



CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

OLDER PRESCHOOL LEADER GUIDE

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR RESCUER

LUKE 2



CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus was born! This was very good news. Jesus was not like other babies; He is God's Son. God sent Jesus to earth from heaven to save people from their sins.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 10:31

STORY POINT: Jesus came to rescue us from sin.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The announcement of the birth of Jesus came in a completely unexpected way. Instead of announcing the birth of the Savior in the halls of power or the seats of religion, God chose for a group of shepherds on the outskirts of Bethlehem to be the first to hear of Christ's birth. The announcement from angels to the shepherds watching over their flocks was significant not only because of the message they gave, but also for the people to whom it was given.

Shepherds spent their days on the fringes of society taking care of animals. Living on the outskirts made it difficult for these shepherds to make it to synagogue and participate in the daily spiritual life of their community. Because these shepherds constantly worked with livestock and were regularly exposed to manure and dead animals, they would have been considered unclean according to Jewish law.

It was no accident that God choose often overlooked and outcast shepherds as the ones to whom the angels would give the announcement of Jesus' birth. This announcement was a powerful statement about the nature of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is for all people, and no one is outside of God's plan to know of His love.

The long expected announcement was remarkable. Jesus had been born in the city of David for all people. Three significant titles are used here to describe why that is good news for all people. First, Jesus is the Savior—the one who rescues people from sin. Next, He is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God who came to lead God's people into God's kingdom. Finally, He is the Lord, the ruler of all the universe.

The shepherds' response to this glorious news included curiosity, awe, and obedience. This Christmas, may we do everything we can to see Jesus, adore Him for who He is, and boldly proclaim the truth that Jesus is Savior, Messiah, and the Lord.



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 Glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)" song

Activity Page

- ☐ "Color the Rescue Story" Activity Page, 1 per child

Gather the sheep

- ☐ cotton balls
- ☐ candy canes in wrappers
- ☐ painter's tape

Transition

- ☐ countdown video (optional)



LOVE

Snack and talk

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

Make a cross ornament

- ☐ plastic tablecloth
- ☐ hot glue gun and glue (adult use only)
- ☐ jumbo craft sticks, 2 per child
- ☐ yarn or twine
- ☐ adhesive jewels



LEARN

Introduce the Bible story

- ☐ baby announcement

Learn about the Bible

- ☐ bookmark
- ☐ Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline

Tell the Bible story

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

Review the Bible story

- ☐ nonbreakable manger scene
- ☐ brown paper bag

Practice the key passage

- ☐ Key Passage Marker
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "The Glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)" song
- ☐ gift bag
- ☐ tissue paper

Learn the Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster



LIVE

Travel the paths

- ☐ "Travel the Paths" printable, 1 copy on cardstock
- ☐ adhesive magnets, 4
- ☐ magnet wands, 4
- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ metal sheet pans, 4

Create good news art

- ☐ a variety of red and green craft items such as metallic pom-poms, glitter glue, tissue paper, and so forth
- ☐ cardstock, 1 per child

Play out the story

- ☐ Bible-times costumes
- ☐ bath robes
- ☐ scarves
- ☐ towels
- ☐ baby blanket
- ☐ toy animals (sheep, donkeys, camels)
- ☐ nonbreakable mirror (optional)

Transition

- ☐ coloring page, 1 per child
- ☐ "The Glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)" song
- ☐ Big Picture Cards for Families



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 Rescue Story" on the Activity Page.

SAY "What do you see? (A manger and a cross.) We are celebrating Jesus' birth, but did you also know we are celebrating that Jesus is our Rescuer? I can't wait to tell you more!"

2 SESSION STARTER

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

COUNT DIFFERENT ITEMS



Encourage children to help you count different items in the room. Items you can count include Bibles, baby dolls, children, leaders, and blocks.

SAY "You counted different things in our room. In today's Bible story, we will learn how the emperor of Rome sent out an order for everyone to go to their hometown to be counted. This brought Mary and Joseph to a city called Bethlehem. Do you know what happened while they were there? [Allow responses.] We will talk all about it during our Bible story time!"

GATHER THE SHEEP



Post an Allergy Alert outside the classroom door. Use painter's tape to make a few squares on a table. Spread some cotton balls across the table. Tell the children they will pretend to be shepherds and the cotton balls will be sheep. Instruct children to use a wrapped candy cane as a staff to gather all the sheep into the squares. Give each child a candy cane and encourage her to use the candy cane to drag all the cotton balls into the squares.

SAY "What kind of animals do shepherds take care of? (sheep) What do you think it would be like to be a real shepherd? [Allow responses.] You did a great job being a pretend shepherd and gathering all the sheep. In our story today, we will hear about some shepherds who were caring for their sheep, when all of a sudden something amazing happened! Do you know what it was? [Allow responses.] I'll tell you our Bible story!"

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 pretend to rock a baby 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

Show and talk about a baby announcement.

SAY “Look at this! [Show baby announcement.] This is a special announcement about a baby being born. Sometimes a family will give or send an announcement like this to their friends and family! Why do you think they do that? [Allow responses.] They want to let everyone know how excited they are to have a new baby! They want to celebrate. In our story today, a very special baby named Jesus was born. Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.”

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 “Look what I have! What book is this? (Bible) All the words in the Bible are true and from God! We have been learning from the Old Testament, but today we will hear about Jesus’ birth from the New Testament! 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 RESCUER

“During the time Mary was waiting for Baby Jesus to be born, the emperor of Rome sent out an order: ‘Everyone must return to his hometown to be counted!’”

Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place for Mary to have her baby, but every place was full. So, Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby, Jesus. She wrapped Him in cloth so He would be snug and warm, and she laid Him in a manger.

In the same area, some shepherds were watching their sheep out in the fields. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them and a bright line shone around them.

The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. Go find the baby. He will be wrapped in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.”

The shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus. They found Him, and they told others what the angel had said about Him.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Then the shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angels said. ”

4 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Jesus was born! This was very good news. Jesus was not like other babies; He is God’s Son. God sent Jesus to earth from heaven to save people from their sins. ”

5 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Place a nonbreakable manger scene in a brown paper bag. Guide each child to pull out an item. Encourage him to retell the part of the story that matches his item. (Note: If your manger scene includes wise men figures, you may decide to leave those out since the story of their arrival happens a few years after this story in the biblical timeline.)

SAY “ You helped share the story of Jesus’ birth. Do you remember why Jesus was born? [Allow responses.] Jesus was not like other babies. **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** ”

6 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Place the Key Passage Marker at 1 Corinthians 10:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Place the marked Bible in a gift bag with tissue paper. Guide the children to sit in a circle. As music plays, encourage the children to pass the gift bag around the circle. When the music stops, tell the child holding the bag to open it to find the marked Bible. Open the Bible and say the key passage together. Put the Bible back in the bag and play again until all the children have had a chance to open the gift.

SAY “ Jesus is the most wonderful gift because He came to rescue us from sin. Because of this, He is worthy of all the glory. And just like our key passage says, ‘We should do everything for the glory of God.’ ”

Sing the key passage song, “The Glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

SAY “ We have been learning our big picture question and answer, **How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.** Jesus loved and obeyed God perfectly. Jesus is worthy of all the glory and worship! ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use visuals: As you tell the story, show a picture of a manger and a cross. Use these visuals to highlight the fact that Jesus was born to be our Rescuer.

Use a manger scene: Follow your church’s safety procedures, walk to a manger scene set up at your church, or use a small nonbreakable manger scene to help tell the story.



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 only Son, Jesus, from heaven to earth. Thank You that He came to rescue us from our sin. This is such good news! God, draw near to each child. I pray they will know you as their Rescuer! 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 “Why was Jesus born?”

SAY “How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.”

3 MAKE A CROSS ORNAMENT

Prior to the session, hot glue two jumbo craft sticks together to form a cross shape. Glue a loop of yarn or twine to the top of the cross to make an ornament. Cover a table with a plastic tablecloth. Distribute a cross ornament, washable markers, and adhesive jewels to each child. Guide the children to use the craft supplies to decorate their crosses.

SAY “Where will you place the cross ornament you made? [Allow responses.] We celebrate Christmas because Jesus was born, but why was Jesus born? [Allow responses.] Jesus lived a perfect life, died on a cross, and came back to life. **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** The cross can help us remember that Jesus is our Rescuer—now that is something wonderful to celebrate at Christmastime!”





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: 1) as a group, all at the same time, 2) in small groups that rotate through each activity, or 3) set up as centers, allowing preschoolers to browse and choose.

SING THE BIBLE STORY



Lead children in doing motions and singing the following song to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star:”

Glory, glory, to our God. (clap hands)
Mary, Joseph went so far. (walk in place)

They had a baby named Jesus. (pretend to rock baby)
He came from heav’n to rescue us. (point upward)

Glory, glory, to our God. (clap hands)
Jesus, Jesus, rescues us. (hug yourself)

SAY “ That song is such a great reminder of our Bible story. Mary and Joseph traveled all the way to Bethlehem. What happened while they were there? [Allow responses.] That’s right! Jesus was born. That’s something to celebrate! But why was Jesus born? **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** We can remember this is the greatest gift and give all the glory to God! **How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.** ”

TRAVEL THE PATHS

Before the session, print and cut out the “Travel the Paths” printable pieces. Tape the path pages to metal sheet pans. Stick an adhesive magnet to the back of the Mary and Joseph and the Baby Jesus pieces. Place the Mary and Joseph magnet pieces with the Nazareth/Bethlehem paths and the Baby Jesus magnet pieces with the manger/cross paths. Encourage the children to use a magnet wand under the sheet pan to drag their magnets up the page from the start to the finish. Talk about the Bible story.

SAY “ Wow! That was fun. First, we used the magnet to move the picture of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born! Then we used the magnet to move Jesus from the manger to the cross. This helps us remember that **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** How amazing is that? God deserves all the glory for sending His Son, Jesus. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

CREATE GOOD NEWS ART

Write GOOD NEWS in large block letters on cardstock for each child. Encourage the children to use a variety of art supplies including red, green, and metallic craft pom-poms, glitter glue, and tissue paper to glue onto the outline of each letter. Children can also use washable markers and crayons to draw on the letters or decorate their pages.

SAY “This page says GOOD NEWS. Can anyone tell me what the good news was in our story today? [Allow responses.] That’s right! **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** We sin when we break God’s rules. All sin deserves to be punished, but God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from the punishment our sin deserves. That is such good news!”

PLAY OUT THE STORY

Invite preschoolers to dress up as Mary, Joseph, and shepherds. Provide Bible-times clothing, bath robes, scarves, or towels tied gently around heads. Wrap a baby doll in a small blanket to be Baby Jesus. Build a manger using wooden blocks to hold the baby. Place toy animals like sheep, donkeys, and camels around the manger. Walk slowly through the classroom as if traveling to Bethlehem. Gather around the manger to look at Baby Jesus and quietly sing a simple Christmas hymn such as “Silent Night” or “Away in a Manger.” Take turns playing out different parts of the story to help everyone participate. Consider providing a nonbreakable mirror so children can see themselves.

SAY “Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, where Baby Jesus was born. Angels appeared to shepherds and told them this amazing news. The shepherds found Baby Jesus laying in a manger. God had a plan for His Son, Jesus. **JESUS CAME TO RESCUE US FROM SIN.** At Christmas and all the time, we can glorify God for this good news! **How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.**”

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 that 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.