



**Growing
in CHRISt®**

Middle School Teacher Guide

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS

God Sends His Son to Save Us

NEW TESTAMENT 1

Introduction

This Middle School level provides resources for teaching sixth through eighth graders.

Teacher Guide Features

- **Preparing the Lesson pages** give you background and theological information.
- **Four-step lessons** make preparation and teaching easy and effective.
- **Activity-based openings and activities** draw youth into the Scripture and topics.
- **Small-group/large-group activity options** dig into God's Word and share faith. Do activities in ways that make the most sense for your group.
- **YouTube videos** encourage critical thinking and discernment.
- **We Live activities** help young people identify personal life applications.
- **Liturgy Links** connect young people to the worship life of the Church.
- **Perforated pages** make team teaching or small-group/large-group teaching easier.

Teacher Tools Packet Contents

- **Timeline Poster and teaching posters** provide historical perspective and discussion.
- **Bible Words Puzzle Book** teaches Bible memory verses (reproducible).
- **Bible Review Cards** work for review games during extra time or as people arrive.
- **Teacher CD** has hymns, select Bible Words/catechism songs and printable lyrics.

Student Pack Essentials

Student Packs feature a four-page **Folio** for each lesson and a **Bible Exploration Guide** with expanded cultural and biblical insight. Students look up and read the primary Scripture each week. Extra verses are usually printed on the Folio to make it easier to use and discuss.

Your Role as Teacher

As a teacher, you challenge, coach, encourage creativity and curiosity, and nurture students' faith in Jesus. Building positive relationships with and between youth is very important. Get to know your students and their families.

Young people may feel wary of trying new things, fearing embarrassment. Provide a safe space for everyone to participate by not allowing put-downs, hurtful jokes, name calling, or other improper suggestions. Model the behavior you want from students by participating yourself and enthusiastically introducing activities. Each time students participate, trust builds. Trust makes students more willing to read aloud, do activities and tasks, participate in small groups, pray together, and share opinions, feelings, and group work.

Make your classroom a place where students can talk openly. To foster trust, remind students to respect one another's privacy. Say you will not share their stories outside of class. However, if a student shares something potentially dangerous to him- or herself or others, you have the responsibility to bring it to your pastor for guidance.

Other Supplies

Before class, do the tasks in the "Get Ready" section of your lesson. Collect "Materials Needed." This list always includes Bibles and YouTube videos. Many lessons use newsprint, markers, and masking tape. A few additional materials are used from time to time.

Find additional teaching helps, including curriculum updates, training, links to podcasts, and other resources, at our Sunday School website, **cph.org/sundayschool**.

Preparing the Lesson

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1–20

Date of Use

Key Point

A Savior is born to you! He is Christ the Lord.

Law/Gospel

Because of sin, I am afraid and helpless before God and deserve to die. **God sent His Son, Jesus, to save me from sin and death, and He makes me His own dear child through faith in Him.**

Context

Luke makes sure to proclaim Jesus as a real man born in the historical events of this world. The story of Jesus is not a moralizing fable.

Commentary

The story of Jesus' birth is a real event. In the text, we see His mother, Mary, plodding along a dusty road with the discomforts of a woman in her third trimester. We can only imagine the difficulty of childbirth in those days.

We see the infant Jesus wrapped in cloths and lying in a hay-filled feeding trough. We see unnamed shepherds praising this newborn as the Savior of God's people. We see parents caught up in the drama that includes birth, blood, and humility, as well as the rejoicing of heavenly armies.

Heaven and earth meet in this baby, the swaddled Lord of all creation nursing at His mother's breast. We hear in the Scriptures how the Lord set aside His greatness to become humble. Yet through His humility, He makes the humble great and seats common folk among the greatest of the heavenly powers.

When God catches us up in His plans, we simply receive His words and the works He would have us do, and like Mary, we ponder in our hearts the greatness of our merciful Lord.

We confess that the bloody birth and death of Jesus lead us to the empty tomb and the heavenly throne, where our Lord's wounds are badges of everlasting honor and His earthly grief becomes His—and our—eternal glory. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 5:12).

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 6

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1–20

Connections

Bible Words

For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in
Him should not perish but
have eternal life.
John 3:16

Catechism

Fifth Petition of the Lord's
Prayer: And forgive us
our trespasses as we
forgive those who
trespass against us.

Hymn

"Jesus! Name of Wondrous
Love," CD Track 2; LSB 900

Get Ready

Before class: Get supplies.

Opening: Preview the Lesson 6 YouTube video in the New Testament 1 Middle School Playlist at bit.ly/1knXwnU. If you decide to show it, set up equipment. Skip ads; cue video.

God Speaks: Hang up two sheets of newsprint. Add these headlines: *Bible Facts*, *Facts from Other Sources*.

We Live: Copy Bible Words Puzzle 6 for students.

1 Opening (10 minutes)

Good Gifts

Welcome students as they arrive. Introduce yourself to any new students.

Say Merry Christmas! Use this greeting even if you don't teach this lesson during the Advent or Christmas season.

Ask Have you ever thought about why we say "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy holidays" or "Season's greetings"? Students may give various responses, including that we say "Christmas" because it includes *Christ*. As Christians, we celebrate God's greatest gift, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Why do you think that many people and businesses use watered-down seasonal greetings in December? Not everyone celebrates Christmas; people don't want to offend others. Stores want their customers to feel comfortable.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1 Opening	2 God Speaks	3 We Live	4 Closing
Other Supplies YouTube video; tablet, computer, or screen; Internet connection (optional)	Teacher Tools Timeline Poster A, Poster B Student Pack Lesson 6 Folios Other Supplies Bibles Pens or pencils Newsprint, markers, masking tape	Teacher Tools Bible Words Puzzle 6 copies Teacher CD (optional) Bible Words, CD (optional) Student Pack Lesson 6 Folios Bible Exploration Guides Other Supplies Pens or pencils CD player (optional)	Teacher Tools (optional) Lesson 6 Bible Review Cards Teacher CD Lyrics, Teacher CD Student Pack Lesson 6 Folios (optional) Other Supplies CD player (optional)

Say Merchants try to induce us to buy gifts and more gifts, but Christians know we've been given the best gift ever.

Show the Lesson 6 video, "Dan Stevers - Christmas in a Nutshell" (2:00), in the New Testament 1 Middle School Playlist at bit.ly/1knXwnU.

If you do not use the video, skip to the prayer.

Ask What is "Christmas in a nutshell"? God showed up (in the form of a baby).

What's your Christmas hope in a nutshell (3 words or less)? Answers vary.

Pray Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to redeem us from our sins. Give us faith in Him and His work for us. In Your Son's name. Amen.

2 God Speaks (32 minutes)

A Savior, Christ the Lord

Say We probably think we know the Scriptures well that tell about Jesus' birth. Let's use new eyes to take a look at Luke 2 today.

Show Timeline Poster A and Events Poster B to place this event in context.

Divide into groups of 2–5 students. Hand out the Lesson 6 Folios and Bibles. Assign each group one of the four sections. If you have fewer groups, assign more than one section to each group.

If you prefer to study together, add content to newsprint sheets as directed.

Read directions on Folio page 2 together: **Read your assigned section of Luke 2:1–20 and discuss the questions. As you do, list facts the Bible provides.**

Tell students they have 10–15 minutes to work. You need more Debriefing time. As students work, review questions so you can guide the debriefing discussion.

Debriefing

When ready, regroup and use the following outline with extra information in "Ask" and "Say" statements. As you do, ask students to share the facts they found from the Bible on the *Bible Facts* sheet. Add information to the *Facts from Other Sources* sheet as students or you share details.

SECTION ONE: Verses 1–3

These verses put Jesus' birth in a historical context. What facts do we find here? Caesar Augustus was a Roman ruler. He ordered a registration. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Add to *Bible Facts*.

Here are other facts you might share: We align years as before or after Christ's birth (BC or AD), but an error misidentified the real year of Jesus' birth. He was probably born sometime in 3 or 2 BC. Add information you use to *Facts from Other Sources*.

Were these real people? How do we know? Of course they're real people. Scripture is infallible (without error), and it says so. Add to *Bible Facts*.

Other ancient sources concur, such as Roman historians and service records. Octavius founded the Roman Empire and was its first emperor, ruling from 27 BC to AD 14. The Roman senate gave him the title *Augustus*, which means "the exalted one." He was known as a dictator. Add to *Facts from Other Sources*.

Key Point

A Savior is born to you!

He is Christ the Lord.

Pronunciations

Caesar: SEE zur

Augustus: aw GUS tus

Quirinius: kwy REN ih us

Syria: SIHR ih uh

Bethlehem:

BETH luh hem

*Digs into
God's Word*

What was a “registration”? Why was it used? Students may remember the King James Version says “to be taxed,” but the ESV does not. The Greek word means “register.” Although registrations were usually used to calculate a tax, Romans also used them to balance accounts for new leadership or to entice an empire-wide oath. Add shared information to *Facts from Other Sources*.

Why do you think it says this was the “first registration when Quirinius was governor”? Quirinius was involved in at least one more census.

Add this information to *Bible Facts*.

Here are other facts you might share: (1) Luke wrote this Gospel and the Book of Acts. Acts 5:37 references another (second) census. It makes sense that Luke would call the census during Jesus’ birth “the first” one.

(2) Jesus was born before Herod the Great died (*Bible Fact* from Matthew 2), near the end of Herod’s reign. Herod died sometime between 6 and 1 BC.

(3) Evidence shows Quirinius served Augustus in Syria twice and conducted two censuses, one in 8–6 BC and the other in AD 6–9. Romans conducted censuses every fourteen years, which fits this pattern. It took several years to complete a census, as it does today, even with computers.

Add information to appropriate newsprint sheets.

SECTION TWO: Verses 4–7

What facts do these verses give about Mary and Joseph? They obeyed the Roman decree. They went to Bethlehem, hometown of David and ancestral home of Joseph. Mary gave birth while they were there, wrapped the babe in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. Add information to the *Bible Facts* newsprint.

Look at the map (on Folio). How many miles is it from Nazareth to Bethlehem? It may look like seventy miles as the crow flies, but tell students that mountains and other barriers actually make it around ninety miles. Add to *Facts from Other Sources*.

What transportation did Mary and Joseph use? This is not in the account.

Here are some facts you might share: Walking was most common. Art often shows Mary on a donkey, which is possible, but not biblical. People used two- or four-wheeled carts. Caravans often included camel riders, but they were not common in Israel. Add information you share to *Facts from Other Sources*.

How long did it take Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem? This is not in the account, but four to six days is probable.

You might share these facts: (1) Mary was pregnant, so we can suppose the journey was uncomfortable for her. Mary’s pregnancy may have slowed them.

(2) Bethlehem was David’s city. “As Jesus’ legal father, Joseph brought Him into the royal line of David” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, Matthew 1:20 note).

(3) Mary probably descended from David too.

Add information to the appropriate newsprint sheets.

How pregnant was Mary when the couple traveled to Bethlehem? Scripture doesn’t say. Art often shows imminent birth. Write a “we do not know” statement on the *Bible Facts* newsprint.

How long were they in Bethlehem before Mary gave birth? Scripture doesn’t say. We tend to think the birth happened soon after arriving in Bethlehem, but Scripture just says the baby was born “while they were there” (Luke 2:6). They

could have been there for some time. Write a “we do not know” statement on *Bible Facts*.

Was Jesus born in a manger? No. Jesus was not born in a manger, an animal feeding trough. Mary laid Him in a manger.

These are other facts you might share: (1) Placing the baby in a manger suggests Jesus was born where animals were housed, which could have been a cave, a stable, or a room for animals attached to a home.

(2) Jews valued hospitality and usually stayed with relatives when away from home. Mary and Joseph may have tried to do this, but there was no room.

(3) Inns or hotels as we have did not exist in New Testament times.

(4) The Greek word for “inn” is *kataluma*, which is only used twice more in the New Testament, both referring to the Upper Room where Jesus and His disciples ate the Last Supper (Luke 22:11; Mark 14:14). Many homes had these second-story rooms for sleeping in the hot summers, for guests, or for entertaining. It’s probable that the relatives’ upper rooms were full.

Add information to *Facts from Other Sources*.

Section THREE: Verses 8–14 Add information for the next five questions to *Bible Facts*.

What were the shepherds doing? Watching their sheep at night

What words tell you that the field lit up? “The glory of the Lord shone around them” (v. 9).

How did the shepherds respond to the angel? They were filled with fear.

What good news did the angel give the shepherds? “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (v. 11).

What did the angel say would be a sign for the shepherds? Why? The sign was a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. It was normal to swaddle a newborn, but unusual to find one sleeping in an animal feeding trough. This baby would be the Christ.

What time of the year was Jesus born? The shepherds’ actions hint at winter or early spring. Israel has a climate similar to that of the West Coast of the United States: hot and dry in the spring, summer, and fall; rainy in the winter. Edible (green) grass near Bethlehem hints at the rainy season. Shepherds wouldn’t have had to take their flocks farther away to eat. Add to *Facts from Other Sources*.

SECTION FOUR: Verses 15–20

Add information for the next three questions to *Bible Facts*.

Did the shepherds believe the angel’s message? Yes, because they left to find the baby. The Holy Spirit gave them faith to believe.

What did the shepherds do after they saw the baby? They told what they saw and heard.

How did people respond to the shepherds? They “wondered,” or were amazed.

How did Mary react to everything that happened? What do you think this means? She treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. *Treasure* means “to cherish or value” something. This tells us Mary understood the importance of her Son’s birth. *Ponder* means “to contemplate or wonder about.” Mary may have been in awe of all that happened; or because she was human, Mary may have had questions.

Key Point

A Savior is born to you!

He is Christ the Lord.

Liturgy Link

In church, we say the Gloria in Excelsis (Latin for “Glory in the highest”) as part of the Divine Service. Luke 2:14 begins the hymn. Throughout the year, we sing the angels’ song from that night in Bethlehem.

Key Point

A Savior is born to you!
He is Christ the Lord.

Add information to the appropriate newsprint sheets.

Stand back and ask students to look at the newsprint sheets.

Say Look at our newsprint sheets. What new thing did you learn about Jesus' birth today? Let students share their personal insights. Thank those who do.

3 We Live (15 minutes)

Forgiveness in Christ

These questions are not on the Folio.

Ask Why did God send His Son to earth as a baby? Let students share their ideas. Jesus took on flesh to become fully human. True God and true man, Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

Whom did the angel say the baby was? A Savior, Christ the Lord

What does a savior do? A savior saves us from something.

From what did Jesus save us? Jesus saved us from our sins when He lived without sin and then suffered and died to pay the price for our sins. Those who believe in Him receive forgiveness of sins and new life, now and forever.

Ask students to turn to Folio page 4. Read aloud together the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer and its meaning.

Ask Is there any part of this petition or meaning that you wonder about or question? If so, what? Address students' concerns, such as not being worthy of the things for which we pray. Help students understand that we are born in sin and are incapable of pleasing our Lord, who is holy and perfect.

If they express concern about willingness and ability to forgive and do good to those who sin against us, discuss the impossibility of doing this alone. Only the Holy Spirit working in us through God's Word can help us forgive others as Christ forgives us. Only the Spirit can help us do good to those who sin against us.

Let students choose to read "Bethlehem" on pages 14–15 of the Bible Exploration Guide or do Bible Words Puzzle 6.

After a few minutes, bring everyone back together. Ask those who did the puzzle to read aloud **John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** If you like, play CD Track 11 and use the printed Bible Words to learn this verse (CD).

Ask those who read the Bible Exploration Guide article to tell something they learned about Bethlehem.

4 Closing (3 minutes)

Say Share something you want to think more about from our lesson. Thank students who share.

Or review the lesson with Lesson 6 Bible Review Cards.

Close by reading or singing "Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love" (CD Track 2; *LSB* 900; lyrics on CD) or by praying or singing "The Lord's Prayer" (CD Track 21).

Goes to
the Heart

Faith in Action

Hand out scraps of paper and pencils. Ask students to write the name of at least one person they struggle to forgive. Have them fold up the paper, put their name on the outside, and give it back to you. Say you will not open it, and don't. Lead a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help them forgive the persons they listed. Ask students to continue to pray this on their own. Tell them you will give the papers back in four weeks so that they can see if God has changed their hearts and situations.

Builds
Relationship