

Sing together “The Savior We Need.”

## **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to send Jesus as You promised. We know that it is only by Your grace and mercy that we can love You and obey Jesus. Help us to honor Jesus as King of our lives and give our best to You in everything we do.

## **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. You may 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
- heavyweight paper
- pens, pencils, or markers

Provide each kid with a sheet of heavyweight paper. Help kids fold the paper in half to create a card. Invite kids to draw a scene from the Bible story on the front and write the key passage inside. Encourage kids to give the cards to a friend or loved one. You may also consider collecting them to send to missionaries overseas or people from your church who are homebound.

**SAY** • Jesus' birth is usually celebrated in December. We often send cards to loved ones during that time, but there is no wrong time to remember Jesus' birth.

**Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior**, and that is great news no matter what time of year! Our key passage reminds us that Jesus was born so that He could die to save sinners.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- strips of paper
- pen
- balloons
- Allergy Alert download

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Before class, write the following questions on strips of paper. Roll up the strips, and place them inside balloons. Inflate the balloons and scatter them around the room. Form two teams of kids, and allow each team to pick a balloon. They must pop their balloon and answer the

Tip: If a kid in your group has a latex allergy, write the questions on paper and make paper wads to scatter.

question inside. Once they have correctly answered their question, they may choose another balloon to pop and answer the question inside. The team with the most correctly answered questions wins.

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

Questions:

1. Mary and Joseph traveled to what city? (*Bethlehem, the city of David; Luke 2:4*)
2. What happened while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem? (*Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son, Luke 2:6-7*)
3. 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*)
4. Where did the shepherds go when the angels left? (*to Bethlehem, Luke 2:15*)
5. What did the shepherds do when they left Bethlehem? (*They told others about Jesus, glorified God, and praised Him; Luke 2:17-18,20*)
6. How did the wise men know Jesus had been born? (*They had seen His star in the east, Matt. 2:2*)
7. What gifts did the wise men give Jesus? (*gold, frankincense, and myrrh; Matt. 2:11*)
8. Why didn't the wise men tell Herod where Jesus was? (*God warned them in a dream not to tell him, Matt. 2:12*)
9. Why was Jesus born? (**Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior**, *Luke 2:11*)
10. **What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.**

**SAY** • Today we learned about Jesus' birth. **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.** We often use balloons and other decorations to celebrate a birthday, and

no one's birthday is more worthy of celebration than Jesus'! He came to earth to save us from sin, and His birth was unlike any other.



### **Activity choice (10 minutes)**

#### **OPTION 1:** Good news or bad news?

Say the following scenarios to the kids, explaining that they should run to one side of the room if it is good news and to the other if it is bad news. Allow kids time to discuss why they think each situation would be good or bad.

- Your parents tell you that you are moving to a new neighborhood.
- You learn that your aunt is about to have a baby.
- A bully from your school shows up at church on Sunday.
- Your brother or sister got a new toy.
- **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior!**

**SAY** • Some of those situations could have been good or bad, depending on your point of view. Jesus' birth is the best news ever, but even His birth seemed like bad news to Herod. Sin damages how we view the world; it can even make us think that God's plans are bad news. The truth is that Jesus' birth is good news for sinners because it means that our Savior came to die for our sin and make the way for us to be with God forever.

#### **OPTION 2:** Hide the baby

Use a baby doll to represent Jesus as a small child. Hide the doll somewhere in the room and invite the kids to find it. Whoever finds the doll gets to hide it for the next round.

**SAY** • The shepherds searched for Jesus to worship Him and

• baby doll

then went out to tell others about Him. However, when Herod heard about Jesus' birth, he searched for Jesus to kill Him and prevent Him from growing up to be king. God protected Jesus so that His plan would succeed. God's plans always succeed!

Without Jesus, we are sinners like Herod who don't want Jesus to be King. Thankfully, Jesus lived a perfect life and died for us so that we could be changed and worship Jesus as King.

### Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a way they fail to see Jesus as king in their lives.

**SAY** • *What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.* Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience and yet died as though He were a sinner. By dying the death we deserve and rising again, He made the way for us to be forgiven. Jesus is King, even when our sinful hearts don't want Him to be. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit guides us after we trust in Jesus, and He helps us live lives that glorify Jesus as King.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus. Confess that we still rebel against His kingship sometimes. Ask for help to live to glorify Him.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring 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.