



CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

# YOUNGER KIDS LEADER GUIDE



CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

# JESUS IS OUR GREATEST GIFT

MATTHEW 1; LUKE 2



**KEY PASSAGE:** Psalm 34:17

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.

**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, the promised Savior, came into the world to show us what God is like and to deliver us from sin and death.

**STORY POINT:** God's Son, Jesus, was born in Bethlehem.



## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

### LEADER Bible Study

In the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth, the miraculous plans of God coincide with the seemingly mundane events of humanity to reveal the promised Messiah. God used modest means to bring about the divine incarnation of His only Son who would deliver us from the death we deserve.

Where was Jesus' birth prophesied in the Old Testament? How does His birth make a way for people to receive the gift of eternal life?

Jesus' genealogy, found in Matthew 1, demonstrates how the long-awaited Savior can be traced back to Abraham. Later, in verse 23, we read the prophecy first relayed in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel." In today's passages—written about 700 years after the words of Isaiah—an angel of the Lord appeared first to Mary, then to Joseph, and later to the shepherds in the field, announcing this newborn baby as the Savior of the world. These ordinary people experienced God's great power at work through the miraculous birth of Jesus.

Consider the grandness of the nativity story. Reflect on the wonder of Jesus coming to earth in such lowly form. The humble birth of Christ would lead to His humbling death: crucified and left to die among wretched sinners. Yet this would not be the end of His story—nor for those who trust in His name! In three days, Jesus would rise from the grave, and by faith in His finished work on the cross, we can be reconciled to God as recipients of His grace.

Pray for the boys and girls who will gather to be taught this spectacular passage of Scripture. May they find their place within God's redemption story, placing true faith in the Savior born to bring us eternal life. May they turn from their sins and call upon Immanuel, our "God with us" forever. And like the shepherds in today's passage, may you faithfully share this good news, giving praise to the God of our salvation for the great gift we have in Jesus!



#### PREPARE

##### THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



#### WELCOME

##### 10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



#### LEARN

##### 25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



#### LOVE

##### 15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



#### LIVE

##### 15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



## PREPARE

### PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



### WELCOME

#### Activity Page

- ☐ "Hurry to Bethlehem" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ gift wrapping paper
- ☐ box
- ☐ individually wrapped candies, 1 per kid
- ☐ mittens or oven mitts

#### Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ medium-sized wooden peg dolls, 1 per kid
- ☐ craft sticks, 3 per kid
- ☐ yellow felt, 1 per kid
- ☐ white felt, 1 per kid
- ☐ hot glue
- ☐ raffia
- ☐ twine



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ self-adhesive Christmas gift tags, 1 set per group
- ☐ wired tinsel garland, 1 per group

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ yellow chenille craft stems, 1 per group
- ☐ red chenille craft stems, 1 per group
- ☐ blue chenille craft stems, 1 per group

#### Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



### LEARN

#### Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

#### Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Jesus Is Our Greatest Gift" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

#### Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Posters, 1 per group
- ☐ "He Rescues Them (Psalm 34:17)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ self-adhesive Christmas bows



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

**SAY** “What has been your most favorite gift you’ve received for Christmas? Why was it your favorite?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Hurry to Bethlehem” activity page.

**SAY** “Today, we will see how the shepherds heard the greatest news: a Savior had been born in the town of Bethlehem.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### ☐ OPTION 1: UNWRAP IT



Before the session, place individually wrapped candies in a gift box. Then wrap the gift box in several layers of wrapping paper, using extra tape to make it challenging to unwrap.

Direct kids to sit in a circle and give one kid a pair of mittens or oven mitts. Challenge her to pull a piece of wrapping paper away from the box while wearing the mittens. After her attempt, pass the mittens and box to the next kid and challenge him to try. Repeat all the way around the circle. Kids should struggle to remove the layers of wrapping paper. Finally, allow kids to unwrap the box without using the mittens by ripping a piece of wrapping paper. Invite kids to have a piece of candy.

**SAY** “When we receive a gift, we can’t wait to unwrap it and see what’s inside. But when you wore the mittens you couldn’t unwrap it right away, you had to wait. Today, we will see that after many years of waiting, God’s promise to send the Savior into the world came true. We’ll learn that **GOD’S SON, JESUS, WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM**, and He is our greatest gift.”

#### ☐ OPTION 2: JESUS ORNAMENT

Before the session, gather medium-sized wooden peg dolls, craft sticks, yellow and white felt, glue, hot glue, raffia, scissors, markers, and twine. Provide each kid with a wooden peg doll and direct them to draw a face on the doll. Then assist kids in wrapping “baby Jesus” in the white felt and hot gluing the felt to the wooden peg doll.

Next, lead kids to glue three craft sticks into a triangle. Guide kids to cut a star from the yellow felt and glue it to the top of the craft stick triangle. Then assist kids in hot gluing raffia to the bottom of the triangle. On top of the raffia, hot glue “baby Jesus.” Finally, cut a strip of twine and hot glue it into a loop to the back of the triangle, behind the star.

**SAY** “At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus’ birth. Jesus is God’s Son, and He came to earth to save people from their sins. I hope your ornaments will remind you of why Jesus is our greatest gift.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**







LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# INTRODUCE the Bible Story

### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I am so happy to see you! Today, we will be celebrating the birth of Jesus. If you have your Bible with you, please take it out. [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] As we learn from God’s Word together, we will hear about how God sent His Son, Jesus, to be born in the world. We’ll learn that **GOD’S SON, JESUS, WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM.** [Display the Story Point Poster.]

Before we open God’s Word, let’s prepare our hearts and minds for what He wants to teach us today. Pray with me: ‘Dear God, thank You that we can gather together to hear from Your Word. Help our hearts trust You and believe that Jesus is our greatest gift. Amen.’ ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

**SAY** “Our big picture question is, **Why does sin separate us from God?** The answer is, **Because God is holy, our sin has broken our relationship with God.** Let’s repeat the answer together: **Because God is holy, our sin has broken our relationship with God.**

God doesn’t want people to be separated from Him. In our story today, we will see how God’s plan to send the Savior into the world finally came true! God has always wanted to be with His people, and He was making a way for His people to be forgiven of their sin. Our sin separates us from God, but He provided the way back to Him through His Son, Jesus. God showed His love to us and provided us with Jesus so that anyone who trusts in Him can be with God forever. ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “At the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we learned how God made people: Adam and Eve. Sadly, Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and rejecting His command. But God promised to send a Rescuer into the world. Over the next hundreds of years, God was working out His plan to send the Rescuer into the world. He made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and said that the Rescuer would come through their family. Even though God’s people continued to sin, God always kept His promise. Finally, the time had come for God’s Son, Jesus, to be born. ”



## LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 2. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Is Our Greatest Gift.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### JESUS IS OUR GREATEST GIFT

“ Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. **One day, an angel told Mary she was going to have a very special baby. The angel explained, “This baby will be God’s Son.”** Then an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. **The angel said, “Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. Her baby was put there by the Holy Spirit. Name Him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins!”** This was amazing news! Jesus—God in the flesh—would come as a light into the dark world.

Mary and Joseph lived in the town of Nazareth. **During the time Mary was pregnant, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, announced that everyone needed to return to their own towns and be registered for a census. Since Joseph was a descendant of King David, he and Mary 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 to stay, but every place was full. So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby. Joseph named Him Jesus.** Mary wrapped the baby tightly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.

**That night, some shepherds were watching over their sheep in the fields near Bethlehem. Suddenly, an angel stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified! The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! I have very good news for you and for all the people: Today a Savior, who is the Messiah and the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.” Then the angel said, “You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”**

**Suddenly, 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!”**

When the angels left and returned to heaven, **the shepherds decided to go straight to Bethlehem to see what had happened. They hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the feeding trough. Then the shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus.** Everyone who heard about Jesus was amazed. Mary thought about everything that was happening and tried to understand it. The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angel said.

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, the promised Savior, came into the world to show us what God is like and to deliver us from sin and death. ”

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Act it out:** Perform motions and movement as you tell the story.

**Active listening:** Invite kids to shout “our greatest gift,” when they hear “Jesus” in the Bible story.



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY**

**SAY** “ In the Old Testament, God had promised His people that He would send a Savior to be born so that people could be saved from their sins. Even though it took hundreds of years for God’s promise to come true, God is never late. His timing is perfect, and He always keeps His promises. What town was Jesus born in? **[Allow responses.]** **GOD’S SON, JESUS, WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM.** Because of a census, Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This happened just as God said it would! In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah received God’s words and wrote that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Was Jesus born in a palace? Where was He placed after He was born? **[Allow responses.]** While Jesus is the King, He was not born in a palace. Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept, and He was laid in a feeding trough for animals. Jesus’ birth shows us what kind of life He would go on to live: He would be humble and serve others. Jesus would grow up to tell people the way to be saved by trusting in Him. Jesus never sinned. He lived in a way that showed He loved people and God. He healed people and performed other miracles. Eventually, Jesus gave His life by dying on the cross for people’s sin. Only faith in Jesus can save people from their sin.

Who were the people God announced the good news of Jesus’ birth to? **[Allow responses.]** God sent an angel to a group of shepherds who told them that a Savior was born for them in the city of David. A whole army of angels appeared and praised God for this good news! The shepherds ran to see Jesus, and then they went and told others the good news.

The birth of Jesus was good news! And Jesus’ birth is good news for us today. Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God’s Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus, the promised Savior, came into the world to show us what God is like and to deliver us from sin and death. ”

**3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION**

**SAY** “ Every person is a sinner, and every person needs to be saved from his or her sin. We can’t take away our sin on our own. God sent Jesus to be born so we could be saved from sin. Jesus is our greatest gift because only He can save us from our sin. His birth is good news because Jesus would go on to live a perfect life, die on the cross for sin, and be raised to life again. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved from sin. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)





LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 4 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session, print copies of the Key Passage Poster for each group of four kids. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 34:17 together.

**SAY** “Jesus’ birth is good news because Jesus came to rescue us from sin and death! Let’s practice remembering our key passage and how God made the way for people to be saved.”

Form kids into groups of four. Tape each group’s Key Passage Poster to a wall. Distribute self-adhesive Christmas bows to each kid. Provide each group with enough bows for each word of the key passage. On your start, challenge groups to send a kid to stick his Christmas bow to the first word of the key passage, say the word aloud, and run back to his team. Then send the next kid to do the same for the second word of the key passage. Continue until one team is the first to cover their Key Passage Poster with bows.

Lead kids to sing “He Rescues Them (Psalm 34:17).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

### 5 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “Dear God, thank You for the gift of Jesus. Thank You for sending Jesus to be born in Bethlehem so that anyone who trusts in Him will be saved from sin. Help us share this good news with others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE

THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

## LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 1. Lead kids to find verse 21 and ask them why the angel said to name the baby Jesus. Tell kids the name Jesus means “the LORD is salvation.”

Consider pointing out Bethlehem (I4) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 1:21 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

**SAY** “Jesus, God’s Son, has always existed. But He came to earth to save people from their sins. During Christmastime, we have many fun activities we can participate in, but the most important reason for celebration is the birth of Jesus. Those who place their faith in Jesus will be saved from their sins.

Jesus’ name means ‘the LORD is salvation,’ and His name is the only One worthy of praise. When we trust in Jesus, we can praise Him for how He saves us from sin and gives us eternal life. And we can share this good news with others so they can be saved and praise His name too.”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “Why is trusting in Jesus better than any Christmas gift we could receive?”

Discuss how God gives us good gifts and we can enjoy the gift He gives, but Jesus is the greatest gift because only He can save people from their sin. Tell kids that earthly gifts will not last, but the gift of salvation is forever. Discuss how only Jesus can fully satisfy our hearts, and His presence in our lives is our greatest good. Remind kids that those who trust in Jesus not only receive forgiveness of sins but also eternal life with God.

**SAY** “What did the shepherds do after they heard the good news of Jesus’ birth and saw Him?”

Remind kids that the shepherds went and told others the good news, and they praised God for the gift of Jesus’ birth. Discuss how we can share the good news with others and that we should praise God for all He has done.

**SAY** “Who can you share the good news of Jesus’ birth with?”

Answers will vary. Tell kids that if we are Christians, God has commanded us to share the gospel with other people He places in our lives. Discuss how every person needs to hear the gospel because it shares the only way for people to be saved from their sins. Tell kids that God helps His people share about Jesus and that He is glorified when we are obedient to His commands. If time allows, spend some time reviewing The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me Poster.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### ☐ OPTION 1: STRING IT TOGETHER

Before the session, write each word of the big picture answer on individual self-adhesive Christmas gift tags. Create a set for each group of three or four kids. Gather a wired tinsel garland for each group and hang them somewhere in the room.

Form kids into groups of three or four. Provide each group with a set of Christmas gift tags with the big picture answer. Challenge each group to “string” the big picture answer on their garland, in the correct order, by sticking each tag onto the garland. The team to complete stringing the big picture answer together first is the winner.

**SAY “ Because God is holy, our sin has broken our relationship with God. Yet, God doesn’t want us to be separated from Him. He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to save people from their sin. When we turn away from our sin and trust in Jesus, our sin is forgiven. We can be brought back to God and have a right relationship with Him. God loves us so much that He made the way for us to be with Him forever. ”**

##### ☐ OPTION 2: BIBLE SKILLS: JESUS’ BIRTH



Form kids into groups of three. Provide each group with a Bible and three chenille craft stems in the colors blue, red, and yellow. Assign kids in each group a specific color. Invite kids to bend their craft stem into an ornament shape such as a star or candy cane. Lead kids to locate Matthew 1:20–25 and Luke 2:1–20 in their Bibles. Tell kids that each chenille craft stem will correspond as follows: Matthew (blue), Luke (red), both books (yellow).

Call out each of the following words one at a time: angel, shepherds, Immanuel, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Bethlehem, Savior, Joseph, Mary. Then guide kids to hold up the correct chenille craft stem to represent what book the word is found in. (Matthew: Immanuel, Jesus, Holy Spirit; Luke: shepherds, Bethlehem, Savior; both books: angel, Joseph, Mary)

**SAY “ GOD’S SON, JESUS, WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM. Jesus was born to save people from their sins. He is Immanuel, God with us, and only faith in Him will forgive people’s sins. Jesus’ birth is good news! ”**

#### 2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.





# THE GOSPEL

## GOD'S PLAN FOR US

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use these prompts to share the gospel with your kids.



Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.