

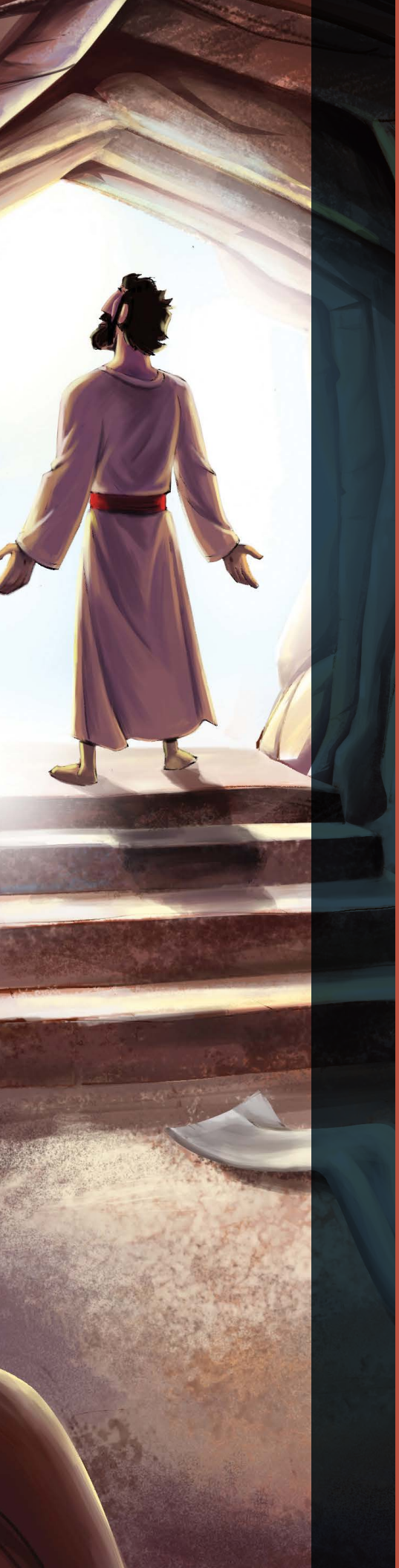
CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

PRESCHOOL

WORSHIP GUIDE



theGOSPELPROJECT®



THE GOSPEL

God's Plan for Preschoolers

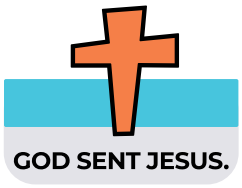
While preschoolers might not be ready to respond to the gospel, use this guide to help young minds begin to grasp big truths about Jesus and the kingdom of God.



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 the preschoolers in your class. 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.

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

LUKE 2



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

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus is God, but He also became a human 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 8:31

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



IN ADVANCE TO TEACH 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

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel.



20–25 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel.



15–20 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel.



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



IN ADVANCE TO TEACH THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep these items on hand for each session: Allergy Alert, Bibles, construction paper, copy paper, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, glue sticks, glue, blocks, baby dolls, play dough, world map or globe, snack food, paper cups, and napkins.

LEARN

Welcome and worship with song
- ☐ "Jesus Saves (Preschool Version)" song

Tell the Bible story
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ "Jesus Is Our Substitute" video (optional)
- ☐ storytelling tips props (optional)
- ☐ gift box or bag

Review
- ☐ Giant Timeline

Respond through song and prayer
- ☐ "Thank You God for Jesus" song
- ☐ "God's Love" song

LOVE

Lay Jesus in a manger
- ☐ "Baby Jesus" printable, 1 per 2 kids
- ☐ brown construction paper, 1 per child
- ☐ yellow paper strips, several per child

Care for sheep
- ☐ stuffed animal sheep
- ☐ plastic sheep figures
- ☐ soft hair brush
- ☐ washcloths

Play "what's missing?"
- ☐ toy manger scene
- ☐ tray
- ☐ small blanket or hand towel

Make a shepherd's crook
- ☐ chenille craft stems, 1 per child
- ☐ red, white, and green pony beads
- ☐ small bowls

LIVE

Learn the Big Picture Question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage
- ☐ Key Passage Marker
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "God is For Us (Romans 8:31)" song
- ☐ ball

Play freeze dance
- ☐ device that plays music

LEARN the Bible Story

1 WELCOME AND WORSHIP WITH SONG

Greet preschoolers with a smile. As preschoolers arrive, sing an action song such as "Jesus Saves (Preschool Version)" to engage and welcome them. Lead motions enthusiastically and encourage preschoolers to join you. Help preschoolers think through what it means to worship God and why we often use music to help us do so. Take time to talk about any lyrics that might be challenging to understand.

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Show a gift box or bag to the kids. Talk about how at Christmastime we typically give and receive gifts. Ask the kids to tell about a gift they have given or received that they really loved.

> **SAY** "*It is fun to give and receive gifts! Today in our Bible story, we will hear about the greatest gift ever given—Jesus.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Now let's listen to the story about when Baby Jesus was born.*"

Open your Bible to Luke 2. Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bold version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

JESUS IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

> "*Long ago, a leader named Caesar Augustus decided that everyone in the land should be counted. He ordered every person to travel to the place where they had been born.*
>
> **Mary was** *a young woman who lived in Nazareth. She was* **going to have a special baby. God told Mary that her baby would be God's Son and the Savior of the world!**
>
> **Mary was going to marry a man named Joseph. They traveled** *from Nazareth* **to Bethlehem,** *which was Joseph's hometown.* **When they got to Bethlehem, Mary was ready to have her baby. There was no guest room for them to stay in, so Mary had her baby in a place where animals were kept.**
>
> **Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and placed Him in a manger**, *a feeding box for animals.* **Jesus, God's Son, was born to save the world.**
>
> **Nearby, some shepherds were taking care of their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared and told them the good news: "***Today, in Bethlehem,* **a Savior has been born. He is the Messiah, the Lord!" The angel told them they would find the baby in a manger.**
>
> **The shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem and found Jesus,** *just as the angel said. They were so happy to see the Savior, and* **they praised God for sending Jesus to save them.**"

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use a manger scene: Use a manger scene to play out the story as you tell it.

Use a baby doll: Show a baby doll, gently wrap it in a blanket, and place it in a box as you tell the story.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

> *Christ Connection: Jesus is God, but He also became a human 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 REVIEW

Point to the Giant Timeline as you review today's Bible story. Ask the following review questions.

1. What did you like about the Bible story? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. What were some things in the Bible story that made you happy or sad? *(Answers will vary.)*
3. Who came to see Baby Jesus after angels told them the news? *(shepherds)*
4. Why was Jesus born? *(to save people from sin)*
5. The shepherds were happy and praised God. How can we praise God? *(Answers will vary. Praying, singing worship songs, reading the Bible, sharing about Jesus with friends)*
6. **What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.**

> **SAY** "*Mary and Joseph were traveling to Bethlehem to be counted. There was no guest room for them, so Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept and laid in a manger. In a nearby field, an angel told some shepherds that the Savior had been born, and they hurried to see Him. The shepherds were filled with joy and praised God for sending Jesus to save the world.*"

4 RESPOND THROUGH SONG AND PRAYER

> **SAY** "*Jesus is God, but He also became a human 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.*"

Sing "Thank You God for Jesus" as preschoolers move with the music. Prepare for prayer by singing "God's Love." Collect an offering.

SAY "*God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to the world. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose again to take the punishment for our sins. Help each child believe in You so they can be forgiven and have a right relationship with You. Amen.*"

LOVE God because of what we learned

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.

1 ☐ REENACT THE STORY



Gather the kids in a circle and briefly retell the Bible story in simple words. Assign roles such as Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds, and sheep. Guide the kids as they play out traveling to Bethlehem and looking for a place to stay. Help "Mary" place a baby doll, representing Baby Jesus, in a manger. Instruct the "angels" to announce the good news, and encourage the "shepherds" to respond with excitement. Lead the "shepherds" and the "sheep" to visit Baby Jesus and praise God.

> **SAY** *Amazing job playing out the Bible story! Jesus is God's son, but He was born in a place where animals live and was laid in a manger.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Sin are the things we do that displease God. We deserve punishment because of our sin. The plan for Jesus to save us shows how much God loves us. We can rejoice like the shepherds because Jesus came to save us from sin. This is very good news!*

2 ☐ LAY JESUS IN A MANGER

Print and cut apart a copy of the "Baby Jesus" printable for every two kids. Cut several strips of yellow paper to represent hay. Give each child a sheet of brown construction paper, several yellow paper strips, and a glue stick. Instruct the kids to glue the yellow paper strips onto the brown paper to make hay. Provide each child with a "Baby Jesus" printable to color. Assist the kids in gluing the Jesus picture on top of the hay when they finish.

> **SAY** *All of your mangers look so nice! After Jesus was born, Mary wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths and placed Him in a manger. A manger is a feeding box for animals. When we see our little mangers with Baby Jesus, we can remember that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN**. *Jesus 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 ☐ CARE FOR SHEEP

Arrange stuffed animal sheep, plastic sheep figures, soft brushes, and washcloths on a table. Show the kids how to gently hold, feed, and care for the sheep. Encourage the kids to brush the sheep's wool, pretend to wash and dry the sheep, and feed them. Remind the kids to keep their sheep safe and stay close, just like real shepherds care for their sheep.

> **SAY** *When you were taking care of your sheep it reminded me of the shepherds in our Bible story. Shepherds make sure their sheep are safe and fed. The shepherds were watching their sheep when the angel told them Jesus was born. They hurried to see Jesus and praised God for sending Jesus to save them.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *We can praise God for making the way for us to be forgiven and have a right relationship with God.*

4 ☐ PLAY "WHAT'S MISSING?"

Place all the pieces of a manger scene, except the wise men, on a tray. Invite the kids to look at the pieces and recall one thing they remember from the Bible story about each item. Cover the tray with a small blanket or hand towel. Remove one piece from the tray without the kids seeing it. Uncover the tray and ask, "What's missing?" Allow the kids to guess the missing piece. Reveal the missing piece and review the part of the Bible story it represents. Repeat the game as time allows.

> **SAY** "*Mary and Joseph* **[Hold up figures.]** *traveled to Bethlehem. While they were there, Baby Jesus* **[Hold up figure.]** *was born.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *In a nearby field, some shepherds were watching their sheep* **[Hold up figures.]**. *Suddenly, an angel appeared* **[Hold up figure.]** *and told them the good news about Jesus's birth. The shepherds left right away to find Baby Jesus.*"

5 ☐ MAKE A SHEPHERD'S CROOK

Distribute a chenille craft stem to each child. Set bowls with red, white, and green pony beads within reach. Demonstrate how to thread beads onto the chenille stem. Assist younger preschoolers as needed. Show kids how to bend one end of the stem to make a shepherd's crook. (Note: make sure to leave about an inch of space on the ends of the stem so the beads don't fall off.)

> **SAY** "*A shepherd uses a crook to help keep his sheep safe. Angels appeared to a group of shepherds to tell them about Jesus's birth. If you turn your crook upside down, it looks like a letter J! J is the first letter of Jesus's name.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is God, but He also became a human 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.*"



LIVE for God out of love

1 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

> **SAY** "*Jesus is fully God and fully man. He came to the earth as a baby to save us.* ***What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.*** *Jesus lived a perfect life and took the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross and coming back to life. If we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God*"

2 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Place the Key Passage Marker at Romans 8:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Invite the kids to sit in a circle. Pass a ball from one child to the next around the circle. Say one word of the key passage each time the ball changes hands. Continue passing the ball until every child has had multiple chances to say a word from the key passage.

> **SAY** "*Jesus is God, but He became a human to save people from sin. God has power over everything. If God is for us, nothing and no one can come against us.*"

Sing the key passage song "God is For Us (Romans 8:31)" together.

3 PRAY

Invite preschoolers to tell you any prayer requests they have. Pray for them.

> **SAY** "*God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Thank You for sending Jesus to earth as a baby because You love us so much. Help us to be joyful like the shepherds and praise You every day. We love You. Amen.*"

☐ PLAY FREEZE DANCE



Play music and invite the kids to pretend they are shepherds. Guide the kids to dance and care for pretend sheep while the music plays. Stop the music, and instruct the kids to look up and freeze like an angel has appeared. Repeat the activity as time and interest allow.

> **SAY** "*How do you think the shepherds felt when they saw and heard the angel?* **[Allow responses.]** *When the shepherds saw the angel, they stopped what they were doing and listened to the good news.* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Let's continue to praise God every day for sending His Son, Jesus!*"