

UNIT 19 | SESSION 1

# JESUS WAS BORN

MATTHEW 1; LUKE 1-2



**KEY PASSAGE:** John 3:16

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** God kept His promise to send Jesus, the Messiah, to save people from their sins. God will keep His promise to save everyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

**STORY POINT:** Jesus, the promised Messiah, was born.



## PREPARE

### PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## LEADER Bible Study

Matthew's and Luke's accounts of Jesus' birth showcase God's faithfulness in sending us His Son. Long before Mary and Joseph embarked on their journey to Bethlehem, God had already promised to redeem His creation through the long-awaited Savior. Now, God was ready to make good on His promise of salvation—in an unexpected setting, at a seemingly inopportune time, and through the most unlikely of people.

The earthly arrival of God in human form caught many by surprise. From Jesus' virgin birth to His first night spent in a manger, the lowliness of this humble King seemed counterintuitive to most people's expectations of how the Messiah would arrive. The joyous birth of Jesus, however, was such a miraculous occasion that God sent angels to prepare the hearts of those who would behold the newborn King—not only Mary and Joseph, but also the shepherds in the field who believed by faith.

Despite all that seemed to go wrong in this story—from the decree of Caesar Augustus, the timing of Mary's pregnancy and delivery, and there being no guest room for Jesus—God orchestrated every detail of this birth narrative so He would be glorified through the humble arrival of His Son. Through His angels, God spoke words of comfort, encouragement, and guidance to Jesus' parents and the shepherds, leading them to trust Him with each next step.

Many Old Testament prophecies had shed light on how the Messiah would arrive. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a virgin giving birth to a son named Immanuel and later predicted a child with the title, Mighty God (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). Meanwhile, Micah, a contemporary prophet to Isaiah, had predicted the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). These were only the beginning of many Old Testament prophecies Jesus would fulfill on His way to live a perfect life, die a sacrificial death, and rise again.

Pray for the boys and girls who will gather to hear this incredible Bible story. May they, too, find their place within God's miraculous plan of redemption, placing true faith in the Savior born to bring us eternal life.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



## PREPARE

### THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



## WELCOME

### 10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



## LEARN

### 25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



## LOVE

### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



## LIVE

### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



## PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



### WELCOME

#### Activity Page

- ☐ "Special Messages Crossword" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ "Crazy Animal Facts" printable



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ dry erase board and dry erase markers
- ☐ small bowl or bag

#### Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ "You Can't Have One Without the Other" printable

#### Journal and Prayer

- ☐ Journal Page
- ☐ "On the Road to Bethlehem" activity page



### LEARN

#### Introduce the Session

- ☐ Countdown Video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

#### Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Jesus was Born" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

#### Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 19, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

#### Missions Moment

- ☐ "About Annie" video

#### Key Passage Activity

- ☐ "Key Passage" printable
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Eternal Life (John 3:16)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

**SAY** “Share your favorite birthday memory with us. How did you celebrate? Who was there? Did you have a favorite gift?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Special Messages Crossword” on the activity page.

**SAY** “Complete each statement to fill in the crossword puzzle.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### ☐ OPTION 1: HOW CAN THIS BE?

Prior to the session, print two copies of the “Crazy Animal Facts” printable. Cut one copy apart, but save the second copy to use as an answer key. Have the kids sit in a circle; then drop the paper strips in the middle of the circle. Allow each kid to pick up a piece of paper. Have the kids with animal names stand on one side of the room and the kids with facts stand on the other side. Lead the kids with animal facts to take turns sharing what their fact says. Then have the kids with the names try to match up with the correct fact.

**SAY** “These are some crazy animal facts! And even though they may be hard to believe, they’re true. In our lesson today, Mary was told that she would have a baby, and that that baby would be the Messiah. Mary had to decide if she trusted that information or not. Let’s get into our lesson to find out what her reaction was to this information.”

#### ☐ OPTION 2: NO MORE ROOM



Before class, create a large space for the kids to move around freely. Create a 1’x1’ square in the middle of the space using tape. Inform the kids that they will be playing tag, trying to get from one side of the room to the other. Assign a tagger and have the other kids line up on the opposite end of the room from the tagger. Tell the kids that the tape square is a safe space, but only one person can be in the box at a time and only for five seconds.

**SAY** “In our lesson today, there was no guest room for Jesus, so Mary had to find somewhere else to lay Baby Jesus. Let’s learn more to find out where this was.”





LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# INTRODUCE the Bible Story

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### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “Hey kids, my name is [your name], and I look forward to opening God’s Word with you today. In today’s lesson we will learn that **JESUS, THE PROMISED MESSIAH, WAS BORN**. If you have your Bible with you, please take it out. [Distribute Bibles to kids who need them.] Let’s pray together before we begin. ‘God, please teach us as we open up Your Word, the Bible, today.’ ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

**SAY** “Today we have a new big picture question and answer. We will answer the question **Who is Jesus?** Many people have tried to answer this question by saying that Jesus was a good person or a prophet, and while those statements are true, Jesus is so much more. Our answer to this question is: **Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.**

God’s people had been waiting for many years for the promised Messiah to come and save them. Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, was born as a baby and grew up like all of us, facing temptation and heartache. But unlike us, Jesus never sinned. Because Jesus is fully God and fully human, only He can save us from the penalty of death we deserve for our sin. ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “In the Old Testament, we followed the story of the Israelites and the many prophets who warned them to repent of their sins against God. Throughout the Old Testament these prophets spoke about a Messiah who would come to God’s people and save them. As we step into our study of the New Testament, we fast forward several hundred years since the last prophet in the Old Testament to the long-awaited birth of the Messiah, the Savior who would come and save God’s people. ”



## LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 2. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus was Born.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### JESUS WAS BORN

“God sent the angel Gabriel to a woman named Mary. Gabriel said, “Greetings, favored woman! You are going to have a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of God, and he will rule over God’s kingdom forever.”

Mary replied, “How is this possible? I’m not even married!”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will give birth to a son. Nothing is impossible with God.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” said Mary. “May it happen just as you said.” Then the angel left.

During this time, Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, he planned to quietly end their engagement. But an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. When the baby is born, you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel commanded.

All this happened to fulfill what God promised long ago through the prophet:

“See, the virgin will become pregnant  
and give birth to a son,  
and they will name him Immanuel,”  
which means “God is with us.”

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. So, Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered. While they were there in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus and wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

In the same region, shepherds were out watching over their sheep at night. An angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid, because I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Then many angels appeared with the first angel, and they all praised God, saying: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!”

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

##### What’s In a Name:

Teach kids that many names in today’s story refer to Jesus. Tell them that anytime they hear a name of Jesus mentioned in the lesson, they should stand to their feet, or you can teach them the ASL sign for Jesus (touching each middle finger to the palm of the other hand one at a time). Names include: *Jesus, Son of God, Immanuel, Savior, Messiah, and Lord.*

##### Break It Up:

Break the story into sections.

Form small groups of kids and assign each group a section to act out for the class.



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**When the angels left, 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.”**

**They hurried off and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. Then the shepherds went and shared the good news of what they had been told.**

Christ Connection: God kept His promise to send Jesus, the Messiah, to save people from their sins. God will keep His promise to save everyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord. ”

## 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ In our lesson today we heard the story of Jesus’ birth. What’s something that stood out to you from the story? **[Allow responses.]** Today’s story has many parts. They include: 1) the announcement that Mary would give birth to a son, 2) the angel telling Joseph to not be afraid to take Mary as his wife, 3) the journey to Bethlehem to be counted, 4) the birth of Jesus and Mary laying Him in a manger because there was no guest room available, and 5) the declaration of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds and their visit to see Him. What is the name that Jesus is called in our lesson? I’ll give you a hint: it starts with an ‘M’ and means promised Savior. **[Allow responses.]** That’s right, Messiah. This is a lot to cover in one lesson, but each piece of this story is important. Not only is Jesus’ birth vital to the faith of Christians, but the events that led up to His birth, some of which fulfilled prophecy that had been told hundreds of years before, are also incredibly important! Let’s focus on one of these events.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied that ‘a virgin would give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).’ Today we learned that Immanuel means God with us. God made clear to His people throughout the Old Testament that He loved them and wanted them to be close to Him, but the people were stubborn and insisted on living lives apart from God. God knew from the very beginning that Jesus would need to be among His people, in the flesh, to live as we do. Jesus became one of us, while still being God. He understood firsthand the things that we face (Hebrews 4:14-16). He was tempted, experienced hunger, pain, and heartache; yet through it all He never sinned. Through His sinless life He was able to become the sinless offering for all people’s sin. If He hadn’t come to live as we do, He couldn’t demonstrate sinless living and take on that penalty for us. He had to come be ‘with us.’ ”

## 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

**SAY** “ The truth that God is with us still applies to us today. When we repent of our sins and believe that Jesus died on the cross for us and rose again, God promises that He will be with us always (Hebrews 13:5-6). Have you put your faith in the only One who can save you? I would love to talk with you if you have questions or if you are ready to make that decision. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)



LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 19, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Where was Jesus before He was on earth?
2. God kept His promise to send Jesus. Why are you glad Jesus came to be the Savior?

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Play the “About Annie” video.

**SAY** “Annie Armstrong was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on July 11, 1850. She was the second youngest of five children. She developed an interest in missions work at a young age while attending missionary meetings with her mother. ‘Miss Annie,’ as she was affectionally called, was touched when she heard a speaker talk about the difficult living conditions of Native Americans who had been forced from their lands onto reservations. Annie realized that churches near her home could work together to supply the needs of the people she heard about even though they were far away. Annie organized women in her church and other Baltimore churches to gather clothes needed for 240 Native American students at a school. This collection of clothing shipped to these students was the beginning of a ministry to Native Americans that continued throughout Annie’s life. Annie made five trips to help these Native Americans.”

Pray, thanking God for Annie Armstrong’s life and the work she did to help people have what they needed.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 3:16 together. Before class make copies of the “Key Passage” printable, one for each kid. Distribute the coloring sheet and crayons.

**SAY** “Reading about the birth of Jesus today ties directly in with our key passage for this unit. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life, die in the place of sinners, and rise again. Those who believe in Jesus will receive eternal life with Him.”

Lead kids to sing “Eternal Life (John 3:16).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “Thank You, God, for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die in our place. Help us trust You with everything in our lives and grow more in our faith each day. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

## LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to the book of Luke. Explain that Luke is one of four books of the Bible in the division called the Gospels. The Gospels include the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of these books tell the same story of Jesus' life and ministry on earth, but from different perspectives.

Consider pointing out the location of Nazareth (E5) and Bethlehem (I4) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 1:26-28, 2:4-5 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

**SAY** “ Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken of the people, so all people had to return to their hometowns to be counted. Joseph, being in the line of David, was required to return to Bethlehem with his pregnant wife, Mary. This was not a short journey just across town or even a few hours away; they traveled for days to reach their destination. [Point to Nazareth on the map and trace your finger all the way to Bethlehem.] It was even prophesied by the prophet Micah that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “ What does ‘nothing is impossible with God’ mean? ”

God can do all things. He is the Creator of everything, and all things are in His control. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 1:37.)

**SAY** “ How did the shepherds respond to the news they heard? How do you think you would have responded? ”

The shepherds were given a message from God that they could not wait to act upon. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 2:15-16.)

**SAY** “ Immanuel means ‘God with us.’ How does it make you feel to know that God became one of us and promises to be with everyone who believes in Him? ”

Knowing that God has promised to be with us brings great comfort. God wants a right relationship with each of us, desires to speak with us daily through prayer, and wants to meet us in the pages of the Bible. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 23:4.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### ☐ OPTION 1: BIRTH OF JESUS DRAWINGS



Before class, write down several key words or phrases that relate to the lesson on pieces of paper, such as: angel, Mary, manger, shepherds, etc. Place the words in a small bowl or bag. Explain to the kids that they will be taking turns drawing parts of today's lesson. They will each have the opportunity to pull out a word or phrase from the bag and then illustrate it for their classmates to try and guess.

**SAY** “ You guys did a great job guessing what each illustration was! While it’s fun to play this game and guess at these drawings, God left no guessing for us: **JESUS, THE PROMISED MESSIAH WAS BORN.** ”

##### ☐ OPTION 2: YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER

Prior to the session, print and cut apart four copies of the “You Can’t Have One Without the Other” printable. Split the class into four groups, giving each a set of pictures. Explain to the groups that they will sort the pictures into pairs that make sense to them.

**SAY** “ The birth of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus are equally important. Both events are part of the good news of the gospel. God sent Jesus to be born and live life as a perfect human so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for our sin and defeat death through His resurrection. ”

#### 2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to be our Savior. As time allows, lead kids to complete “On the Road to Bethlehem” on the activity page.