

The Birth of Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: The baby in the manger is the mighty God come in the flesh to save us. When we hear that news, we respond like the shepherds: we go to Him, tell others and praise God.

Bible passage: Luke 2:1–20. Students read it out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." *Luke 2:11 (KJV)* and "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." *Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Luke 2:1–20, Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 9:6. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: In Luke 2 or Not? (5–10 minutes)

Read each item. Students stand up if they think it is in Luke 2:1–20, and stay seated if it isn't. After each one, give the answer.

1. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. (*In: 2:4–5*)
- 2) Mary rode a donkey. (*Not in the text*)
- 3) There was no room for them in the inn. (*In: 2:7*)
- 4) An innkeeper turned them away. (*Not in the text*)
- 5) Jesus was laid in a manger. (*In: 2:7*)
- 6) A star shone over the manger. (*Not in Luke 2; a star leads the wise men in Matthew 2*)
- 7) Angels praised God in front of shepherds. (*In: 2:13–14*)
- 8) Three wise men visited the manger. (*Not in Luke; Matthew 2 tells of wise men but never says how many, and they came "into the house," Matthew 2:11*)

Ask: *Why does it matter to know what the Bible actually says?* Say: "Many of the extras are harmless, but we want to know God's Word for ourselves. Today we read the story straight from the text."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Luke 2:1–7. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **decree** (2:1): an official order; **taxed** (2:1): counted and registered so people could be taxed
- **Judaea** (2:4): the southern part of the land of Israel, where Bethlehem is
- **house and lineage of David** (2:4): from King David's family line
- **espoused** (2:5): promised in marriage; **great with child** (2:5): her baby was coming soon
- **the days were accomplished that she should be delivered** (2:6): it was time for the baby to be born
- **swaddling clothes** (2:7): strips of cloth wrapped snugly around a baby; **manger** (2:7): an animal feeding box



Read out loud: Micah 5:2. Old words: **Ephratah** is another name for the Bethlehem area; **from of old, from everlasting** means He has always existed. Ask: *Caesar gave an order for his own reasons. How did God use it?* (It brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the town God named in Micah 5:2.)

Read out loud: Luke 2:8–20. Old words in this passage:

- **abiding** (2:8): staying; **keeping watch over their flock by night** (2:8): guarding their sheep through the night
- **sore afraid** (2:9): very afraid; **tidings** (2:10): news
- **Saviour** (2:11): the One who saves; **Christ** (2:11): the Anointed One, the promised King
- **babe** (2:12): baby; **multitude of the heavenly host** (2:13): a huge army of angels from heaven
- **with haste** (2:16): in a hurry; **made known abroad** (2:17): told it everywhere
- **wondered** (2:18): were amazed; **pondered** (2:19): thought deeply about

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. God chose a manger and shepherds, not a palace and kings (2:7–12). What does that show about God and about who the good news is for?
2. The angel said "Fear not" (2:10). Why do you think people in the Bible were afraid when an angel came? What fears does the good news about Jesus answer for you?
3. The angel called the news "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (2:10). Is there anyone you think the good news isn't for? What does this verse say?
4. The shepherds heard, went with haste, saw, told and praised (2:15–20). Which of those is easiest for you? Which is hardest?
5. Mary "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (2:19). Why is it good to slow down and think about what God has done?
6. Isaiah 9:6 calls the child "The mighty God, The everlasting Father." What does that tell you about who was lying in the manger?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Isaiah 9:6: **the government shall be upon his shoulder** means He will rule as King.

Wonderful, Counsellor means He is amazing and gives perfect advice. **The mighty God, The everlasting Father** means the child born is God Himself. **The Prince of Peace** means He brings peace with God.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Luke 2:11 this week; keep working on Isaiah 9:6 next week too.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Christmas is about Jesus. The child in the manger is the One Isaiah called 'The mighty God, The everlasting Father' (Isaiah 9:6). Paul wrote, 'God was manifest in the flesh' (1 Timothy 3:16, KJV): the one God came to us as a man to be our Savior. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That is why we need a Saviour. 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. The shepherds heard the news and went "with haste" (Luke 2:16). What is something God has been speaking to me about that I need to act on, not put off?
2. Who is one person I could tell about Jesus this Christmas, the way the shepherds made it known abroad (Luke 2:17)?
3. Write a short prayer praising God for coming to us in Jesus, the way the shepherds went home "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20).
If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Luke 2:1–20 at home with your family, and tell one person why Christmas is about Jesus.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for coming to us in Jesus, our Savior. Thank You that the good news is for all people. Help us respond like the shepherds: to come to You quickly, to tell others, and to praise You for everything You have done. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks "Was Jesus born on December 25?": answer honestly. The Bible doesn't give the date. Christmas is the day many Christians celebrate His birth. What matters is that He really was born, as Luke 2 says, and that He is our Savior (Luke 2:11).

