

PEACE ON EARTH

MAIN POINT.

Recognizing the wonder of Jesus's birth changes how we celebrate Christmas.



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. Jesus humbled Himself in obedience to the Father, lived a perfect life, and took the punishment for our sins. Anyone who believes in Him will be forgiven and have a right relationship with God.





This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Matthew 1; Luke 2

GOOD NEWS DRAWS US IN

LUKE 2:1-14

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, 5 to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. 8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: 11 Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

14 Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people he favors!

GOOD NEWS SENDS US OUT

LUKE 2:15-20

15 When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. 17 After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Recognizing the wonder of Jesus's birth changes how we celebrate Christmas.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

GOOD NEWS DRAWS US IN

LUKE 2:6-7

“Swaddling cloths are long strips which could wrap the child round and round. That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth. That he was laid in a manger has traditionally been taken to mean that Jesus was born in a stable. He may have been. But it is also possible that the birth took place in a very poor home where the animals shared the same roof as the family. A tradition going back to Justin says it occurred in a cave (Dialogue with Trypho 78) and this could be right. Some have thought that the birth took place in the open air (possibly the courtyard of the inn), that being where a manger would likely be. We do not know. We know only that everything points to poverty, obscurity, and even rejection.”

Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 100–101.

LUKE 2:9-14

“With the angel came God’s glory, His shining majesty, the side of God humans can see and to which they can respond in confession, worship, and praise (see Isa. 60:1-3). As with Zechariah (1:12-13) and Mary (1:29-30), gazing at God’s glorious angel terrified the shepherds and brought quick reassurance: ‘Do not be afraid.’ Gospel is coming, ‘good news.’ Gospel elicits joy, not fear.”

Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 29.

GOOD NEWS SENDS US OUT

LUKE 2:19

“This along with Luke 2:51 indicates that Mary did not fully understand the implications of all that happened to her. Compare Daniel 4:28 (LXX) and Genesis 37:11, where this word or a similar one is used to describe a person who is puzzled by what they have heard but keeps it in mind in order to understand, often with divine help, its meaning. . . . No doubt she recognized her child’s divine calling and destiny; but exactly what that entailed was not known to her, and she may at times have had the same kinds of questions that John the Baptist had in Luke 7:18-23.”

Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 110.

CONTEXT

Incarnation: The deities of other religions are mostly removed from humans. For example, the “gods” of the Egyptian pantheon lived in the sky “above” humanity, manipulating weather, crops, and natural disasters to interfere with human plans, to reward heroism, or to punish human error. These “gods” didn’t come down to live with humans, and they certainly didn’t condescend to live as a human. Only Jesus, the Word from the beginning (John 1:1) and the eternal Son of God, condescended to dwell in human flesh. In obedience to God the Father, Jesus relinquished certain divine rights for a time and came to earth as a vulnerable baby—the Creator of the universe depending on His creation to provide for His hunger and His thirst. The King of kings became a servant, though He is worthy of worship and glory. Jesus, God incarnate (Lat. *incarnatio*, “being or taking flesh”), was born in a manger, surrounded by filth, exposed to the elements, not simply to visit us from heaven but to be one of us—fully God, fully man.¹ As you read Luke 2, wonder at our Savior as He willingly breathed our air; wonder at the eternal Word needing sleep and food and water and at Him needing to be held and swaddled. The Sustainer who holds all things together (Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:3) became small to save us from our sin. Wonder at His love. Wonder at His incarnation.

1. Walter D. Draughon III, “Incarnation,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2003), 813.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



God is One in Three Persons

While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully divine—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2:6), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is distinct from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect unity within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to abandon orthodox Christianity.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, WE ARE IN AWE AND WONDER THAT YOU SENT YOUR SON TO EARTH. WE ARE AMAZED BY HIS HUMANITY. KEEP US AWARE OF HIS DIVINITY. HELP US TO WORSHIP HIM WITH HUMILITY AND WITH ADORATION FOR WILLINGLY COMING TO EARTH TO SAVE US FROM OUR SIN.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

When you travel or go to a concert, you probably keep your phone ready to capture the details. But taking photos or videos can actually hinder you from remembering the experience. The **photography-distortion effect** basically says that the brain transfers responsibility for remembering to external devices. So, the more we depend on our phones for recording memories, the less we actually remember!

Serkan Say et al., "Capturing the Experience: How Digital Media Affects Memory Retention in Museum Education," PubMed Central, September 12, 2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12466594/>.

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

7

GREATEST WONDERS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **CAN YOU NAME THE SEVEN NATURAL WONDERS OF THE WORLD? (CONSIDER FINDING THESE ONLINE AND SHOWING PICTURES.) WHAT MAKES THEM SO GREAT?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN A PLACE THAT LEFT YOU IN AWE? DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SAW.**
- **WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING AMAZING, WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT? WHO DO YOU TELL? WHAT DO YOU DO TO MAKE SURE YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAW?**

Our world is pretty incredible. We can travel to places that leave us in awe, like the Grand Canyon, Mount Everest, or the northern lights. When we see a towering mountain or a raging waterfall, we often realize how small we are in comparison. We take photos to remember the details and to share with others. God's Word preserves the details of Jesus's birth, a gift we can "see" and share with others and the most incredible news: Our Savior has come!

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Children are easily amazed. Think about it: As a child, you were probably amazed by elevators and escalators or thought airplanes were insane. Maybe you jumped up and down in excitement at a parade or thought the slide on the playground was as tall as a tree. But at some point, you stopped being amazed by these things. Elevators and escalators no longer leave you in wonder, and the playground slide now looks as if it somehow shrank. Our perspective changes as we grow, which is totally normal, but we often lose our amazement at God's work too. Maybe you grew up in church and have heard the story of Jesus's birth more times than you can count. Maybe you're hearing about His birth for the first time. The truth is that Jesus coming to us is the most amazing moment in history. He left heaven to be with us and to save us, yet we begin to treat this truth as ordinary. We battle reducing Jesus's birth to a nice "story," but His birth is so much more and should leave us amazed, grateful, and overwhelmed by joy.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Recognizing the wonder of Jesus's birth changes how we celebrate Christmas.

GOOD NEWS DRAWS US IN

READ LUKE 2:1-14



WHY DO YOU THINK GOD CHOSE SUCH LOWLY CONDITIONS FOR JESUS'S BIRTH? HOW DO THE DETAILS SHOW US WHAT KIND OF KING JESUS IS?

We read about Jesus's birth each year at Christmas and can grow numb to the details. We rush past the reality that Mary and Joseph welcomed their son in circumstances none of us would want for ourselves. Jesus arrived at night, practically hidden from the world, but the heavens announced His birth. God orchestrated every detail for a purpose. **King Jesus arrived humbly instead of extravagantly, reflecting His purpose and His posture: He came to serve and assumed the posture of a servant.**

HOW DID SEEING THE ANGEL AND THE "GLORY OF THE LORD" AFFECT THE SHEPHERDS? WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SCENE LOOKED LIKE FOR THEM TO RESPOND LIKE THIS?

As the shepherds watched over their flocks one ordinary night, they witnessed God's glory and heard the announcement all creation had been waiting to hear: A Savior is born today for you. They were terrified! How blinding was the light? How deafening was the chorus of angelic voices? **The shepherds glimpsed God's glory and immediately recognized their position before the Holy One; in the presence of His glory, we're painfully aware of our sin. But the angel's message was good, and glimpsing God's glory was a gift.**



READ VERSE 11 AGAIN. HOW DOES THE ANGEL SHED LIGHT ON JESUS'S IDENTITY AND HIS PURPOSE? HOW CAN THIS HELP YOU TO TRUST HIM WITH CONFIDENCE?

As Jesus ministered, healed, and taught, people argued over His identity. People still disagree on Jesus's identity, calling Him a prophet, a good teacher, and even a lying lunatic. People describe Him as a good man and a healer but not the Son of God. The angel's "good news of great joy" clearly defined Jesus's identity: Savior, Messiah, Lord. This truth anchors us when we wrestle with doubt: (1) Jesus is the promised Savior, who freed us from the penalty of our sin through His death on the cross; (2) He is the Messiah ("Anointed One" in Hebrew), who came to spread the good news and free captives (Luke 4:18-19); (3) He is Lord, Ruler over creation, which exists by Him and through Him (John 1:3). **The angel of the Lord shared the best news: Jesus—the Savior, Messiah, and Lord—was born for us.** He came for the shepherds, the ones on the fringes of society; He came for the sick, the silenced, the ignored; He came for the ones bound by sin and shame. **When we struggle with doubt, we can return to the birth announcement of our King: Jesus is exactly who the angel said, and He did exactly what the angel said He would do.**

GOOD NEWS SENDS US OUT

READ LUKE 2:15-20

WHAT DO YOU THINK MARY TREASURED? HOW DO WE TREASURE AND MEDITATE ON JESUS'S BIRTH?

As Mary held her son, she absorbed the scene. The angel Gabriel had visited her and explained that her son would be the great ruler of a kingdom without end (Luke 1:31-33). After Jesus's birth, shepherds visited to relay a message from heaven: The Savior, Messiah, and Lord had arrived to save people from sin. Mary treasured and meditated on this. Certain religions teach that meditation is emptying the mind to focus on one topic in an effort to reach peace or a higher spiritual state. But in Scripture, meditation is filling the mind with God's Word in an effort to know Him more deeply. **For us, meditating on Jesus's birth is reflecting on what God's Word said would happen, connecting His birth to prophecies, and considering what it means for us.** Mary meditated in this way as she held her newborn son. Though she didn't understand every implication, Mary did believe what God had said and held the evidence in her arms.



WHAT DOES THE PHRASE "MEET ME HALFWAY" MEAN? WHAT DOES IT SHOW YOU ABOUT GOD THAT HE DIDN'T JUST MEET US HALFWAY BUT CAME TO US TO BE WITH US?

Leaders: Share Context on Incarnation. When we say, "Meet me halfway," we're asking people to do their part. In other words, we're agreeing to do our part and meet them in the middle, but they have to do the work too. **Jesus didn't just meet us halfway. To save us from our sin, Jesus came to us—Immanuel, God with us. He did the work to save us through His death and resurrection.** We simply respond to His gift of salvation rather than working to earn it.



WHY DO YOU THINK WE SO EASILY LOSE THE AWE AND WONDER OF JESUS'S BIRTH? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE WAY WE SHARE THE GOSPEL?

We live in a culture numbed by content we see in entertainment and on social media. We aren't easily amazed because we see so much. Though we may love celebrating Christmas, we easily lose the purpose: Jesus was born to save us from sin. The real meaning becomes a backdrop to worldly celebration. **Christmas is one of the greatest times to share Jesus with people who don't know Him, but we'll struggle to do this if we've lost the wonder of Jesus's birth.** If our joy is rooted only in what the world celebrates, we're missing the greatest gift.

WRAP-UP



HOW CAN YOU FOCUS ON JESUS THIS CHRISTMAS? HOW CAN YOU FIGHT AGAINST HIS BIRTH BEING AN AFTERTHOUGHT?

So much about the way we celebrate Christmas isn't wrong, but we get distracted even by the "good" things—by far lesser gifts. If we want to focus on Jesus while the world around us focuses on gifts and material possessions, we must intentionally center our hearts and minds on what His birth means for us. While we can enjoy the season and take part in the fun, we want to celebrate the gift of God's Son—the One who came to us to free us from sin. To keep our hearts focused on our Savior's birth, you can make a worship playlist, volunteer to help those in need, journal all the ways Jesus is a gift in your life, and share the gift of the gospel with others. Assess what activities you do and if they celebrate Jesus's birth. You can slow down, spending time to meditate on God fulfilling His promise to send a Savior. **The Christmas season comes and goes so quickly, but when we focus on Jesus—on Him coming close to us to save us—then we experience it in a more meaningful way, one that lasts long after the season ends.**