



CHRISTMAS SUNDAY

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will embrace the joy Jesus gives because He was born to be my Savior.

FOCUS VERSES

Luke 2:10-11

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

LESSON TEXT

**Matthew 2:7-12;
Luke 2:1-20**

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God manifested Himself in flesh to save us from our sins.

REJOICING WITH GREAT JOY



Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

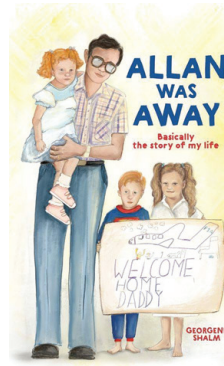
LESSON CONNECTION I

Teacher Option:

Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.

In her book *Allan Was Away: Basically, the Story of My Life*, missionary Georgene Shalm tells the story of celebrating Christmas in Pakistan.

“My parents came from Canada for our first Christmas in Pakistan in 1982. They loved sitting in the garden, sipping tea, and telling Bible stories to Kamala (their granddaughter). The flourishing poinsettias and other tropical plants provided a beautiful backdrop to these special moments.



“During their visit our English congregation held their first-ever Christmas program. The Sunday school children recited Bible verses and Christmas poems and sang Christmas carols and songs which they were so proud to perform. But not only children performed that special night!

“Albin D’Sa, whose family was originally from Goa in India, was the emcee for the program. Several months previously he had decided to take German classes. I have no idea why he wanted to learn German, but he did. In conversation with my father that evening they discovered they both knew the words to Silent Night in German. Apparently, my dad had learned the words when he was in Europe during the Second World War and had kept them stored in his memory ever since. I’d certainly never heard him sing in German before!

“Brother Albin announced there was one item that had been left off the program. Then he invited my father up to the stage and asked me to join them with my accordion.

“I have to say it was quite surreal to hear a Goan from India and a Canadian singing ‘Silent Night’ in German in Karachi, Pakistan!”

When an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth, he said, “I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). The birth of Jesus introduced the possibility of salvation for every person, regardless of their national origin or language. There is no exception.

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What is your favorite Christmas carol? Why is it your favorite?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 147. **I**

- I. JOSEPH AND MARY WENT TO BETHLEHEM
 - A. They Struggled to Find a Place to Stay
 - B. Jesus Was Born
 - » *Have you discovered any information so far in this lesson that is new to you? If so, does it change your thinking about any aspect of Christmas?*
 - C. The Angels Announced His Birth
 - » *Have you ever had an encounter with an angel or personally known someone who had such an experience? Can you describe it?* **V**
 - D. Good Tidings of Great Joy
 - E. I Can Rejoice Because Jesus Came
 - » *When you think of the word gospel, what is the first idea that comes to mind?*
- II. THE SHEPHERDS CAME TO JESUS
 - A. They Testified to Others about Jesus' Birth
 - B. They Rejoiced Because of What They Experienced
 - C. I Will Glorify and Praise God like the Shepherds
 - » *In what sense do we have more reason than the shepherds to glorify and praise God?*
- III. THE WISE MEN CAME TO JESUS
 - A. When They Saw the Star, They Rejoiced
 - B. They Worshiped Jesus with Gifts
 - C. I Will Worship Jesus with Gifts of Praise
- IV. I WILL EMBRACE THE JOY JESUS GIVES BECAUSE HE WAS BORN TO BE MY SAVIOR
 - » *What is the evidence in your life that you are a joyful person?*

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- That our lives would show others we have the joy of the Lord
- Worshiping the Lord together for coming to save us

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. JOSEPH AND MARY WENT TO BETHLEHEM

As the crow flies, the distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem was about seventy miles. However, the route most likely taken by Joseph and Mary would have been about ninety miles over a period of four to seven days.

From a political standpoint, the reason for this trip was to respond to the decree of the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus (who reigned 27 BC to AD 14), to register for taxation. To register, it was necessary for all the people to return to their ancestral cities. For Joseph, this was Bethlehem, since he was descended from David (Matthew 1:6, 16). From a biblical standpoint, the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem fulfilled prophecy (Micah 5:2).

A. They Struggled to Find a Place to Stay

There was no ready welcome for Joseph and Mary when they arrived in Bethlehem. There was no room for them in the inn, which was not so much a first-century hotel as a business providing shelter for travelers, all under one roof. Two thousand years have lent themselves to the development of a rich lore of tradition about Jesus' birth. This tradition may not be harmful, but neither should it be the basis for doctrinal development. The Bible says nothing about an angry and impatient innkeeper whose wife mercifully provided a space in a barn associated with the inn. The shepherds and the wise men did not arrive simultaneously. We do not even know how many wise men there were, but we do know they came on the scene up to two years later, when Joseph and Mary lived in a house. (See Matthew 2:11, 16.)

B. Jesus Was Born


The biblical account of Jesus' birth is simple and straightforward, yet magnificent. Jesus' birth is recorded only in Luke. We are not told how long Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. Mary was "great with child" and "while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered" (Luke 2:5-6).

The most significant birth ever to be accomplished transpired in what may seem to be the most unlikely circumstances. There could be no better description of what happened here than that given in Philippians 2:7-8. Jesus "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." Jesus, God Himself, embraced the full expression of human existence (John 1:14; I Timothy 3:16). Not only did the Creator enter into His creation, but He did so in the humblest manner.

Have you discovered any information so far in this lesson that is new to you? If so, does it change your thinking about any aspect of Christmas?

C. The Angels Announced His Birth

In vivid contrast to the thick darkness that would come upon the earth as Jesus hung, dying on the cross, the night of His birth was suddenly turned into the brightest day as “the glory of the Lord shone round about” the shepherds (Luke 2:9). So bright was this light that they were terrified. In the midst of this light came the angel of the Lord with an announcement that would transform all human history from that moment.

Have you ever had an encounter with an angel or personally known someone who had such an experience? Can you describe it? 

Even before this night, Gabriel had appeared to Mary to announce that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, the heir to the throne of David, whose kingdom would be without end. (See Luke 1:26–38.) An angel of the Lord also appeared to Joseph in a dream to inform him that the baby in Mary’s womb had been conceived of the Holy Spirit. The angel told Joseph that Mary would give birth to a son and that he was to name this son Jesus because He would be the Savior. (See Matthew 1:18–25.)

D. Good Tidings of Great Joy

The word angel essentially means “messenger” and can refer both to human messengers or spirit beings. The angel who appeared to the shepherds was a messenger of the Lord. This means the angel delivered the precise message God wanted the shepherds to hear:

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:10–12)

Teacher Option:

Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.

E. I Can Rejoice Because Jesus Came

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16–17)

Jesus did not come to condemn the world; condemnation was already a fact:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:19–21)

People did not begin to hate light only when Jesus came into the world. This problem began in Eden’s Garden. Those who believe in Jesus, that is, those who put their faith in Him exclusively can escape

this dark condemnation and live in joyous light. This was prefigured by the shepherds upon the arrival of the angel of the Lord when darkness turned to day in the brilliant light of God's glory.

The angel's message was "good tidings," or good news. This is the meaning of the word gospel. The same word is used both in Luke 2:10 and in I Corinthians 15:1. In Luke, it functions as a verb; in I Corinthians, as a noun. Instead of fear, the angel's announcement was an occasion for "great joy." It was not for the shepherds alone, but for "all people." The baby born that night was Savior, Christ, and Lord.

When you think of the word gospel, what is the first idea that comes to mind?

II. THE SHEPHERDS CAME TO JESUS

The heavenly visitation the shepherds experienced would allow no delay. As soon as the angels withdrew, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to visit Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. They found everything to be precisely as they had been told (Luke 2:15-16, 20).

A. They Testified to Others about Jesus' Birth

When the shepherds saw before their eyes the scene the angel of the Lord had described, "they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (Luke 2:17). We can imagine the shepherds' breathless excitement as they told everyone they met about their angelic visitation and their personal experience of viewing the manger scene. Apparently no one who heard their testimony dismissed it outright. They "wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (Luke 2:18). In the meantime, Mary, who knew exactly what was going on, did not talk about it. Instead, she pondered these things in her heart (Luke 2:19).

B. They Rejoiced Because of What They Experienced

After spreading the news of the night to everyone possible in the environs of Bethlehem, the shepherds returned to their field and flock, still "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20). It was just as they had been told.

C. I Will Glorify and Praise God like the Shepherds

Though we were not there to behold the resplendent scene in the field or to visit the newborn baby, we have reason to replicate the shepherds' joy and to glorify and praise God. First, we have the Scripture to preserve the account of the birth of Christ. It is not merely a story with a moral. It is a vivid description of truth that resonates in our hearts of faith. Second, we have been transformed by the work Christ accomplished on our behalf, and we are now in Him. Through baptism we have "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Because we have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of his Son" is in our hearts, "crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

In what sense do we have more reason than the shepherds to glorify and praise God?

III. THE WISE MEN CAME TO JESUS

The shepherds were not alone in their privilege of visiting Jesus in the earliest days of His life on earth. The wise men traveled from the East, possibly somewhere in the Persian Empire. They arrived in Jerusalem, seeking the “King of the Jews.” They had seen a star they understood to signify the birth of this King, and they wanted to worship Him (Matthew 2:1-2).

A. When They Saw the Star, They Rejoiced

Much like the shepherds, whose social standing was much lower, the wise men “rejoiced with exceeding great joy” when they saw the star had identified the house where Jesus lived (Matthew 2:10). Even today it is not unusual for those who first meet Jesus to respond with gladness and praise. (See Acts 2:41, 46-47).

B. They Worshiped Jesus with Gifts

The wise men had brought gifts with them to present to the new King. They worshiped Jesus, presenting gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). These gifts indicate the wealth of the wise men and may symbolize aspects of Jesus’ identity. It has been suggested, for instance, that the gold was in recognition of Jesus’ royalty as King, the frankincense of His deity, and the myrrh of His suffering. Other theories have been offered as well. From a practical standpoint, the gold would have been a great help to finance the family’s trip and stay in Egypt as they awaited Herod’s death (Robert Jamieson, et al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*).

C. I Will Worship Jesus with Gifts of Praise

Like those first worshipers, we “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15). This New Testament command has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures: “Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips’” (Hosea 14:2, NKJV).

IV. I WILL EMBRACE THE JOY JESUS GIVES BECAUSE HE WAS BORN TO BE MY SAVIOR

Those of us who have had the Pentecostal experience instinctively follow the example of the three thousand who believed Peter’s words and were baptized in water and Spirit. They received the word gladly, praising God for what they had experienced (Acts 2:41-47). Words like joy, joyous, joyful, and joyfully appear more than seventy-five times from the Book of Acts to the end of the New Testament. This is a major emotional response for those who have discovered the joy of the Lord. It just comes naturally.

What is the evidence in your life that you are a joyful person?

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

How would you have responded had you been one of the shepherds on that night in Bethlehem? Or if you had been one of the wise men, what would have been your reaction upon entering the home of the young Jesus to see Him and His mother for the first time?

These questions call for more: How does your current response to the presence of the Lord compare with what you think it would have been in those days? Or, to bring us to a much more recent comparison, how does your response today compare to the day you were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? or to the moment you were baptized with the Holy Spirit?

Paul's command in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit," indicates the ongoing need for spiritual renewal, even for those who have been baptized with the Spirit. The word translated "be filled" could be rendered "keep on being filled." One evidence of continual refilling with the Holy Spirit is ongoing renewal of praise, worship, and joy.

