**1. Motivate**

When have you seen a decision by one person positively impact others?

* one person in the crowd decided to make a purchase
* at a revival meeting, the first person to come forward made it easier for others to come on
* the person who started the applause
* first person to stand when they began the Hallelujah Chorus
* someone in the Starbucks line paid for the person behind them, it continued
* the person who stopped to put money in the Salvation Army kettle
* the fellow who stopped as the light turned yellow prevented others from crashing the red light

**2. Transition**

Today we consider God’s decision to send His Only Son to Earth

* Jesus came for our salvation.

A video introduction is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_v5ztwujz> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/3ahzbm4r>

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Jesus’ Humble Birth

Listen for hardships experienced.

Luke 2:4-7 (NIV) So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

What event provided historical context for the story of Jesus’ birth?

* had to travel to family hometown
* Roman government had mandated international registration for taxes
* Joseph (and Mary) traveled to Bethlehem
* small town didn’t have enough rented rooms for all the travelers
* they ended up in the stable

What were the difficulties involved in this trip?

* travel, in general would have been tough (90 miles, up hill, trip of 3 – 4 days)
* Mary is 9 months pregnant
* no place to stay when they get there
* Baby decides to be born away from home

What elements of the narrative suggest the birth was unusual?

* Joseph and Mary were still only pledged to marriage
* yet she was pregnant … not by relations with a man
* God’s Holy Spirit had performed a physical miracle in her body

What suggests the birth was normal and common?

* there were no complications
* Joseph and whoever might have been nearby attended to her birth
* they cared for the Baby Jesus in normal fashion

Actually, only the husband was required to go for the census registration – what are some possible reasons why Mary accompanied Joseph?

* just wanted to be with him
* people back home were talking about the less than 9 month bride being pregnant
* they might have decided to move there
* Joseph wanted to protect her from the talk

What are some things that are incongruous about the birth of the King of Kings?

* born of very poor parents
* born in what appeared to be questionable circumstances
* born in a very poor location
* might make modern ob-gyn folks nervous about the lack of facilities, cleanliness
* born in a small, inconsequential town
* very few people were aware of the events of that night

If the birth of Jesus was so momentous, why was He born in such humble circumstances?

* consistent with the Servant role of Jesus
* everything about Jesus would be miraculous
	+ His virgin birth, his conception
	+ His divinity/humanity combination (incarnation)
	+ His ministry
	+ His resurrection
* It showed his identification with *all* men
* It underlined the *humanity* of Jesus – there is no question of his humanity – he was not plunked down in a palace as a special grown-up envoy of deity

3.2 Angels Proclaimed Good News

Listen for who made an announcement.

Luke 2:8-12 (NIV) And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suppose you were a shepherd outside of Bethlehem some 2000 years ago … you’ve got the sheep settled down, you’re taking turns being on watch against predatory animals and thieves … a brilliant light appears in the sky. What are some possible responses?

* run away fast
* dive under something to hide
* gather the sheep – don’t want a stampede
* try to wake up from your bad dream
* try to figure out what it is

List words of encouragement and celebration that appear in the angel’s announcement

* don’t be afraid
* I bring you good news of great joy
* the good news is for all the people
* a Savior has been born to you today
* He is the Messiah, the Lord
* Here’s how you’ll know it is him …
* A great angel choir appeared praising God, pronouncing peace to men

What were the three titles given to the Baby … and what is their significance?

* Savior save us from the penalty and power of sin
* Christ Messiah, the Sent One, the Anointed One
* Lord Lord over all things, authority, power … submit to Him

Why do you think God chose to reveal the birth of the Son of God to mere shepherds? (They were not considered high society – couldn’t even act as a witness in the courts)

* they were the ones present, nearby
* Jesus came to minister to and to provide salvation for all men – all sinners – these were about as common folk as existed
* could be some significance about Jesus being referred to eventually as the “Good Shepherd”
* God was trying to show that His Son came not for the high and mighty but for the poor and lowly
* Some folks considered shepherds as dishonest sinners (and Jews) – that’s exactly who Jesus came to help
* The wise men who came were pagan Gentiles – also the folks that Jesus came to help

⇒ Jesus came for the rich and the poor, for the Jews and the Gentiles

How does God's sending the Christ Child bring peace?

* peace between/among men … when the sin problem is solved, we are able to live as God intended
* peace within oneself … no longer plagued by guilt
* peace and contentment with life … when we are trusting God, we don’t need to be constantly desiring for something else

3.3 Rejoice for Your Salvation

Listen for how the shepherds responded.

Luke 2:16-20 (NIV) So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

List the words and phrases that have to do with *joyous celebration* and *excitement*

* shepherds decide to go see what they had heard about
* they hurried
* they visited with Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus
* they spread the word about what they had heard and seen
* people were *amazed*
* they glorified and praised God
* Mary treasured and pondered all the events

What did the shepherds do after their encounter with the Baby?

* returned to their sheep
* glorified God
* praised God for what they had heard and seen
* marveled that what they had been told, sure enough, was actually true

Why do you think the shepherds told what they experienced to the people of Bethlehem?

* was so exciting, they couldn’t keep it to themselves
* too good of a secret to keep
* not much good happens to shepherds, when it does, it’s worth telling

How does celebrating Jesus birth bring you joy?

* the beauty of the music which declares the birth of Jesus
* the Truth about who Jesus and what He has done
* the reminder of His humanity
* the Power of God to accomplish His redemption of mankind in this way

Note that the shepherds were the first to tell the Good News of the coming of Jesus!

* they were thrilled and excited
* probably, you couldn’t have shut them up

What are some ways we can specifically praise God for the gift of His Son as we celebrate Christmas this year?

* daily *tell* God your thanks and your praise
* participation in outreach ministries which bring God's Joy to others
* share the Christmas story to children, grandchildren
* work to focus your attention on the *birth of the Savior*, instead of all the other things which cause us to lose focus

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Surrender your life.

* Now is the time to put your faith and trust in Christ.
* If you haven’t already, make this the best Christmas ever; speak with a Christian friend or leader about your decision.

Seek God’s plan.

* God has a wonderful plan for your life.
* If you are placing your dreams above His plans, turn these expectations over to Him.
* Invite Him to make clear His path for your life.

Rest in your salvation.

* Trust Jesus to cover your past, protect your present, and secure your eternity.
* If you are struggling to accept peace in one of these areas, pray about it and speak to a trusted Christian friend.

Cryptogram
Puzzle

A whistle blower in Mauque Eruszam sent this message stored as a graphic on a thumb drive. All our decoding personnel are busy entering online shopping orders for their parents. Help us out by decoding the message using the key above. A sample message “Hello World” is given to show you how the key works. Your Bible Study leader is awaiting your decoding of this important message. If you’re stuck go to <https://tinyurl.com/3ahzbm4r>. There are other intriguing activities available, also.

