



## Leader's Notes – Session Two

These lessons are meant to serve several different audiences and therefore customized as needed and used with flexibility. The leader does not need to teach everything in the lesson but should choose what is most appropriate or needed for your audience and time. The answers also are included here as additional helps in discussion. The unique experiences and insights of leader and participants will frame what you will actually cover.

*Read the Leading the Lessons guide and the Narration sheet for additional help.*

### Experiencing Christmas

Annual celebrations, like the Passover for the Jews, become a part of the rhythm of life. They bring families, ethnic groups, and even nations together around a cause or a remembrance of a past event. Christmas is one of the celebrations that has found wide acceptance around the globe.

*...but don't spend too much time here as it is just setting the mood.*

- Compare the different ways people celebrate or view the meaning of Christmas.

*Participants may mention Santa Claus, buying presents showing the secularizing of Christmas. They may talk about the decorations and Christmas trees that set the mood. Or may point out the pageants, family traditions, or worship that recall the initial Christmas event.*

- Share some meaningful memories of your experiences with Christmas.

*Purely a participant-driven answer.*

#### [Watch “My Son, My Savior” – Chapter 2 – The Prince of Peace is Born]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you?*

### The Real Christmas Story

Read Luke 2:1-7:

- Describe what stands out in this portion of the account for you. Why?

*Let participants drive what impressed them.*

*This is set in a historic setting with historic details—the decree of Caesar Augustus. The census was a frustrating reminder of the Roman dominance over the nation that had once been in control and powerful under King David.*

*Bethlehem was where King David grew up (He had been out tending sheep when Samuel came looking to anoint the next king, the one God would choose (1 Samuel 16:4-13). It was a town 7 miles south of Jerusalem and about 90 miles from Nazareth where Mary and Joseph had been living. It was probably a 4-day journey—not easy for a pregnant woman.*

*No room. Had to be born in a stable—not a setting for a king and in sharp contrast to the dignity deserved for the Son of the Most High. The birth escaped practically the entire city.*

- Imagine what ...

...would have been the same for Mary as any mother with her pregnancy, birth, and care for her new firstborn child.

*Mary would have experienced the baby kicking inside of her; the discomfort toward the end; the pain of the childbirth; the joy of seeing the baby for the first time; the changing of the diapers; the midnight feedings; the excitement over every new development discovery; etc.*

...would have been so different for Mary and Joseph.

*This was the Son of God, the promised Messiah. God was paying special attention to this child. That must have been a nervous joy for them. Soon they would have the unexpected visits of shepherds from their fields and wise men from the East, soon the anger of the king would try to hunt them down. Mary would go from obscure and ordinary, to drawn into the public eye because of her son.*

Continue by reading Luke 2:8-20:

- What was remarkable about the appearance and message of the angels to the shepherds?

*The angel didn't come to the palace or the temple to make this big announcement, not to big crowds, but to the lowly field workers watching their sheep. The "glory of the Lord" shone around them—the term used for the appearance of God to his people in the Old Testament (e.g. the pillar of fire and cloud). The news was "for all the people." The Savior, the promised Messiah, was born. Details of what to look for were shared. Angels host broke into praise "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

### Song of the Angels

has become a regular song in Christian worship. Identify where it shows up.

- Compare the reaction of the shepherds with the reactions of people to Christmas today. Why the difference?

*The shepherds immediately responded with curious joy to see the Messiah and then after seeing him couldn't wait to tell others. The news isn't as fresh today or announced in a spectacular way but even what is shared gets distracted by conflicting messages and priorities.*

- Put yourself in Mary's place. What would you have been treasuring up and pondering in your heart at this point?

*Mary's "pondering" (Gr: sumballo) was likely a weighing of the events, putting the pieces together—reflecting on the meaning of what was happening to grasp the deeper significance. You can imagine her pondering the angel's appearances and message to her and Joseph, the comments by Elizabeth, the appearance of shepherds who seem to come out of nowhere to worship her child...and the wise men. How did they know? How did they find them? Note that she pondered these things rather than run around town broadcasting it and demanding special privileges.*

## The Real Ancestry of Jesus

Quickly skim through Matthew 1:1-17:

- Summarize what this reveals about Jesus through his ancestry.

*Jesus is 100% human and has a clear traceable ancestry*

*It is set into three sets of 14 generations. It takes us back to Abraham to whom God had promised, "Through your offspring all nations of earth will be blessed." It follows the line of kings from the line of King David. It is instructive to note that Jesus' ancestry wasn't pure. It includes Tamar and Rahab who at one time were prostitutes, King David who committed adultery and murder. The ancestry (including Mary and Joseph) isn't untarnished—they were sinners too who needed this Savior.*

Read John 1:1-3, 14-18:

- Describe what John reveals about Jesus' origin, and why Jesus could make an impact like no one else.

*He is also 100% God. This child has origins from eternity—before the world began. He is God, the One and Only, who sits at the Father's side (part of the Trinity).*

*He was, in the beginning, creating the world. He can reveal what he did because he has seen God...and is God, knows the bigger picture of the universe.*

*He is the Word—the communication of God to man to bring the things of God to light—who became human and “pitched his tent” among us. He comes to give grace and truth, not enforcement of the Law of Moses.*

- Consider also what the following reveal about Jesus:

*Jesus told the Jews, “My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me ... Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad ... Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!” At this they picked up stones to stone him” (John 8:54-59).*

*“The people of Israel ... Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen” (Romans 9:5).*

*Leader Note: He existed before Abraham who had lived 2,000 years earlier. He was the fulfillment of the covenant promise that Abraham longed to see fulfilled. The Jews understood he was calling himself God and the Messiah. That is why they wanted to stone him.*

*He is both God and Man—a traceable ancestry yet God overall.*

*Other passages to refer to is Philippians 2:5-11 and Hebrews 1:1-12*

## His Purpose is Recognized by the Faithful

Read Luke 2:21-40 – The Journey to the Temple:

- Evaluate what it teaches us about Mary that she went through the Purification Rite (Leviticus 12:1-8) offering a sacrifice of a pair of doves in keeping with the Law of the Lord.

*All women who had given birth had to go through 40 days of being ceremonially unclean and then offer a lamb for purification. Mary had to go through that also. Those who were poor could substitute two turtledoves instead of a lamb for their sacrifice. Both the purification and sacrifice were a recognition of sin and the need for atonement/ cleansing. Mary was no different from the rest of us in this.*

- How did it happen that Simeon (and later Anna) was there and could identify the baby as the Messiah?

*Simeon's life was bound up in the expectation that he would meet the Savior King before he died. The Holy Spirit came on him to go to the temple courts that day. Anna never left the temple and anticipated this child also.*

- Verses. 29-32 became a song of praise for Christianity throughout the ages. What does it reveal about the baby?

- ...for Simeon? – *God had finally fulfilled the promise that he would not die before he would see the promised Messiah. Now he could be dismissed in peace. His eyes had seen the salvation God had prepared.*
- ...for the world? – *Would be a light for revelation to the Gentiles (non-Jews). (Cf. Isaiah 52:10; 40:5-6; 49:6.)*
- ...for you? – *my savior (but also the one who tests the hearts—the rising and falling of people).*

### Song of the Simeon

Locate where this has become a regular song in Christian worship.

## Growing in Wisdom and Favor...and Obedience

Read Luke 2:41-52:

- What can you relate to Mary and her words to Jesus as a parent to a child?

*Mary must have felt her motherly concern and let him know how much worry and trouble he had caused them—how it made her life hard—without grasping what he was actually doing. The term (Gr: odunomenoi—deep spiritual or mental anguish).*

- Evaluate what Jesus was pointing out to them when he told Mary and Joseph, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

*Mary said, “Your father and I have been searching ...” Jesus clarifies that he is the Son of God and following the work of his heavenly Father. “In my Father’s house” also is translated “about my Father’s work/business.” Both bring out a bit of the Greek. Jesus is establishing an understanding that he is on a specific mission not connected with his relationship with his biological family but with his heavenly Father. That is why he is here.*

- What lesson can parents and children learn from Jesus’ words and his actions?

*Jesus’ earthly parents brought him to the temple. Faithful Christian parents should take note to make attendance at church as a routine of a child’s life—a place they enjoy being—and going about their heavenly Father’s work. Part of the Father’s will is honoring parents. Jesus left the temple with them as part of his life of obedience in our place—also leaving us an example to follow.*

## Preparing Hearts for the King

Read what John says in John 3:22-35

- Identify what John reveals about Jesus and the effect of our relationship to him.

*Jesus is the bridegroom, we are the bride. He speaks the words of God because he is from above. Whoever believes in him has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him. Our relationship with God pivots on our belief in who Jesus is.*

### Put it into Practice:

- Mary pondered what she heard and saw. Reread the Christmas story and Jesus in the temple and capture words or truths that you can incorporate into your life.
- Think of the words of John the Baptist. Daily gauge your heart. Is it in preparation mode or resistance mode to own up to sin and trust in Jesus for forgiveness and life?

### CHRISTMAS SONGS to consider that express similar messages to this lesson:

You may want to refer people to the messages in these songs.

- Hark, the Herald Angels Sing – *Christ by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin’s womb. Veiled in flesh the God-head see. Hail the Incarnate Deity! Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel!*
- Once in Royal David’s City – *He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all*
- Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful – *God from true God, and Light from Light eternal, born of a virgin, to earth he comes, only begotten Son of God the Father*
- Mary, Did you Know – *when you kiss your little baby, you’ve kissed the face of God*

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