

LARGE GROUP WORSHIP

Session

4



A GLORIOUS NIGHT

Matthew 1:18-25; Mark 1:35-39,45; Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2 records for us the greatest event in Christendom apart from the resurrection. The birth of Jesus Christ begins the next chapter in God's redemptive plan. God sent Jesus in His perfect timing to rescue us from our sin. Jesus is the good news shared about in the Gospels, and because of Jesus, we can share that good news with others.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth. Nazareth was a small town in Galilee somewhere between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. Mary had received a message from an angel that she would become pregnant. Joseph also was visited by an angel encouraging him to marry Mary and raise Jesus as his very own son.

Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, a good four-day walk from Nazareth. Bethlehem was Joseph's ancestral home and Joseph had to return to participate in a census. When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, there was no suitable place for them to stay. When Jesus was born, Mary swaddled Jesus in soft cloths and gently placed Him in a manger. Jesus' first night on earth was spent in a manger made for feeding livestock.

Jesus' ancestor, King David, was a shepherd as a young boy, an honorable profession during his lifetime. By the time of Jesus' birth, however, shepherds were seen as outcasts and thieves. It is appropriate that those for whom Jesus came were the first to visit Him on the night of His birth. Angels shared with the shepherds good news that the Messiah had been born. Having heard the good news, the shepherds went to worship the Messiah.

Luke's Gospel also records for us a story of the birth of Jesus' relative, John the Baptist. Later, John preached a message of repentance to the crowds and baptized Jesus before Jesus began His public ministry. Following His baptism, Jesus chose men to be in His closest circle of influence and He traveled around the area freeing people from evil spirits, healing the sick and lame, and preaching in the synagogues.

SESSION FOCUS

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 1:18-25; Mark 1:35-39,45; Luke 2:1-20

BIBLE VERSE

Luke 2:11

TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

CHRIST IN CONTEXT

The Book of Mark emphasizes the miraculous deeds of Jesus, the perfect Son of God.

JESUS CAME

Matthew 1:18-25; Mark 1:35-39,45; Luke 2:1-20

One night when Joseph was sleeping, he had a dream. An angel told Joseph important news. It was about Mary.

“God wants Mary to be your wife, Joseph. Mary will have a very special baby. When the baby is born, name Him Jesus. He will grow up to help people.”

When Joseph woke up, Joseph obeyed God. Joseph went to get Mary and married her.

Soon Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be counted. They walked and walked and walked until they reached the city. The inns (hotels) were full, though.

Joseph then found a stable where he and Mary could rest.

Soon Baby Jesus was born. Mary gently wrapped Jesus in soft cloths to keep Him warm and comfortable. Mary laid Jesus in a manger bed.

Angels said, “Glory to God and peace on earth.”

Shepherds heard the angels. The angels said Jesus had been born.

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see Jesus. They thanked God for the special baby.

Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds were happy that Jesus was born.

Later, when Jesus became a man, He taught people. Jesus said, “Let’s go to the villages so I may preach there. This is why I have come.”

WELCOME AND SING

- Greet the children by name as they come into the room. Let them know how glad you are to see them. Play the song “I Hear Stories of Jesus.” Lead the preschoolers to sing along with the song.
- Ask the preschoolers to line up in a single file line behind you. Tell the boys and girls to follow what you do. Explain that you will pretend to go on a journey to Bethlehem.
- Lead the preschoolers around the room. Encourage them to follow your movements as you march, leap, tiptoe, and hop around the room.
- Comment: “We pretended to go on a journey to the city of Bethlehem. Today we will learn how Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.**”

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Place the hoops on the ground. Place one of the Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John “Bible Book Cards” in each hoop. Place four Bibles around the room.
- Explain: “The first four books in the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These books are called the Gospels because they tell the good news about Jesus.”
- Invite the children to choose a hoop to stand in. Guide them to pick up the “Bible Book Card” in the hoop, then to find one of the Bibles in the room. Assist them in opening the Bibles to the book on the cards they chose.
- Comment: “Today we will hear a Bible story from the Books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.”

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

- Place the items in the diaper bag. Invite a preschooler to choose an item from the bag. Ask the child to determine if the item is something a baby would use or a preschooler would use. Continue until all the items have been chosen from the bag.
- Remark: “When you were a baby, you used baby items. Listen to hear about when **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.**”
- Open the Bible to Luke 2. Leave the Bible open on your lap as you tell the Bible story in your own words.
- Display the Story Picture. Ask: “Who told Joseph that Mary would have a baby? Where was Jesus born? What did Jesus do when He grew up?”

TOOLS

- Welcome and Sing: Enhanced CD
- Practice Bible Skills: Bibles, “Bible Book Cards” (print item), four large plastic hoops
- Tell the Bible Story: Bibles, Story Picture: “Jesus Came” (Pack Item 4), diaper bag, pacifier, bottle, cup, fork, rattle, crayon
- Find the Baby: doll
- Worship: Enhanced CD, offering basket, jingle bells, chenille stems
- Learn the Bible Verse: Bibles, “December Bible Markers” (print item)
- Listen and Pray: none

BIBLE SKILLS SPOTLIGHT

- Begins to recognize names of books in the Bible. Knows that Matthew is the first book of the New Testament. Opens Bible to a Bible marker.
- Understands that the Bible tells that God sent Jesus to earth.
- Hears about content of different divisions of the Bible, such as History, Gospels, and Letters.

FIND THE BABY

- Hide the doll in the room.
- Ask the children to name things they can do that babies cannot do. Challenge the boys and girls to search for the baby. Pretend to cry when the children are close to the baby. Lead the preschoolers to take turns hiding the baby and finding it.
- Mention: “You searched to find the baby. The angels told the shepherds that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem. The shepherds hurried to find Baby Jesus.”

WORSHIP

- Mention: “We celebrate Christmas because **Jesus was born in Bethlehem**. We can celebrate by worshiping Jesus. We can worship Him by giving our offerings and singing songs of praise to Him.”
- Guide the preschoolers to place their offerings in the offering basket.
- Help the preschoolers thread the jingle bells onto the chenille stems, then twist the ends together to make bracelets.
- Play the song “God Loved Us.” Lead the boys and girls to shake their bells as they sing along with the song. Invite the preschoolers to sing their favorite Christmas song about Jesus.

LEARN THE BIBLE VERSE

- Place this week’s “December Bible Marker” at Luke 2:11. Invite a child to open the Bible at the marker. Read the verse.
- Demonstrate how to pretend to rock a baby with your arms. Guide the preschoolers to say the verse with you. Lead them to pretend to rock a baby as they say the verse.
- Comment: “**Jesus was born in Bethlehem**. God sent Jesus to be our Savior.”

LISTEN AND PRAY

- Remark: “**Jesus was born in Bethlehem**. God loves us so much He sent Jesus to be our Savior.”
- Lead the boys and girls in prayer. Thank God for sending Jesus to be our Savior.
- Transition to Exploration Stations by explaining that children will play and learn more about how **Jesus was born in Bethlehem**.

EXPLORATION STATIONS (45-60 MINUTES)

Set up at least three stations to provide choices of multisensory activities and movement for busy preschoolers.

BUILD A MANGER

Tools: blocks, shredded paper, doll, baby blanket

- Guide the preschoolers to build a manger with the blocks. Explain that a manger was like a box that the animals ate out of. Suggest they pretend the shredded paper is hay. Guide them to put the paper in the manger. Demonstrate how to swaddle the doll with the blanket. Lead the boys and girls to place the doll in the manger.
- State: **“Jesus was born in Bethlehem.** Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid Him in a manger bed.”

FIND A NAME

Tools: white paper, white crayon, washable watercolor paints, paintbrushes, paint smocks

- Use the white crayon to print *JESUS* on each piece of paper. Guide the preschoolers to put on the paint smocks.
- Guide the boys and girls to use the watercolor paints to paint the paper. Encourage them to look for the letters to appear.
- Explain: “These letters spell *Jesus*.” The angel told Mary and Joseph that Mary would have a baby. The baby’s name would be Jesus. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.**”

TASTE APPLESAUCE

Tools: unflavored applesauce, different flavors of dry gelatin, small cups, spoons, "Allergy Sign" (print item)

- Place a small amount of applesauce in a cup for each child.
- Guide the preschoolers to choose a flavor of gelatin to add to their applesauce. Lead them to mix the gelatin and applesauce together. Encourage them to taste the applesauce.
- Remark: "Babies cannot eat the same food we eat. They have to drink milk and eat baby food. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.** Mary and Joseph took care of Jesus when He was a baby."

MAKE AN ORNAMENT

Tools: chenille stems, pony beads, pencils

- Guide the preschoolers to thread beads on the chenille stems. Wrap each end of the chenille stem around a bead to keep the beads from falling off. Demonstrate how to twist the chenille stems around a pencil. Remove the pencil. Encourage the preschoolers to hang the ornament on their Christmas trees at home.
- Comment: "On Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birth. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.** There was not room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. They had to stay in a stable. Mary and Joseph took care of Baby Jesus."

FEED BABIES

Tools: dolls, doll high chair, toy dishes, baby bottles

- Suggest the boys and girls prepare a meal for the baby dolls. Guide the preschoolers to sit a doll in the high chair. Lead the children to feed some of the dolls with spoons and some of the dolls with bottles.
- Mention: "Babies need a lot of care. Their parents have to dress them and feed them. **Jesus was born in Bethlehem.** Mary and Joseph took care of Baby Jesus."