Jesus Is Good News

**Christmas Week 2: Shepherds Hear the Good News** (Luke 2:8-20)

Bible Point: Jesus is good news…**for everyone.**

“But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.” (John 20:31)

**Purpose**

We probably all know someone with “the laugh.” You know the kind. It erupts with joy and is so contagious that you can’t help but smile and laugh along…even if you don’t know the joke.

Perhaps that’s what the shepherds’ contagious joy sounded like as they ran to spread the good news of Jesus’ birth. After all, the angels said it would “bring great joy to all people.” What might it have been like to see those excited shepherds running toward you, shouting giddily about all they had seen and heard?

This good news is for everyone—including the kids you lead. Jesus made a way for all people to be forever friends of God. Today you have an opportunity to help kids believe and receive this truth. So let *your* joy be contagious as you share God’s love today.

**Prayer**

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to earth to be good news for us all. Thank you for the joy and forgiveness you bring. And thank you for the opportunity to tell kids the good news. In your name, amen.

**Prep**

**Opening Options**

* Option Cards\*
* *Ribbon Reams:* gift bows, ribbon, child-safe scissors
* *Construction Paper Wreath:* construction paper, tissue paper, tape, glue sticks, child-safe scissors

**Sing & Play**

* countdown video\*
* *Music Video* DVD\*
* *Buddy Video* DVD\*
* Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy poster\*
* media player
* Bible (bookmark John 20:31)

**Bible Discovery & Friendship Finale**

* “Shepherds Hear the Good News” Bible Story poster\*
* Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy stickers\* (1 per child)
* Take-It-Home Flyers\* (Week 2) (1 per child)
* Bible (bookmark Luke 2:8-14, 16, 20)

**Apply-It Options**

* *Explore More*: Bibles, copies of “Christmas Around the World” handout (p. XX), smartphones (optional)
* *Game:* no supplies

\* *in your Simply Loved Kit*

**Opening Options**

Set up one—or both—of these intro activities to start your time together. Each activity connects kids to the Bible Point and to each other. Cut apart these Option Cards, and place one by each activity you choose. Crew Guides will follow the directions and build friendships with kids as they make discoveries together!

**Ribbon Reams**

**Supplies:** gift bows, ribbon, child-safe scissors

Cut a piece of ribbon you think will be the same length as a disassembled bow. Then remove the staple, unwind the bow, and see how close you were!

[?] **Tell about something you have a lot of.**

**Here’s what Jesus has a lot of: love! Some people thought friendship with God was just for certain people. But God’s love is bigger than they expected! Today we’ll discover how** [POINT] **Jesus is good news…for everyone!**

**Construction Paper Wreath**

**Supplies:** construction paper, tissue paper, tape, glue sticks, child-safe scissors

Fold construction paper in half the long way. Cut slits from the fold about every half inch. Tape it into a tube and curl it into a wreath shape. Decorate by gluing on tissue paper berries.

[?] **What are some fun things you could put in a wreath?**

**Wreaths can have all kinds of things: pinecones, flowers, ornaments, lights, candy canes, and so much more! There’s a little something for everyone. That reminds me how** [POINT] **Jesus is good news…for everyone!**

Now’s a great time for Opening Options. Choose one—or both—to introduce today’s Bible discoveries.

Play countdown video (1 minute).

TIP

Help kids transition, clean up the activities, and sit with Connect Crews. A Connect Crew is a small group of kids with one Crew Guide.

**Sing & Play**

**Supplies**

Bible

media player

*Music Video* DVD

* “Here Is Our King” music video
* “O Little Town of Bethlehem” music video
* “Go, Tell It On the Mountain” music video

*Buddy Video* DVD

* Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 2)

Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy poster

**Merry Christmas! Christmas is the time we welcome our king, Jesus, who came to earth as a baby.**

Play “Here Is Our King” music video.

**It’s good news that God came to bring us back to him! That means he made a way for us to be forgiven and his forever friends—through Jesus!**

**Bible Point**

[POINT] **Jesus is good news! That’s our Bible Point today.** **Every time you hear the words** [POINT] **“Jesus is good news,” cup your hands in front of your mouth like a megaphone** (demonstrate) **and say, “Celebrate Jesus!” Let’s try that together.**

* Hold your hands like a megaphone as you say, “Celebrate Jesus!”
* Repeat several times.

TIP

Repetition cements learning, so be sure to say today’s Bible Point A LOT. Have fun with it! Kids will love listening for it and responding with *“Celebrate Jesus!”*

**Let’s sing about the good news that happened so many years ago in a town called Bethlehem.**

Play “O Little Town of Bethlehem” music video.

**Bible Memory Buddy & Verse**

**Ramsey the bighorn sheep is our Bible Memory Buddy!** Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster. **Our Bible story today has sheep in it. I wonder if they’re related to bighorn sheep. Let’s find out with a This-or-That Challenge! You’ll hear two fun facts about sheep. It’s up to you to decide which is true—this fact or that!**

* [?] **Are bighorn sheep related to farm sheep, or are they a completely different kind of animal?**
* Have everyone hold their hands close together to vote for *this* (related) or far apart to vote for *that* (completely different).
* Make a drumroll sound by patting your thighs or the floor.
* Dramatically give the answer: **Bighorn sheep and farm sheep both have the scientific genus *ovis*. That means they’re related! Let’s hear more from Ramsey.**
* Watch the Bible Memory Buddy video.

Show Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 2).

**I can’t wait to learn more about Ramsey’s sheep cousins in the Bible!**

Show the Bible. **The Bible is God’s true story of love. It has two main sections: the Old Testament, which tells about before Jesus was born, and the New Testament, which tells about after Jesus came. Our Bible Memory Verse is John 20:31. Let’s say the verse together. I’ll say a line, and then you repeat it after me.**

**“But these are written** *(hold hands like an open book)*

**so that you may continue to believe** *(place hands over heart)*

**that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,** *(point middle finger into each palm for “Jesus”)*

**and that by believing in him** *(place hands over heart)*

**you will have life by the power of his name.”** *(sweep arms overhead and back down)*

(John 20:31)

TIP

As you teach sign language for “Jesus,” tell kids that the sign reminds us of the nails put in Jesus’ hands when he died on the cross to show God’s great love for all people—including you and me!

[POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **Let’s tell the good news to everyone.**

**Our next song is about telling the good news of Jesus on a mountain, so first, let’s pretend to climb a mountain, like Ramsey the bighorn sheep! We’ll start with simply hiking in place.** Lead everyone in hiking in place.

**Whew! It’s getting steep here! Hike in place with bigger steps!** Lead everyone in lifting legs higher as you hike in place. **We’re almost to the top. We’ll have to scramble up using our hands and feet now!** Demonstrate. **We made it! Now let’s sing!**

Play “Go Tell It on the Mountain” music video.

**Bible Discovery**

**Supplies**

Bible

“Shepherds Hear the Good News” Bible Story poster

TIP

We call helpers Crew Guides. If you lead a small class, you can be the Crew Guide. Simply circle up with the kids. If you have helpers, form smaller groups so each child can be known—and so kids can befriend your helpers, too!

**Circle Up & Connect**

**Let’s circle up and spend a little time simply getting to know each other in smaller groups called Connect Crews.**

* Arrange kids into Connect Crews with one helper—or Crew Guide—per group.
* Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
* Have kids give their Crew Guides fist bumps as they make sheep noises.
* Have kids take turns saying their names and answering this question. Crew Guides go first.
* [?] **What’s one thing you wish *everyone* knew about you?**

TIP

Sitting in knee-to-knee circles helps kids practice good listening skills! Everyone can see and hear each other as they share.

**Experience the Bible Story**

**God had something he wanted everyone to know, too! Let’s find out what it was. I’ll need your help to tell the story.**

**In your Crew, you’ll need at least one shepherd, at least one sheep, and at least one angel. But you can have more than one of each. Go ahead and take a minute to decide who’s who. Make sure everyone has a role!** Allow time for Crews to assign roles.

**Awesome! Let’s practice our roles before we start telling the story. If you’re a sheep, let’s hear your best sheep noise.** Pause.

**Great! If you’re a shepherd, call “Heeeere, sheepy sheepy sheep!”** Pause.

**And if you’re an angel, let’s hear you sing a long high note.** Pause.

**Perfect! We’re all warmed up, so let’s get started. I’ll read a verse, then you’ll follow my lead and respond like you think a sheep, shepherd, or angel would respond. Here we go!**

Read aloud Luke 2:8.

**Yes. You sheep are sleepily grazing. Go ahead and pretend to eat some grass, sheep.** Pause. **And the shepherds are herding the sheep over there.** Point one direction and wait for shepherds to move sheep that way. **Now they’re herding them back to your Connect Crew.** Pause.

Read aloud Luke 2:9.

**The angels are standing with arms out, looking radiant!** Demonstrate. **Yikes! But the shepherds look scared. Just look at them!** Pause.

**Maybe the sheep even let out a frightened “baaa.”** Pause. **Let’s read what happened next.**

Read aloud Luke 2:10-12.

**The angels are telling the shepherds** [POINT] **Jesus is good news.** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

**Wow! The shepherds look so excited!** Pause. **And the sheep are happily taking little sheepy jumps.** Pause. **It gets even better! Listen to this.**

Read aloud Luke 2:13-14.

**The shepherds are excited about this news, and they run to Bethlehem to see what has happened. See those shepherds running in place?** Pause.

**The sheep look around, confused.** Pause. **Where did their shepherds go?**

**Here’s what happened when the shepherds got to Bethlehem.**

Read aloud Luke 2:16.

**The shepherds gazed at the baby in the manger. They didn’t understand everything, but they believed what the angels said. This baby was special. He was God, wrapped up in cloth, with skin and eyelashes and everything!**

**[?] How would you feel if you were a shepherd who got to see God as a human baby?** Invite a few responses from the whole group.

TIP

Welcome several responses, making sure to repeat each answer given. Your recap will allow kids to know they’re understood, and it’ll help everyone else hear quiet voices.

**The shepherds may have felt** [insert responses shared from the group]**.** **This baby was a gift, not just for Mary and Joseph but for everyone—the shepherds, the other people in Bethlehem, and people today, too.** [POINT] **Jesus is good news for everyone!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

**The shepherds went to see the baby. Meanwhile, the sheep were still waiting for them to come back to the hillside. Look at those sheep. They seem impatient. They’re tapping their sheep hooves!** Pause.

**And the angels, well, they’re back in heaven…still celebrating! They’re jumping and singing and high-fiving.** Pause.

**The shepherds were excited, too. They ran to tell everyone they could find:** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

Show the Bible Story poster. **Look at them go!** **Shepherds, run around the room and tell everyone, “Jesus is good news.”** Remind others to respond with “Celebrate Jesus!”

**Let’s read what happened after they told the good news about Jesus’ birth.**

Read aloud Luke 2:20.

**Hear that? The shepherds are shouting, “Praise God!”** Pause.

**The angels in heaven were probably praising God, too. The angels and shepherds are shouting “Praise God!” together.** Pause.

**And the sheep may be excited to see their shepherds so excited! They’re baaing excitedly and jumping while the angels and shepherds shout “Praise God!” three more times.** Pause.

**Great job! Give yourselves a round of applause for your excellent acting skills.** Lead kids in applauding, then have Connect Crews sit together again.

**This story is exciting and special because** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

**Jesus’ birth changed everything. God had always been there for his people, but sin—which is choosing our own way instead of God’s way—kept messing up their friendship with God. God didn’t like that, so God did something to fix it. He wrapped himself in skin and came as a human baby to show the world his great love. That’s why** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

**That news isn’t just for people in the Bible; it’s for everyone—including you and me.**

**The Heart of the Matter**

**Let’s try telling this good news back and forth. We’ll form two different groups and stand on opposite sides of the room.** Motion to one side of the room. **This good news is for everyone. It’s for people who like chocolate ice cream and people who prefer vanilla.** Have those who like chocolate go to one side of the room and those who like vanilla go to the other side.

**Now let’s shout back and forth, “We have good news—yes, we do! We have good news—how ʼbout you?”** **Chocolate people, you’ll start.** After a few times of shouting back and forth, have groups give high-fives, then form two new groups. Group ideas include:

* People who live in different towns.
* Fans of two different sports teams.
* People who go to different schools.
* People who are different ages.
* Leaders and Crew Guides on one side and kids on the other.

[POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **That good news is for people who like chocolate *and* vanilla. It’s good news for people who live everywhere! And it’s good news no matter how old you are! No matter our differences, Jesus brings people together because he shows God’s love for everyone. That’s good news!** Have sides come together and give each other high-fives before sitting with Crew again.

**Let’s talk about this in Connect Crews.**

* [?] **Tell about someone who’s different from you.** Encourage Crew Guides to share first.
* After Crews have discussed, follow up with this question:
* [?] **Why is Jesus good news for both of you?**

**The Bible doesn’t say the shepherds just ran to tell other shepherds about Jesus. They didn’t just tell people who were like them; they told *everyone*. That’s because the same thing is true for everyone:** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **We all need Jesus!**

TIP

Now’s a great time for Apply-It Options. Choose one—or both—of the following reinforcement activities to support today’s Bible discoveries before the Friendship Finale.

**Apply-It Options**

Choose one—or both—of these activities to support kids’ learning after the Bible Discovery.

**Explore More**

**Supplies:** Bibles, copies of“Christmas Around the World” handout (p. XX), smartphones (optional)

Distribute Bibles, and help kids find and read Acts 1:8 together.

[POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **And since the good news is for everyone, that good news has spread all around the earth! Let’s find out how people in other countries celebrate Christmas.**

* Distribute the “Christmas Around the World” handout.
* Crews can each pick one country to read about.
* If you’d like, you can also let Crews use smartphones to search for a different country of their choice.
* Crews can report in their own words what they learned.
* Kids can also share other cultural Christmas traditions they know.

[?] **What are some of your Christmas traditions?**

**There are a lot of ways people celebrate Christmas in different cultures. But no matter where you are, Christmas always points back to one thing:** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)*

**Game**

**Let’s play a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors with a twist.**

* Crew Guides each form a circle with the Crew Guide in the center.
* On the count of three, everyone (including Crew Guides) shows Rock, Paper, or Scissors.
* Anyone who doesn’t have the *same* hand signal as the Crew Guide must turn to face out and not play.
* Every few rounds, shout, “Good news! Everyone can play again!”

[?] **Tell about a time you felt left out.** Encourage Crew Guides to share first.

[POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **And that’s not only for people who are just like you. Jesus is for everyone! In our game you were left out if your hand signal wasn’t just like your Crew Guide’s. But when it comes to Jesus, no one is left out. Jesus is for everyone. Jesus is the news that brings us all together, no matter what our differences are.**

**Friendship Finale**

**Supplies**

Ramsey Bible Memory Buddy stickers (1 per child)

Take-It-Home Flyers (Week 2) (1 per child)

Have kids sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.

**Ramsey, our Bible Memory Buddy, can help us remember that** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **You’ll each receive a Ramsey sticker to help you remember to celebrate Jesus throughout your week. You can wear it now or take it home with you.**

* Demonstrate how to push the edge of the sticker to move or “herd” it to someone.
* Kids hold their hands like sheep pens on the floor.
* Crew Guides will herd stickers into kids’ “pens” and say, “[Child’s name],[POINT] **Jesus is good news** for you.”
* Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has received a sticker.

TIP

Saying each child’s name in a loving way helps kids simply experience the love of Jesus through you!

**The shepherds told everyone around them about Jesus. But Jesus wasn’t just good news for people that were alive back then. Jesus is good news for everyone today, too!**

**I’d like to read to you something about our friend Jesus. As you listen, please close your eyes and give two thumbs up to show that** [POINT] **Jesus is good news!** *(Celebrate Jesus!)* **Ready? Here we go!**

* Read the first section of the Week 2 Take-It-Home Flyer.
* **Now I’ll give you one of these flyers to help you talk about the good news of Jesus in your Connect Crews *and* at home, too. Think of this as a practice time for talking about Jesus with your family at home.**
* Distribute Take-It-Home Flyers to Crew Guides, and have them share about their own friendship with Jesus as they discuss the “Talk Starter” question with their Crews.
* Kids share prayer requests—things they’d like to tell Jesus—in their Connect Crews.
* Connect Crews pray together.
* Crew Guides distribute Take-It-Home Flyers and follow the directions to help kids fold the paper to “fly” home.

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