

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.



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

- "Who Is Jesus?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- baby doll, 1 per team
- obstacles (jump ropes, hula hoops, chairs, etc.)
- masking tape



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- candy
- plastic wrap
- oven mitts

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring 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
- hay (optional)
- blankets (optional)

Questions from Kids

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

Missions Moment

- "About Annie" video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- paper clips
- string
- magnet
- "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** “What is the most exciting news you’ve ever received? How did you react?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Who Is Jesus?” on the activity page.

| **SAY** “Nice work unscrambling the angel’s message! In today’s story, we’ll read that Mary gave birth to Jesus, the promised Messiah. He is God with us.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: HANDLE WITH CARE

Before the session, use chairs, jump ropes, hula hoops, and any other desired items to set up an obstacle course in the classroom, or if weather permits, outside. Use masking tape to mark a starting line on the floor. Gather the kids into two teams and provide each team with a baby doll. The first kid will hold the baby and attempt to complete the obstacle course without dropping the baby. When she finishes, the next kid in line will repeat this. If any kid drops the baby doll, he must go back and start at the beginning. Play until the kids on both teams have completed the course.

| **SAY** “Great job holding onto those babies! Did you know that God sent His Son to earth as a baby? In today’s story, we will learn that **JESUS, THE PROMISED MESSIAH, WAS BORN.**”

OPTION 2: BARNYARD BONANZA



Instruct the kids to stand and form a circle. Select one volunteer to be in the middle. Instruct the kid in the middle to close her eyes and begin spinning clockwise with one arm pointed straight out in front. The rest of the kids will walk counterclockwise. On your cue, everyone will stop moving. While the kid in the middle keeps her eyes closed, whoever she is pointing to must make an animal sound. Allow the kids to choose between a cow, a sheep, or a donkey. She must guess which classmate is making the sound.

| **SAY** “Animals can be loud and smelly, so a place where animals were kept probably isn’t where most people would expect to find a baby! But God is working in all situations to bring about His good plan. We will see in today’s story that **JESUS, THE PROMISED MESSIAH, WAS BORN** in a place where animals were kept.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

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 “Hi, kids! I’m glad you are joining us this morning! I’m [your name], and today we will be reading about the long-awaited Messiah, who God promised to His people. If you brought your Bible to class, hold it up high where I can see it! [Use this time to distribute Bibles to any kid who needs one.] Today’s story can be found in the book of Matthew and the book of Luke.

Let’s pray together before we open God’s Word. [Consider pausing here for a moment of prayer.] ‘God, thank You for sending Jesus, the promised Messiah, according to Your perfect plan. As we read together, open our hearts and minds to understand Your great love for us. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Today, we are going to learn a new big picture question together! Can anyone remind me why big picture questions are important? [Allow responses.] Big picture questions teach us truths about God and His character. Our new big picture question is: **Who is Jesus?** Together we will learn that **Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.** We have all drifted from God because of sin. Today, we will learn that God provided His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin.”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

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

SAY “God’s people had returned home from exile to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. When the people heard the faithful teaching of God’s Word through Ezra, the people promised to obey God. But the people would not be able to follow God’s law perfectly because of their sin. Malachi shared God’s love with the people and warned them to repent. He pointed them toward Someone who would not only perfectly follow God’s law, but would fulfill it. Today, we will see that God kept His promise by sending His Son, Jesus.”



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:

STORYTELLING TIPS

3-2-1 Action: Encourage the kids to participate in the story by assigning them each a part. Allow them to act out the story as a movie while you read.

Set the Stage: Use props such as hay and blankets to transform the room into a place where animals were kept. Consider playing live animal noises to further set the tone of what it would have been like the night Jesus was born.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

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

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 “ After many prophecies and years of waiting, God showed that He had not forgotten His people. The angel Gabriel brought Mary a message from God. She would give birth to a son and name Him Jesus! Do you remember who Gabriel told Mary that Jesus is? [Allow responses.] Jesus was not just any baby; He was and is the Son of God. Mary was obedient to do what the Lord commanded, and after a visit from an angel, Joseph submitted to God’s plan, too. God is in control of everything. He worked through the decree of Caesar Augustus to fulfill the prophecies from years earlier. Where was Jesus born? [Allow responses.] The Messiah was born in Bethlehem, just as God promised! Through Mary and Joseph’s obedience, God came to earth to be with His people.

How did the shepherds respond when they saw the angel? [Allow responses.] The angel told the shepherds to not fear, because there was good news! Who did the angel tell the shepherds the good news was for? [Allow responses.] Jesus came for all people, including the shepherds. We no longer have to walk in the darkness of sin because Jesus, the light, has come. And like the shepherds, God wants us to share the good news of Jesus with others. 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. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God has not left us in our sin. He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world as a baby, just as He foretold through the prophets. By taking on our sins, Jesus has saved all those who trust in Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can talk to an adult you trust, like your parents or a leader at church. ”

(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.)

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.

SAY “God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to save us from our sins. That’s good news! Let’s learn more about this in our new key passage.”

Write the words for the key passage on individual pieces of paper. Attach a paper clip to each slip of paper and spread them out upside down on the floor. Use string to attach a magnet to the end of a pencil. Invite each kid to take a turn fishing for a slip of paper. Once the kids have caught all of the words, help them place the key passage together in the correct order. 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 “God, thank You for sending Your Son to earth to bring us back into a right relationship with You. Give us the opportunities and the courage to share this good news with others. Amen.”





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 Matthew 1. Explain that the book of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. It is also one of the four Gospels. Matthew and Luke are the only Gospels which contain the story of Jesus' birth.

Consider pointing out the location of Bethlehem [15] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 1:21-23 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Think about how it feels to receive good news. About 400 years had passed from Malachi’s words about the coming Messiah at the end of the Old Testament, to the start of the New Testament when Jesus entered into the world as a baby. Imagine what it would feel like to wait that long for something! But God had not abandoned His people. After all that waiting, God’s people received the best news of all. God had taken on flesh and come to save His people from their sin. When waiting seems hard, we can trust that God is in control of all things. He is working in all things for our good and to bring about His glory. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ How can Jesus be both God and human? ”

Explain that God becoming a human is what believers call the incarnation. Because Jesus is God, He was able to perfectly follow God’s law. Because Jesus became a human, He was able to live a perfect life in our place and die as a sacrifice for our sins. (Option: Ask a volunteer to read John 1:14).

SAY “ Is anything outside of God’s control? ”

Remind kids that because of Caesar Augustus’ decree, Mary and Joseph had to journey away from home to register with the government. Explain that because of this decree, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. God used the ruler’s decree to fulfill His promise given through the prophets. God works in all things to accomplish His plans (Option: Ask a volunteer to read Micah 5:2).

SAY “ Why did God wait so long to send His Son, Jesus, to earth? ”

Encourage kids to consider how God does not operate on our timeline. Remind them that God is sovereign and in control of all things. Scripture tells us that He sent Jesus at the right time, not according to our plan or timetable, but according to His (Option: Ask a volunteer to read Galatians 4:4).

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





LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: WRAP IT UP

Before the activity, use plastic wrap and begin forming a ball around pieces of candy (include at least one piece of candy for each kid in the class). When you finish, you should have a plastic wrap ball, a little smaller than a soccer ball. Instruct the kids to sit in a circle. When you say Go, the first kid must use the oven mitts to begin unwrapping the ball. Encourage them to find the place where the plastic wrap begins in order to unwrap the ball faster. Give each kid about 30 seconds, then shout Pass! Have the kids continue passing the ball and oven mitts until it is unwrapped. Allow each kid to have a piece of candy.

SAY “ It required patience to continue unwrapping the ball, but it was worth the wait! God’s people waited a long time for the promised Messiah. And at just the right time, God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to save us from sin. ”

OPTION 2: TURTLE TAG

Instruct the kids to spread out around the room. Choose a kid to be It. All kids must move around the room in slow motion, no running allowed. If a kid is tagged by It, he becomes It next. If a player is caught moving too quickly, she must freeze for 10 seconds.

SAY “ This game involved a lot of patience. It’s hard to move slow when you’re playing a game! For years, God’s people had been waiting for Him to fulfill His promise to send a Savior. When the time was right, God sent His Son, Jesus, the promised Messiah. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.