**1. Motivate**

What’s something you’d love to *add* to your celebration of Christmas?

* Holy land trip
* celebrate Christmas in Hawaii (or Switzerland or Disney World)
* a sleigh ride … over the river and through the woods …
* hear the Messiah in some big theater or cathedral
* picture made with Santa
* binge on Christmas movies
* would like to see again the movie *The Man in the Santa Clause Suit*
* buy my spouse a new car … red with white interior (Ha!)

**2. Transition**

Many of our wishes and our actual celebrations can bring us joy

* We can experience true joy because Jesus saves.

A video introduction is available to view at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/1_zb672d1d> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from [<https://tinyurl.com/y5et6bl2>](https://tinyurl.com/y5et6bl2) .Note instructions available for adding to your PowerPoint

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 God, Our Salvation, Brings Joy

Listen for an invitation.

Psalm 95:1-3 (NIV) Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. 3 For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.

What is the nature of the invitation in these verses?

* an invitation to worship
* to praise God together
* to express our joy of knowing the very God of creation

What words or phrases express the type of worship the psalmist urges?

* singing
* shouting
* thanksgiving
* music and song

Why is God to be worshiped?

* He is the Rock of our salvation
* He is “the Great God”
* He is LORD, Jehovah, Yahweh … The I AM … The God Who IS

What ways might this passage suggest that we worship God personally or privately?

* humming, singing, whistling when we are alone
* singing along with gospel songs, hymns on the radio or CD
* personal quiet time includes specific thanksgiving, praise
* frequent personal conversations with God where you thank Him for His various attributes (power, love, patience, righteousness, justice, etc.)

What has recently led you to praise God? What motivates you to offer praise and thanksgiving to God today, right now?

* answers to prayer
* realization once again of the awesome salvation He has provided
* thinking about His greatness … His authority (sovereignty), His power, His love
* remembering, realizing that whatever happens in world or national events … He is in charge, in control

How can believers express joy to the Lord in our daily lives?

* reading and meditating on His Word … what God has to say to us
* frequent observation of nature around us … the beauty, the design
* noting situations where we can see that God provided, God protected, God intervened
* in your prayer journal, noting specific answers to prayer and thanking Him

3.2 Jesus, Born to Bring Us Salvation

Listen for difficulties of the trip described.

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 account of Jesus’ birth?

* the Roman emperor declared a census be taken
* everyone had to go to their ancestral town to register
* the Roman edict coincided with the birth of Mary’s baby
* all God’s timing!

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 suggests the birth was normal and common?

* the pregnancy had progressed normally
* the time came for the birth
* no complications, the Baby was born

Yet, what elements in these verses suggest the birth was unusual? What are some things that are incongruous about the birth of the King of Kings?

* for starters, they were not yet officially married, only pledged to be married
* the King of Kings was born of very poor parents
* born in what appeared to be questionable circumstances
* born in a very poor location
* the Baby’s first bed was an animal feeding trough – well-worn and slobbered
* 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

3.3 Jesus’ Birth, Cause for Great Joy

Listen for an important message.

Luke 2:8-14 (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." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

List words of encouragement, joy, 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

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

Note the three titles given to the Baby. What is the significance of these titles?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Significance |
| Savior | * came to die for our sins
* save us from the penalty and power of sin in our lives
 |
| Christ | * Greek word for “Messiah”, the Anointed One, the Sent One
 |
| the Lord | * the One of Authority
* He is in Charge
* He is in control
 |

How does God's sending the Christ Child 2000 years ago bring you joy today?

* peace with God when we receive His salvation provided by Jesus
* peace with our own selves
* peace with each other
* joy when forgiven for our sins
* joy to be set free from the power of sin over us
* joy at God’s very presence in our lives as believers

The shepherds received a joyful *personal* announcement about Jesus. How can we make the joy of Christmas *personal* to those around us?

* give meaningful gifts, not just something that is nice and expensive enough to keep up appearances
* give the gift of your personal attention and time with those around you … listening, sharing their joys, dreams, sorrows
* find someone who is hurting and personally minister to them, to their hurt
* be involved in an outreach ministry … at a city mission, at Home for Habitat, on a short term mission trip
* write a letter to a missionary – tell them of your prayers, your interest in their work

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

Application

Accept.

* Christ came to forgive you, restore you, and give you hope and a future.
* If you have never trusted Christ for salvation, do so now.
* Talk to your group leader or read the inside cover of this book.

Praise.

* Make praise a regular part of your prayer time.
* Don’t let your joy in Christ fade; instead, continually praise Him and remember all He has done.

Share.

* The greatest gift you can give someone this Christmas is the good news of why Jesus came to earth.
* During this season, plan to tell someone in your family or a life-long friend who is yet to believe about the salvation and joy you experience because of Christ.

Double Puzzle

‘Tis the Season. Merry Christmas! Here’s a quote by someone famous. Unscramble each of the clue phrases. They can be found in your Bible Study passages. Copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells with the same number. If you need assistance go to <https://tinyurl.com/y5et6bl2> . There are also other intriguing activities there for the whole family!

