

ADAPTABLE TEACHING RESOURCES



# THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTMAS

A journey through advent  
for churches & families

## LESSON 3: SHEPHERD'S ADVENTURE

Luke 2:8-18



faith  kids

The Adventure of Christmas

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes use the New International Version.

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'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)

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# Shepherd's Adventure

LUKE 2:8-18



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## Big Idea:

God invites us to meet the Saviour no matter who we are.



## Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who are excited that they are invited to know Jesus and enthusiastic to share him with others.



## Preparation

Prepare your heart first. Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going?** and **Look at the Passage** to give you a better understanding of the passage and the **Big Idea**. Spend some time thinking through **Win my heart first** and **Questions for my heart** to see how this makes a difference to your life.

Prepare your lesson. Read the lesson plan for the age group you will be teaching. Use sections from a

different age group if they are better suited to your children. Keep the **Big Idea** in your mind to help you teach it clearly in every part of your lesson. Use the blank **Lesson Template** to plan the different sections. Collect/draw/print/make what you need.

Pray for the children in your group to grasp the **Big Idea** and to live it out in their lives. Remember that you have the Holy Spirit's help as you teach God's word!



## Where are we going?

Our Christmas adventure takes us to a dark hillside to meet some rather ordinary and scruffy shepherds. They lived on the outskirts of the town and society and were an unlikely bunch to be main characters in the first Christmas. But God chose them to receive his technical announcement of great joy - his son had arrived on earth!

There was no expense spared - the blokes on the hillside got an angel, a momentous announcement, a glorious light show and all of heaven's backing singers.

It was a staggering scene to announce staggering news: a Saviour has come to ordinary people like us. The shepherds hurried to find out if it was too good to be true. They found the baby, just as the angel said, and they left rejoicing and sharing the story.

The news the shepherds heard is for us too - good news, great joy, the Saviour is born! This Christmas, let's get excited that Jesus is our reason to celebrate and our hope to share.



## Look at the Passage

Luke the gospel writer, with his heart for the outsider, lines up the cast of characters in the world premiere of the first ever nativity scene.

### Scene 1 - Shepherds v8

When we think of Christmas shepherds we tend to see a child in a dressing gown, tea towel on head with a toy sheep under their arm. But try for a moment to see the reality of night shift, manual labourers, used to wild camping and wild animals. Toughened skin on their hands, lines on their faces, used to their own company and living on the outskirts.

### Scene 2 - Angels v9-14

The greatest nativity show budget on earth could never replicate this scene. A cute child wrapped in tinsel can't compare to an actual angel surrounded by God's shining glory. The glory that fills the heavens broke into earth's darkness. No wonder the shepherds

were afraid - they'd never even seen a firework! The angel announced good news that is both universal ('for all' v10) and personal ('to you' v11). The Saviour, Christ the Lord, is born. God is coming close. Peace is being offered. For a brief moment the curtain is pulled back and we get to see heaven's gospel choir partying and praising God for being so good.

### Scene 3 - Baby v15-18

The shepherds ran and found the baby, just as the angels said: real life manger, actual scratchy straw, genuine frayed cloth, wide eyed parents and the Saviour of the world. The shepherds had quite an adventure. They left bursting with all they had seen, heard and experienced. They didn't need an evangelism training course, they just told everyone they met what they heard and saw. Their lives were forever changed the night God broke into the darkness.



## Win my heart first

FOMO (fear of missing out), was added to the Oxford English dictionary in 2013. It describes the anxiety that arises when you feel that something better is happening elsewhere and you're left out. This fear is what drives us to endlessly scroll social media, to look over the shoulder of the person we are talking to for a more interesting conversation, to obsess over what everyone else is doing or to be reluctant to commit to a plan. FOMO snatches the joy of the moment and invades the peace of what you are doing right now.

The scene that Luke describes is a beautiful antidote; those always on the fringes are the ones who

receive a personal invitation - this good news is for ALL people. There can be no fear of missing out, because everyone is included. God announced from heaven a glorious and open invitation to come to the Saviour and know deep joy and lasting peace.

So, whenever you feel like you're missing out or left on the edges, remember that God welcomed you. He gave you the one invitation that truly matters - to know him and be known by him. This is the good news that is for us to enjoy everyday. And as we marvel at how we have been included, let's share that good news with others too!



## Questions for my heart

God, who belongs in the highest heaven, stoops to become a Saviour in a smelly manger so that you can come to him. How does this truth bring joy to your

heart?

How does this truth change the way you treat others, particularly those who are often left out?



# All-Welcome Service

The table below outlines a plan to teach this lesson to the whole church gathering - adults and children, Christians and unbelieving guests together.

It includes short sections of engaging visual drama to tell the story, interactive discussions, songs and prayers. It is designed for use when children will be in for the whole service, rather than leaving for their own Sunday School groups.

There are also highlighted moments where brief 'mini-sermons' can be included if you want to add more.

*Aim for each of these 'mini-sermon' slots to be 5 minutes or less. Be visually engaging and use short sentences to hold children's attention. Remember to address everyone (adults, children, guests etc.) so that they understand the passage and can see how it makes a difference to their daily lives.*

If the children will be leaving for their own activities, you can instead use the script as a **Bible Story Idea** to introduce the Bible passage (either as a Kids Slot in the service or at the start of the Sunday School lesson). To do this, omit the sections highlighted in blue.

*This service would be an ideal guest service to run as a 'no rehearsal' nativity - no learning lines, no visiting children feeling left out - everyone is involved!*

*Invite your community to come, dressed however they like - as a shepherd, an angel, a sheep, a dinosaur, Batman... the joy of this Christmas adventure is that everyone is welcome. It's good news for all - even Batman! Consider having a dressing up box available so anyone who arrives without a costume can join in.*

*Expect a little more chaos than usual - that's OK! It'll be closer to the first nativity anyway, when the makeshift maternity wing was gatecrashed by the night shift shepherds.*

*This style of service is a hit with younger children - it's an excellent service to invite toddler group families to. If the majority of the children in the service are under 5 then omit the Heart and Hands questions and sing more songs. Sing familiar toddler group songs or church favourites.*



## Helpers Needed

Invite the congregation to come dressed up in nativity costumes (angels, shepherds, sheep, donkeys etc.) or in any costume they like. Have readers prepared for the Bible readings and prayer (e.g. children or a family).



## Props

Thick marker pen, fairy lights, tinsel, invitation/envelope, Christmas music, a present, a mobile phone, a manger and a doll wrapped in strips of cloth.



## Make in advance

A large envelope with 'for all' written on one side and 'for you' on the other side. A large tick list with the heading 'A Great Christmas' and a list of the following things: Christmas Lights; Party invitation; Christmas music; Wrapped up presents; Tell everyone. Photocopy the worksheet for the congregation or make the following PowerPoint slides - 'Did You Spot It?' questions, 'Work It Out' questions, 'Live It Out' questions.



## What to Say



## What to Do

Welcome to our Adventure of Christmas nativity! You are all so welcome and we're so glad you came because we need you in today's nativity.

(If you provide extra costumes then invite people to get dressed up if they came without one.)

Today we are going to enjoy meeting some of the characters of the real nativity!

Are there any shepherds in the house? I'd love to hear a good rural 'OO-AARR!'

Are there any sheep? Let's have a 'Baa!'

Are there any angels? I want a 'La, La, La!'

For everyone else at the party, let's 'cha-cha-cha!'

Because, as we're going to hear today, everyone's invited to the first Christmas party.

(Play some Christmas music while people get ready.)

Let's get in the Christmas mood with a classic carol.

- Hark the Herald Angels Sing

What do you think makes a great Christmas experience?

Is it the smell of a tree, seeing the lights, singing a song or eating a mince pie?

Talk to the person next to you and tell one another 3 things that make you feel Christmassy.

Let me show you a list of the things I think you need for a great Christmas experience:

- Christmas lights - the more lights and sparkle the better
- Party invitation - somewhere good to go and enjoy yourself
- Christmas music - to get you in the mood
- Wrapped up presents - we all love presents
- Tell everyone - when we're having a great Christmas we can't wait to tell everyone about it!

Go through the large tick list and hold up the items:

- fairy lights and tinsel
- an invitation/envelope
- play a Christmas song
- present
- take a selfie of you and the crowd with your phone

Listen closely to our first Bible reading and see if there's anything from my list that you could tick off.

Read Luke 2:8-11.

continued →



## What to Say



## What to Do

We're going to sing a song that tells us all about the action that night.

Song:

- While Shepherds watched their flocks by night

OR watch the Faith in Kids Adventure of Christmas mini movie (find it on our [YouTube channel](#)).

Can all the shepherds please come and join me at the front.

Did you hear what happened? The shepherds were out on the hillside at night.

Nobody thought that shepherds were important, no one usually invited them to anything - but God did!

God gave them a Christmas light show that you and I with all our fairy lights and fireworks couldn't even come close to.

We can tick the first item off the list - Christmas lights!

The angel shone with the glory of the Lord and the tough shepherds were terrified!

Can I have an 'OO-AGH!' from the shepherds please?

The shepherds were given an amazing Christmas invitation. Good news for all, a Saviour is born to you in Bethlehem.

Amazing - I can tick that off the list! We are doing so well, great job shepherds, you can all sit down now.

Get the congregation talking to one another while the shepherds sit down. Use the 'Did You Spot It?' questions:

- Was the angel's message good or bad?
- Who was the news about?
- Who was the news for?

Or sing:

- Happy Happy Day by Colin Buchanan (King of Christmas album.)



Everyone dressed as a shepherd comes to the front.

Turn lights off.

Turn lights on.

Use the marker pen to tick off 'Christmas lights' on the big list.

Hold up a large envelope - one side reads 'for all' the other side 'to you'.

Tick off 'party invitation' on the big list. Send shepherds to sit down.

[PowerPoint slide the 'Did You Spot It?' questions or use the worksheet.]

continued →





## What to Say



## What to Do

Let's find out what happened next.  
Read Luke 2:12-18.

Can all the angels please come and join me at the front.

Angels, you brought a party to the skies as you celebrated the brilliant news. Let's enjoy a little rejoicing right now - wave your hands up in the air and side to side! Have a dance!

Great work angels! I can tick another item off the list - the angels brought the Christmas party music as they declared glory to God across the skies. The glory of heaven was breaking into earth's darkness and it was awesome! Thanks, angels.

Play some disco music - a few minutes to party. Wave around arms to the music. Dance.

Tick off 'Christmas music' on the big list.

Send angels to sit down.

I think the next item on my list is ready to be ticked off too. Who did the shepherds set off to find? The baby Jesus!

The baby, the saviour, is the well wrapped present. He was wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.  
We can tick off the well wrapped present on our list.

Hold up the doll wrapped in swaddling cloths and place it in a straw filled manger.

Tick off 'wrapped up presents' on the big list.

We're going to sing 'Away in a manger'.  
While we sing, you are welcome to come and stand around the manger in whatever costume you've got. Even if you didn't dress up, come anyway - because the good news of God's Saviour is for ALL of you.

Sing: Away in a manger

**Suggested sermon slot #1: Explain the Big Idea (God invites us to meet the Saviour no matter who we are).**

Get people talking to one another using the 'Work It Out' questions:

- Why is the birth of Jesus good news?
- Why do you think the shepherds wanted to tell people about what they heard and saw?



[Powerpoint slide of 'Work It Out' questions or use the worksheet.]

continued →



## What to Say



## What to Do

Well, our Christmas adventure is nearly over and our Christmas list is nearly complete. There is just one more thing to tick off - 'tell everyone' about how great it is that God sent us Jesus.

The shepherds in the story knew real, life transforming joy. They saw the lights, they accepted the invitation, they heard the angels, they ran to the stable and met the wrapped up baby. He was there, just as the angels said. The shepherds were so amazed by everything they saw and heard that they had to tell everyone about it!

Hold up your phone and take a selfie with the doll in the manger. Tick off 'tell everyone' on the big list.

The Christmas story is good news for everyone.  
The Christmas story is good news for you.  
God broke into this world of struggle and fear with peace and joy by sending his son to save us.

- To save us from living like we are lost in the dark
- To invite us to come back to his family
- To give us something to celebrate
- To give us a someone we can hold onto
- And to give us good news worth sharing.

Run through the items on the Christmas list.

**Suggested sermon slot #2: Apply the Big Idea. We want people to be excited that they are invited to know Jesus and enthusiastic to share him with others.**

Get people talking to one another using the 'Live It Out' questions:

- Does the birth of Jesus feel like good news for you? Why?
- If you were sharing the Christmas story with a friend, what would you say?



Or sing:

- Go tell it on the mountain (Christmas carol)

[Powerpoint slide of the 'Live It Out' questions or use the worksheet.]

This Christmas, God invites you to come and meet Jesus - the Saviour we all need. Come and find out just how great he is, and then you'll want to tell everyone about him, too.

**Pray to close.**

**Wish everyone a 'HAPPY CHRISTMAS!'**

Pray: Ask a family to lead the prayers.

Sing:

- Joy to the world (Christmas carol)



# Lesson Overview



Get  
Going



Teaching  
Time



Brain  
Break



Heart &  
Hands



## Get Going

Focus the children's attention on the theme of the session using a game or activity. Light, not manic, so that the children can be calm afterwards, with their minds ready.



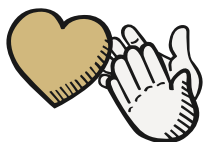
## Teaching Time

Teach the key content of the lesson in an engaging way to clearly point to the **Big Idea**. If you have used the **Bible Story Idea** already, you may not need to cover the whole story again. If not, you can adapt it to use here with your group or tell the story in another way, perhaps using the suggestions below. Use a suitable Bible translation for your age group - we use the International Children's Bible which can be found online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). However you do this **Teaching Time**, conclude with a simple explanation of the **Big Idea**.



## Brain Break

A chance to rest the children's minds before **Heart and Hands**. Get children moving. Finish by linking the activity to the **Big Idea** so that this time serves the Bible story.



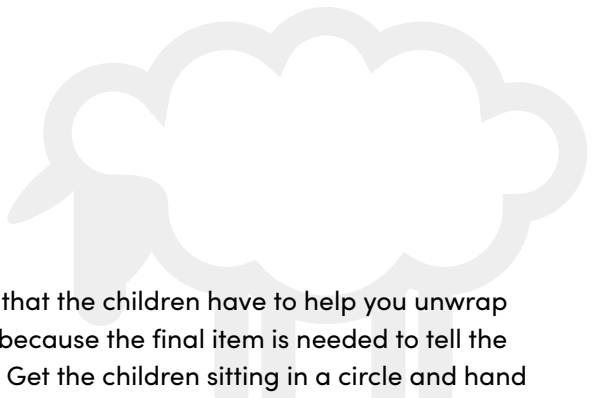
## Heart & Hands

### Small group discussion:

The vital chance for the children to reflect on the story, so that its truths impact their hearts. They do most of the talking, not the leader - ask multiple children the same question; give each child an opportunity to respond to what they have heard today. The questions will lead the children to see how their heads (thoughts), hearts (feelings) and hands (actions) are shaped by the Bible story through the work of the Spirit.



## Get Going




### Under 7's

#### Pass the Christmas Parcel

**You will need:** a music playing device and some Christmas music, a doll swaddled in strips of cloth/a sheet, Christmas wrapping paper, sticky tape, individually wrapped sweets (optional).

**Prepare in advance:** wrap the doll in layers of Christmas paper - you could include sweets in the layers.

Explain that the children have to help you unwrap the parcel because the final item is needed to tell the Bible story. Get the children sitting in a circle and hand the parcel to a child. As the music plays, the parcel is passed around the circle. When the music stops, the child holding the parcel removes a layer of paper. Keep going until the doll is unwrapped.

 **Link:** It was exciting to unwrap the parcel and find out what was inside. In today's Bible story, we will hear about the shepherd's big adventure to find the baby Jesus. They were so excited, they told everyone about him!




### Over 8's

#### A Well Wrapped Gift

**You will need:** large, awkwardly shaped items (e.g. a teddy bear, a skateboard, a plastic spade, a bike, a scooter), rolls of Christmas wrapping paper, sticky tape, scissors and ribbons and sweets/small prizes.

Get into pairs or small groups. Give out the items

and things needed to wrap them. Explain that the best wrapped gift wins. Set a time limit. Award the sweets/prizes to the winner.

 **Link:** All of your gifts look great but the most wonderful gift we were given was wrapped in strips of cloth not festive paper and ribbons. God gave us his son Jesus and the best news is that God gave him to everyone!



## Teaching Time



### Under 7's

**You will need:** a blanket, toy sheep, tinsel/angel costume, a torch, the swaddled doll from Get Going and the illustration (see Appendix).

Hide the doll in the room before you start the story.

#### Tell the Shepherds story

Place the blanket on the floor for the children to sit on. Scatter the sheep across the floor. Tell the children that you are going on an adventure like the shepherds did. Explain that they were sitting on a hillside at night

watching their sheep. They looked and listened for anything dangerous. They kept their sheep safe.

Get the children to act out what the shepherds were doing.

#### Share the Angel's Announcement

Put on the angel costume and shine the torch above you.

Read out the angel's message in Luke 2:10-12, 14 in a loud voice.

Ask the children some questions to help them understand the main message from the angel.

continued →

- Was the message good or bad news? *Good.*
- Was the good news for some people or all people? *All people.*
- Who was born? *A saviour.*
- How would they know they had found the right baby? *By what he was wearing - strips of cloth, what he was in - animal feeding box.*

Ask the children what they think the shepherds did after the angel visited them.

### Send the Shepherds Seeking

Take off the angel outfit. Read Luke 2:15 - the shepherds went on an adventure to find the baby! Ask the children to help you find the baby in the room.

When the doll is found, ask the children how they can be sure it's the right baby - it was wrapped in strips of cloth. Remind them that the shepherds found Jesus wrapped in cloth and lying in an animal's

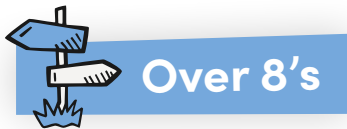
feeding box, just as the angel said.

- Look at the illustration and ask the children how they think the shepherds felt when they saw Jesus.

Explain that the Bible tells us they were so full of joy at this good news that they couldn't stop talking about it. Talk about how we like to share our news with people. These shepherds were so amazed by what they heard and saw that they told anyone who would listen to them.

The good news the shepherds were excited about is good news for us, too. We are invited to come and know more about Jesus and to trust him to save us and bring us into God's family. This is the best news ever that we should want to share with everyone.

God invites everyone from everywhere to come and meet Jesus. Wow!



**You will need:** pens, paper and Bibles or printouts of the passage.

Today your group will pretend to be news reporters who will break the Shepherd's story on Bethlehem Broadcasting Service (BBS). You could keep this simple and report from behind a desk or go all out with props and a BBS background. Depending on the size of your group and the time you have together, you could film the report, write an article or interview an eyewitness shepherd.

Read through Luke 2:8-20. Work on the report together or if you have a larger group then break into smaller groups to report back on the sections below (use the suggested headlines or come up with your own):

- v8-9 Shepherds Shock
- v10-12 Angel's Announcement
- v13-14 Heavenly Host
- v12, 16 Fashion First in Babygros

Use the questions to help you include the important details in your report/s. Keep this quick - set a time limit.

- Who were the key characters? Who was the announcement for?
- What was happening?
- Where were they? Where did they have to go?
- How did the characters feel? How did the characters respond?

Pull the information together and present the report.

Come back together to chat about the following key questions:

- If you were listening to this news report, would you think this was good news or bad news?
- Would you think this news is for you too, or just for the people who were there at the time?
- Could this news be actually worth sharing today?

Talk about how the good news the shepherds were excited about is good news for us, too. God announced Jesus' birth to the unknown and ordinary shepherds because Jesus is for everyone. He's the king and saviour who came for everyone. That's why his birth is such good news. Everyone is invited to come and know Jesus, to trust him and to be welcomed into God's family. This is the best news ever that we should want to share with everyone.



## Brain Break



Under 7's

& Over 8's




### Pass it on

**You will need:** an envelope with 'Good news!' written on it and a sheet of paper with 'The Saviour is born!' and a picture of a baby on it.

Place the sheet of paper in the envelope. Ask the children to line up behind one another and give the envelope to the child at the front of the line. Ask them to pass the message along the group - over the head, under the legs, until it reaches the person at the back.

That person then runs to the front and begins to pass the message again. Repeat until the leader is back at the front. Race in teams or against the clock.

If you have a small group, do it as a simple relay. Have fun running and cheering excitedly like the shepherds would have done after they met the baby Jesus.

 **Link:** *Open the envelope to reveal the message.*

The shepherds knew the good news about the Saviour was for everyone so they passed it on to anyone they met. The good news is for us and everyone we know - let's share it with them too!



## Heart and Hands



Under 7's

### Craft time - Make a Megaphone Decoration

**You will need:** printouts of the craft sheet (1 sheet/2 children), glue stick, hole punch, scissors, string, coloured pens/crayons and stickers.

**Prepare in advance:** cut out the pieces on the craft sheet for younger children.

*Step-by-step craft pictures can be found on page 15.*

Give each child a megaphone template to colour in and decorate. Fold on the dotted line so the small rectangle is on the outside of the cone/over the writing (Fig. 1).

Put glue on the 'glue' section. Then, line up the 'SHARE' edge with the dashed line of the glue section to make the cone shape. Make sure the 2 sections are stuck together well (Fig. 2).

Punch a hole in the small rectangle and tie a loop of string to hang the decoration (Fig. 3). Use the megaphones to pretend you are shouting out the good news about Jesus like the shepherds did! Use this craft time to reinforce the **Big Idea** of the lesson to get them ready for **Think Time**.

### Think time

**Big Question:** What did the angel tell the shepherds?

**A follow up question:** Who was this good news for?

### Prayer

Dear Father God, thank you for sending your son Jesus as the Saviour we all need. Thank you for sending him to everyone. Please help us to understand this is good news and share it with others just like the shepherds did. Amen.

**Say together:** Dear Jesus, please help us to tell everyone about you. Amen.



## Over 8's

These questions can mostly be found on the worksheet which has been designed to aid your discussion. If possible, enlarge the page to A3 so you can work on it together. Make sure each child can still answer the personal questions honestly for themselves (e.g. hand out Post-it notes for them to write/draw their answers to these questions).

### Did you spot it?

- Was the angel's message good or bad?
- Who was the news about?
- Who was the news for?

### Work it out

- Why is the birth of Jesus good news?
- Why do you think the shepherds wanted to tell people about what they heard and saw?

### Live it out

- Does the birth of Jesus feel like good news for you? Why?
- If you were sharing the Christmas story with a friend, what would you say?

### Extra Stretch

- The shepherds were a surprising choice to be the first ones God told about his son's arrival on earth. Why would he choose nobodies like them? Who are the people today that are often left out and ignored? How does this story include them?
- What more do you need to convince you that the birth of Jesus is good news for you?

### Prayer

God has kept his promise and sent the Saviour we need to be right with him again. What is the right response to this good news? What could you say? How could you act? Talk to God about that now.

### Craft Time

**Make a Megaphone Decoration.** Use the craft if you have time available after your discussion.

The assembly instructions can be found in the Under 7's **Craft Time** section.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

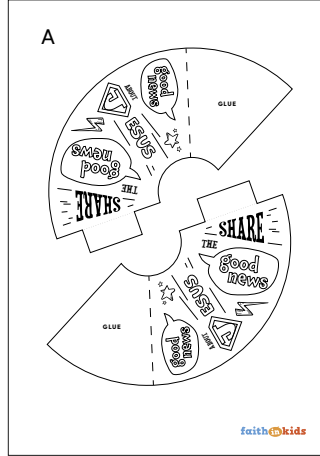


# Appendix

The following pages can be copied, printed and used to accompany this lesson.



p17



p18

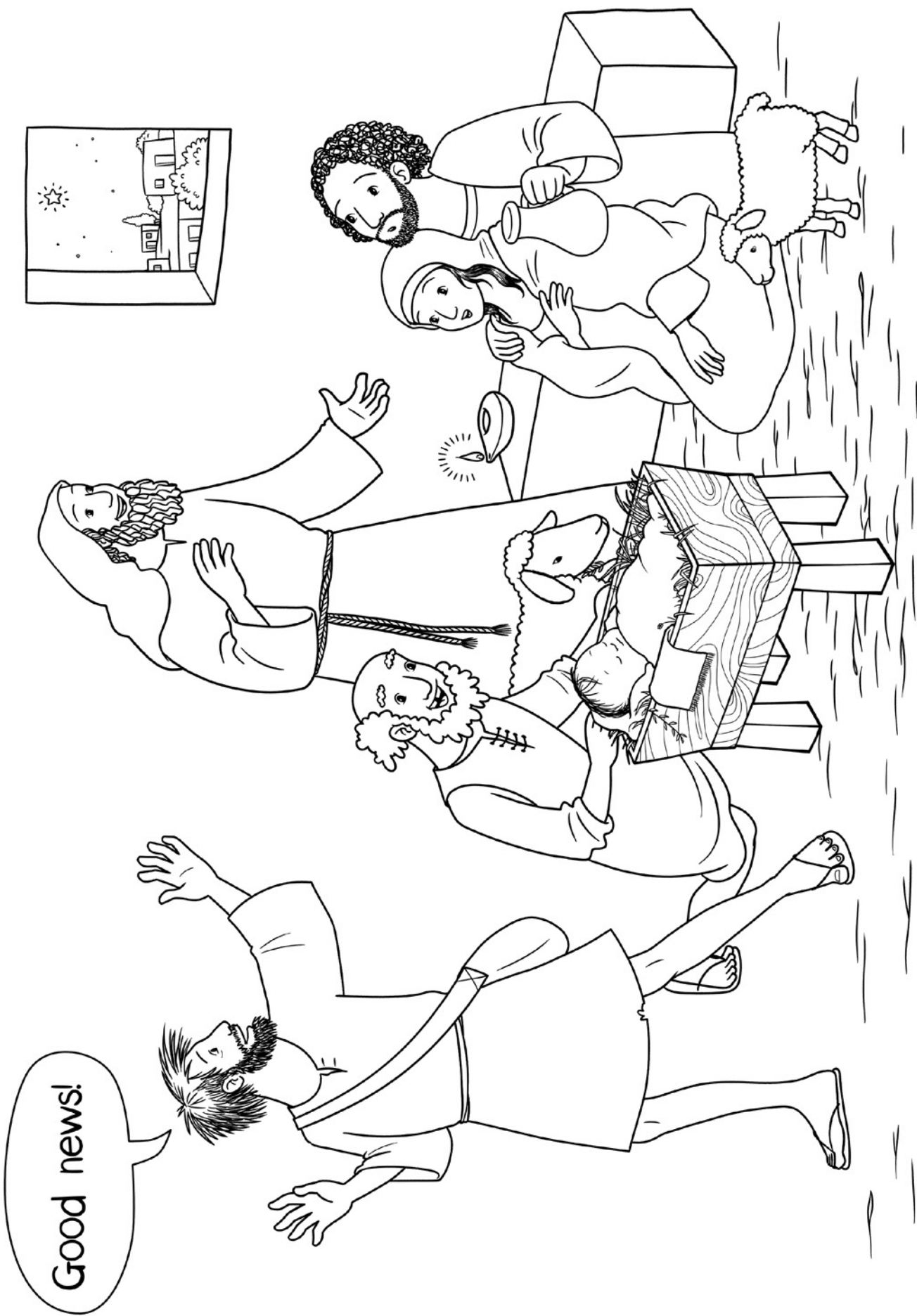


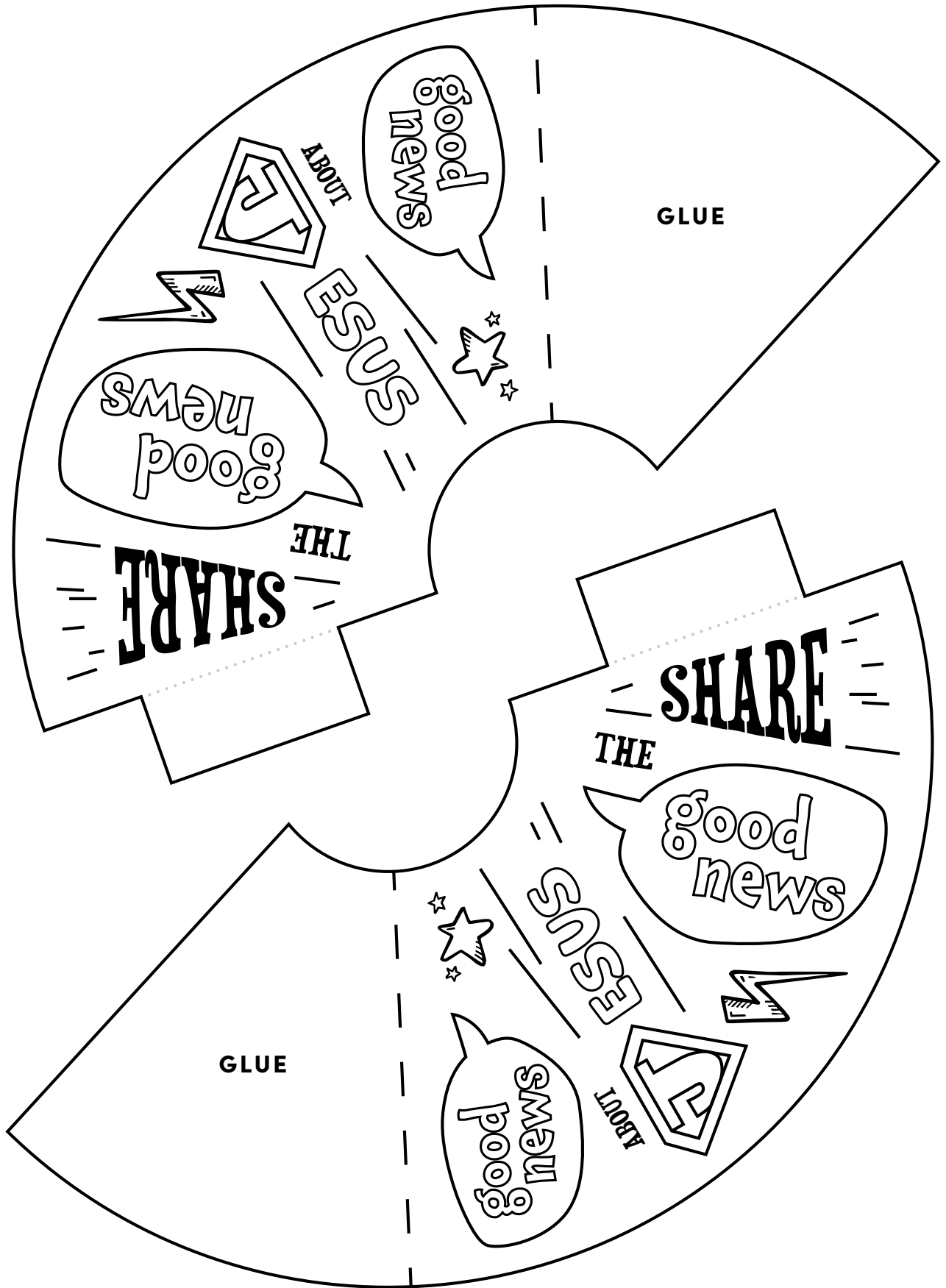
p19



p20









# Lesson 3: Shepherd's Adventure

LUKE 2:8-18



## Did you spot it?

Circle the correct word:

The angel's message was  
GOOD / BAD news.



Unscramble the letters  
to find the answers:

Who was the  
news about?

Who was the  
news for?

E U S  
S U J

E E E Y  
V O R N



## Work it out



Why is the  
birth of Jesus  
good news?



Why do you think the shepherds wanted to tell  
people about what they heard and saw?



## Live it out

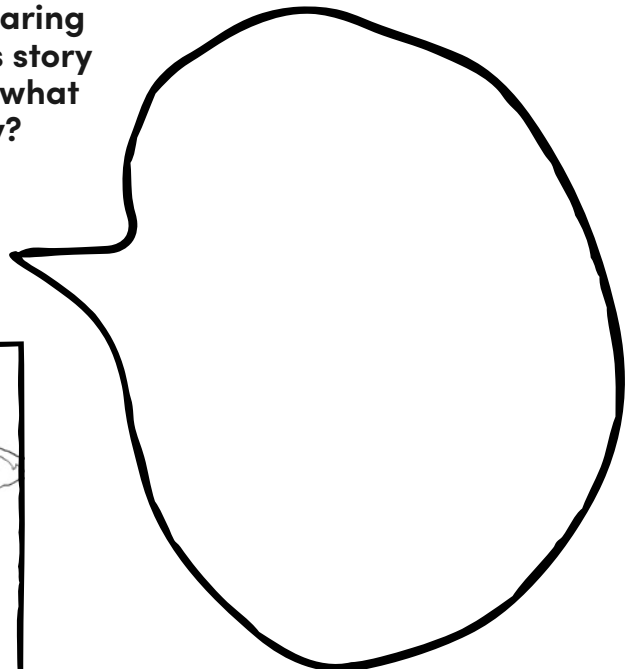
Does the birth of Jesus feel  
like good news to you?

yes  no

Why?



If you were sharing  
the Christmas story  
with a friend, what  
would you say?





# Planning for Sunday

## TEMPLATE



### Big Idea & Aim

Passage:

Big Idea:

Aim:



### Get Going

Introductory Idea:

➡ **Link:** What is the link between this activity and the **Big Idea**?



### Teaching Time

Story with explanation:

➡ **Key Message:** What is the one idea that you want the children to understand? What's the aim?



### Brain Break

Game:

➡ **Link:** What is the link between the game and the **Big Idea**?



### Heart & Hands

**Small Group Discussion**  
(applying the truth to their lives)

➡ **Live It Out.** Apply the point.



**Did you Spot it?** Remember the events.

**Pray:**



**Work it Out.** Understand the logic.

Linked activity (craft/game):



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in raising children to trust in Jesus Christ eternally.**

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