

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

OLDER KIDS

LEADER GUIDE



theGOSPELPROJECT®

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

LUKE 2



STORY POINT: Jesus was born to save us from sin.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus has always been and always will be God, but He also became a human and was born as a baby to save people from sin. As Jesus grew up, He lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 8:31b-32a

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: *What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.*



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Though the world often views the nativity story as a mere Christmas decoration along the same lines as snowmen and gingerbread houses, followers of Jesus recognize Christ's birth is the true and wondrous account of the long-awaited Savior, born to die so that we may find life in Him. From before the creation of the world, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was always God's plan for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-20).

The story of the birth of Jesus isn't as glamorous as people might have expected for the arrival of a royal king; instead, it's a humble story of an ordinary young woman giving birth among animals and common shepherds being invited to worship the newborn King. In calling shepherds to marvel at the arrival of Jesus, God didn't summon those with power, wealth, and positions of great influence in society. Instead, He invited the lowly and humble, and they responded to God's invitation to experience the glory of His Son.

Whereas Caesar Augustus called the people of his kingdom to travel far and wide for his goal of conducting a census—a measure of an earthly ruler's power—Jesus was humbly making His way to His people in the greatest act of power the world has ever seen: God becoming man. Christmas is the story of Immanuel, which means, God with us.

Though the Christmas season comes each year, we must continually bring ourselves to recount the wonder, majesty, and grandness of the nativity story—the awe that our Creator would make the way to forgive us and to bridge the gap between God and sinners by becoming a human, living a perfect life, dying for our sins, and rising again.

Pray that the boys and girls you lead will experience the story of Jesus's birth and find their place in His redemption story. May they receive His love and—like the shepherds in this story—share the story of Christ with others.



THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



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
- ☐ "Word Search" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)
- ☐ wrapping paper
- ☐ boxes



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 Substitute" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Key Passage Activity
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ plastic cups with rims
- ☐ "For Us All (Romans 8:31-32)" song
- ☐ chopsticks
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills
- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)
- ☐ index cards

Activity Choice (Option 2)
- ☐ tennis or table tennis balls, 8
- ☐ hula hoops, 2
- ☐ painter's tape

Journal and Prayer
- ☐ Journal Page
- ☐ "Who's Who?" activity page



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's the longest journey you've ever taken? How did you pass the time until you arrived?*"

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Word Search" activity page.

> **SAY** "*The Old Testament prophecies told of a Messiah, a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Today we'll learn the good news that Jesus was this Savior who came to save God's people from sin.*"

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: THE BEST GIFT

Distribute wrapping paper, a box, and tape to each kid. Consider using a box to demonstrate how to wrap a gift before starting. Instruct the kids to put on a blindfold. Explain that the kids must try to wrap his or her box as neatly and quickly as they can. The kid who wraps his or her box entirely wins. Once all of the boxes are wrapped, invite the kids to remove their blindfolds and see how they did. Optional: If supplies are limited, the kids can take turns and watch their classmates wrap the box.

> **SAY** "*Nice job! How difficult was it to wrap the gifts blindfolded?* **[Allow responses.]** *God gave us His greatest gift when He sent us His Son, Jesus, as a baby! Today we will learn that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**"

☐ OPTION 2: MAZE TAG



Instruct the kids to form four lines with their arms stretched out beside them and fingertips touching. Select two volunteers. One kid will be the *tagger*, the other will be trying to escape. Place the two kids in between two lines opposite one another. When you say *right* all the kids in line must turn right. When you say *left*, they must turn left, always keeping their hands held out. As the maze shifts, the tagger must try to make it to his or her classmate. The other kid will try to avoid the tagger.

> **SAY** "*Similar to how you were trapped in the maze, we are all trapped in sin. But God entered into the world as a man to set us free. Together we'll learn that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**"

Transition from **WELCOME** to **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! Thanks for joining us today! I'm **[your name]**, and I'm excited to explore a new Bible story with you. We've been learning about what Jesus has done to save us from sin. Today we are going to learn that it was God's plan for Jesus to be born as a baby in Bethlehem. If you brought your Bible to class, turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, which is found in the New Testament. (Use this time to distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.)
>
> Let's pray together as we open God's Word. 'God, thank You for revealing Your kingdom through Your Son, Jesus. Open our hearts and minds as we read Your Word together. Amen.'"

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

> **SAY** "Our big picture question has taught us that Jesus has completed God's plan for salvation through His life, death, and resurrection. Let's review this together. **What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.** God sent His Son, Jesus, not as a great political king or ruler, but as a baby, born to save God's people. Because Jesus was sinless, His death was the perfect sacrifice for our sin. By dying and rising again, Jesus has saved and forgiven everyone who trusts in Him.
>
> Let's repeat the big picture question and answer together one more time: **What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.**"

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

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

> **SAY** "Jesus demonstrated through His life and ministry that He is God's Son. Though Jesus was sinless, He was betrayed and arrested for His claims. Jesus died according to God's plan, but God has raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death once and for all. Jesus is God and He will always be God. Today we'll learn that, because God wants a relationship with His people, He sent Jesus to be born to save us from sin."

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 Substitute." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

"**In the days when Herod was the king of Judea,** *a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that everyone in the empire should be counted.* **Every person had to go to his hometown for the census.**

In a town called Nazareth, *a young woman named* **Mary was expecting a very special baby.** *God told Mary that* **her baby** *would be God's Son. He* **would be the Savior of the world!**

Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, and they traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to the city of Bethlehem in Judea, *because that was where Joseph was from. When they arrived in Bethlehem,* **the time came for Mary to have her baby. There was no guest room available for them, so Mary gave birth to Jesus in a place where animals were kept.**

Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and laid Him in a manger, *a feeding box for animals.* **Baby Jesus was the person the Old Testament promised would come who would also be called Immanuel, which means "God with us."** *God had come to live as a human to save sinners!*

In the nearby fields, some shepherds were watching their sheep. *Suddenly,* **an angel appeared to them and told them the good news: "Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born. He is the Messiah, the Lord!"** *The angel told them they would find the baby lying in a manger.*

Suddenly, there was a large number of heavenly creatures praising God with the angel, saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!"

The shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem and found Baby Jesus lying in a manger, *just as the angel had said.*

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which happened exactly like they had been told. *They worshiped God for sending Jesus to the world!*

Christ Connection: Jesus has always been and always will be God, but He also became a human and was born as a baby to save people from sin. As Jesus grew up, He lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God."

STORYTELLING TIPS

Active listening: Each time the kids hear the word *baby* in the story, invite them to say "God with us!" Remind the kids that Jesus was born as Emmanuel—God who came to live with us.

Take a headcount: Gather the kids together and count how many are in the room. Explain that a census was a way for the government to gather a headcount of the people in an area. Remind kids that this census was orchestrated by God to fulfill the prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

> **SAY** *"Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem?* ***[Choose a volunteer to read Luke 2:1-6 aloud.]*** *Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted because that was Joseph's ancestral home. Bethlehem was also King David's hometown and according to the Old Testament, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem as part of the house and line of David. God was in control of Jesus's birth and He arranged these events to bring salvation to His people. God is in control of our lives, too, and we can trust that His plan is for our good.*
>
> *What did the angel say after appearing to the shepherds in the field?* ***[Choose a volunteer to read Luke 2:8-11 aloud.]*** *God's people had been awaiting the birth of the promised Messiah for years. And yet God chose to send an angel to lowly shepherds to bring the greatest news. The angel told the shepherds that the promised Savior, Christ the Lord, had been born in Bethlehem. How did the shepherds respond to this news?* ***[Choose a volunteer to read Luke 2:15-20 aloud.]*** *The shepherds immediately went to see Jesus and praised God for His glorious gift of salvation! Like the shepherds, God invites believers to praise and worship Him for the salvation He has given them through Jesus. Jesus is Emmanuel—God who has come down to dwell with us.*
>
> *Jesus has always been and always will be God, but He also became a human and was born as a baby to save people from sin. As Jesus grew up, He lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God."*

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

> **SAY** *"In an incredible display of His grace and mercy, God sent Jesus to be born to save His people from sin. Everyone who repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus as Lord is forgiven and made righteous before God. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can see one of your parents or church leaders."*

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create a welcoming environment for kids to ask questions they might have about choosing to follow Jesus.)

4 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Romans 8:31b-32a together.

> **SAY** *"God has shown His great love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to be born to save us from sin. Not only is Jesus Emmanuel—God with us, He is also for us! Let's review our key passage together."*

Write one word of the key passage on the rim of each cup, creating two full sets. Place each set of cups on the floor in a line, not in the correct order. Invite the kids to line up behind each set of cups. Provide the first two kids in each line with chopsticks. Challenge them to use the chopsticks to lift the cups by the rim and stack them in the correct order of the key passage. Continue until all the kids have taken a turn.

Lead kids to sing "For Us All (Romans 8:31-32)." 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** *"God, thank You for wanting a relationship with each one of us. We praise You for sending Jesus to save us from sin and make us righteous before You. Lead us to live as witnesses for the gospel everyday. Amen."*

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 Luke 2. Explain that the Gospel of Luke is found in the New Testament. Share that the details Luke includes, such as the census and political leaders at the time, point to a date somewhere between 6 B.C. and 4 B.C. for Jesus's birth.

Consider pointing out the location of Bethlehem [I4] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 2:10-14 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"Think about what it means to be saved from something. We can all think of people who help save others like firefighters, doctors, or even heroes in fictional books and movies! But God sent Jesus to be a different kind of hero. God wants a relationship with us, but because of our sin, we're separated from Him. But God became a human and came to live with us. God's great love for us was expressed through His Son, Jesus. As Jesus grew, He lived a sinless life and died on the cross as our substitute, saving us from our sin. When we trust in Jesus as Lord, He forgives us and invites us to tell others about Him."*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"Why was it important for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem?"*

Remind kids that the Old Testament prophecies told of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem from the line of David. By being born in Bethlehem, Jesus fulfilled God's promises and confirmed His identity as the Messiah who came to save us from sin. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Micah 5:2.)

> **SAY** *"How can God be with us if we can't physically see Him? Is He still with us today?"*

Explain that God became a human through His Son, Jesus, which is why Jesus is called *Emmanuel*, God with us. Jesus came to live, die, and rise again, defeating sin and death forever. Share that though Jesus is no longer here physically, He promised that those who trust in Him will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 14:15-17.)

> **SAY** *"How can we, like the shepherds and the angels, praise God everyday?"*

Answers will vary. Encourage kids to consider how God desires a relationship with us. Prompt kids to think about ways they can spend time with God and grow closer to Him every day through reading their Bibles, praying, and worshiping God for who He is and what He has done. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:18.)

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

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE *(10 minutes)*

☐ OPTION 1: GOD IS WITH ME



Review the story with the kids. Share that Jesus was born to save us from sin. Explain that Jesus is Emmanuel, which means *God with us*. Give each kid an index card and lead them to write the name *Emmanuel* in the center. In the space around the name, challenge the kids to write ways that God is with them every day. Encourage the kids to keep the card somewhere that will remind them that Jesus came to save us from sin. Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who trust in Him.

> **SAY** *"God sent His Son, Jesus to earth as a baby to live a perfect life and die as our substitute. Jesus is Emmanuel, who was born to save us from sin. We can trust that He is with all those who repent and believe in Him, no matter what we face!"*

☐ OPTION 2: STICKY HOOPS

Prior to the session, wrap tape around two hula hoops, with the sticky side facing outward. Discuss how the Gospels contain stories about Jesus's life and death. Invite the kids to use their Bibles to look up the order the Gospels appear in. Write the names of the four Gospels (*Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*) on one ball each. Do this twice to create two sets. Then tape each hula hoop to the wall. Guide the kids to form two lines in front of the hula hoops. Give the first kid in each line a set of Gospel balls. Challenge the kids to toss the balls onto the sticky hoop in the correct order. After their turn, they'll remove the balls and hand them to the next kid in line.

> **SAY** *"The Gospel writers share stories about Jesus's life, including His birth as a baby, all the way to His death and resurrection. The Gospels show us that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is God and He invites each of us to repent of our sin and trust in Him!"*

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER *(5 minutes)*

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God for sending His Son to save us from sin. As time allows, lead kids to complete "Who's Who?" on the activity page.



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.