Use Week of:

Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20

MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

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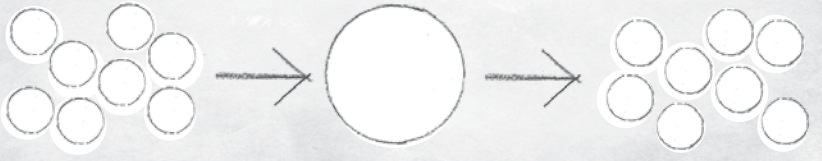

Leader BIBLE STUDY

Do you think it was just by chance that Caesar Augustus called for a census? Did it just so happen that Mary and Joseph were traveling to Bethlehem—the very place the Messiah was prophesied to be born? (Micah 5:2) God is in control of all things, which He showed by using a pagan emperor to bring about His plan.

After Jesus was born, Mary laid Him in a manger. A king in a manger! It was so unlikely. But Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent in the most humble of positions, "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Imagine the shepherds' surprise when an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared. The Bible says that they were terrified! But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David" (Luke 2:10-11).

What a relief! This angel had come to bring good news. First, he proclaimed a Savior. The people of Israel were well aware of their need for a Savior. They made sacrifices daily to atone for their sin. Finally, a Savior had come who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, once and for all.

Jesus was also Messiah the Lord. The word *Messiah* means "anointed one," especially a king. The Deliverer and Redeemer would be King over His people. And this was all happening in Bethlehem, the city of David—just as the prophet Micah said.

This is the best news ever! An army of angels appeared, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors" (Luke 2:14). The purpose of Jesus' birth was twofold: to bring glory to God and to make peace between God and those who trust in Jesus' death and resurrection.

MINISTRY GRID
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Additional resources for each session are available at *gospelproject.com.* For free training and session-by-session help, visit *www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.*

Jesus Was Born

Luke 2:1-20

During the time Mary was pregnant with Baby Jesus, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, **announced that everyone needed to be registered for a census.** Every person traveled to the town where his family was from. Since **Joseph** was a descendant of King David, he **and Mary** left their home in Nazareth and **traveled to Bethlehem**, the city of David.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place for Mary to have her baby, but every place was full because of all the people who were in town to be counted.

So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby. She wrapped Baby Jesus snugly in cloth, and she laid Him in a feeding trough.

In the same region, some shepherds were staying out in the fields and watching their sheep to protect them from thieves and predators. **All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them. A bright light shone around the shepherds, and they were terrified!**

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David."

Then the angel said, "You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough." A king in a feeding trough? That was no place for a king!

All of a sudden, many angels appeared, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!"

So **the shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus. They found Mary and Joseph, and the baby** who was lying in the feeding trough. **The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus.**

Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. Mary thought about everything that was happening and tried to understand it.

The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Christ Connection: The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to save people from their sins and to be their King.

WANT TO DISCOVER GOD'S WORD? GET *ADVENTURE!*

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Jesus is God's one and only Son. Everyone who believes in Jesus will not perish but will have life forever with God. (See John 3:16.) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out *www.lifeway.com/devotionals.*

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born
BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20
MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.
KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5
BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, invite them to share with you their family's Christmas traditions. Do they light Advent candles or use an Advent calendar? Do they stay up late on Christmas Eve? Do they go to a candlelight service? Do they go to their grandparents' house?

SAY • We all have many ways to celebrate Christmas with our family. The most important reason we celebrate Christmas is the birth of Jesus, God's promised Savior.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Comic Strip" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Comic Strip" activity page. Talk about what the kids wrote in the thought bubbles.

SAY • Today, we will learn that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.** The shepherds knew about this great news because an angel told them. The shepherds were the first people to hear the good news!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Is it good news?

Explain that you are going to read a few scenarios to the kids. Kids will give a thumbs-up if the news is good news. Kids will give a thumbs-down if it is not good news.

- Your sister fell and broke her arm.
- Your dad announces a surprise trip to the beach.
- You made an A+ on your spelling test.
- Your grandma is coming for a visit.
- It snowed three feet last night and school is canceled.
- You have to wash the dishes.
- You have to write an essay.
- You won free tickets to the Super Bowl.

SAY • We all know good news when we hear it. The shepherds knew the angel's message was good news. The fact that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior** is the best news ever told.

OPTION 2: Herd sheep

- clean, white rolled-up socks
- empty wrapping paper tubes
- masking tape

Provide rolled-up white socks to be sheep and long wrapping paper tubes to be shepherds' crooks. Tape a square "pen" on the far end of the room. Scatter the rolled-up socks around the room. Invite shepherds to use their crooks to lead the sheep into the pen. For more of a challenge, you may give the kids a time limit.

SAY • Shepherds who were out watching their flocks were the first to hear some really good news. **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior!**

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born
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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Large Group Leader enters.]

LEADER • Merry Christmas, everybody! I hope you're having a good week! Have you enjoyed any Christmas parties this year? [*Invite the kids to respond.*] What would you do if someone really famous invited you to a party? Would you be pretty excited?

I don't know about you, but I'd be so excited that I would have to tell everyone I knew. I'd post pictures of me getting ready all over social media, and I'd probably countdown every minute until the party. Am I right? What would you do? [*Invite kids to respond.*]

In today's Bible story, we're going to learn about some shepherds who witnessed the very first Christmas celebration ever.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

- Giant Timeline

LEADER • We've been taking a break from our chronological journey through the Bible to celebrate Jesus' birth during Christmas time. Last week, we learned that **God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.** Mary and Joseph were just ordinary people whom God used to bring His Son into the world. Today we're going to learn about Jesus' birth.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we launch into our Bible story, who can remember our big picture question and answer? [*Invite a few kids to say it from memory.*] ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.*** Angels appeared to shepherds on the night that Jesus was born and told them the good news: the Savior, the Messiah, was born!

Key passage (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Adopted as Sons" song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to say together Galatians 4:4-5. You may also say the key passage broken up into smaller parts and invite the kids to say it after you.

LEADER • Our key passage tells us that God sent Jesus to be born of a woman so He could rescue us from sin. When we trust in Jesus, we also are adopted into God's family!

Sing the key passage song.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "Jesus Was Born" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Open your Bible to Luke 2:1-20. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Was Born." Read only the bolded text for a shorter story.

LEADER • Isn't it neat that God used an unbelieving emperor's census to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem at just the right time for Jesus to be born? Long ago, God had said through the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. That's exactly what happened.

The first people to hear about Jesus being born were shepherds who were watching sheep in the fields. Back in Bible times, shepherds were not important people. Most people wouldn't invite a shepherd to come straight from the fields and visit a new baby. Shepherds were probably covered with mud, and they probably smelled like sheep! Just as God chose ordinary people to be His Son's earthly parents, He chose to share the good news with unlikely people first. The shepherds found out **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to save people from their sin and to be their King.

Ask the following review questions:

1. Where did Mary and Joseph travel for the census? (*Bethlehem, Luke 2:4*)
2. Where did Baby Jesus sleep? (*in a feeding trough, Luke 2:7*)

3. To whom did the angel first appear with the good news? (*shepherds, Luke 2:8-9*)
4. Who did the angel say Jesus is? (*the Savior, Christ the Lord; Luke 2:11*)
5. ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

- "Unit 5, Session 2" discussion starter video

LEADER • Have you ever had a hard time waiting for something? Check out this video.

Show the "Unit 5, Session 2" discussion starter video.

LEADER • Jacob didn't wait for the brownies to cool down before he ate them! Ouch! You know, God's people had been waiting for the Messiah a long time. They may have thought that God had forgotten His promise or that He would never fulfill it. Has anyone ever made a promise to you that took a long time to fulfill? Do you ever have a hard time trusting others? How about trusting God? Why do you think it is so hard to trust God at times? [*Invite kids to respond to each question.*]

God is always faithful and will always keep His promises! Even though it took hundreds and hundreds of years for God to send Jesus, at just the

right time, He sent Jesus to earth so that He could die on the cross and rise again to rescue us from sin. **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

Sing (4 minutes)

- "Joy to the World" song
- noisemakers or jingle bells (optional)

LEADER • I think we should stand up and sing to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Sing together "Joy to the World." Consider providing noisemakers or jingle bells for kids to shake as they sing.

Pray (2 minutes)

Before transitioning to small groups, make any announcements for your kids' ministry. Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for sending Your Son—Christ, the Lord—to rescue us from sin. Help us to be like the shepherds, who were so excited that they told everyone they saw about You. Help us to tell others that You sent Your Son, Jesus, to rescue people from sin. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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MAIN POINT: Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- foam plates
- marker
- hula hoop
- "You Must Be Holy" song

Before class, draw simple sheep faces on the front of foam plates. On the back of each plate, write one or two words from the key passage and Scripture reference. Mix up the plates. During class, invite kids to line up single file. Stand a few feet away from them, holding the hula hoop. The first kid will search for the sheep that contains the first few words of the key passage and "herd" it into the pen by flinging it like a flying disc through the hula hoop. Allow kids to try again if the plate doesn't make it through the hula hoop.

Once all kids have herded the sheep into the pen, invite them to arrange the key passage in the correct order. Say the key passage together or sing the key passage song.

SAY • Our key passage says that Jesus was born of woman at the exact time God had planned for it to happen. This was not an accident! God fulfilled His promise to send a Savior to rescue people from sin, and that Savior is Jesus! **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- Bible times dress-up clothes

Open your Bible to Luke 2:1-20. Provide Bible times dress-up clothes for kids to use as they act out the Bible story as you read it to them. If you don't have Bible times dress-up clothes, provide adult-size T-shirts or button-down shirts with taffeta to belt them. Assign each kid a Bible story person to act out in the Bible story (shepherds, Mary, Joseph, angels, other townspeople whom the shepherds told about Jesus).

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

SAY • The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to earth from heaven. God the Son has always existed with God the Father in heaven, but Jesus came into the world to save people from their sins and to be their King. Was He born in a palace though? [*Invite kids to answer.*]

No, when Jesus was born on earth, He wasn't born into a royal family with a palace, a crown, and royal servants. Mary and Joseph were just normal people, although Joseph was a descendant of King David. The shepherds who came to visit Jesus when He was born were not special either. In fact, lots of people in Bible times didn't like shepherds! What does that tell you about God's plan to send Jesus? [*Invite kids to respond.*] That's right: He is a Savior for all types of people. Do you remember our big picture question? ***Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.***

Jesus came to be a humble King, a King who would give up His life to rescue His people from their sin. One day Jesus will come back to earth and He will set up His throne on earth!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Run to Bethlehem

Form two teams of kids and invite them to line up single file on one end of the room. Designate a finish line on the opposite end of the room. Explain to the kids that the first kid in each line must run to "Bethlehem," touch the floor, and run back to tell the next kid in line "the Savior is born!" Then she will move to the back of the line and the next kid will run to Bethlehem. The first team to complete the task wins.

SAY • The Bible says that after the angels had given the shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth, the shepherds went "quickly to find Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They were excited to see Jesus for themselves. When they saw Jesus, they were so excited that they told everyone about everything they had seen. They were the first people to tell the good news: **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

OPTION 2: Good news popcorn

- Allergy Alert download
- Christmas-themed ziplock sandwich bags
- snack-size zplok bags
- large bag of popcorn kernels
- cinnamon
- sugar
- measuring cups
- tablespoons
- adhesive labels
- marker

Before class, post an allergy alert. Pour the popcorn kernels into a large bowl with one or two ½ cup measuring cups. Give each kid one or two ziplock bags (two if they'd like to make a popcorn gift bag for themselves). Help kids write the main point on the back of the bag.

Assist kids as they measure ½ cup of popcorn kernels in the larger sandwich bags and 2 tablespoons of sugar and one tablespoon of cinnamon in the snack-size bag. Seal the snack bag and place it inside the popcorn bag. Write the ingredients and the following instructions on the adhesive label:

1. Pour cooking oil in the bottom of a large pot. Heat oil

on medium heat and add the popcorn kernels.
2. Cover the pot loosely with a lid. When the kernels start popping, shake the pot to ensure even popping.
3. When popping slows down, remove from heat and pour into a large bowl.
4. While still warm, shake the cinnamon and sugar mixture on top and stir. Enjoy!

SAY • Can you think of someone who might need to hear the good news this Christmas? When you get home, ask your parents for permission to take this bag of good news popcorn to someone who needs to hear that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids*

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write or draw a picture of what the shepherds might have told the people about when they met Jesus. Ask kids what they would tell someone about Jesus this Christmas.

SAY • Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior. Jesus is God's Son, who came to earth as a human being just like us so He could rescue us from sin.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to be our Savior and for Him to help everyone remember the real reason for Christmas this year.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

Journal Page

Christmas

Key Passage: Galatians 4:4-5

Big Picture Question: Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

Session 1: Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph
Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18-24
God chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus.

Session 2: Jesus Was Born
Luke 2:1-20
Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

Session 3: Wise Men Visited Jesus
Matthew 2:1-21
The wise men worshiped Jesus as King.

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When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

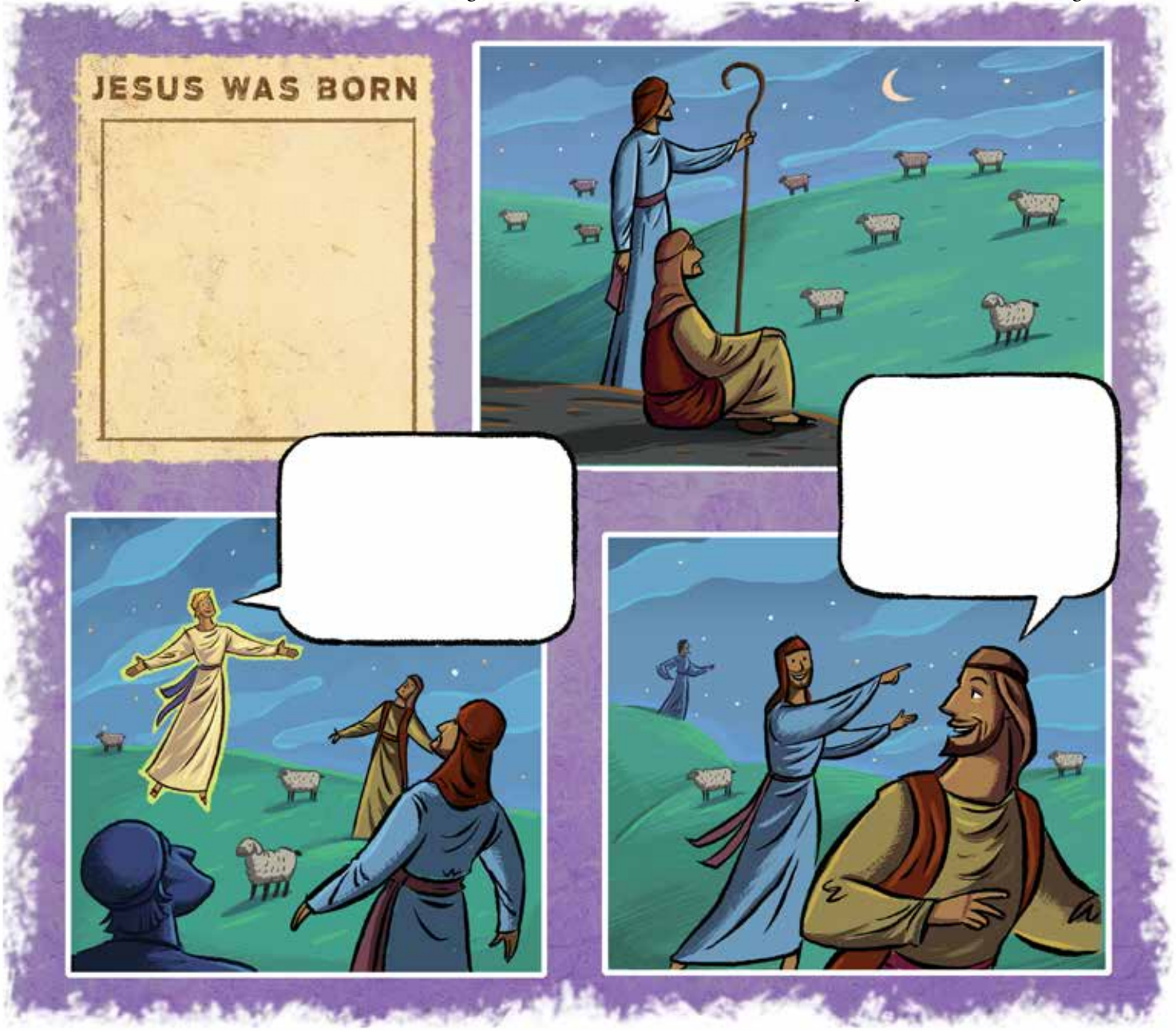
Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

Comic Strip

DOWNLOAD THE TGP FAMILY APP

INSTRUCTIONS: Write down or draw what the angel said about Jesus' birth and what the shepherds said when the angels left.



KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- Why was Jesus born? Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS WAS BORN

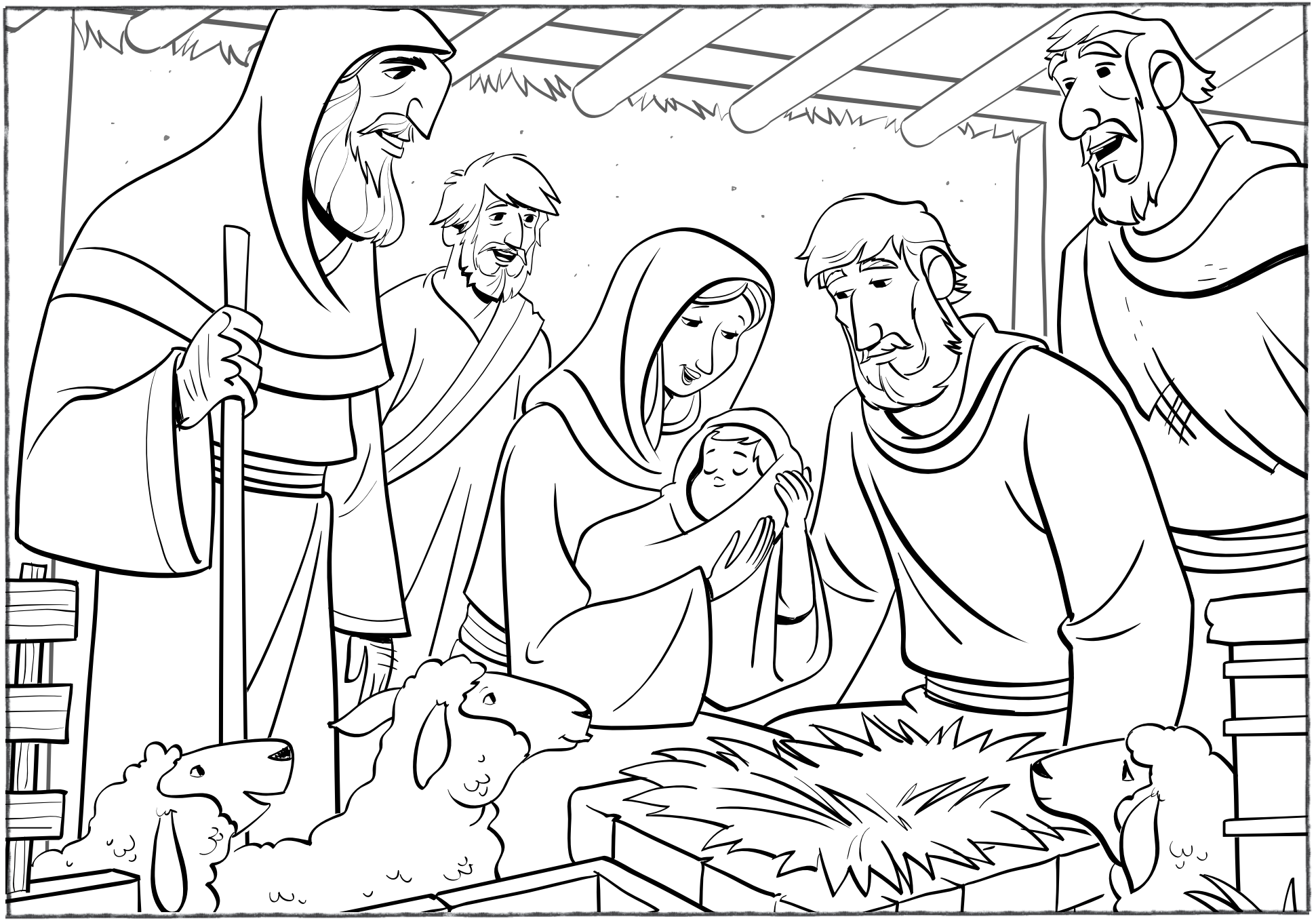
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- Angels appeared to shepherds and told them Jesus was born.
- The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Baby Jesus in the manger.
- Jesus is God's Son.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

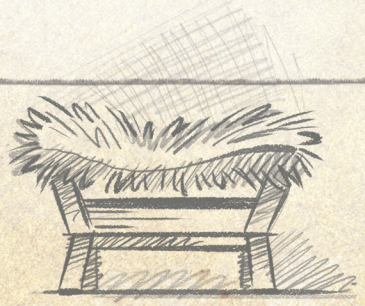
- What is the best news you've ever heard?
- Where was Jesus born? Why?
- Whom can you tell the good news?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Talk about the day your kids were born or when an adoption was finalized. Who were the first people who came to visit? Talk about the joy of that day.
- Take it further: Purchase or donate gently used baby blankets, clothes, or toys to a pregnancy crisis center or women and children's shelter. Include a Christmas card with the message: *Jesus was born!*



Why was Jesus born?



Why was Jesus born?

Jesus was born to rescue us from sin.