



# awake to Jesus! sunday school resources

## 1: Jesus the Saviour

### Sunday school lesson 1: Luke 1-4

#### Teacher's notes / Devotional for teachers

##### **Luke 2:1-20**

All of us have become so familiar with the birth of Jesus that we can so easily miss its importance and its true meaning. The importance of this story lies in the fact that God committed Himself to entering our world so that He could be with us. He also determined that in becoming human He would save us from our sin so that we could live with Him in a renewed world in the future. Such was the magnitude of this event that it caused the angels to erupt in spontaneous praise. It should always evoke the same response in us.

As for the meaning of this story, there are many valid interpretations. Let me draw your attention to but a few.

We need to notice that the main characters in this story are not powerful and influential, but rather very ordinary, in fact, lowly people at the mercy of the wishes and desires of the great in society. Mary is a young teenage girl carrying the stigma of a perceived illegitimate pregnancy. Together with Joseph they have no option but to travel to register because a foreign Roman Emperor wants them to do so. They have to endure hardship not of their own making. Additionally, we find the shepherds, who themselves were the lowliest of the low, gathered around the nativity scene. It is to the humble that God comes and it is the lowly that God lifts up. It seems that God is most at home with the ordinary, unseen people, of the world.

So we are reminded by this story of the forgotten truth that, in God's workings, the great events of history and the great actions of God are not necessarily dramatic or miraculous. Jesus comes into the world unnoticed by the 'good and great'. Yet in God's eyes this event stands at the very centre of history. We need to ask God to allow us to see life through His eyes so that we might discern the true meaning of the 'insignificant' events that constitute our lives.

We need to constantly remember this lesson. God is with us, even though most of us, from a purely human perspective, have no real impact on the great movements in our world. And the fact of God's presence in this world means that we see things and people with very different eyes. And that begins with the children in your class. They are the little ones who have to go where

others tell them, but God is with them, in fact Jesus tells us that they are precious to Him. Indeed from God's perspective, those children that you have chosen to be with as a teacher, are going to grow up to change the world through God's power. Never underestimate the influence you have over those children for the sake of Jesus. He came into the world for them and for you.

- **Explanation of Lesson**

- It is strange to be looking at the story of the birth of Jesus in February. However, with doing this series of 6 lessons and looking through the life of Jesus, the idea is that the children will get an overview and see how all the stories of Jesus' life and the parts of His character are connected. They are all part of God's big story of salvation and mission.
- It probably has not been that long since you have looked at the story of Jesus' birth and if you want to leave this out that is fine – each of these lessons can be as stand alone or done as a series looking at the life of Jesus.

- **Aims of lesson**

- Help kids see over the 6 weeks the whole story of Jesus life and how it is all connected.
- Remind them that the story of Jesus birth is not just for Christmas
- To help them see that they have an important part in the church to remind adults and others outside church about Jesus birth and life

- **Equipment needed**

- Flipchart paper/whiteboard and pens
- Postcards with the characters names on them
- Bible passage Luke 2 (and Matthew 2) included at the end of the lesson (CEV)
- approximately 15 pipe cleaners per child (depending on how you choose to do activity)
- Plasticine
- Pages to make posters, coloured pens, decorations

## Introduction

Explain to the children that today you are going to look at a story that you would not ordinarily be doing at this time of the year – the story of Jesus' birth. Over the next few weeks we are going to look at the life of Jesus, from His birth to His death and resurrection that we celebrate at Easter.

Ask: What are all the things that are connected with Christmas? What do we decorate our houses and churches with? What do we eat? What else happens at Christmas that does not happen at other times of the year? Ask additional questions about what the children answer. Find out about food, cards, presents, decorations, stories, songs, etc. – all the things that the children associate with Christmas. Write all the answers on a big sheet of paper/whiteboard on the wall for everyone to see.

Now ask them to point out all the ones that are not to do with the birth of Jesus and the real meaning of Christmas. Cover them up/cross them off the list.

Then ask: what sorts of things do we do to remind us of Jesus birth at Christmas? (Read Bible story, sing carols, nativity scenes, nativity plays, etc.). What does your family/church do? Why do a lot of people

celebrate Christmas without celebrating Jesus' birth?

## **Part 2**

- Have postcards with the names of the Bible characters in the story of birth of Jesus written on them scattered over the table. Read through the story in Luke 2:1-20 and each time a character is mentioned in the story, have the children find the name on the card and stick it on the wall. Have them then select pipe cleaners to make a stick figure of that character that is then stuck in a piece of plasticine to allow it to stand up. (By the end the children should have Joseph, Mary, baby Jesus, shepherds, and angel/s. They can either make a nativity scene each or take it in turns to make the characters so that there is one nativity scene collectively at the end. Also if you want to use the story in Matthew as well, they may want to add in the wise men.)
- Once all the characters have been made, re-read the story from Luke (with the added bit from Matthew 2 if you chose to do the wise men) and use the pipe cleaner characters to help illustrate the story. You may then wish to display the nativity scene somewhere that the children can see it over the coming weeks as the story of Jesus life unfolds through this series.
- If making the pipe cleaner characters is not possible, you may want to bring in a nativity set that you have and let the children set the scene as the story is read from the Bible, adding the different characters the story goes through.

## **Part 3**

- Explain that we may not hear angels singing in the sky like the shepherds did to announce Jesus' birth but God still wants us to celebrate the birth of His Son – and not just in December! He also wants us to remind people who are busy and sometimes forget, even those in church, how important it is that Jesus was sent by God to be born in Bethlehem.
- Have the children make posters announcing the birth of Jesus to remind people in church when they see them the significance of this event beyond Christmastime. Make them colourful and bright so that they are seen and cannot be missed, as the shepherds could not miss the host of angels and the wise men the star. Hang the posters around the church building. Then pray with the children that God will use the signs to speak to the adults in the congregation.

## **Part 4**

- Ask the children: how can we remind people we see this week about how important the birth of Jesus is? Allow them to come up with some answers.
- It is strange thinking about the Christmas story in February but it is important when we are heading towards Easter when we think about Jesus death and resurrection, that we remember the wonder of God sending His only Son to a young unmarried girl as a small, vulnerable baby in the first place. Give the children copies of Luke 2 and encourage them to read through it every day during the week and see what God says to them through remembering the important story of Jesus' birth.

## Bible Readings

### Luke 2:1-20

<sup>1</sup>About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. <sup>2</sup>These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>Everyone had to go to their hometown to be listed. <sup>4</sup>So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

<sup>5</sup>Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby; <sup>6</sup>and while they were there, <sup>7</sup>she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

### The Shepherds

<sup>8</sup>That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. <sup>9</sup>All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. <sup>11</sup>This very day in King David's hometown a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: <sup>14</sup>"Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God."

<sup>15</sup>After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup>They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay. <sup>17</sup>When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. <sup>18</sup>Everyone listened and was surprised. <sup>19</sup>But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant. <sup>20</sup>As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about him. Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said.

### Matthew 2: 1-12

#### The Wise Men

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup>and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him." <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

<sup>5</sup>They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, <sup>6</sup>Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' "

<sup>7</sup>Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. <sup>8</sup>He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too." <sup>9</sup>The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

<sup>11</sup>When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. <sup>12</sup>Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.