



# THE STORY OF MARY AND JOSEPH

MATTHEW 1:1-25, 2:1-23, AND LUKE 2:1-20

## GOAL

- ▶ To teach children the story of how Jesus, the savior of the world, came into the world, not as a powerful man, but as a baby born into a humble family.
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## WORDS TO KNOW

- ▶ **Descendant:** A person who is part of a family that has come from a particular individual.
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## MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **Luke 2:7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Isaiah 9:6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



## OVERVIEW



**Read Matthew 1:1-25, 2:1-23, and Luke 2:1-20:** Mary and Joseph, both descendants of Abraham and King David, were engaged to be married. Sometime before their wedding day, an angel of the Lord came to Mary, who was a virgin, to tell her that she was going to give birth to the Son of the Most High. Before Joseph was able to break off his engagement to Mary, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream and explained that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and she was going to give birth to the Messiah. Near the time that Mary was due, she and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem for the Roman census. When they arrived, the city was packed with travelers, and the only place left for them to stay was a stable. On the night that Jesus was born, a star appeared in the sky over the stable. This attracted the attention of the Magi, who began a long journey to see the newborn king. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod where they could find the baby born king of the Jews. Angry that anyone would try to take his power, King Herod asked the Magi to find this baby and tell him where He was so he could go worship Him. King Herod planned to kill Jesus. The Magi followed the star to the place where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were living. They worshiped the newborn King and gave him gifts fit for a king: gold, incense, and myrrh. An angel of the Lord came to the Magi in a dream and warned them of King Herod's plan, and they went home in a different direction. An angel of the Lord warned Joseph of King Herod's plan, so they fled to Egypt where they lived until after Herod's death.



## SUGGESTIONS



Many years earlier, Jesus' birth was prophesied. Many people had expectations of who the Messiah would be and what would change once He had come.

**God has a plan:** God has always known that humanity would need a savior. He had been planning for Jesus' birth from before He created anything. God knew the family line from which Jesus would be a descendant. He knew the dangers Jesus would face. He knew the sacrifice Jesus would have to make. And yet, because He loves us so much, He sent His only Son to save us.

**Looks can be deceiving:** Many people expected the Messiah to be very different from a baby born to a poor family. Many expected that the Messiah would be born royalty and would eventually become the good and just ruler they had so longed for. But Jesus came to serve, not to rule. This confused people, and many did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah because He did not look like what they thought He would or should be.

**The best gift has been given:** Christmas is a time of getting together with friends and family and exchanging gifts. Gift giving is meant to remind us of the gifts the wise men gave to baby Jesus, but giving and receiving often becomes the focus of Christmas celebrations. It is important at Christmas time to reflect on what we have been given. God gave us His son, and through Him, we can receive salvation. We will never receive a more precious gift than that.



## PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY



**Ages 5-7 Stars Ornaments | Supplies:** yellow construction paper; markers; glitter; glue; hole punch; and ribbon, yarn, or string.

Using the yellow construction paper, cut out enough star shapes for every student. On one side, write the following: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. At the top of one of the star's points, punch a hole. Allow students to decorate their stars using the craft supplies. Once students are done, run a piece of ribbon, yarn, or string through the hole, and tie the ends in a knot so the star can be hung on Christmas tree or elsewhere.

### **Ages 5-10 Follow the Star**

Get the students to stand in a line. The student at the front of the line is the "star." The star leads the rest of the class round while making different motions that the rest of the line must mimic. Any student who does not successfully mimic the star is out. Continue until each student has a chance to be the star or until the class must move on to the next activity.

**Ages 8-10 Present Predictions | Supplies:** Gift boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, tape for gift wrapping.

Print out or cut out from newspaper ads items that students would like to receive for Christmas (bicycles, video games, instruments) and things they would not be excited to receive for Christmas (package of socks, box of non-color pencils, bag of sand). Print out enough so that each team will have two of each type of gift. Place one of these items in the gift boxes, but leave some of the gift boxes empty. Wrap enough gifts so that each team receives two elaborately wrapped gifts, two moderately wrapped gifts, and two unwrapped gifts. Mix things up so that the exciting gifts aren't always in the prettiest boxes.

Let the students unwrap the first set of gifts. Ask them if what was in each gift was what they expected to find in box wrapped or not wrapped that way. On the second set of gifts, ask the teams to predict what is in each box, and then let them open the boxes. Ask if their predictions were correct.

Just because something looks good, doesn't mean it is and vice versa. The wise men traveled very far to worship a king only to find a baby born to a poor family. Jesus was not born rich and powerful by worldly standards, but the wise men knew that He was great all the same. The same is true of people; we can't tell whether people are good or bad, funny or boring just by looking them.



## MEMORY

## VERSE

## MEANING



**Luke 2:7:** Jesus, the savior of the world, was born in a barn. Instead of a crib, He was laid down in a manger used to feed livestock. The Creator of the universe did not come into this world a powerful man, but as a powerless baby born into a poor, humble family.

**Isaiah 9:6:** This prophecy foretold of the coming Messiah and the attributes He would have and the power He would have. Although Jesus was born fully human, He was also fully God.

Post-Lesson Activities

## POST-LESSON ACTIVITY



**Ages 5-7** **Don't Wake the Baby** | **Supplies:** baby doll, baby blanket, shallow box, strips of yellow paper, stuffed animals.

Cut yellow paper into strips and lay them along the bottom of the box to serve as hay. Wrap the baby doll in the blanket, and place it on top of the strips of paper. Give each student a stuffed animal (they don't have to be the kinds of animals that would have been in the stable). Tell the students that they must feed their stuffed animal with hay from the manger that the doll is in. Instruct them to carefully pull out a piece of hay from the manger without touching or disturbing the doll. If the doll moves more than an inch or rolls over, that student doesn't get a piece of hay. Keep going until all the pieces of hay have been pulled out of the manger or until the class needs to move on to another activity. The student with the most pieces of hay wins.

For a bit of extra fun, have the students make the sound their stuffed animals make while playing the game.

**Ages 5-10** **Shepherds and Sugar** | **Supplies:** candy canes

Divide the class into teams and have the students line up. Give each student a candy cane. In front of each line, place a pile of candy canes on a table. Students at the front of the line will put the straight end of their candy canes in their mouths. On go, they will use the hook end of the candy cane to hook candy canes in the pile without using their hands. After 30 seconds, count how many candy canes the students hooked. Each candy cane hooked counts as one point. Continue until each student has a chance to try hooking candy canes. The team with the most points at the end wins.

Candy canes are holiday treats and decorations that are meant to remind us of the shepherd's crooks, or canes, carried by the shepherds who came to worship Jesus on the night He was born.



**Ages 5-10** | **Stargazing** | **Supplies:** construction paper, marker, tape

Write out Luke 2:7 one word at a time on the back of cut-out star shapes. Make enough so that each team has a set. Tape the stars around the room. Add an element of difficulty by putting the stars in locations that are not obvious. Divide the class into teams. On go, each team sends one person out to find a star. When that student returns, the next student in line goes out to get another star. Students waiting in line should try to assemble the words into the verse. Continue until a team has assembled the verse in order or until all the stars have been collected. If the teams are unable to put the whole verse together because of word duplication, the team with the most complete verse wins.

TAKE  
HOME



**God has a plan:** Just as God had a plan for Jesus, God knows everything about us. We are not here on accident. We were created with a purpose, and if we follow His guidance through the Holy Spirit, we can help to carry out God's plan and glorify Him.

**Looks can be deceiving:** Because we do not know people's hearts or every detail about their lives, we cannot judge people or their value. God knows these things, and it is His job to judge. We should try our best to love everyone, no matter what, and help them to see the love God has for them.

**The best gift has been given:** Giving and receiving gifts isn't bad. Asking for things isn't something to be ashamed of. It is something we should enjoy! Just don't lose sight of what the celebrating is all about: Jesus, the ultimate gift given to us by God.



## QUESTION & ANSWER

### SLIDE 1



**Q1a:** Jesus' family could be traced back to whom?

**A1:** Jesus' family could be traced back to Abraham and King David.

**Q1b:** From your parents, how far can you trace your family?

**TN:** From our parents we have aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmothers, grandfathers, and maybe even great grandmothers and great grandfathers. The oldest relative we can think of had great grandmothers and great grandfathers! Our families go back farther in time than anyone living can remember. We know who our ancestors are from records and family stories, just like Mary and Joseph were able to trace their family.

### SLIDE 2



**Q2a:** What news did God share with Mary?

**A2:** God told Mary that He had chosen her to be Jesus' mother.

**Q2b:** A box of cookies is missing. Only you and your friend are home. You didn't eat them, so your friend must have, right?

**TN:** It seems logical to assume our friend ate the box of cookies, but we have no evidence. Just because we can't think of any other way for the cookies to go missing doesn't mean that the only answer is that our friend ate them. Maybe someone else was home at the time and we didn't know. Maybe the cookies were eaten the day before and we didn't know. These possible scenarios are pretty simple compared to what can happen with an all-powerful God. In the case of this story, a virgin was made pregnant. It wasn't illogical for Joseph to have thought that Mary must have been unfaithful because it is not humanly possible for a virgin to become pregnant. It is highly unlikely that anyone would have suggested Mary's pregnancy was caused by the Holy Spirit, as that just wasn't a thing that happened. Joseph is a good example of why it is a good idea to give people the benefit of the doubt and let them explain their side of the story before passing judgment.



## QUESTION & ANSWER

### SLIDE 3



**Q3a:** What did the angel of the Lord tell Joseph?

**A3:** The angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary's baby came from the Holy Spirit.

**Q3b:** If someone promised every day to buy you a pony, but never did, would you still believe you'll get a pony one day?

**TN:** At first, we'd probably continue to believe it. What an exciting promise! After a couple of weeks, we'd probably start asking for specific information, such as when we might expect to see this promised pony. After months, this promise would just sound empty to us. No matter how much we want the pony, this person isn't coming through on their promise. The first mention of God sending a savior is thought to appear in Genesis during God's explanation of Adam and Eve's punishment for their disobedience and sin. Humanity had been waiting for the Messiah for nearly all of history, and yet those who believed and understood that God is faithful knew that God would send our Savior. No matter how long it takes, God is always faithful, and He will fulfill His promises when the time is right.

### SLIDE 4



**Q4a:** Why was Bethlehem so crowded when Mary and Joseph arrived there?

**A4:** Bethlehem was crowded with people who had traveled there to be counted.

**Q4b:** How would you go about counting the number of students who go to your school?

**TN:** If we count the number of students while out on recess, we might count the same people more than once because no one stays in one place during recess. The same is possible if we tried to count during lunch. The best way to count everyone in the school would be to gather everyone into one room all at the same time. That way we know that each student is counted only once. It was for these same reasons that the Romans made specific people go to specific places at specific times so they could be counted. It would have been impossible to get anything close to an accurate count otherwise.



## QUESTION & ANSWER

### SLIDE 5



**Q5a:** What appeared the night that Jesus was born?

**A5:** A star appeared in the sky on the night that Jesus was born.

**Q5b:** Can you locate the North Star?

**TN:** Before compasses and GPS devices were available, people used the stars to help them navigate. Knowing how to find the North Star meant that a person could figure out where they were and how to get to where they needed to go. The Magi used the brilliant star that began to shine on the night Jesus was born so they could find and worship the savior of the world.

### SLIDE 6



**Q6a:** What did the Magi give Jesus?

**A6:** The Magi gave Jesus gold, incense, and myrrh, which are gifts fit for a king.

**Q6b:** You are given two birthday gifts: one is in a box big enough for a bike, the other is the size of a book. Which do you open first?

**TN:** Most of us would open the big box first, but there is no guarantee that what it holds is any better than the little box. Looks rarely are the best indicators of content and substance. The story of Jesus' birth would have been very different if the Magi had reached the place where Jesus was and decided to turn around and go home because there was no way anyone with any real power would be found in such a poor home. The Magi truly were wise men because they recognized the power and majesty in this poor, powerless baby.



## SLIDE 7

### QUESTION & ANSWER



**Q7a:** In a dream, what did God warn the Magi, Mary, and Joseph about?

**A7:** God warned the Magi, Mary, and Joseph of King Herod's plan to kill Jesus.

**Q7b:** Have you ever had a dream you thought really happened?

**TN:** Sometimes our dreams are very lifelike, and it can be a bit confusing. When God came to the Magi, Mary, and Joseph, there was no mistaking that it wasn't just a dream. They all knew that the message they received should be taken seriously. They obeyed the advice, and Jesus was kept safe from King Herod.



## QUESTION & ANSWER

### MEMORY VERSES

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### BIG IDEA

▶ God sending His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins was the best gift we will ever receive!

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### CLOSING PRAYER

▶ Father God, thank You so much for sending us Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for the relationship we have with You that was restored by Jesus' sacrifice. Help us to live lives that are as pleasing to You as the kingly gifts the Magi gave to Jesus after He was born. We love You and ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



## LESSON TRANSCRIPT

### SLIDE 1



In the beginning, before God created the universe and everything in it, His salvation plan was for Jesus to come to the earth. God selected a very special people to be part of Jesus' family. Mary, Jesus' mother, and Joseph, Mary's husband, were part of this special family. It was a family that could be traced back to the great King David, whom God had promised an eternal Kingdom, and then to Abraham through whom God has promised to bless the entire world.

### SLIDE 2



But before Mary and Joseph got married, God came to her and shared some astonishing news. God had chosen Mary to be Jesus' mother! God told Mary that she would become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Joseph found out, he was hurt and confused. He didn't understand how Mary could be with child unless she had been unfaithful to him. Heartbroken, Joseph considered breaking his engagement to Mary and quietly ending their relationship.

### SLIDE 3



Before Joseph could go through with his plans, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel told Joseph that the child Mary was carrying was from the Holy Spirit and there was no reason Joseph shouldn't marry her. Joseph was amazed and overjoyed by this incredible news! The angel told Joseph that the baby boy would fulfill God's promise to send His people a savior, and the baby should be named Jesus. Mary's baby was the Messiah!



## LESSON TRANSCRIPT

### SLIDE 4



The Romans, who were in control of Israel at the time, ordered that everyone under their rule be counted. This meant that Joseph and a very pregnant Mary had to take a long and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The weary couple arrived to find the city overflowing with people who had all traveled to be counted. This presented a big problem for them because Mary was ready to give birth. With the inn full of travelers, Mary and Joseph took shelter in the only place still available: a stable. Next to horses and sheep, the savior of the world was born. Angels sang, and nearby shepherds came to worship the newborn king.

### SLIDE 5

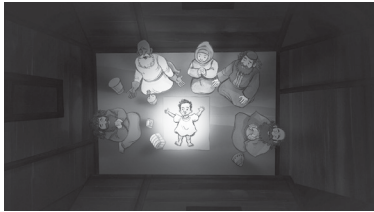


On the night Jesus was born, a star shone brightly in the night sky over the stable where Jesus was born. It attracted the attention of a group of wise men, called the Magi. The Magi, in wonder of this beautiful sight, followed the star in search of Jesus. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod where they could find the child who was born king of the Jews. Evil King Herod, angry at the idea that someone was trying to take away his power, asked the wise men to continue their search and to let him know where the child could be found so he could worship Him. But worship wasn't King Herod's plan; King Herod was plotting to kill Jesus.



## LESSON TRANSCRIPT

### SLIDE 6



The Magi followed the star until they reached the town of Bethlehem. Their long and difficult journey came to an end when the star stopped over the place where they found Mary and Joseph caring for the baby Jesus. The wise men bowed down and worshiped Jesus. Despite the humble surroundings, the wise men knew they were in the presence of holiness. They didn't need to find the baby in a palace to know that it was right to give Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which were the types of gifts given to kings.

### SLIDE 7



In a dream, God warned the Magi and Mary and Joseph of King Herod's plan to kill Jesus. To help keep Jesus safe, the wise men began their long trip home in a different direction than they came so they wouldn't run into King Herod. Mary and Joseph scooped up Jesus and escaped to Egypt. They stayed in Egypt until an angel of the Lord appeared in one of Joseph's dreams to tell him that King Herod had died and that it was finally safe for them to return home to Israel. Some years later in Israel, Jesus began His ministry, performing miracles, healing people, and ultimately sacrificing Himself to save us from our sins.