



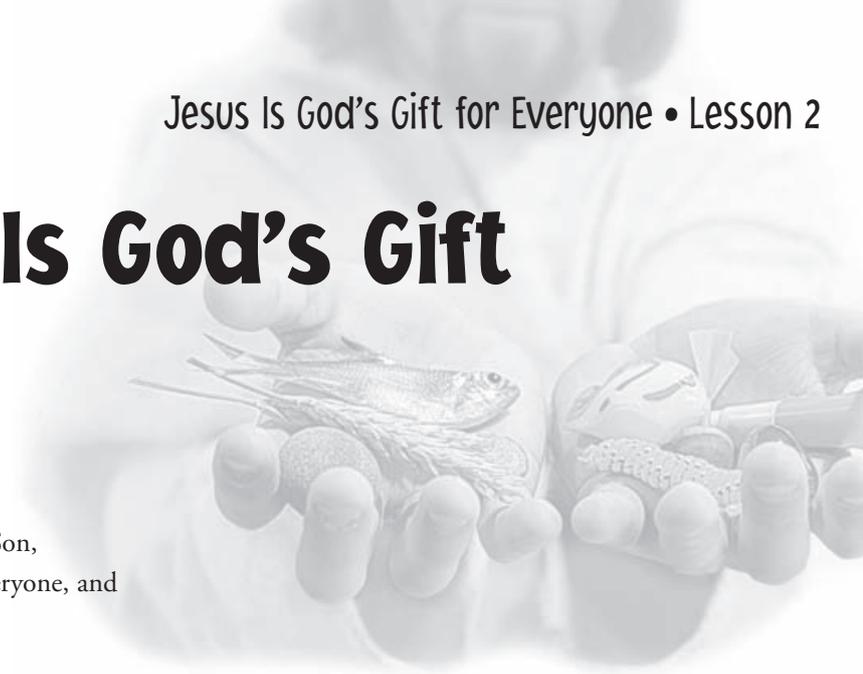
Jesus Is God's Gift

Bible Verse

Jesus is God's gift (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- understand that Jesus is God's Son,
 - realize that Jesus is a gift for everyone, and
 - thank God for his gift of Jesus.



Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- Jesus is God's gift for everyone.

Matthew 1:18–2:11



Joseph faced a dilemma. Because he was a righteous Jew, it was unthinkable for him to complete a marriage to someone who had been unfaithful to him. He demonstrated his deep love for Mary by his intention to end the marriage quietly.

But before he could take action, God sent a messenger to him. The angel addressed Joseph as “son of David” (Matthew 1:20), a reminder that the Messiah was to come through David. The angel's announcement harmonizes with the one given to Mary in Luke 1:35: The child would be special indeed! The name Jesus sounds very much like the Hebrew phrase meaning “he will save.”

Matthew's Gospel, written primarily to Jews, was intended to show that Jesus was indeed the Messiah promised by the prophets. Joseph's dilemma was gone. He could complete his marriage to Mary, and he didn't hesitate to do so.

Prayer

- Read Hebrews 11:1.
- When have you faced a situation that required utter trust in God's plan, despite outward appearances?
- When is it hard for you to have complete faith in God?
- Pray: Dear Lord, thank you for always being faithful. Help me to inspire faith in you as I...

Before the Lesson

- Collect items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart on the next page.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God's direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Arrival Activities Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Welcome Time —Receive a warm welcome from the teacher and Cuddles the Lamb.	Name tags (p. 8), scissors, marker, tape or safety pins, CD player	
	Option 1: Shepherd Steps —Use walking sticks and pretend to be shepherds on a road.	Large sticks, masking tape, towels, Nativity set	
	Option 2: Fluffy Flocks —Care for a make-believe flock of sheep.	White trash bags, newspapers, string, black construction paper, scissors, tape	
	Pick-Up Time —Sing a song as they help clean up the room.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Bible Song —Sing a song about the Bible.	Bible, CD player	
	Jesus Is God's Gift —Interact with sensory StoryBoard figures as they hear the Christmas story from Matthew 1:18–2:11.	CD player, chow mein noodles, AA battery	
	Jesus Is Our Gift —Sing a song about baby Jesus' birth.	CD player	
Bible Activities	Animal Actions —Act out the animals that may have been at the manger.	Index cards, doll	
	Interactive Bible Bulletin Board —Review the Bible Point with Cuddles the Lamb as they create a bulletin board together.	Twinkling light patterns (p. 36), scissors, tape, yarn, construction paper	
	Sing It Out —Sing a song about baby Jesus' birth.	CD player	
	Bible Craft —Make headdresses, and pretend to be shepherds.	Grocery sack, tape, scissors, paper towels, crayons or markers	
	Bible Game —"Herd" pretend sheep across the "fields" to see baby Jesus.	Newspaper, tape, headdresses from Bible Craft	
 Closing	Travel Tidbits —Say a prayer, and have a snack.	Trail mix, paper towels	

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.

Arrival Activities

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: name tags (p. 8), scissors, marker, tape or safety pins, CD player



- Play “Jesus Is God’s Gift” (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a) (track 6) from the CD as children are arriving.
- Use Cuddles the Lamb to help you greet each child by name and with a warm smile.
- Tape or pin a name tag to each child’s clothing.
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus is God’s gift.**
- Place Cuddles out of sight so the children won’t be distracted by him during the next activity.



The Lesson at a Glance chart gives you a quick overview of the lesson and lists the supplies you’ll need for each activity. Most of the supplies are items you may already have in your home or classroom. Simplify your preparation by choosing which Arrival Activities and For Extra Time activities (found at the end of the lesson) you’ll use.

Option 1: Shepherd Steps

SUPPLIES: large sticks, masking tape, towels, nativity set

Before class, choose large sticks for children to use as “shepherd staffs.” Break off any twigs, and wrap masking tape around the ends of the sticks to keep them from scratching anyone. Lay a curvy “road” around the edge of the room using masking tape. Place a Nativity set or the StoryBoard manger and figure of baby Jesus at the end of the road.

Set out the shepherd staffs and towels for children to wear on their heads. Invite the children to be shepherds and use the staffs to help them walk along the road to “Bethlehem.” As they walk, make comments such as “The shepherds wanted to see baby Jesus” and “This is a long road, but seeing baby Jesus is worth it!” When you reach Bethlehem, point out baby Jesus in the manger. Explain that they’ll hear a Bible story today about baby Jesus and how the shepherds knew that ► Jesus is God’s gift.



It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.

Option 2: Fluffy Flocks

SUPPLIES: white trash bags, newspapers, string, black construction paper, scissors, tape

Before class, stuff three or four white plastic trash bags with crumpled newspaper, and tie them closed with string. Tape black construction paper ears and facial features to the bags to create a flock of fluffy “sheep.” Set the sheep on the floor in one corner of the room. As children arrive, invite them to care for the flock by gently giving them make-believe water and food, petting the sheep, and taking the sheep for “walks” by pulling them gently around the room. As you play with the children, make comments such as “Angels told the shepherds about baby Jesus” and “Shepherds love their sheep just as God loves you.” Remind children that ► Jesus is God’s gift and the shepherds came to see this special baby.



■ Pick-Up Time

SUPPLIES: CD player



As Arrival Activities draw to a close, gently mention that it will soon be time to clean up. Encourage children to help you pick up things in the room as you lead them in singing “Let’s Pick Up All Our Things” (track 2). Use the *CD* and sing the song to the tune of “Looby Loo.”



**Let’s pick up all our things.
Let’s pick up all our things.
Let’s pick up all our things
And put them all away.**

**Everyone here can help.
Everyone here can help.
Everyone here can help.
Let’s put it all away.**

**Let’s pick up all our things.
Let’s pick up all our things.
Let’s pick up all our things.
It’s time to stop our play.**

teacher tips

Consider laminating the name tags after the first week so they’ll last the entire quarter. Fasten the name tags to children’s clothing with tape or safety pins. You may want to put the name tags on the children’s backs because the children will be playing on the floor. You’ll find yourself referring to the name tags often.

Bible Story Time

■ Bible Song

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player



Say: **Who is God’s gift to us? ► Jesus is God’s gift. How do we know that? The Bible tells us. Show children the Bible. The Bible is God’s special book. The Bible tells us about God. Let’s sing a song about the Bible.** Using the *CD*, lead children in singing “God’s Special Book” (track 3) to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”



**This is God’s special book.
Yes, it’s God’s book you see!
I learn about all God has done
And his love for me!**

(Repeat.)
Bible!

teacher tips

Choose a special Bible to use for the lesson each week. For example, you could use the *Hands-On Bible* (Group Publishing), a big black Bible, a red Bible, or a Bible with gold leaf pages. These special characteristics will make your Bible story time memorable.

■ Bible Story: Jesus Is God's Gift

SUPPLIES: CD player, chow mein noodles, AA battery



Before class begins, please check to make sure the StoryBoard figures' sensory items are still attached securely so the children can touch them without danger of pulling the items off or putting them into their mouths.

Before this activity, put an AA battery in the flashlight from Sensory Packet 1. Have chow mein noodles available.



Panel 1



Place the StoryBoard figures and the star and flashlight from Sensory Packet 1 beside you. Set the CD player and bag of chow mein noodles behind you. Say: **We're going to hear a Bible story about a very special birthday, and we'll learn that ► Jesus is God's gift.** Set out the figures of Mary, Joseph, and the donkey. **This is Joseph and his wife, Mary. We can**

tell them hello. Have children pass the figures of Mary and Joseph. Lead children in saying, "Hello, Mary" and "Hello, Joseph." Encourage toddlers to feel Mary's hair and Joseph's belt as they pass the figures.

Mary and Joseph were excited because Mary was going to have a special baby! Mary rode on the donkey while Joseph walked beside them. They wanted to find a place for the special baby to be born. Hold the figure of Mary on the donkey and have her "ride" a short way. **Whoa, little donkey! Let's pet the nice donkey.**

Ask: • **How does the donkey feel?** (Soft; nice.)

Set out the stable. Say: **Mary and Joseph traveled until they came to a town called Bethlehem. Let's say that together. Bethlehem. But there was no room in Bethlehem to stay. No room at all!** Say the following action rhyme, and then encourage children to slowly repeat the rhyme with you a few times.

No room, no room, where could they stay? (*Shake your head and finger.*)

In a little stable filled with animals and hay! (*Make a "roof" over your head with your arms.*)

Say: **Mary and Joseph stayed in a stable and waited for the special baby to be born. There were animals in the stable, too. Let's listen to the animals.** Play the "Animal Sounds" segment (track 4) on the CD. Pause the CD after each sound and encourage children to identify the animal and then imitate its sound. Stop the CD after the sheep sounds.

Set the manger by the stable. Say: **There was a manger in the stable where animals ate hay.** Let children peek in the manger. **Mary and Joseph waited for a special gift from God. Do you know who that gift was? Close your eyes, and we'll find out!**



Panel 2



BIBLE POINT ▶

While children's eyes are closed, lay the figure of baby Jesus in the manger. Say: **One...two...three...open your eyes. What do you see? Look! Baby Jesus is born! Let's clap to show how glad we are that ▶ *Jesus is God's gift!*** Lead children in clapping. **Let's tell baby Jesus we love him.** Have each toddler gently hold the figure of baby Jesus and help him or her say, "I love you, Jesus."

When everyone has held the baby, lay the figure of baby Jesus in the manger.

Ask: • **What's baby Jesus' blanket like?** (Soft; warm.)

• **Who gave us baby Jesus?** (God.)

Say: **God gave Jesus to all of us. In fact, ▶ *Jesus is God's gift.***

Set the shepherd and sheep figures a little ways from the story area. Say: **Out in the fields, shepherds watched their sheep.** Invite each child to pet the sheep and touch the shepherd's staff.

Suddenly, angels appeared! Set the angel figure next to the shepherd. **An angel said that Jesus had been born and that ▶ *Jesus is God's gift* to everyone! The shepherds were so happy! Show me a big smile like the ones the shepherds had on their faces.** Pause. **Then the shepherds came to see baby Jesus.** Set the sheep, shepherd, and angel figures by the stable. **Do you think their sheep followed them? You can pretend to be sheep. Come, little sheep, follow me!** Lead children around the room and then back to the story area. Give each "sheep" a warm pat and hand him or her a few chow mein noodles as "hay." Then say: **Now turn back into boys and girls, and we'll find out who else came to see baby Jesus.**



BIBLE POINT ▶



BIBLE POINT ▶

Panel 3



Hold the star above the manger. Say: **God put a bright star in the sky above the stable. Let's make the star shine!** Let each child have a turn shining the flashlight on the star.

Now put your fingers in the air and make them twinkle like stars! Open and close your fingers to make "twinkling stars" as you say the following rhyme.

**Twinkle, twinkle, starry light;
Baby Jesus is born tonight.**

Set the figure of the wise men off to one side of the story area. Say: **Three wise men heard the good news about Jesus' birth. They loved Jesus and wanted to see him, so they followed the bright star. Let's see the good gifts the wise men are bringing Jesus.** Have children scratch and sniff the spice sticker and touch the gold gift.

The wise men brought special gifts to Jesus because they loved him. And God gave us a special gift because he loves us. ▶ *Jesus is God's gift* to everyone in the world! We'll sing a song to remind us that Jesus is our gift.



Important: Put the StoryBoard away and out of reach of children.



BIBLE POINT ▶

■ *Jesus Is Our Gift*

SUPPLIES: CD player



Using the CD, lead children in singing “Jesus Is God’s Gift” (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a) (track 6) to the tune of “Jesus Loves Me.” Encourage children to do the motions in parentheses.



Jesus was born one winter night (*cradle-rock your arms*),
Overhead a star shone bright. (*“Twinkle” your fingers.*)

Baby Jesus is God’s Son (*hold one hand flat, and then make a fist with your other hand and put it on top*);

He’s God’s gift to everyone. (*Cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

He is our gift from God. (*Cover your heart, and then point upward.*)

(Repeat.)

Say: I’m so happy that **Jesus was born on Christmas. Let’s play a fun game to remind us that ► Jesus is God’s gift for us.**



Bible Activities

■ *Animal Actions*

SUPPLIES: one index card for each child, doll



Before class, remove the *animal stickers* from the Learning Lab. Prepare an index card for each child by attaching one *animal sticker* to it. There are four different types of animals. Because the children will be forming groups later, try to create an equal number of cards with each animal.

Say: **There were lots of animals in the stable where Jesus was born. What are some animals that might have seen**

Jesus? (Donkeys; cows; pigs.)

Say: ► **Jesus is God’s gift for everyone! Let’s remember that animals were in the stable when Jesus was born by acting like some animals!**

Pass out an index card to each child, and encourage him or her to act like the animal on the card. Encourage the children to make appropriate animal noises and to walk or crawl around the room. Then help them find the other children who have the same animals on their cards to form groups.

Say: **Now let’s pretend that this doll is baby Jesus. How do you think the animals in the stable would welcome baby Jesus to the world?**

Encourage each group to approach the doll and gently pat it, make quiet animal noises, or prance excitedly around it.

Say: **It was fun to act like the animals in the stable the night Jesus was born! Acting like these animals can help us remember that ► Jesus is God’s gift for everyone. You can take your animal card home with you to remind**




BIBLE POINT

you of today's lesson. Now let's put happy, twinkly lights on our Christmas tree to remind us that ► Jesus is God's gift for everyone.

■ Interactive Bible Bulletin Board

SUPPLIES: twinkling light patterns (p. 36), scissors, tape, yarn, construction paper



Before class, photocopy the twinkling light patterns on colored construction paper. Cut out a twinkling light for each child in class plus a few extras. Tape the extra paper lights to a 3-foot length of yarn to make a string of Christmas tree lights. Then loop the string of lights around Cuddles.



Bring out Cuddles the Lamb, and go through the following script. When you've finished, put Cuddles away, out of sight of the children.

Cuddles: (Wearing the string of lights) Ooo, I'm all tangled up!

Teacher: Here, Cuddles, let me help you. What did you get into? These look like Christmas tree lights. (*Helps untangle Cuddles from the string of lights.*)

Cuddles: They are Christmas tree lights. I thought they'd be pretty on the bulletin board, so I wanted to share them with my friends. But I got all tangled up—whew! Thanks for helping me!

Teacher: You're welcome, Cuddles. We've been learning that ► Jesus is God's gift and that he was born on Christmas. Your pretty Christmas tree lights remind us of the special star that shone when Jesus was born.

Cuddles: Can we put the lights on the Christmas tree?

Teacher: Good idea, Cuddles!

Tape the string of lights to the Christmas tree. Have Cuddles hand each child a light to add to the string of lights already on the Christmas tree. Each time a child adds a light, help him or her repeat the Bible Point. Then let children find and touch the different Bible story figures on the tree from last week.

Teacher: I'm so glad that Jesus was born on Christmas. And we know that Jesus loves each one of us. Let's sing a song and remember that ► Jesus is God's gift to each of us.

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Sing It Out

SUPPLIES: CD player



Using the CD, lead children in singing “Jesus Is God’s Gift” (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a) (track 6) to the tune of “Jesus Loves Me.” Encourage children to do the motions in parentheses.



Jesus was born one winter night (*cradle-rock your arms*),
Overhead a star shone bright. (*“Twinkle” your fingers.*)

Baby Jesus is God’s Son (*hold one hand flat, and then make a fist with your other hand and put it on top*);

He’s God’s gift to everyone. (*Cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

Jesus is God’s gift. (*Point upward, and then cover your heart.*)

He is our gift from God. (*Cover your heart, and then point upward.*)

(Repeat.)

Say: **The shepherds knew that ► Jesus is God’s gift. And they were so happy, they walked a long way to see baby Jesus. We can make headdresses like the shepherds wore.**



Bible Craft

SUPPLIES: grocery sack, tape, scissors, paper towels, crayons or markers

Before class, cut the bottom from a paper grocery sack. Cut up one side of the sack, and lay it flat. Then cut 3-inch-wide strips along the shorter edge of the paper. Cut a paper strip for each child in class.

Set out paper towels, crayons or markers, and tape. Hand each child a “headband” and paper towel to decorate using crayons or markers. Fit the headbands to each child’s head, cut off any excess, and tape the ends together. Then help children tape paper towels over the top and down the sides and backs of their headbands. As children work, point out that shepherds wore headdresses like these to protect their heads from the hot sun. Remind toddlers that the shepherds walked a long way to see baby Jesus because

► Jesus is God’s gift.

When the headbands are finished, say: **My, there are a lot of shepherds in our room! Let’s pretend to be shepherds going to see baby Jesus. But first, you’ll need some sheep.**



Bible Game

SUPPLIES: newspaper, tape, headdresses from Bible Craft



Have children stand at one end of the room, and place the StoryBoard manger and figure of baby Jesus at the opposite end. Tape the star from Sensory Packet 1 on the wall above the manger. Hand each child a crumpled newspaper. Say:

Let's pretend these newspapers are sheep. We'll gently guide them across the fields to see baby Jesus. Lead children in gently pushing their newspaper sheep across the room to the manger. Make comments such as "I can't wait to see baby Jesus!" and "I'm so glad that ► *Jesus is God's gift.*" When you reach the manger, have children say, "I love you, Jesus" and then return with their sheep to the starting place.

Say: **Special gifts are wonderful, and we know that ► *Jesus is God's gift.* We'll keep our pretend sheep here to rest while we go to the snack table.**



Closing

■ Travel Tidbits

SUPPLIES: trail mix, paper towels

Before class, make a trail mix in a paper sack. (Dried fruit, chocolate chips, and small crackers or cereal loops work well together. Avoid peanuts, as many kids are allergic to them.)

Ask: • **Who is our gift from God?** (Jesus; baby Jesus.)



Say: **God loved us so much that he wanted to give us a very special gift. So God gave us Jesus to be our forever friend and bring us to heaven someday. Let's say a prayer and thank God for the gift of Jesus. Fold your hands. Pray: Dear God, thank you for the wonderful gift of Jesus. We love Jesus, and we love you! In Jesus' name, amen.**

Say: **Think of all the people who traveled to Bethlehem. There were Mary and Joseph and the shepherds, and then later came the wise men. What do you suppose they ate on their trips? I have some gummy "travel tidbits" for us to munch!**

Have children wash their hands. Hand each child a paper towel with a small handful of trail mix to eat.

Remind children to throw their paper towels in the wastebasket. Encourage children to take home their index card animals and to wear their headdresses home.



For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

■ ***Baby Jesus Rhyme-Time***

Lead children in repeating the action rhyme they learned last week. Repeat the rhyme slowly two times.

One little baby—asleep on the hay. *(Hold up one finger, and then lay your head on your hands.)*

Two loving parents keep watch while they pray. *(Hold up two fingers, and then fold your hands.)*

Three wise men traveled on camels to find *(hold up three fingers, and then shield eyes with hand as if searching)*

One little baby—your Jesus and mine. *(Hold up one finger, and then point to yourself.)*

■ ***“Sheepshape”***

Let children “herd” pretend sheep around the room using the sheep from Option 2 or the crumpled-newspaper sheep from the Bible Game. Explain that shepherds take good care of their flocks and lead them to fresh grass and water. As children gently push the pretend sheep, you may wish to recite the following rhyme.

Baa, baa, little sheep, have you any wool?

Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full.

One for the nighttime, one for the day,

And one for the baby asleep on the hay.

Patterns

Cut loosely around each pattern instead of cutting exactly on the outlines.

