

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-21

Gospel Focus: Acts 4:12

Student Takeaways:

- Students will understand that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of God's plan to perfectly rescue humanity from the ravages of sin.
- Students will be reminded that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus and His work on the cross.
- Students will discuss how people look for salvation in lots of other sources besides Jesus.



Overview

Jesus is born! The Old Testament is full of God's promises to send a Messiah, a Savior. And now, with the birth of Jesus, the Savior has come. It's easy for us to think about the picture of a baby lying in a manger surrounded by cattle and shepherds. But don't miss the clear connection to God's overarching purpose in this lesson. God sent His Son in order to rescue people from the clutches of sin and the penalty of death. In this lesson, we'll explore the thread of salvation from the birth of Jesus, to the birth of the first church. Along the way, we'll see how easy it is to trust in other sources of salvation, forgetting that Jesus supplies the remedy to our greatest need: forgiveness.



Teacher Prep Video

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Thread* lesson 27 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 27, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson we encourage teachers to help students know who wrote a particular book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **Why teach context?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

Matthew

Author: Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.

Time frame: Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Purpose: Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

Luke

Author: Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.

Time frame: The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.

Purpose: Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Acts

Author: Acts has long been held to be a letter from Luke, a Gentile physician, to a man named Theophilus, possibly a benefactor of some sort.

Time frame: There is some debate over when Acts was written. The suggested dates are between 70 AD and 80 AD.

Purpose: The Book of Acts is a second letter to Theophilus that tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' resurrection. The book begins with Jesus' ascension and His command of His followers to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book traces this journey as the early church leaders proclaim the Gospel and plant churches.



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up helping teenagers ask the question, "How am I impacted by what I learned today"?

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

Getting Started

- **Goal:** To get students thinking and talking about rescue missions.
- **Set-Up:** You will need to equally divide your class into two teams. You will also need a way to keep score.

FIRST, explain to your students that today's lesson is going to look at the beginning of the ultimate rescue mission. Tell them that in order to get the conversation started, you are going to play a game. Divide them into two equal teams.

THEN, explain the rules:

- **Each team will think of five movies with a rescue mission. Star Wars, Toy Story 2, and The Martian are some examples.**
- **The game will feature five rounds. During a round Team A challenges Team B with a movie title that features a rescue. Team B will have to tell Team A who in the movie was the one being rescued. If they correctly guess who was being rescued in the movie, then they get one point. Then, Team B challenges Team A with a movie title, and Team A must guess who was being rescued.**
- **For example, Team A may say, "Our movie is Toy Story 2." Team B would answer, "In Toy Story 2 Buzz and friends are trying to rescue Woody." Ding, ding, ding, right answer and they get a point. Then, Team B would say, "Our movie is Saving Private Ryan." Team A would answer, "Seriously! Y'all are so dumb. They are trying to rescue Private Ryan." Point awarded.**
- **The teams cannot repeat movies. Teams must answer with the correct character name; the actor's name or a description is not sufficient. If there is a dispute, then you'll refer to the plot summary of the movie on IMDB as the final say.**
- **The team with the most points after five rounds wins.**

NEXT, after the game, ask your students a few questions to connect to the lesson.

- **Why do you think the theme of rescue is so popular in movies?**
- **What would happen in these movies if the hero had been confused about whom he or she was supposed to rescue? Why must rescuers be clear on their purpose?**
- **What are some motivations for people to join rescue missions?**

FINALLY, transition to The Story by saying something like:

- **Throughout our study of the big-picture story of the Bible, we've discussed that God has promised to send a rescuer called the Messiah. Today we're going to meet God's promised rescuer, and discuss whom He came to rescue, and what He came to rescue them from.**

The Story

- **Goal:** To understand that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of God's plan to perfectly rescue humankind from the ravages of sin.
- **Setup:** Students will need a Bible or a Bible app.

FIRST tell your students that you will be starting the New Testament in today's lesson. Explain that in the previous lessons

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

you've seen how the stories of the Old Testament actually point ahead to Jesus . . . His life, His death, and His resurrection. So far we've seen a thread of the Gospel through the Scripture, now we're going to meet Jesus and begin to understand His purpose. Before you precede you may want to review using the "Connecting the Dots" with your students.

Connecting The Dots

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it as a way to review and/or to connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- **Our last lesson discussed prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, which God had first promised way back in Genesis 3:15, and continued to promise throughout the Old Testament.**
- **The time between the Old Testament and the New Testament (called The Intertestamental Period) is 400 years. During that time there is no record of God speaking to His people.**
- **Remember Israel was taken into captivity by the Babylons. The Babylons were defeated by the Persians, and the Persian King Cyrus allows the Israelites to return home. During the Intertestamental Period, rule of Israel changed hands a few times with Israel ultimately being occupied by the Romans. During the time of Jesus the Jews are under Roman rule.**

THEN, begin by asking your students to go to Luke 1:26-38. As they turn to the passage, give them the context of the passage by reviewing the Bible Background. Read or have student read Luke 1:26-33. Ask:

- **What do we learn about Mary from this passage?**
 - o Answer: She was a virgin. She was betrothed to Joseph. She was favored by God.
- **What characteristics do we learn about Jesus in this passage?**
 - o Answer: He will be great. He will be called Son of the Most High. He will rule an everlasting kingdom on David's throne.
- **The angel says that Jesus will be the true King of Israel, but it's interesting that God doesn't chose a king, queen or other ruler to be Jesus' parents. What can we learn about God's purpose in sending Jesus by His choice for Jesus' parents?**
 - o Answer: God's plan is to build a different kind of kingdom. Jesus is not coming from a royal position, but instead He is growing up humbly. Humility, not entitlement, is a key to God's kingdom.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 1:34-38.

- **Look again at verse 34. What key problem in the angel's plan does Mary point out?**
 - o Answer: She is a virgin. It is biologically impossible for virgins to have babies. (Even 6th graders know this.)
- **What, according to Gabriel, is the solution?**
 - o Answer: God. God will send His Spirit to miraculously give Mary a child, even though she is a virgin.
- **Gabriel says, "For nothing will be impossible with God." What does that say about God's power?**
 - o Answer: God is able to do things that we don't even believe are possible.
- **How does it make you feel to know that God can do the impossible?**
 - o Answer: Answers will vary.
- **How does Mary respond to God's plan told to her by Gabriel?**

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

o Answer: She says that she is the Lord's servant. In other words, she humbly submits to God's plan, trusting Him.

- **Mary's attitude is incredible. Remember, she still has to explain to her family, her friends, and to Joseph that even though she is pregnant, she is still a virgin, and the baby belongs to God. Even in those times, people were smart enough to know virgins don't have babies. She knew people would think she was lying or insane, but she still humbly agreed to trust God. How can we follow Mary's example in our lives?**

o Answers will vary.

THEN, remind your students that Mary is betrothed (which was similar to an engagement but was legally binding) to a man named Joseph. Tell them to turn to Matthew 1:18-25 to get a better understanding of Joseph's side to this story. Read or have a student read Matthew 1:18-25. Then ask:

- **Obviously, Mary told Joseph she was pregnant prior to an angel appearing to him. What do we learn about Joseph from this passage?**

o Answer: He was a just man, a respectable one who did not want to publicly embarrass Mary. Also, he must have been struggling to believe Mary and needed to hear from God Himself.

- **Look at again at verse 21. What does the angel say is Jesus' purpose? Why is His purpose important?**

o Answer: Jesus' purpose is to save His people from their sin. From the very beginning God's plan was not to send a warrior to rescue His people, but a Savior who would pay the penalty of sin by His sacrifice.

- **Jesus' name is actually tied to His purpose. In Hebrew, the name Jesus means "God saves" or "God delivers." During the time, many Jewish people believed they most needed to be saved from the Romans. But what does God believe they need to be saved from the most?**

o Answer: God knows what they need most is to be saved from sin.

- **What do students your age believe they need to be saved from the most?**

o Answer: Various, but will probably include boredom, unhappiness, loneliness, insignificance, or singleness.

- **What do you think God believes you need to be saved from the most? What did He do to rescue you?**

o Answer: To reiterate, our greatest need is to be saved from sin. God sent His son Jesus to save us from sins as well.

- **How does Joseph respond to the angel's instructions?**

o Answer: He did what the angel instructed him to do. He took Mary as his wife and named the baby Jesus.

NEXT, tell your students that you are going to look at a passage in Luke 2 that actually describes Jesus' birth. The story will be very familiar as it is the account that is traditionally read during Christmas. Read or have student read Luke 2:1-14. Ask:

- **Who does the angel say this baby is?**

o Answer: He is a savior, the promised Messiah. The Messiah is the one who is coming to rescue God's people.

- **What will the good news bring? Who is the good news for?**

o Answer: The good news will bring great joy. It is for ALL people, not just the Jews.

- **Think back to Matthew 1:21. Why is Jesus' birth good news? Why will it bring all people great joy?**

o Answer: He is coming to rescue people from their sins, which is our biggest need. Sin separates us from a relationship with God and hurts our relationships with other people.

THEN, Read or have student read Luke 2:15-21. Ask:

- **How do the shepherds respond?**

o Answer: They quickly go to see Jesus.

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

- **How does Mary respond to the events surrounding Jesus' birth?**
 - o Answer: Verse 19 says she "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."
- **How do the shepherds leave after meeting Jesus?**
 - o Answer: They leave praising God.
- **The shepherds respond to seeing Jesus by worshipping God. What can we learn from the shepherds' response to Jesus?**
 - o Answer: Various, but the point is that meeting Jesus leads to worship. We, like the shepherds, should respond to knowing Jesus by worshipping God.

Remind your students that the purpose of Jesus coming to earth was to save people from their sins. Tell them that you're now going to look at a verse that connects His purpose with our lives.

The Thread

FIRST, ask your students to go to Acts 4:12. As they find the passage explain to them the context of this verse. You may want to review the Bible Background of Acts or just make sure they understand the context of Acts 3 and 4.

THEN, read or have a student read Acts 4:12. Ask:

- **According to Acts 4:12, where does salvation come from?**
 - o Answer: Jesus.
- **Where else? Are there any other sources of salvation?**
 - o Answer: Nowhere else, just Jesus and Jesus alone.
- **When Acts 4:12 speaks about salvation, what is it talking about? What does Jesus save us from?**
 - o Answer: Jesus saves us from sin by offering us forgiveness.
- **Let's unpack this some more. What makes Jesus a unique source of salvation? What makes trusting Him different?**
 - o Answer: There are numerous characteristics that make Jesus unique, but the one that is key to these passages is forgiveness. Other saviors want to help us do better, or overcome our issues. But Jesus offers us full and complete forgiveness for our sins.

FINALLY, remind students that their greatest need is to be saved from their sins. While others may offer to save them from loneliness, boredom, unhappiness, or singleness, Jesus is rescuing them from sin. The Bible teaches us that sin is the root problem, and these other problems are symptoms. Many people claim to save us from the symptoms, but only Jesus can save us from the root problem of sin.

If your students don't have any more questions, transition into the Wrapping Up section by inviting your students to examine their own lives in light of today's lesson.

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The Shepherds

Wrapping Up

- **Goal:** To discuss how people look for salvation in lots of other sources besides Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** None.

FIRST explain to your students that you are going to wrap up today's lesson by examining where people look for salvation. Ask:

- **We just touched on a list of things people your age want to be saved from. What are some examples of things teenagers turn to in an attempt to rescue themselves from those things?**
 - o Answer: Various, but could include: party scene, popularity, relationships, video games, pornography, social media, or dozens of other things.
- **What is the problem with trusting these things for salvation?**
 - o Answer: The big problem is they don't address the big problem: sin. Not only that, but they usually don't work. Partying doesn't really make people happy. A boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't really make people feel less lonely for the long haul. And popularity doesn't help people feel more significant.

THEN, invite your students to think about what this means for the people they go to school with every day. Ask:

- **When you see someone pursuing salvation from one of these sources, how do you respond? How does it make you feel toward that person?**
 - o Answer: Hopefully, your students will feel empathy, realizing that people without Christ are in great need.
- **This means that even the people you know who seem to have it all, may not have the most important thing: forgiveness of their sins. While they may look complete on the outside, they are living with their greatest need unmet. They may be popular, have a great boyfriend or girlfriend, a cool car, or be instafamous. But they still have the problem of sin. What can you do for them? What do they need?**
 - o Answer: They need to hear that Jesus will forgive them of their sins. We can help by telling them about Jesus, the only name by which we may be saved.

FINALLY, conclude by asking your students to pray for specific people they know who need Jesus. You can invite them to pray out loud together as a group or give them time to pray individually. The important thing is that you give them an immediate opportunity to act on behalf of their friends who don't know Jesus.

- **If you've purchased the *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that they'll be working through Week 27 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions, and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.**
- **If you'll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.**

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life
Lesson 27: Jesus' Birth And The
Shepherds

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.