Preschool–Grade 6

The Road to Bethlehem

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: God keeps His promises. Long before, God said His ruler would come from Bethlehem, and God brought Joseph and Mary there.
Bible passage: Luke 2:1–7 and Micah 5:2. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)" *Luke 2:4 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 4 sheets of colored paper (red, blue, green and yellow), small paper cards in the same 4 colors (one for each child), 8 sheets of paper, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: tape one colored sheet in each corner of the room. Write the memory verse on the 8 sheets of paper (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Luke 2:4 and Micah 5:2.

1. Opening game: Everyone to Your Town! (5 minutes)

Give each child a colored card. Say: "Each corner is a town. Your card shows which town your family comes from." Then call out: "Here is the ruler's order: everyone go to your own town!" Kids walk (no running) to the corner that matches their card. Collect the cards, mix them up, hand them out and play again. Ask: *Did everyone have to go, even if they didn't want to?* Say: "Today we will hear about a real order that sent everyone to their own city, and how God used it to keep a promise."

2. Bible story: The Road to Bethlehem (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Luke 2, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Long ago, a ruler named **Caesar Augustus** ruled over many lands. He sent out a **decree**. A decree is an order that everyone has to obey. It said that all the world should be **taxed** (Luke 2:1). That means every person had to be counted and written down, so they could pay taxes. And everyone had to go to his own city to do it (2:3).

A man named **Joseph** lived in the town of **Nazareth**, in the land of Galilee (2:4). Joseph's family came from **King David**, a great king who lived long before. So Joseph had to go to David's town. Which town was that? **Bethlehem**, the city of David (2:4)!

Read Luke 2:4 from your Bible. Say: "**House and lineage of David** means Joseph came from King David's family."

Joseph did not go alone. **Mary** went with him. Mary was promised to be Joseph's wife, and her baby was coming very soon (2:5). An angel had already told Mary that her baby would be named Jesus, and that God would give Him "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:31–32).

The story continues: Bethlehem is high up in the hills, so the Bible says Joseph "went up" (2:4). It was a long trip. The Bible doesn't tell us how they traveled. It just tells us they went.

Here is something amazing. Hundreds of years before Joseph and Mary were born, God told a prophet named **Micah** where His promised ruler would come from. **Read Micah 5:2 from your Bible:** "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." Say: "God named little Bethlehem, long, long before!"

Caesar thought he was just counting people. But God used Caesar's order to bring Joseph and Mary to the very town God had named. **God keeps His promises!**

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born (Luke 2:6). Mary's firstborn son was born. She wrapped Him in **swaddling clothes**, strips of cloth wrapped snugly around a baby, and laid Him in a **manger**, a box that animals eat from, "because there was no room for them in the inn" (2:7). That baby was **Jesus**, the One God had promised!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who sent out the order that all the world should be taxed? *(Caesar Augustus, Luke 2:1)*
2. What town did Joseph come from? *(Nazareth, in Galilee, 2:4)*
3. Where did Joseph and Mary go? *(Bethlehem, the city of David, 2:4)*
4. Why did Joseph have to go to Bethlehem? *(He was from King David's family, 2:4)*
5. What did God promise about Bethlehem long before? *(That His ruler would come from there, Micah 5:2)*

4. Memory verse: Stepping Stones to Bethlehem (5 minutes)

Tape the 8 sheets on the floor in a path, in order, like stepping stones on a road: *And Joseph also went up / from Galilee, / out of the city of Nazareth, / into Judaea, / unto the city of David, / which is called Bethlehem; / (because he was of the house / and lineage of David:) Luke 2:4.* Explain the old words: **went up** means traveled up into the hills, **Galilee** is the land where Nazareth was, **Judaea** is the land where Bethlehem is, **unto** means to, and **house and lineage** means family. Kids take turns walking the path. They read each stone out loud as they step on it, and everyone says it with them. Then turn one stone over, and walk it again. Keep turning stones over until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God promised that His ruler would come from Bethlehem, and God did it, right where He said. God always keeps His promises. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. The baby born in Bethlehem is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). When Jesus grew up, He died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, 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.
This week: when you make a promise, keep it. Every time you go on a trip, say, "Thank You, God, for keeping Your promises!"

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Road to Bethlehem word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/road-to-bethlehem-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/road-to-bethlehem-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/road-to-bethlehem-maze), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/road-to-bethlehem), or **Up the Road:** lead the kids in a line around the room, from "Nazareth" to "Bethlehem." Stop four times. At each stop, ask one question from part 3. For the last part, march with high knees, because Joseph "went up" into the hills (Luke 2:4). At "Bethlehem," everyone says, "God keeps His promises!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You always keep Your promises. Thank You that You are in charge of everything, even rulers and kings. Help us trust You and obey You like Joseph did. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about the donkey, the innkeeper or the star: say, "Luke 2 doesn't mention a donkey, an innkeeper, knocking on doors or a stable. It says only that 'there was no room for them in the inn' (Luke 2:7). The star is a true story too, but it's in Matthew 2, with the wise men. We tell the story the way the Bible tells it."

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