



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

- Listen to brief Bible stories. Point to the Bible and pictures of Jesus.
- Touch, hold, and turn the pages of the Bible.

OFF TO A GREAT START!

- ▶ First impressions are important. Help each child and family feel special and welcomed at church.
- ▶ Greet each child individually and personally.
- ▶ Briefly mention to families and their preschooler an activity you have ready for children to enjoy at church.

EXPLORATIONS FOR BABIES

- Tap Blocks
- Discover the Bible
- Play with a Bell Mobile

EXPLORATIONS FOR TODDLERS

- Care for a Baby Doll
- Shake Bells
- Match Pictures
- Design a Christmas Card



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.

FAMILY AT HOME

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

TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

BIBLE STORY

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

BIBLE VERSE PARAPHRASE

Jesus was born for you.
Luke 2:11

PACK ITEMS

4 Story Picture: Jesus Came
20 Jesus Matching Cards
28 Bible Bookmarks
29 Bible Verse Strips

LEADER TIP!

Focus on Christmas by adding a few board books telling about Jesus' birth.

Make an accordion-type book to prop on the floor or in a windowsill. Use colorful religious greeting cards showing the birth of Jesus and family celebrations.



BABIES EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Babies are sensory learners, and they are relational. They learn best when teachers engage them through conversation and play. Prepare two or three activities for babies to enjoy as they explore the Bible.

BIBLE STORY NUGGETS

- Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem.
- Baby Jesus was born.
- Mary, Joseph, and shepherds were happy Jesus was born.
- God sent Jesus to help people.



TAP BLOCKS

Tools: Bible, cardboard blocks, other stacking or sorting toys, Story Picture: Jesus Came (Pack), Bible Verse Strips (Pack)

- Stack a few blocks with babies. Lay a block near a baby. Tap a beat on the block. Encourage the baby to tap or pat the block. To the beat, repeat: "Jesus. Jesus."
- Open the Bible to today's Bible Verse Strip. Say: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem." Tap a block again as you repeat: "Bethlehem."
- Show the Story Picture to babies as they play with the stacking or sorting toys. Say: "Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. Jesus was born. People were happy that Jesus was born."



DISCOVER THE BIBLE

Tools: Bible, plastic baby doll, baby blankets, Bible Bookmarks (Pack)

- Mark the Bible story in the Bible. Lay the Bible and the doll on the floor. Cover each with blankets.
- Sit near the blankets with a baby. Help a baby touch the blanket and feel the object underneath. Encourage a baby to pull the blanket to see what is under it.

- Hold the Bible and help the baby open it to the Bible story. Point to the words and say: “These words tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”
- Wrap a blanket around the doll. Place the wrapped doll in the child’s lap.
- Say: “Mary and Joseph were happy that Jesus was born.”



PLAY WITH A BELL MOBILE

Tools: Bible, yarn, large jingle bells, plastic clothes hanger, hole punch, Jesus Matching Cards (Pack)

- Securely tie a few bells to lengths of yarn. Tie the other ends of the yarn to the plastic hanger.
- Punch holes in the baby Jesus cards. Use yarn to tie the pictures to the hanger. Hang the mobile in the room in sight of babies.
- Hold a baby near the mobile. Gently touch the mobile to move it and make the bells jingle.
- Say: “You can hear the bells. You can hear stories about Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”
- Point to the picture of Baby Jesus. Say: “Jesus was a baby. Mary, Joseph, and shepherds were happy when Jesus was born.”
- Open the Bible to Luke 2:11 and point to the verse as you say it.

NEXT HOUR (MORE EXPLORATIONS FOR BABIES)

- Continue and repeat activities from the first hour. Babies learn through repetition and practice.
- As you cuddle, rock, soothe, and tend to babies’ needs, talk about the Bible. Say Bible words and phrases.
- Use the Bible with babies. Let them see, touch, and turn Bible pages.

DON’T FORGET!

Give every child this week’s Diaper Bag Card and Preschool Family Card.

TEXT TRUTH

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

BIBLE VERSE PARAPHRASE

Jesus was born for you.
Luke 2:11

PACK ITEMS

4 Story Picture: Jesus Came
20 Jesus Matching Cards
28 Bible Bookmarks

LEADER TIP!

Toddlers will be excited and possibly tired from numerous holiday activities. During the session, maintain a calm atmosphere and focus conversation on the birth of Jesus.

EXPLORATION STATIONS

Toddlers are on the go and ready to learn. They learn best through playful exploration and discovery. Offer three or more multisensory activities to lead young preschoolers to discover and learn Bible truths.

JESUS CAME

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

An angel told Joseph some news. "Mary is going to have a baby. Don't be afraid. This is what God wants. Name the baby Jesus."

Joseph went to get Mary and married her.

Later Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. Joseph found a place for Mary to rest. Joseph watched over Mary and cared for her.

Soon the baby Jesus arrived. Mary wrapped Him in soft cloths. She laid Him in a manger bed.

Angels praised God for Jesus. The angels told shepherds that Baby Jesus was born.

The shepherds hurried to see Jesus. They thanked God for Him.

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

Later, when Jesus became a man, he taught people and helped them. Jesus said, "This is why I have come."



EXPLORATION STATIONS (45-60 MINUTES)

CARE FOR A BABY DOLL



Tools: Bible, baby dolls, box, blankets, Story Picture: Jesus Came (Pack)

- Help a toddler wrap a blanket around a doll then cradle it.
- Say: "You can take care of the baby. Mary took care of Jesus when He was born."
- Show the toddler the Story Picture. Point to Mary holding Jesus. Say: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Mary laid Jesus in a manger."
- Suggest a child lay the doll in the box.
- Help a child turn the pages in the Bible. Stop at Luke 2:11. Say: "This verse is 'Jesus was born for you.' We learn about Jesus by reading this part of the Bible."



SHAKE BELLS

Tools: Bible, small jingle bells, shiny confetti, plastic drink bottles with lids, tape, Enhanced CD, Bible Bookmarks (Pack)

- Drop several bells into each bottle. Add a bit of confetti to each one. Seal the caps with tape.
- Play a song about Jesus. Lead toddlers to sing and shake the bell bottles to accompany the music.
- Remark: "Christmas is the time we celebrate Jesus' birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Thank You, God, for Jesus."
- Open the Bible to Luke 2:11 to the bookmark and read the verse. Shake a bottle as you say the verse with a child.
- Sing about Jesus' birth. Say: "Christmas is a happy time. Angels were happy that Jesus was born. Shepherds and Mary and Joseph were happy that Jesus was born. We are happy Jesus was born."

MATCH PICTURES

Tools: Bible, Jesus Matching Cards (Pack), sorting and matching toys, Diaper Bag Card

- As children play with the toys, show them the picture on the Diaper Bag Card. Say: "Shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see Baby Jesus."
- Lay the Matching Cards on the floor. Lead a child to find the two cards that show Jesus as a baby. Say: "Jesus was born for you."
- Point to the cards showing Jesus as a man. Say: "Jesus grew to be a man. God sent Jesus to help people. Jesus loves us."
- For older toddlers, cut the matching cards in half. Guide children to find the halves that go together.
- Help a child open the Bible to Luke 2.

DESIGN A CHRISTMAS CARD

Tools: Bible, paper, dot painters, paint smocks, washable markers, Bible Bookmarks (Pack)

- Use a Bible Bookmark to mark the Bible story at Matthew 1. Fold paper in half to resemble cards.
- Invite children to make Christmas cards. They can use the dot painters and markers to make designs.
- Print the words *Jesus was born in Bethlehem* on a child's card. Read the words to him.
- Say: "Jesus was born. He was a baby. Then He grew to a man. Jesus helped people."
- Help a child open the Bible to Matthew 1. Point to the words and say: "These words tell us about Jesus. We learn about Jesus by reading the Bible."
- Encourage a child to say the name *Jesus* with you.



CIRCLE TIME (2-5 MINUTES)

Your toddlers may be ready for a simple circle time. You decide when and how long to have a group experience.

CIRCLE TIME TOOLS

- several Bibles
- Enhanced CD

PACK ITEMS

- 4 Story Picture: Jesus Came
- 20 Jesus Matching Cards

LEADER TIP!

Use the Bible. Open the Bible to the Scripture passage while you tell the story. That way toddlers will know the story comes from the Bible.

GATHER

- After all toddlers are seated in the circle, play a guessing game. Describe a child by her clothing.
- After children guess the person, say: “Yes, it’s _____. You were a baby, but you grew.”
- Continue describing other children.
- Play the Enhanced CD and sing along to songs related to Christmas.
- Say: “Christmas is a special time to think about a special baby. Who was that special baby?”
- When children respond “Jesus,” tell them today’s story is about Jesus.

HEAR THE BIBLE STORY

- Lay one of the baby Jesus Matching Cards (Pack) on the floor.
- Open the Bible to Luke 2. Tell the Bible story in your own words.
- After the story, quietly repeat a song about Jesus.
- Show the Story Picture (Pack) to the children, then pass it around the circle.

PRACTICE BIBLE SKILLS

- Comment: “The story about Jesus’ birth is in the New Testament part of the Bible. We find it in the Books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Let’s find those books in the Bible.”
- Distribute Bibles to toddlers and ask teachers in the group to help children find one or more Bible books.
- Remark: “A verse to remember is from the Book of Luke. Let’s say the verse together.”
- Lead toddlers to repeat the Bible verse.

PRAY

- Lay the adult Jesus Matching Card on the floor. Say: “Jesus was a baby but He grew and became a man. Jesus helped people know about God.”
- Pray and thank God for sending Jesus.

NEXT HOUR (MORE EXPLORATIONS FOR TODDLERS)

OPTION 1 Continue activities from first hour. (Kids learn through repetition!)

OPTION 2 Try something different. Choose two or three new activities.

WORK CHRISTMAS CARD PUZZLES

Tools: Bible, 3 or 4 religious Christmas cards cut in half, gift bag, Diaper Bag Card

- Choose colorful cards that depict the story of Jesus' birth. Cut each card in half and put the pieces in a gift bag.
- Open the Bible to one of the Bible passages and lay the Diaper Bag Card on the pages.
- Invite a toddler to reach into the bag to get puzzle pieces. Help him find pieces that go together. Talk about the pictures on the cards and their connection to Christmastime.
- Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus.

MAKE A CHRISTMAS COLLAGE

Tools: Bible, large sheet of paper, tape, glue sticks, gift wrap paper pieces, plastic container

- Write on the paper the words *Jesus is born!* Then tape the paper to the wall at toddlers' eye level.
- Put the paper pieces in the container and put it in a chair. Invite two toddlers to choose gift wrap pieces to glue on the paper.
- As children work on the collage, read the words on the paper.
- Comment that we celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas.
- Sing a song about Jesus' birth.

PACK A DIAPER BAG

Tools: Bible; Diaper Bag Card; small diaper bag; baby items such as disposable diaper, clothing, baby food dish, spoon, rattle or teether; baby doll

- Lay the Diaper Bag Card on top of the Bible opened to Luke 2.
- Talk about families taking care of babies. While a toddler investigates the diaper bag and items, tell about the special baby born to Mary. Relate the items to mothers caring for babies and loving them.
- Hold the Diaper Bag Card to show toddlers the picture. Say: "The shepherds were happy to hear about Jesus. They hurried to find the special baby."
- Encourage a preschooler to cuddle a doll and softly sing a lullaby.

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

DON'T FORGET!

- Make a final diaper check.
- Put a Diaper Bag Card and Preschool Family Card in each child's bag.
- Release children to authorized adults.