


the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

The Light of the whole world

The story of the shepherds, from Luke 2

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

- ☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.
- ☉ Briefly recap the main point of the previous story: “Last time we read that God’s Son, the Rescuer, the true King, was born in a stable in Bethlehem. We memorized a verse about that.”

- ☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Luke 2:11 — ‘Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.’” Remind them that Messiah means Christ and refers to the King. It is another name for Jesus.

- ☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “In the Bible, another name for Jesus is Light. Jesus is called the ‘Light of the World.’”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and learn that Jesus is called the “Light of the World.”

Materials: 2 blindfolds; a star cut out of paper for each child (large enough to fit the preprinted words onto); a piece of paper for each child with the words “Jesus is the Light of the World!” printed on it; child-safe glue; decorating items, e.g., crayons, stickers, pieces of colored paper, tin foil, etc.

1. Say: “Let’s play a game of ‘Find the Star.’”
2. Assign half the circle as team 1 and the other half as team 2, and give each team a blindfold. Place (or hang) the stars on opposite walls of the room, spread out from one another. Assign a wall to each team.
3. Explain the game: The first person in the team wears the blindfold. The team calls out instructions so that their player can get to the wall and pick up a star. For example: two steps to the right; walk forward, stop; and so on. Once the person has picked up a star, they can remove the blindfold, run back to their team, and hand the blindfold to the next person on the team, who is then also instructed on how to cross to the wall and pick up a star. The team to get all their stars back to the circle first wins.

4. Play the game and announce the winning team.
5. Hand each child a piece of paper with the words “Jesus is the Light of the World!” Announce what is written on the paper as you do so. Ask them to glue the paper on their star, helping the children with the glue if necessary.
6. Place the decorating items in the center of the circle. Give the children a few minutes to decorate their stars.
7. Ask them to write their name on the back of their star and then to help you put away the decorating items. Ask the children to help you spread out all the stars in the center of the circle. Comment admiringly on their work.
8. Say: “We’ve made some very beautiful stars. In our story today there is a very special star. Ready to find out why?”

For larger groups: You may want to divide the circle into more teams so this activity does not take too long.

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 184–191 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD2 track 9.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

The incarnation is the great miracle. In many other religions the founder is a human being sent by God to show us what to do to be saved. But Jesus is God himself come to earth. His coming means he will not just tell us what we have to do to be saved, but will do for us all that we cannot do ourselves – he will live the obedient life we should have lived but did not; he will die to pay the penalty for the disobedient life we shouldn't have lived but did. He came to accomplish our salvation for us.

The following are some of the wonderful implications of the fact that the Savior is not only truly God but truly human:

☉ If God became truly human, we have a remarkable resource to face pain and suffering. Only the Christian God descended into the world and became vulnerable and suffered and died himself. Jesus knows what it's like to experience hunger, danger, injustice, rejection, torture, suffering, and death. Moreover, because he is "God with us" (Matthew 1:23), he gives us his personal presence in our suffering.

☉ If God became truly human, then we should not be too impressed with glitz, physical beauty, status, and power. The incarnation means that God was willing to empty himself of his glory and power and live humbly as a servant. In the incarnation God associated with "undesirables." The first people to arrive at the stable were shepherds. Shepherds in Jesus' day were at the bottom of the social ladder. They were marginal and disdained. Yet, God announces the birth of Jesus to them first and it is the shepherds through whom others learn about Jesus – Luke 2:17 says: "When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child." The incarnation should mean the end of our snobbery.

The following are some of the wonderful implications of the fact that the baby born in Bethlehem is God himself:

☉ If Jesus is God, he is not simply to be admired and respected but to be worshiped, adored, and delighted in. The purpose of our lives is to behold his glory and beauty (John 17:24). He is the ultimate object of worship.

☉ If Jesus is God, he is to be absolutely obeyed and given central priority in our lives. He must be Lord. Jesus is God – and therefore he should be the preeminent concern of our choices, the ultimate Lord over our wills.

☉ If Jesus is God, his salvation is of infinite value. His blood was shed as a ransom (Mark 10:45) to pay for our sin. But his blood was the blood of God (Acts 20:28)! Imagine how valuable that is. No sin is too great to be forgiven; no corruption is too great to be healed.

☉ If Jesus is God, then there is endless hope for the world and for you. Jesus, the true King, has returned and has begun to put the world right with his power. Right now that healing is only partial, but some day all deformity, decay, sin, disease, and imperfection will be wiped away. Whatever problem we face, God's power will eventually triumph over it.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To understand how and why God shared the news of Jesus' birth with the shepherds.

Materials: Crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: "The star that God put in the sky was like a spotlight, shining on Jesus, announcing his birth. God did something else to announce the birth of his Son — he sent a choir of angels to some shepherds. Let's act out what happened. You can all be shepherds. So, it is night, this room is a field, and you are all shepherds."
2. Say: "I'm going to call out the main scenes from the story and then ask you to act them out. Ready?"
3. Read the following scenes from the story, getting the children to act them out accordingly:

STORY	ACTION
That night some shepherds were out in the open fields.	Show them the picture on page 187 of <i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i> and ask them to imitate the positions of the shepherds; i.e., they can lie down in the circle sleeping or gazing up at the stars. Comment on how well they do this.
Suddenly standing in front of them was an angel of the Lord. They were very frightened.	Ask: "How can you show fear?" Get them to tremble, hide their faces, freeze in fear, etc.
The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I have come to bring you happy news for everyone everywhere. Today, God's Son has been born! You can go see him."	Ask: "How did the shepherds feel when the angel told them this?" Get answers like: not afraid anymore, excited, amazed, etc., and get them to act accordingly. When they have mastered this, ask: "Why is it surprising that God told this news to the shepherds first? Correct, people used to laugh at shepherds; they were not important people; they were nobodies."
Behind the angel, troops of other angels were singing a beautiful song about God and then suddenly the angels left. The shepherds stamped out their fire.	Get them to stand up in the circle and pretend to stamp out a fire.

STORY	ACTION
The shepherds raced down the grassy hill.	Get them to run in place as fast as they can.
The shepherds ran through the gates of Bethlehem, down the streets, through a courtyard ...	Say: "Keep running ..."
... down some steps, round a corner, past a hedge ...	Say: "Keep running ..."
... they ran until at last they reached a stable. They stopped to catch their breath.	Get them to stop and gasp/catch their breath.
The shepherds quietly went inside and knelt on the dirt floor.	Get them to kneel (quietly).
They looked at the baby, who would be a light to light up the whole world.	Ask: "How did the shepherds feel when they saw Jesus?" Get answers like: happy, excited, prayerful, etc., and get them to act accordingly.

4. Repeat the story in the preceding table several times so the actions and story become familiar. Every time you repeat it, the pace at which you read and the children's actions should get faster and faster.

5. Toward the end of the allocated time, give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Ask them to use the code to find the missing words. You may want to allow them to work in pairs. When they are finished, ask a willing volunteer to read the complete sentences aloud.

6. Say: "The first people to hear the good news about the birth of God's Son were shepherds. But as we said, that is surprising because people used to laugh at shepherds; shepherds were not important people; they were nobodies. Why then did God tell the shepherds the news first? As we've seen from other stories, God often chooses people we would not. God often sets his love on people who are not loved, not wanted, not attractive, and not popular — just like these shepherds and just like Jesus."

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher. Each teacher can then facilitate the activity with their circle, and then the circles can all perform for one another.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: "The angel told the shepherds the good news for everyone everywhere. It was the good news that Jesus was born."

Say: "That is good news for everyone everywhere, which means it is good news for us too. Jesus, the Rescuer, the Light of the World, is born!"

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: "What did we discover about Jesus from today's story?"

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, thanking God for telling the shepherds and us the good news.

Ask the children to pray, praising God for Jesus' birth and that he is the Light of the World.

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

⌚ Introduce the verse: "The verse we recited at the start is the good news the angel told the shepherds in today's story."

⌚ Announce the verse: "So, your verse to practice at home is Luke 2:11 — 'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.'"

⌚ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

⌚ Say: "Time is almost up, so let's see how quickly you can collect your stars. When I tap you on the shoulder, jump up, collect your star from the center of the circle, and sit down again. The only rule is that you cannot touch or step on anyone else's star to get to your own. Ready?"

⌚ Tap the children quickly on the shoulder in a random order as you walk around the circle until all the stars are collected.

⌚ Remind them to give the handout to their parents, to take their stars with them, and to memorize the verse for next time.

