

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

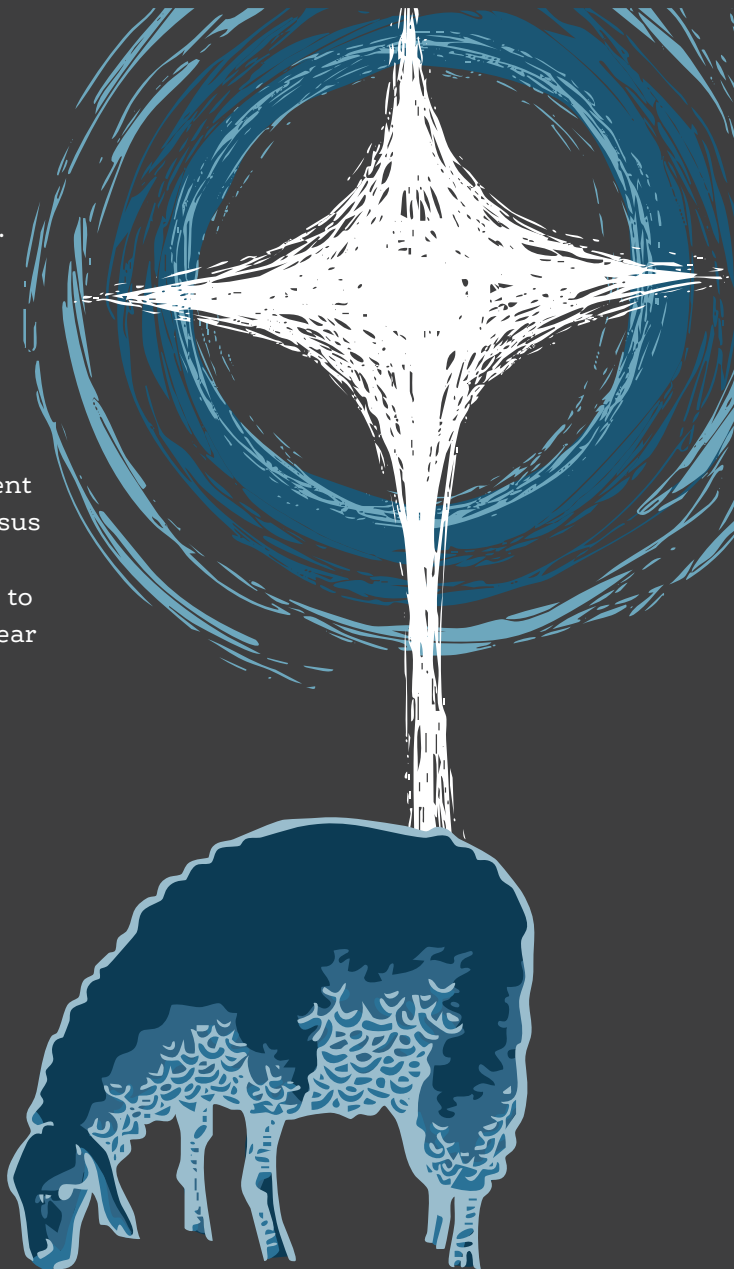
MAIN POINT.

Jesus's birth is proof of God's great love for us.



CHRIST CONNECTION

The birth of Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in humble circumstances to be the Suffering Servant; He would lay down His life to be our mighty Savior. He put on flesh to be near us and to pay for our sins.



PROMISE REVEALED

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Luke 1—Luke 2

JESUS'S BIRTH FULFILLED GOD'S PROMISE

LUKE 2:1-7

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, 5 to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

JESUS'S BIRTH PRODUCES JOYFUL WORSHIP

LUKE 2:8-20

8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: 11 Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

14 Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and peace on earth to people he favors!

15 When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

16 They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. 17 After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus's birth is proof of God's great love for us.

Leaders: As you prepare to teach, may you experience the greatness of God's love as you study about the birth of His Son.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS'S BIRTH IS GOOD NEWS

GENESIS 2:4-7

“. . . the manger is an animal's feeding trough, which means the family is in a stable or in a cave where animals are housed (Hengel 1974:53–54). Swaddling clothes were cloth wrapped around the baby's arms and legs (see Ezek. 16:4); they kept the limbs covered and protected. The contrast between the birth's commonness and the child's greatness could not be greater. The promised one of God enters creation among the creation. The profane decree of a census has put the child in the promised city of messianic origin. God is quietly at work, and a stable is Messiah's first throne room.”

Darrell L. Bock, Luke, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1–7.

JESUS'S BIRTH PRODUCES JOYFUL WORSHIP

LUKE 2:8-12

“The scene changes, and the ‘humble’ of Luke 1:52 are visited (cf. 7:22). One should not romanticize the occupation of shepherds. In general shepherds were dishonest and unclean according to the standards of the law. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came. Such outcasts were the first recipients of the good news.”

Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 108.

LUKE 2:20

“This birth is no mere arrival of a new life, as poignant as each such event is. The story is not told so that hearers can identify with the new mother and father or enjoy a story of hope, of a touching birth in humble surroundings. This birth has value because of whose birth it is. The shepherds have found that the angel's words were true, that events have transpired just as they had been told. God's word is coming to pass; his plan is again strategically at work. They break out in praise to God because he has sent Jesus, the Savior, Lord and Christ.”

Darrell L. Bock, Luke, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:8–21.



CONTEXT

The entire Bible points to the promise of a Savior. The gospel echoes throughout the story of creation and the fall, through Israel's wandering in the wilderness and their arrival into the promised land, through Israel's fall, through the prophets' warnings. The promise is there. And here, we see the promised Savior born to lowly parents, his birth announced to lowly shepherds. In ancient Hebrew culture, shepherds were outcasts. Although it was once a respectable position in David's era, it shifted to one that was looked down upon, especially by religious leaders. Many shepherds lived isolated lives with their sheep due to the nature and demands of caring for them. Yet, it was these men to whom God chose to announce His Son's birth. The Savior was born for everyone—the lowly, the wealthy, the religious, the sinner, the outcast.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Jesus's Humanity

In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully human. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (Messiah) would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:3), but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus's earthly life bore all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances common to living as a human being, such as hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (Matt. 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (the crucifixion).

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE BIRTH OF YOUR SON. THANK YOU FOR FULFILLING YOUR PROMISE TO SEND A SAVIOR. HELP ME TO NEVER TAKE THIS GIFT FOR GRANTED AND TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE WITH JOYFUL WORSHIP.



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

If something good happens for you, are you quick to share it with someone (1=never, 10=every time)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

GOOD NEWS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHO IS THE FIRST PERSON YOU RUN TO WITH GOOD NEWS?**
- **WHAT ELSE DO PEOPLE TYPICALLY DO WHEN THEY RECEIVE GOOD NEWS?**
- **WHY DO WE WANT OTHERS TO KNOW OUR GOOD NEWS?**

Good news is fun to share. When we receive good news, many of us run to our family or our closest friends. We want them to know and to celebrate with us. We may even share an announcement on social media so that others can join in our excitement. We have the best news—the gospel. Today, we'll see how some of the first people respond when they hear the news about Jesus's birth.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Christmas is celebrated world-wide. Although it's a time to look back and reflect on the arrival of our Savior, even believers often get pulled into a materialistic mindset this time of the year. It becomes more about what gifts we're receiving than the most important gift we've already received—Jesus. So, is celebrating with our friends and family this time of the year wrong? Not at all. What's important is that we keep our hearts fixed on the real meaning for this time of celebration. What's important is that we guard our hearts from getting caught up in what the world sells as the meaning of Christmas. As believers, we know the reason we're celebrating: our Savior has come, and He'll come again! It's okay to enjoy time with family and friends, Christmas lights, and fun traditions, but our motive in every celebration is the joy we find in knowing God loved us enough to send His Son.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus's birth is proof of God's great love for us.

JESUS'S BIRTH IS GOOD NEWS

READ LUKE 2:1-7

HOW DOES IT FEEL WHEN SOMEONE KEEPS A PROMISE TO YOU?

Many of us have experienced someone breaking a promise to us. It can feel crushing; it can cause us to struggle with trusting others. But on the opposite side, trust is built when someone keeps a promise to us. If we're honest, a lot of us just want to know that the people we love won't let us down. We want to know that we are safe with them and that they're who they claim to be. But people will fail us. Only God is truly faithful to us at all times. **God is exactly who Scripture reveals Him to be. Only God is capable of fulfilling every promise He has made.**



HOW DOES KNOWING THAT GOD KEPT HIS PROMISE TO SEND A SAVIOR HELP YOU TRUST HIM MORE?

Scripture is full of God's promise to send a Savior. The Jewish people spent years longing for and waiting for this promise to come—for the Messiah to come. **Jesus's birth was the very moment that God's promise was fulfilled.** Our living hope came to us as a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths—in a way people probably never imagined. **We can trust God. We can believe His words are true. And when we believe this, it transforms everything.** He keeps His promises, often in ways we could never imagine.

WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT JESUS CAME HERE FULLY GOD YET FULLY HUMAN?

This isn't an easy concept to grasp. Jesus was fully divine and also fully man. When we read Hebrews 9:22, we discover that the shedding of blood enables the forgiveness of sins. This is why God commanded the temporary sacrificial system involving animals. But it was never enough to permanently pay for sin. **Only one "born under the law" could "redeem those under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). In order to redeem us, one like us had to live a perfectly sinless life. And this perfect one's blood would be the only sacrifice perfect enough to permanently pay for the atonement of sin—all sin for all time.** Jesus had to be man. He had to experience temptation—every temptation we face—and to crush it with His obedience. **When God sent His Son and allowed Him to be contained within human flesh, He gave us the greatest gift of all time—a walking, living, breathing sacrifice. Because Jesus was fully God, He has the authority to forgive sin. Because Jesus was fully man, He could pay the price for all sin.** While our finite minds may struggle to completely understand these biblical truths, God's infinite wisdom was always at work.

JESUS'S BIRTH PRODUCES JOYFUL WORSHIP

READ LUKE 2:8-20



WHAT DOES IT SHOW ABOUT GOD THAT HE FIRST REVEALED JESUS'S IDENTITY TO SHEPHERDS?

Leader: share context about shepherds. The greatest birth of all time was first announced not to the religious leaders but to the outcasts. According to scholars, shepherds were often looked down upon by religious leaders. The demands of the job often kept shepherds from participating in strict religious traditions. Even those caring for the sacrificial lambs, which had to remain spotless, were on the fringes of society. God chose to deliver the heavenly announcement to them! **Jesus came for us all. God's love isn't confined to our societal expectations.** Even the details of our Savior's birth reflect this truth.

READ VERSES 10-15. IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD GIVE THE SHEPHERDS PROOF OF JESUS'S IDENTITY?

Like any of us would, the shepherds immediately felt fear when they saw the angel of the Lord, but the angel spoke peace over them. **He directly stated who Jesus was: the Messiah! Next, he told them they'd find a baby swaddled and lying in a manger, which was definitely not the norm. Lastly, they got to witness a multitude of angels worshiping because the time had finally come for Jesus's arrival—for the gift of salvation!** The shepherds were given sure proof of this amazing truth.



HOW DO THE SHEPHERDS RESPOND TO ENCOUNTERING JESUS? HOW DOES THIS CHALLENGE YOUR OWN RESPONSE TO SEEING JESUS?

The shepherds arrived to find things just as the angel had spoken. Then, they ran off to tell everyone the news. What they saw and heard moved them to action. They couldn't keep quiet about the Messiah's arrival. **It was the greatest news—the gospel—and they couldn't keep it to themselves.** They returned to the scene with hearts full of joyful worship over the Messiah's birth. **As believers, we know Jesus as our Savior. We have the hope and security of an eternity with Him in heaven. This should produce the same joyful worship in our hearts, which should then overflow to every part of our lives.** Worship is the only right response to the gift of salvation we have in Christ.

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU SHARE THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL THIS CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is a special time of the year. For many people, it's a time of family gatherings, food, and gifts. These things are good, but the real meaning of Christmas is the celebration of our Messiah's birth. Sometimes, we get so caught up in what the world celebrates that we forget to center our hearts on Christ's birth. His arrival meant we could experience forgiveness and salvation. God sent His Son, wrapped in human flesh, to live among us. He experienced hunger, thirst, pain, temptation. Ultimately, He experienced death to pay for our sins. We have the greatest gift, and this time of the year is one of the best times to share that gift with others. **Like the shepherds who ran to share the news, run to everyone you know who needs hope and tell them of the great hope you have in Jesus.**