

A detailed illustration of a nativity scene. In the upper half, Mary is shown in a white headscarf and green robe, looking down at the infant Jesus. Joseph, with a beard and green robe, stands to the right. A lantern hangs from the wooden ceiling. In the lower half, Mary is seated, holding the baby Jesus wrapped in a white cloth. A wooden manger filled with straw is in the foreground, with a white donkey and sheep looking on. The background shows a night sky with stars and a distant town.

PS

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

OLDER PRESCHOOL LEADER GUIDE

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR GREATEST GIFT

LUKE 2



CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus was born! This was very good news! Jesus was not like other babies. Jesus is God's Son. God sent Jesus to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to rescue people from their sins.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy.

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 34:17

STORY POINT: Jesus was born.



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 preschoolers and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to live 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, Allergy Alert, construction paper, copy paper, washable markers, crayons, blunt-tipped scissors, glue sticks, glue, tape, blocks, baby dolls, play dough, world map, snacks, paper cups, napkins.



WELCOME

Welcome

- ☐ "The LORD Hears (Psalm 34:17)" song

Activity Page

- ☐ "Color the Stars" Activity Page, 1 per child

Make ornaments

- ☐ hole punch
- ☐ ribbon
- ☐ various craft supplies (yarn, stickers, self-adhesive gems, and so forth)
- ☐ contact plastic (optional)

Transition

- ☐ countdown video (optional)



LOVE

Snack and talk

- ☐ hand sanitizer (optional)
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Make puppets

- ☐ "Christmas Story Puppets" printable, 1 per child
- ☐ craft sticks, 6 per child
- ☐ ziplock bags, 1 per child
- ☐ permanent marker



LIVE

Take care of babies

- ☐ toy bottles and diapers (optional)

Pass the gift

- ☐ small wrapped gift
- ☐ music and music player

Move and sing

- ☐ Christmas music and music player
- ☐ red and green ribbon or streamers

Round up the sheep

- ☐ white balloons
- ☐ pool noodles
- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ white socks or balls (optional)

Transition

- ☐ coloring page, 1 per child
- ☐ "The LORD Hears (Psalm 34:17)" song
- ☐ Big Picture Cards for Families



LEARN

Learn about the Bible

- ☐ bookmark
- ☐ Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline

Tell the Bible story

- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ "Jesus Is Our Greatest Gift" video (optional)
- ☐ storytelling tips props (optional)

Practice the key passage

- ☐ Key Passage Marker
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "The LORD Hears (Psalm 34:17)" song
- ☐ baby doll and/or manger scene

Learn the Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster



WELCOME Preschoolers

Post an Allergy Alert, if needed. Set out supplies to engage preschoolers as they arrive. Play music as you welcome preschoolers. Greet children by name at eye level. Follow your church's security procedures.

1 ACTIVITY PAGE

Lead preschoolers to complete "Color the Stars" on the Activity Page.

SAY "At Christmas we celebrate the birth of God's Son, Jesus. Jesus had a special job to do on earth. Today we will hear the good news that Jesus was born and came to rescue people from their sin."

2 SESSION STARTER

Use one or both of the following options to engage curiosity about today's Bible story.

GUESS THE ANIMAL



Make different animal sounds. Lead preschoolers to guess the name of the animal. Invite preschoolers to make the sound once it is guessed correctly. Include various animals such as farm animals, pets, zoo animals, and so forth. Use a sheep as the last animal noise.

SAY "Today we are celebrating that **JESUS WAS BORN**. Shepherds came to visit Jesus when He was born. Shepherds take care of sheep. Today we will hear more about the shepherds learning about the birth of Jesus."

MAKE ORNAMENTS

Prior to the activity, cut out various shapes (squares, circles, triangles, diamonds, and so forth) out of construction paper. Punch a hole in the top of each shape. Set up an art area for preschoolers to create their own ornaments. Encourage them to decorate their ornaments using available supplies. Write Jesus was born! on each ornament. Assist preschoolers in threading ribbon through the holes to make a hanger for their ornaments. (Note: Consider laminating the ornaments or covering them in contact plastic to increase durability.)

SAY "At Christmas we often put up decorations to celebrate. We might hang ornaments on trees. What are we celebrating at Christmas? We are celebrating that **JESUS WAS BORN**. In today's Bible story we will learn more about the birth of God's Son, Jesus."

3 TRANSITION TO LEARN

Gain preschoolers' attention by showing the countdown video, turning the lights off and on, or clapping a simple rhythm for children to copy. Invite preschoolers to sing a familiar Christmas hymn as they transition to Learn.

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





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Gather preschoolers together on the floor or in chairs. Begin counting preschoolers. If your group is large, lead various adult leaders to count different groups and then report the number to you. Announce the number of preschoolers in the room.

SAY “We just took a count of the number of people who are here today. In today’s Bible story, a man named Joseph and his wife, Mary, traveled to a town called Bethlehem so they could be counted. The ruler of their land wanted a list of everyone who lived there.”

2 LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE

Place a bookmark at Luke 2 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY “The first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels. Gospel means “good news.” These books tell the good news about Jesus. Today’s Bible story is found in the Gospel of Luke.”

Point to the Bible story picture on the Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

3 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Tell the following Bible story using the provided storytelling tips or show the video. Use the bold version of the Bible story for younger preschoolers.

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, “Do not 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!”**

During the time Mary was pregnant with Baby Jesus, **a ruler named Caesar Augustus wanted a list of all the people who were living in the land. He sent out an order: “Everyone must return to his hometown to be counted!”** Since Joseph was part of King David’s family, he and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David.

While they were there, Mary was ready 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 the baby Jesus. Mary wrapped Him in cloth and laid Him in a manger.**

That night, **some shepherds were watching their sheep out in the fields. All of a sudden, an angel stood before them. A bright light shone around the shepherds, and they were scared!**



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

But **the angel said, “Do not be afraid! I have good news for you: Today a Savior, who is the Messiah and the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.”** Then the angel said, “Go find the baby. He will be wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, many angels appeared. They praised God and said, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!”

When the angels left, **the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus. They found Him, and then they told others about Him.** Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. Jesus’ mother, Mary, thought about everything that happened and tried to understand it. The shepherds went back to their fields. They praised God because everything had happened just like the angel had said. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use manger scene figures: Set up manger scene figures as you tell the story. Invite different preschoolers to add the figures to the scene as they are mentioned.

Play it out: Provide Bible-times clothing for preschoolers to wear. Invite them to play out the story as you tell it. If you have a large group, retell the story a few times so everyone can play a part.

4 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Jesus was born! This was very good news! Jesus was not like other babies. Jesus is God’s Son. God sent Jesus to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to rescue people from their sins. ”

5 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ An angel came to Mary and Joseph to tell them that Mary was going to have a special baby. This baby was God’s Son. What did the angel tell them to name the baby? (Jesus) When they arrived in Bethlehem, there were no places to stay, so they found a place where animals were kept. Mary had her baby, and Joseph named the baby Jesus. That same night, who appeared to a group of shepherds? (an angel) The angel told them not to be afraid because a Savior was born. Many angels appeared and praised God. What did the shepherds do once the angels left? (They went to Bethlehem to find Jesus.) After they found Him, they told everyone the good news that **JESUS WAS BORN.** ”

6 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Before the session, write the words of the key passage on sheets of paper, one word per sheet. Place the papers in order on the ground to form a path. At the end of the path, display a manger scene or a baby doll. Place the Key Passage Marker at Psalm 34:17. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Travel together along the path. Say the words of the key passage as you pass the paper. Lead preschoolers to repeat the words. Follow the path to the manger scene.

SAY “ Because we are sinners, we need a rescuer. God sent His Son, Jesus, as a baby. When He grew up, He died on a cross for our sins. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus is our rescuer! Because of Him, we can be with God forever. ”

Sing the key passage song, “The LORD Hears (Psalm 34:17).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

7 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

SAY “**Why does sin separate us from God?** Sin separates us from God **because God is holy**. God has never sinned; He is perfect. When God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth as a baby, Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus would be very special and would grow up to do things no other human could do. Because Jesus is God, He is holy. God sent Jesus to provide a way for us to no longer be separated from God. Through Jesus’ death on the cross, we can have a right relationship with God forever. Even though we still sin, Jesus has provided a way for those who believe in Him to no longer be separated from God.”

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





LOVE

THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 PRAY

Invite preschoolers to close their eyes and think about God as they talk with Him.

SAY “God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to earth as a baby. We believe Jesus came to rescue people from their sins. Thank You for this most perfect gift. Amen.”

2 SNACK AND TALK

Post an Allergy Alert. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer. Serve a snack. Show the Bible Story Picture Poster as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

SAY “What was your favorite part of today’s Bible story?”

SAY “What did you learn about God in today’s Bible story?”

SAY “What did the shepherds do when they heard the good news that Jesus was born?”

SAY “Why does sin separate us from God? Because God is holy.”

3 MAKE PUPPETS

Print and cut apart the “Christmas Story Puppets” printable for each child. Separate the sets into ziplock bags with preschoolers’ names written on them. Distribute bags to preschoolers. Invite them to color the pictures. Assist preschoolers in attaching a craft stick to the back of each picture with tape. Once all sets are made, retell the Bible story. Encourage preschoolers to use their puppets to play out the story as you tell it. Consider providing blocks for preschoolers to make a barn or stable to use as they play out the story.

SAY “**JESUS WAS BORN** in Bethlehem. God’s Son had come to earth! We celebrate Jesus’ birth at Christmas. You can use these puppets to retell the Bible story to your family and friends. Like the shepherds told everyone what they had seen and heard that special night, we can also tell people the good news that **JESUS WAS BORN**.”





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

- 1 Choose the activities that best fit your group, space, available resources, and time constraints. Set up activities in one of these ways: as a group—all at the same time, in small groups that rotate through each activity, or set up as centers—allowing preschoolers to browse and choose.

TAKE CARE OF BABIES



Gather several baby dolls and baby blankets. Consider providing baby care items such as toy bottles and diapers. Demonstrate how to gently rock a baby. Lead preschoolers in the following song to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?” as they rock their baby:

Thank You God.
Thank You God.
For Jesus;
For Jesus.
Jesus was born.
Jesus was born.
Thank You God.
Thank You God.

SAY “ **JESUS WAS BORN** as a little baby. You used to be a baby too! Jesus was different than other babies because Jesus is God’s Son. He is the Savior of the world who came to rescue people from their sins. This is news worth sharing with everyone! What other good news can you tell people about Jesus? ”

PASS THE GIFT

Gather preschoolers in a circle on the floor. Invite preschoolers to pass a small, wrapped gift around the circle as music plays. Stop the music. Ask the preschooler holding the gift to tell one thing he remembers from the Bible story. Assist as needed. Start the music and begin passing the gift again. Continue until each child has a chance to share something from the Bible story.

SAY “ Today’s Bible story is one of the most important stories in the Bible. **JESUS WAS BORN!** Jesus was not like other babies. He is God’s Son. Jesus is our greatest gift. Because of Him, we can be rescued from our sins and have a right relationship with God. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

MOVE AND SING

Lead preschoolers to spread out around the room. Distribute red and green streamers to each preschooler. Play familiar Christmas-themed worship songs that celebrate the birth of Jesus. Lead preschoolers to worship Jesus as they sing and wave streamers in the air.

SAY “ When **JESUS WAS BORN**, an angel came to a group of shepherds to tell them the good news. After the shepherds heard that **JESUS WAS BORN**, a group of angels appeared and began praising God. They said, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth.’ We can celebrate Jesus’ birth as we sing songs about Him. This is something we can do all year, not just at Christmas! ”

ROUND UP THE SHEEP

Make several large squares on the floor using painter’s tape. Invite preschoolers to pretend they are shepherds. Remind them shepherds take care of sheep. Spread inflated balloons throughout the room. Mention the balloons are “sheep” the preschoolers need to round up in the “pens” (taped squares on the floor). Guide boys and girls to use pool noodles as shepherd crooks and work together to get the sheep in the pens. If time allows, play a few rounds of the game. (Note: If a balloon pops, promptly pick up and discard the pieces. If you prefer, use wadded paper, balled-up socks, or small balls instead of balloons.)

SAY “ **JESUS WAS BORN!** Who came to see Jesus after He was born? [Allow responses.] Yes! Shepherds came to find Jesus after an angel told them the Savior was born. After they found Jesus, the shepherds told people the good news. We can tell others the good news that **JESUS WAS BORN**, just like the shepherds did. ”

2 TRANSITION

Invite preschoolers to complete their coloring pages. Consider leading preschoolers to sing the key passage song or involving them in a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Give parents the completed Activity Page. Distribute the Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to review the Bible story and engage with the family discussion starters during the week.



THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR PRESCHOOLERS

While preschoolers might not be ready to respond to the gospel, use this guide to help young minds begin to grasp big truths about Jesus and the kingdom of God.



Ask: "Who is in charge at home? Who is in charge over the whole world?" Explain that God made everything! He is King over everything, and He is in charge..



Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell preschoolers that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin makes God sad.



Explain that God must punish sin. He loves us, and He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus came to take away the punishment for sin.



Ask: "Do you like gifts?" Explain that Jesus gives us the best gift. He never did anything wrong, but He was punished in our place. Jesus wants to take away our sin because He loves us.

Pray for the salvation of your preschoolers. As you faithfully teach the Bible, you are planting gospel seeds in children's hearts. Ask God to grow the preschoolers into children who love and trust in Jesus.