

THIS IS JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS PART 2: HE IS

Lesson 1: He Is The Gift

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: The circumstances of Jesus' birth and His saving mission for all people.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Recognize God's gracious gift of love in Jesus' birth, and understand what that means for their relationship with God.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Luke 2:1-28; Romans 6:23

KEY TAKEAWAY: Jesus' coming was a gracious gift that expressed God's love for humanity.

OVERVIEW:

This lesson helps students examine the truth that Jesus the Messiah is the greatest gift of all time. The events related to the birth of Jesus are reminders of how much God loves people. He sent His Son into the world to experience life as a man and to bring about salvation for all people because of His incredible love! By reading through Luke's account of Jesus' birth, students will learn more about who Jesus was sent for, the miraculous circumstances of His birth, and the One who sent Him.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Luke

- *Author:* Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

THE SETTING

Jesus' coming was described slightly differently by each of the Gospel writers. This lesson focuses on Luke's account. Luke described the birth of Jesus Christ in great detail, including His ancestry, the circumstances of His birth, and the miracles surrounding His coming. This passage of Scripture is important for students because it shows the royal lineage of Jesus, which links Him as a descendant of David, as prophesied.

THE MAIN POINT

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus have been told through every imaginable means. Yet the story continues to be told because it is so incredible: how Almighty God would send His Son to earth in the form of a baby with the mission of saving humanity from the penalty of their sins. The humble birth of this spectacular gift helps us understand that Jesus would defy expectations at every turn. The outcasts of society were intentionally chosen to be early proclaimers of the Good News. Students should be encouraged by this lesson to be modern-day proclaimers of the greatest gift of all time: Jesus.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To understand the importance of Jesus' lineage and trace it back to the Gift Giver (God).
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, explain to students that you will begin this lesson by talking about lineage. Lineage essentially means the line or sequence of a family tree. To help students understand, instruct everyone to raise their hands. **Say:**

- **Keep your hand raised if you have four or more aunts and uncles. If you have less than that, lower your hand.**

THEN, continue this game by asking students to keep their hands raised if they have five or more. Then six or more, and so on until only one (or two if you have a group of siblings) is left with their hand raised. Once you have a winner, ask the remaining student if they could name all of their aunts and uncles. *(Don't worry if they cannot do so. It will support the activity.)*

NEXT, instruct students to raise their hands again. **Say something like:**

- **Who has the most cousins? Let's start by keeping your hand up if you have eight or more.**

Continue in the previous manner until only one or two students have their hands raised. Ask students to name all their cousins. *(Again, don't worry if they cannot do so.)*

FINALLY, instruct students to locate Luke 3:23-28 in their Bibles. Ask students to take turns reading a verse each until the passage is read. **Say something like:**

- **Starting with Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, Jesus' lineage could be traced all the way back to Adam and ultimately to His Heavenly Father, God. That is a pretty incredible pedigree! As we look into the arrival of Jesus, there will be a natural question that arises: Who sent this life-changing gift? Even though Luke 3:23-28 seems like a list of names, it is actually a complex gift tag. When you trace it back to the very beginning, it is God who has given us the wonderful gift of Jesus!**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To help students understand that Jesus is the best gift of all time.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, read or have a student read Luke 2:1-7. **Say something like:**

- **Let's start by pointing out the lineage, or family tree, of Jesus. We just read a little inclusion that Luke made about King David. Why? Among all the prophecies concerning Jesus, one was that He would come from the family line of David, which makes Him royalty. However, we immediately read that Jesus was laid in a manger... which was a place where the farm animals ate their food. That doesn't seem like a place you would find a member of the royal family!**

Ask students:

- **Hundreds of years before Jesus arrived, the prophet Isaiah told God's people that the Savior of the world, a.k.a. the greatest gift of all time, would be a member of the house of David. What do you think people expected the arrival of Jesus to look like?**
 - *Answers will vary.* The point of this question is to help students understand that a humble birth was likely the last thing on their mind. (You may have students read Isaiah 11:10 for more context.)

Explain that most of us do pay careful attention to how our gifts are wrapped. For example, it's difficult to wrap a new baseball bat with any sort of secrecy. Likewise, when we see a box wrapped in glittery gold paper, our mind immediately assumes "the things in this present are valuable." More so than if something is wrapped in brown bags. But even though Jesus, the ultimate gift, was wrapped in the equivalent of a brown paper bag, it is made clear that He is the most valuable gift the world will ever receive.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 2:8-14. **Say something like:**

- **In the fields outside Bethlehem, perhaps closer to Jerusalem, shepherds were guarding their flocks during the night. The sheep may have belonged to the special flocks that were set aside for Temple sacrifices. If so, they could have been there all year. Ordinarily, sheep would be in the fields from March to November.**

Explain that shepherds were generally despised by others. As a group, they were scorned because they failed to keep (or ignored) much of the Mosaic Law. Shepherds were considered social outcasts. They were stereotyped as thieves and low-lives. They were not allowed to serve as witnesses in court because their testimony was thought to be unreliable. However, God still sent His angels to proclaim the Good News to them. **Say something like:**

- **Though these men were used to fighting wild animals that threatened their sheep, the angelic presence terrified them. After calming their fears, the angel shared God's incredible message: God was fulfilling His promise to send the Messiah, or Savior, into the world. Although there were likely plenty of priests and servants in the Temple, God chose to send a choir of angels to these outcasts. Why? Because He wanted to send the message that the gift of Jesus is for everyone, not just those who have it together or who seclude themselves in the Temple.**

NEXT, explain that after the angels departed, the shepherds acted on what they had heard. They obediently went to Bethlehem and searched for the child. They found the baby just as they had been told. Read or have a student read Luke 2:15-20. **Ask:**

- **After the shepherds found Jesus, what did they do?**
 - *Answer:* They went and shared the Good News with others!
- **Remember though... shepherds were often considered unreliable sources of information. How do you think people responded to their story?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Help students see the tension here between who God used to share the Good News, and how the people in the religious community (who should have been on the lookout for Jesus) might have responded.

THEN, remind students that there is a theme in Jesus' life, in which He often seeks out those that the religious people of His day rejected. **Ask:**

- **What kind of people do we find ourselves rejecting and treating similarly to the shepherds?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

- **How can we change that, and celebrate the fact that the gift of Jesus is for everyone?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- **Even though the shepherds knew there would be many people who did not believe their story, they still told it. And we don't read that they sat and argued with those who didn't believe, practiced a perfectly prepared 10-minute presentation, or even that they went to the Temple and made themselves clean before sharing what God had shown them. The truth simply flowed from them, and they went about sharing it with as many people as they could, all while glorifying God.**

FINALLY, ask students to turn to Romans 6:23. Briefly explain that we are skipping forward in the narrative of Jesus' life. We have talked at length about Jesus being the greatest gift, but to end our Main Event, we will now discover a little more about what that gift is. Read or have a student read Romans 6:23. **Ask:**

- **Think of every gift you've ever received. Can you think of any that can compare to eternal life?**
 - *Answer: No!*
- **Let's pretend that there is a store down the street that happens to sell tickets for eternal life. How much do you think something like that would cost you?**
 - *Answers will vary. Students should guess in the very high range.*

Say something like:

- **The truth is, the forgiveness of our sins and a promise of eternal life costs more than any of us could ever hope to pay. Which is why God paid every bit of that price so He could offer it to us as a gift. He didn't get us the off-brand version of forgiveness, or forget to buy the batteries for our eternal life. In all of His glory, He made sure this was the best gift we would ever receive.**

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students think about their own reception of God's gift.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students each have a 6x6 piece of paper and a pen.
 - *To prepare, you will need to learn to make an origami heart. There is a good instructional video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-BIL6p1Te8>*

FIRST, pass out a square piece of paper to each student, as well as a pen. **Say something like:**

- **We talked a little bit about how presents can come wrapped in different ways. On your piece of paper, take a moment to write down what the gift of Jesus means to you. Make sure you only use one side of the paper.**

Once students have finished writing this down, explain that you will all be 'wrapping' this gift into the shape of a heart. This heart is meant to represent the love that God has for us, that He would give us such a gift.

THEN, slowly demonstrate how to fold this paper into a heart. (If you are able to show the video linked above, you may do that in place of a demonstration.) Help students fold their hearts so that the written portion is hidden in the origami.

FINALLY, encourage students to take this home and keep it somewhere special. Explain that it can serve as a great reminder that we are recipients of the greatest gift of all time.

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.