



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ME | WEEK 2 ONLINE TEACHING GUIDE

WEEK 2

ONLINE TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

On the first Christmas, the shepherds gave their stories.

THE BIBLE

Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 10:27

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

QUESTION | What's the best gift you've ever received?

- Whether it's an awesome Christmas gift, a thoughtful note, or a well-timed hug, if we think hard enough I think we can all recall at least one gift we were really happy to receive – or maybe to give!
 - Maybe you once received the exact gift you were hoping to get.
 - Maybe you were once surprised by a gift you never would have thought to ask for, but once you opened it you realized it was perfect for you.
 - Or maybe you once had a gift for a friend or family member that was so perfect you couldn't wait for them to open it.
- So what about you? **What's the best gift you've ever received?**

STORY | Talk about a time you received the perfect gift.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when you were given an incredible gift. It could be a physical gift, but it doesn't have to be – especially if you're ministering to students who may not be receiving many Christmas presents this year. Talk about the gift you received, who it was from, and why it was so perfect, thoughtful, or memorable. Be sure to also share how excited you were to tell others about the gift you'd received.*
- When we give or receive the perfect gift, it's natural to want to brag about it! When we're so filled with joy and excitement, of course we want to share that joy and excitement with others!



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DISCUSSION

- **Have you ever been really excited to give someone a gift? Why were you so excited about it?**
- **Why do you think people say Jesus' birth was a gift?**

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

OBJECT LESSON | Nativity Set

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Each week, you'll need a nativity set of your choice. You can use a traditional set or a [non-traditional set](#), but just make sure whatever set you choose features Jesus, Mary, Joseph, a few shepherds, and the wise men. As you introduce each character, place them into the nativity set.*
- If you were with us last week, you know we're talking about how easy it is to focus on ourselves at Christmastime. We can get so wrapped up in what we want, expect, and experience that it's sometimes difficult to remember what this season is really about.
 - So each week in this series, we're going to hear the stories of people who were present for the very first Christmas – the day Jesus was born.
 - Last week, we saw how Mary and Joseph gave up their comfort in order to make the first Christmas happen. It was uncomfortable, but they chose to join God's mission and take on the responsibility of parenting the Savior of the world.
 - Today, we're going to take a look at a whole group of people who played another important part in the first Christmas. We don't know their names, but here's what we do know: they were given a gift, and they couldn't help but tell others about it.
- Today, our most brag-worthy Christmas presents might be puppies, shoes, or video games, but two thousand years ago, on the very first Christmas, everyone's most brag-worthy Christmas present was a newborn baby named Jesus. And the first people to tell others about that gift were a few shepherds.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 2:8-16

- Most nativity sets show there were shepherds on the scene of Jesus' birth, but do you know their story? Do you know why they were there? Have you ever thought about why God would have chosen them, of all people, to be there?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 2:8-16.*
- Just like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds weren't special people by most standards.
 - They were average people.
 - They were working late.
 - They weren't particularly educated, rich, influential, or important.



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- Yet that's exactly who God chose to be some of the first people on earth to hear the good news that the Savior of the world had just been born.
 - At first, they were terrified, of course – I think we'd all be terrified if a mysterious being appeared in the sky in the middle of the night.
 - But when the angel told the shepherds about Jesus' birth, and a whole group of angels showed up to sing about it, the shepherds put their fear aside and ran to see what was happening.

SCRIPTURE | Luke 2:17-20

- The shepherds' role in the first Christmas could have ended here. They could have run to where baby Jesus had been born, said hello to Mary and Joseph, and then went home. They could have kept this news to themselves . . . but they didn't.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 2:17-20.*
- When the shepherds saw baby Jesus, they told everybody! If they had social media back then, I'm sure these guys would have figured out how to make #BabyJesus trend. The TikToks would have been amazing. But since they didn't have phones, the shepherds relied on what they did have – their voices.
- And when they did share what they'd seen, the shepherds didn't make themselves the main characters in their stories. It would have been pretty easy to think, "God chose me to see the Savior of the world – I must be pretty special." Instead, the shepherds focused on the real hero of the story: Jesus.

STORY | Talk about a few people who shared about Jesus with you.

- I'm so glad a few people did for me what the shepherds did for others.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a few brief stories about people who told you something about Jesus that changed your life or your perspective. You might start by telling the story of the first time you heard about Jesus and who told you about Him, but don't stop there. Talk about important messages you've heard, books you've read, conversations you've had, and people who have shared their own faith journeys with you. As you share each story, relate it back to what the shepherds did – they gave their stories so other people could know God.*
- We all love to hear good stories, but the best stories do more than entertain us. The best stories teach us something true and change who we are. That's what these people did for me with their stories, it's what I hope to do for you, and it's what the shepherds did so long ago.
- **On the first Christmas, the shepherds gave their stories.** This Christmas, how could you and I do the same?

DISCUSSION

- **Of all people, why do you think God chose to tell these shepherds about Jesus' birth?**



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- **When the shepherds told people the story of what they'd seen, how much do you think they understood about who Jesus was? What do you think they said?**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

ACTIVITY | "Santa's Coming" from the movie *Elf*

- Now, I don't know for sure what the shepherds sounded like when they shared their stories, but after an angelic concert and getting to meet the Savior of the world firsthand, I imagine their enthusiasm was a little bit like that scene in *Elf* when Buddy hears Santa is coming to the mall.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *This is the scene* we're talking about! For this activity, have all of your students (or just a few) try to reenact the moment when Buddy screams, "SANTAAAAAAA," and, "I know him!" You may want to identify some students or leaders beforehand and ask them to participate with all the excitement they can muster.
- This scene is ridiculous, but it's kind of relatable too. Buddy loves Santa so much that he can't contain himself. He is so excited to see Santa (who he knows and loves) that he can't help but tell everyone within earshot the good news so they can get to know Santa too.

QUESTION | How did you discover your favorite things?

- By a show of hands . . .
 - Who has a favorite show?
 - Who has a favorite restaurant or a favorite meal?
 - Who has a favorite game, hobby, or interest?
 - Who has a favorite musician, sports team, actor, or celebrity that you absolutely love?
- Even though I don't know your answers to any of those questions, I can tell you one thing everyone in this room has in common. At least one of your favorite things was once introduced to you by someone else. Maybe . . .
 - You heard someone talking about that new pizza place where the crust is made of chicken nuggets, and now you can't get enough of it.
 - Your friend once invited you to play pickleball and now you're joining a pickleball league.



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- Your favorite YouTuber reviewed a new product that you've since added to your Christmas list.
- Netflix always seems to know exactly which murder mystery you'd like to watch next.
- So much of our lives are impacted by the stories and opinions of people we trust – from the clothes we wear, to the snacks we eat, to the things we believe.
- Stories are powerful and, believe it or not, you have a story to tell that someone in your life needs to hear – just like these shepherds from 2,000 years ago.

DISCUSSION

- **Have you ever felt unqualified to talk with someone about what you believe? What holds us back from sharing our stories with others?**
- **The shepherds shared their stories about being visited by angels – what kinds of stories about God could you share?**

REFLECTION | What Can You Share?

- Maybe it's hard to believe you have a story to share. Maybe you're worried because you're not sure what you believe right now, or you're not sure your story is that interesting, or you're not sure how to defend what you believe if someone asks you a hard question. That's okay! You still have something important that the world needs to hear.
- So what's your story? What's the message you have to share with others about this Christmas season? Maybe . . .
 - You met Jesus and He changed your life.
 - You still have a lot of questions, but something about Jesus is really compelling.
 - You still have a lot of growing to do, but there's one specific way God is currently changing your heart.
 - Your story isn't very dramatic, but God is teaching you something really cool right now.
- Whatever you have to share, write it down.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, prepare enough [customizable Christmas ornaments](#) and permanent markers for every student. Encourage them to write down one thing Jesus has changed about their life or perspective – something that would be worth telling a story about. Play an upbeat Christmas song like ["Joy" by 116](#) (featuring Trip Lee, Lecrae & Abe Parker) while students reflect and write. As they finish, invite them to hang their ornaments on the Christmas trees at the front of your room. (Check out the [Room Design](#) for this series for reference.)*

RESPONSE | Who Will You Tell?

- On the first Christmas, the shepherds gave their stories, as incomplete and unpolished as they were. They weren't experts. They didn't have answers to every question. They



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just knew something incredible was taking place, and they were going to tell everyone they could about it.

- So what's your story? What do you have to tell the world about who Jesus is to you? And who are you going to tell?
 - Do you have a friend or loved one who needs to hear that God loves them?
 - Is there something you're learning about who God is that could benefit someone else?
 - Do you have a question about faith you want to talk to someone about?
 - Do you know someone struggling with their faith who might need to hear what keeps you coming back to Jesus?
- You don't have to be someone important to have an important story to share. **On the first Christmas, the shepherds gave their stories** because they couldn't help but share the good news about Jesus' birth. This Christmas, how could you and I do the same?

DISCUSSION

- **Read Matthew 10:27. What's one thing you've discovered about God that you could share with others?**
- **This Christmas, what's one way you plan to share your stories of faith with someone else?**
- **How do you think God might be calling you to share your stories even after Christmas is over?**