

December 8, 2021 – Jim Peterson

Today's Bible Story: Because of Christmas Day (Jesus Is Born/Shepherds Visit) • *Luke 2:1-20*

Today's Bottom Line: Celebrate because God sent a Savior.

Monthly Memory Verse: *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.* John 3:16 (NIV)

Monthly Life App: Christmas—Celebrating Jesus, God's greatest gift

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

BIBLE STORY

SETTING UP THE STORY

STORYTELLER: "Hi, everyone! This is a very special week—one of the most special weeks of the whole year. Maybe it's because I'm older, but every year around this time, I start to think about what's important to me: my faith, my family, and my friends. There's a sense of wonder. There's excitement and anticipation. There are lots and lots of Christmas cookies!

Spray the cookie-scented air freshener over the kids.

"Man, that smells good. This week, we're celebrating one of the greatest events in all of human history: when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. (*Hold up Bible.*) The whole story, start to finish, is just amazing. So I thought we could tell it in a fun, different way . . . with sights, sounds, senses, and even smells!

Spray the cookie air freshener again.

"You never know what might happen!

Put the air freshener back in the prop box.

"Let me set the stage for you.

"Last week we learned that the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a baby. The angel told Mary to name the baby Jesus. And Jesus wouldn't be just an ordinary baby. He was the Savior God had promised—the Savior people had waited literally thousands of years for! Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was also going to have a baby. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months.

"After Mary went home to Nazareth, the ruler of the land, Caesar Augustus, made a new law.

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Trumpet fanfare*

"The law said that everyone had to go to their hometown to be counted. So that meant Mary and her now-husband Joseph had to travel to the town of Bethlehem. You see, Bethlehem was known as the town of David, and Joseph came from the family line of David.

“Mary and Joseph probably knew the words God had spoken through the prophet Micah hundreds of years before.

Open the Bible to Micah 5:2 (NIRV) and read.

“Bethlehem . . . you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come for me a ruler over Israel.”

ROAD TRIP

STORYTELLER: “We have no idea what Mary and Joseph’s journey was like, but the route they took probably looked something like this.

SLIDE: *Map of Mary and Joseph’s trip*

Point to the features on the screen map as you speak.

“They had to travel from Nazareth, way up here . . . down to the flatlands of the Jordan River . . . over the hills surrounding Jerusalem . . . then on into Bethlehem. That’s about 70 miles—like from here to [local town or landmark about 70 miles away]. And remember, there were no cars or trains back then, so Mary and Joseph had to travel by donkey or on foot. It would have taken many days.

“Oh—and they weren’t traveling on nice, paved roads, either. It was rocky and dusty. Maybe the winds were blowing.

Worship Leader enters, sets the box fan in front of the audience, and turns it on.

“Maybe they had to walk in the rain.

Another Worship Leader enters and sprays the audience with a Super Soaker or spray bottle of water.

“Maybe they wore heavy cloaks to protect themselves from the weather.

Another Worship Leader enters and tosses a big blanket over the kids in the front row.

“Maybe they had to worry about wild animals . . .

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Bear growl*

“ . . . or robbers!

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Grumbling robbers*

“Are you getting the picture? This wasn’t an easy journey at all—especially for someone who was about to have a baby!”

All three Worship Leaders gather their supplies and exit.

NO VACANCY

STORYTELLER: “Finally, Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem.

SLIDE: *Bethlehem*

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born. But, as we read in the book of Luke . . .

Open the Bible to Luke 2:7 (NIRV) and read.

“There was no guest room where they could stay.

“Again, we don’t know exactly what this looked like. But everywhere they went, Mary and Joseph kept hearing this.

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Doors closing (several different doors)*

“No room. No place. And they were running out of time because Mary wasn’t getting any less pregnant. Eventually, they ended up in the only place they could find—a place where animals stayed.

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Manger animals*

“And THERE . . .

Point to the tech booth to cue the sound effect.

AUDIO: *Baby*

“. . . Mary gave birth to Jesus.”

FIELD OF DREAMS

STORYTELLER: “While this happened, a group of shepherds were gathered in a field outside of town.

LIGHTS: *Dim*

SLIDE: *Field and starry night*

AUDIO: *Flock of sheep*

Spray the fresh cut grass/woods/forest air freshener out over the kids.

“It was the shepherds’ job to watch over the flocks and protect them from wild animals. Suddenly, something strange and amazing happened.

Worship Leader enters, turns on the bright flashlight, and shines it slowly around the room.

Storyteller: Open the Bible to Luke 2:9 (NIRV) and read.

“An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them.

“The shepherds were terrified!

Nod to the audience to cue them to make terrified faces/sounds. If needed, repeat the line so they know what to do.

“But the angel told them . . .

Open the Bible to Luke 2:10-12 (NIRV) and read.

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

“Then, a large group of angels appeared!

Point to the tech booth to cue the music.

AUDIO: “Glory to God in the Highest” 17. from Handel’s Messiah, performed by the Robert Shaw Chorale and Orchestra—play from 0:00 to about 0:21, then fade out

Other Worship Leaders enter, with bright flashlights, shining them around the room. When the music fades, Worship Leaders exit.

“The angels were praising God. They said . . .

Open the Bible to Luke 2:14 (NIRV) and read.

“May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!

“The angels left and went into heaven. And the shepherds were probably like, ‘What was THAT?!’ They were scared, excited, overwhelmed—you name it, they probably felt it! But listen to what the shepherds said next.

Open the Bible to Luke 2:15 (NIRV) and read.

“Let’s go to Bethlehem. Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

SLIDE: Manger scene

AUDIO: “Silent Night” guitar instrumental (suggestion: by Adam Rafferty)

(talking over the music) “The shepherds hurried to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby. Just as the angel had said, Jesus was lying in a manger.”

Let the scene “rest” for a few seconds before you fade out the music.

LIGHTS: Up

SLIDE: Theme Background

AUDIO: Fade out music

WRAPPING UP THE STORY

STORYTELLER: “After the shepherds saw Jesus, they went out and told everyone they knew! They explained what the angel had said about Jesus—that He is the Savior God had promised.

“And what about Mary? Well, as we read in the book of Luke . . .

Open the Bible to Luke 2:19 (NIRV) and read.

“Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over.

“Mary must have thought about how the angel first appeared to her . . . about her visit with Elizabeth . . . about the journey to Bethlehem . . . and now, how God’s Son was right there, sleeping in her arms.

“From the beginning, God always had a plan to rescue ALL people. And that night, the angels announced good news to the shepherds—good news that would bring joy to EVERYONE, including us today. God kept His promise. He sent His Son to be our Savior.

SLIDE: Bottom Line

“We can **[Bottom Line]** celebrate because God sent a Savior.

“God sent His Son to save us. That’s why Jesus is the greatest gift the world has ever known! Let’s pray.”

SLIDE: Theme Background

PRAY

STORYTELLER: “God, we are in awe of how much You love us! Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. There are so many exciting things happening this week as we get ready for Christmas Day. In the middle of it all, help us remember the real reason we celebrate. Help us focus on what You’ve done for us by sending Your Son to save us. We love You, and we ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

