

CHRISTMAS BONUS SESSION

YOUNGER 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
- ☐ "Field Maze" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)
- ☐ painter's tape

Session Starter (Option 2)
- ☐ hula hoops
- ☐ cone



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
- ☐ map of ancient Israel (optional)
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

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



LOVE

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



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)
- ☐ yarn
- ☐ beads (optional)

Activity Choice (Option 2)
- ☐ pool noodles

Reflection and Prayer
- ☐ Bible story coloring 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** *"If you could have been born anywhere in the world, where would you choose? Why?"*

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Field Maze" activity page.

> **SAY** *"By completing the maze, you helped the angel find the shepherds! The angel appeared to share some exciting news with the shepherds. Today we'll learn that Jesus was born as a baby to save us from sin."*

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: STEPPING IN



Create a large rectangle on the floor using tape. Guide the kids to line up along the outside of the rectangle. Explain that you will give two commands: in and out. When you say in, the kids must step inside the rectangle with both feet. When you say out, they must step out with both feet. Mix up the commands, getting faster as you go. Any kid who makes the wrong move must sit down. Play until one kid is left standing.

> **SAY** *"You had to step carefully to win the game. Did you know that God stepped into the world as a baby to be our substitute and take the punishment our sin deserves? Today we will learn that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.**

☐ OPTION 2: CONE GRAB

Invite the kids to sit down in a circle. Select two kids to stand outside the circle. Place a hula hoop in between each kid in the circle, instructing them to hold on to either side. Each kid should have one hula hoop in each hand. Explain that the hula hoops must stay in place, on the ground. Place a cone in the middle of the circle. Encourage the two kids outside the circle to run one lap around the circle going opposite directions. When they've completed their lap, he or she must step into one of the hoops to enter the circle and try to grab the cone. The first kid to grab the cone wins. Play several times, allowing the other kids a turn.

> **SAY** *"By entering into the hoop, you saved the cone! Today we will be learning that God entered into the world as a baby to save us. Sin separates us from God, but* **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! I'm so glad you're here! My name is* ***[your name]****, and today we will be reading a story that is found in the Gospel of Luke. If you brought your Bible with you to church, please take it out and place it in your lap. (Distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.) Together we have learned about Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. In today's story we get to read about how Jesus was born as the Messiah to save us from sin. Let's pray together as we open God's Word.*
>
> *'God, thank You for sending Jesus, the promised Messiah, to save us. 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's death and resurrection has saved believers from sin. Let's review it together now:* ***What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead****. Jesus is the Messiah who lived in perfect obedience to God, all the way to death on the cross. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has taken the punishment sin deserves and defeated death. Jesus saves all of those who trust in Him as Lord.*
>
> *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 lived a perfect life, but He was betrayed and arrested to fulfill God's plan for the salvation of His people. By taking on our punishment when He died on the cross, Jesus has saved believers from sin. Jesus's resurrection provides hope that those who trust in Him will be raised to new life, too! Jesus has always and will always be God. Today we'll learn that Jesus is the Messiah, 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

React and respond: As you read through the story, pause on each person. Challenge the kids to show how they would have reacted if they had been given the same news.

Track the distance: Using a map of ancient Israel, show the kids what it would have looked like to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Share that the distance is around 90 miles and would have taken Mary and Joseph about a week.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

> **SAY** "Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to be counted according to the decree. What city was Jesus born in? **[Allow responses.]** God used the decree from Caesar and the leaders of the day to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. We can trust that God can use anything and anyone to complete His plans. Salvation had come to God's people through a little baby.
>
> Who did God tell Mary that her baby would be? **[Allow responses.]** Mary gave birth to God's only Son and placed Him in a feeding trough for animals. Jesus was called Emmanuel because God had not left His people in their sin. Jesus is God and He came down as a baby to live with and save His people. Through Jesus, we are offered forgiveness and salvation from sin forever.
>
> How did the shepherds respond when they heard the angel's message? **[Allow responses.]** The shepherds obeyed God by going to see Jesus, the promised Messiah. Like the angels and the shepherds, we can praise God for sending His Son, Jesus to save believers from sin. But the news is too good to keep to ourselves! We can obey God by going out and sharing the good news of Jesus with others.
>
> 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 sin so that if we believe in Him, we will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God."

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

> **SAY** "Jesus was born as the promised Messiah, who took our punishment when He died on the cross for our sins. As our perfect substitute, Jesus has saved all those who repent of their sin and trust in Him as Lord. 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 an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means 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 that He is not against us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from sin forever! Let's continue learning as we review our key passage together."

Invite the kids to sit together in a circle. Start by asking the group questions such as, *Who is wearing shoes?* or *Who is a sibling?* When you ask the question, kids who fit that scenario should stand up and say the verse aloud together. Repeat this several times until all the kids have had a chance to say the key passage aloud.

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 coming down to earth as a baby to save us from sin. Help us trust that You are for us. Give us the courage to share the good news of the gift of salvation that Jesus offers to all who trust Him. 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 many of the details Luke records about Jesus's birth show how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the birth of the Messiah.

Consider pointing out the location of Bethlehem [I4] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 2:9-12 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"Consider a time you received a special gift. Think about how it feels for someone else to give us something we want or need. We all love to receive gifts and presents, whether it's our birthday or even Christmas! But God has given us a gift that is greater than anything else we can receive. God wants a relationship with us, but sin has separated us from Him. By sending His Son, Jesus, God showed that He has not left us. Jesus came to be our substitute. Through Jesus, God offers us salvation from sin and life with Him forever. What an amazing gift! And God wants us to share that gift by telling others the good news of the gospel."*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"What does it mean for God to be with us?"*

Point to Jesus as Emmanuel, which means He is God and He came to live on earth and die for our sin. All those who repent of their sin and trust in Jesus are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God is with believers at all times. Prompt kids to consider how knowing that God is with us every day can give us peace. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 145:18.)

> **SAY** *"Why was the Savior of the world born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger?"*

Share that a manger, or animal feeding trough, was definitely not a place you would expect a king to be sleep in. But Jesus's humble birth shows that He came down to save sinners. Remind kids that the circumstances of Jesus's birth fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Micah 5:2.)

> **SAY** *"How can we glorify and praise God for who He is everyday?"*

Answers will vary. Encourage kids to think about how prayer, worship, and obedience to God's Word honors Him. Ask kids to consider ways that they can incorporate worship and Bible reading into their lives on a daily basis. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 10:31.)

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

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: ANGEL ORNAMENTS

Distribute markers and two sheets of paper to each kid. Encourage the kids to write the names of people they can share that **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN** with on their papers. Show kids how to fold their sheets of paper accordion style, long ways. Fold one of the papers one third of the way down to create one wing and half the body. Repeat with the second sheet for the other side. Make a loop with the yarn. Glue each half of the angel to the yarn. Optional: Add a bead for a head on the loop of yarn.

> **SAY** *"The angel shared the good news with the shepherds that Jesus had been born. We can also share the good news that* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN!** *Use these angels as a reminder to pray for others this week."*

☐ OPTION 2: NOODLE DROP



Invite kids to form a circle, standing about a foot apart from each other. Give each kid a pool noodle. Share that when you count to three, the kids must let go of their pool noodle while simultaneously moving to the left and trying to catch his or her neighbor's pool noodle before it hits the ground. Encourage kids to think about how **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** If someone does not catch the pool noodle, he or she is out. As more kids are eliminated, make the challenge harder by having the remaining kids move farther apart. Continue playing until one kid remains.

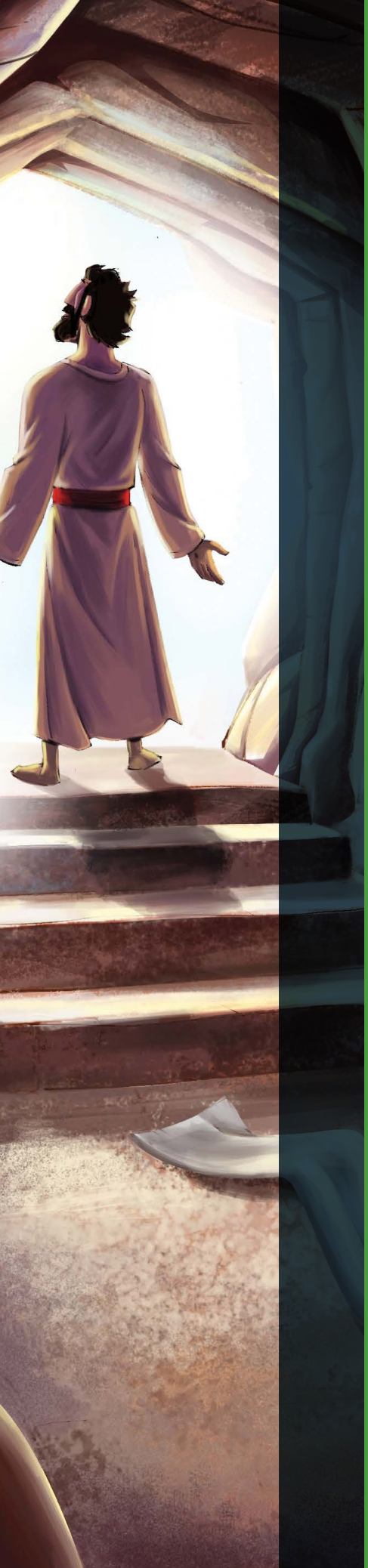
> **SAY** *"You may or may not have saved your noodle from falling, but* **JESUS WAS BORN TO SAVE US FROM SIN.** *Jesus is the Messiah who came to live with sinners like you and me! We are made right with God when we trust Jesus as Lord."*

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.