



## 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

### TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

### BIBLE STORY

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

### BIBLE VERSE

Luke 2:11

### CHRIST IN CONTEXT

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

### BIBLE SKILLS

- Understand that the Bible tells that God sent Jesus to earth.
- Remember and retell a familiar Bible story and Bible fact.



### EXPLORE THE BIBLE TEXT CONNECTION

- God's plan for the redemption of people culminates with Christ. The story we study today shares the good news of the gospel.
- An angel, Gabriel, visited Mary, a young woman of Nazareth, and pronounced a special greeting. Mary was favored among women and God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.
- Mary was engaged to Joseph, who also received a special message from an angel. Joseph followed the instruction given by the angel and married Mary.
- God's promise of Jesus to Mary carried with it a fulfillment of messianic prophecy. This prophecy began in the Book of Genesis.
- Just as the angel had said, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling yet another prophecy from the Old Testament. God's plan for Jesus to be the Savior of the world had begun in a quiet lodging place for animals in the little town of Bethlehem. Jesus is the good news—God sent Him to rescue us from sin.

## ARRIVAL ACTIVITIES (5 MINUTES)

As preschoolers arrive, offer choices of self-guided activities that set the stage for Bible explorations.

#### ► Practice swaddling a baby doll.

*Tools: Bible, Christmas card showing swaddled Baby Jesus, baby doll, baby blanket*

#### ► Work puzzles about Jesus' birth.

*Tools: Bible, First Christmas Sequence Cards (Pack Item 27), Christmas Lacing Cards (Pack Item 28), other puzzles about Jesus' birth*

#### ► Play with a Nativity set.

*Tools: Bible, plastic or wooden Nativity scene figures*

- After everyone has had an opportunity to do one or more arrival activities, direct preschoolers to Exploration Stations. (See next page.)

### FAMILY AT HOME

Print this week's devotional page (Enhanced CD) to give to families.

## TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

## BIBLE VERSE

Luke 2:11

## LEADER TIP!

Children may be excited and overwhelmed by holiday celebrations. Calm them by playing soothing CDs featuring songs of Jesus' birth.

Focus conversation on the birth of Jesus, God's Son.

# 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."*

## LEADER TIP

You choose! Are your preschoolers ready to learn memory verses? Decide which wording of the Bible verse you want to use with your group.

## BIBLE VERSE

From the Bible text:

*Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you. Luke 2:11*

Paraphrase:

*A savior was born for you. Luke 2:11*





## CIRCLE TIME (10-15 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON YOUR AGE GROUP)

### GATHER

- Play Christmas music as the boys and girls help put away materials and move to the Circle Time area.
- Ask children to tell one thing their family is doing to celebrate Jesus' birth. Offer suggestions as needed to focus children's attention on the biblical Christmas story.

### HEAR THE BIBLE STORY

- Place red ribbons in the Bible to mark each of the accounts of Jesus' birth.
- Hold the Bible and remark that the story of Jesus' birth is in the New Testament. Open the Bible to one of the ribbons.
- Tell the Bible story in your own words, then pass the Story Picture (Pack) around the circle.
- Say: "Christmas is a very special time. We spend time with our families and eat special meals. We give and receive presents. But the best reason we celebrate Christmas is because God sent Jesus."

### PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Hold the box with the story-related items. Ask children one at a time to reach into the box and take an item.
- Give each child an opportunity to name or describe the chosen item. Help the child connect the item to the story or something about Jesus.
- Show preschoolers the December Bible Marker (Pack) for this session. Read the words. Lead the children to repeat the Bible verse, then find its location in the Book of Luke.

### PRAY

- Thank God for sending Jesus, His Son, to love and help people. Ask God to help us remember the meaning of Christmas.

### OPTIONS

1. Arrival Activities
2. Circle Time
3. Exploration Stations

### OR

1. Arrival Activities
2. Exploration Stations
3. Circle Time

### TOOLS

- Bible
- CD of instrumental Christmas music
- 3 red ribbons
- box with lid; items related to the Bible story: Nativity set figures, a soft cloth or blanket, baby doll, picture of adult Jesus, toy sheep or donkey

### PACK ITEMS

- 4 Story Picture: Jesus Came
- 15 December Bible Markers

## TEXT TRUTH

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.

## BIBLE STORY

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

## BIBLE VERSE

Luke 2:11

## PACK ITEMS

4 Story Picture: Jesus Came  
15 December Bible Markers  
26 Manger Scene Figures  
27 First Christmas Sequence Cards

## LEADER TIP!

Keep the focus on the biblical meaning of Christmas. Avoid materials and resources that take away from the birth of Jesus.

## LEADER TIP!

Bringing other books about Jesus' birth to read to children is a good idea. Be careful, though, that the content and images are biblically accurate.

### DESIGN A CHRISTMAS PICTURE



*Tools: Bible, small pieces of holiday gift wrap (avoid cartoon or secular themes), paper, glue sticks or white glue, pieces of wide gift ribbon, preschool book about Jesus' birth*

- Invite children to choose gift wrap and ribbon to make a colorful holiday picture. On each child's paper, write the Text Truth.
- Talk with the children about Christmas-related activities they have enjoyed with their families.
- Comment: "We are happy that Jesus came. Christmas is a special time to think about Jesus' birth and the wonderful things He did when He became a grown-up."
- Read the book as children complete their pictures.

### WORK CHRISTMAS PUZZLES



*Tools: Bible, First Christmas Sequence Cards (Pack), religious Christmas cards cut in half, The Nativity Floor Puzzle (LifeWay, 005160680) or other Christmas puzzle*

- Guide a child to look at the First Christmas Sequence Cards and listen as you tell the Christmas story. Then lead the child to place the cards in the correct order.
- Another child may enjoy working the wooden puzzle or matching Christmas card pieces.
- Tell children: "Christmas is a special time to celebrate the birth of God's Son, Jesus."
- Say the Bible verse.

**EXAMINE BABY ITEMS**

*Tools: Bible, Activity Page, small laundry basket, baby blanket, diaper, baby bottle, bottle brush, rattle, bib, baby doll, baby spoon*

- Show children the picture on the Activity Page. Point to Mary and Joseph. Say: "The angel told Mary and Joseph they would have a baby. Mary and Joseph began to prepare for the baby's arrival."
- Ask preschoolers what families do to get ready for babies. Invite children to remove items from the basket and tell how each is used to care for a baby.
- Open the Bible to Matthew 1 or Luke 2 and summarize the Bible story. Encourage preschoolers to use the baby items to take care of the baby doll.
- Thank God for the special baby born in Bethlehem.

**PLAY WITH MANGER FIGURES**

*Tools: Bible, December Bible Markers (Pack), Manger Scene Figures (Pack), craft sticks, play dough, Story Picture: Jesus Came (Pack), Enhanced CD, tape*

- Tape the figures to the craft sticks and place each one in a small mound of play dough.
- Show a child the Story Picture and point to the shepherds, the manger, Mary and Joseph. Suggest that the preschooler use the manger figures to play out the Bible story as you tell it.
- Show the child the marker placed at Luke 2. Read the Bible verse to the preschooler and show him where it is in the Bible. Help the preschooler repeat the Bible verse.
- Play the CD and listen for songs about Jesus' birth.

**ROLE PLAY THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

*Tools: Bible; biblical dress-up clothes and props suggestive of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angel; baby doll and strips of cloth; basket or box for manger*

- Open the Bible to Luke 2 and tell preschoolers that the story of Jesus' birth is written there. Show children the Bible page and point to Jesus' name.
- Tell the Bible story or read the Bible passage. Then suggest that children play out the Bible story.
- Guide children to select roles and look for clothes and props to use.
- Repeat the Bible story, helping children know when to move or do an action.
- At the end of the story play, lead children to say the Bible verse from Luke 2.
- Give other children turns to play out the Bible story.

## NEXT HOUR (MORE EXPLORATIONS FOR PRESCHOOLERS)

### OPTIONS

1. Continue activities from the first hour. (Kids learn through repetition.)
2. Try something different. Choose two or three new activities.

### TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

### BIBLE STORY

Jesus Came

Matthew 1:18-25;

Mark 1:35-39,45;

Luke 2:1-20

*The Bible story is printed on the back of the Story Picture.*

### BIBLE VERSE

Luke 2:11

### CARE FOR A BABY DOLL

*Tools: Bible, plastic baby doll, baby clothes, receiving blankets*

- Suggest that a child care for the baby doll.
- Say: “Mary and Joseph heard some special news from an angel.” Invite children to recall the angel’s message for Mary and Joseph.
- Find Matthew 1 or Luke 2 in the Bible and lead children to say the Text Truth.

### USE MAGNIFYING GLASSES

*Tools: 2 or 3 Bibles, 2 or 3 children’s magnifying glasses, Story Picture: Jesus Came (Pack Item 4), index cards, marker*

- Write the words *Matthew, Mark, Luke, Jesus, Joseph, and Mary* on individual index cards. Put the cards on a table with the Bibles, Story Picture, and magnifying glasses.
- Invite a child to get one or two cards and a Bible. Read the words on his cards and explain that these are words in the Bible.
- Help the preschooler search the New Testament for the words. Relate the words to the story of Jesus’ birth.

### PLAY STEP BELLS

*Tools: Bible, children’s step bells, Enhanced CD, 2 or 3 books related to Jesus’ birth*

- Play the CD and encourage children to sing along to the songs. Invite preschoolers to play step bells to accompany the music.
- As the children make joyful sounds, tell them they are celebrating God’s Son, Jesus. Say: “God sent Jesus to earth to help people and teach them. We love Jesus. We celebrate His birth at Christmastime.”
- Open the Bible to Matthew 1 or Luke 2 and recall the Bible story. Read books about Jesus’ birth.



## LACE CARDS

*Tools: Bible, Christmas Lacing Cards (Pack Item 28), Activity Page, CD of instrumental Christmas music or Enhanced CD*

- Use the Activity Page to mark Luke 2 in the Bible.
- Invite a child to choose a card to lace. Talk about the picture on the card and its meaning to the Christmas season. Focus conversation on the celebration of Jesus' birth and the joy we feel to know God sent Jesus.
- Open the Bible to the Activity Page and show the picture to the child. Say: "Luke 2 is a place in the Bible where we read about Jesus' birth." Summarize the Bible story for the preschooler.
- Listen and sing along to songs about Jesus' birth.

## LEADER TIP!

Form groups of two or three preschoolers and a teacher. Look at the Activity Page, review the Bible story, and say the Bible verse.

## CIRCLE TIME

### GATHER

- To the tune "London Bridge," sing the words:  
*Jesus was born in Beth-le-hem,  
Beth-le-hem, Beth-le-hem.  
Jesus was born in Beth-le-hem.  
Thank You, God, for Jesus.*

### REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

- Show preschoolers the Story Picture (Pack Item 4). Ask them to tell you what they remember about the story.
- Say: "Mary and Joseph were happy when Jesus was born. The shepherds were happy when they heard the news of Jesus' birth!"

- Distribute the First Christmas Sequence Cards (Pack Item 27) to children. Help them put the cards in order as you summarize the Christmas story.

### PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Comment: "We sang that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. We read in the Bible about Jesus' birth."
- Guide preschoolers to search for Luke 2:11 in classroom Bibles.

### PRAY

- Thank God for sending Jesus to love and help people.

### DON'T FORGET!

Give every child this week's Activity Page and Preschool Family Card.



Look for printable Next Hour helps on the Preschool Enhanced CD.