

Strategic Dads

Advent Week 2



DEC 8-14

What We Learn from the Nativity

How do you decide who to invite to your birthday party?

The people we choose to hang out with says a lot about us. This week, we are looking at each of the people God invited to be part of the story of Jesus' birth. We can learn a lot from each of them—and we can also learn about what's important to God.

(Parents, if you have a nativity set in your house, you could show your younger children each person as you talk about them this week.)

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Jesus's Humility

Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus is God the Son, so he has always existed. But at Christmas, we celebrate something wonderful that he did: he became a human and was born as a little baby. Think about that! He left the beauty of heaven, where he was worshipped, and he became a tiny, helpless baby. He worked as a carpenter until he was 30 and then taught and helped people around Israel. And then he died (in an embarrassing, public, and painful way) to take the punishment for our sins. That's what humility looks like—loving somebody enough to put them in front of yourself.

- Did Jesus' story start at Christmas?
- Humility means putting others first—like thinking of who needs a friend, not just who it's easy to be friends with. Can you think of anybody you know who might need a friend (even if you feel too embarrassed or shy to be their friend)?

Challenge: Talk with that person who needs a friend—whether that means eating lunch with them, hanging out after school, or asking about their day at dinner time.

DEC
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Mary's Obedience

Luke 1:26-38

God is in control of everything, and he loves you more than you can imagine. You can trust him to give you good instructions, even when they are tough or confusing. Think about a little kid whose mom tells him to stop playing in the street. The little kid might not want to move, and he

might not know that cars drive down that street—but if he trusts that his mom loves him and knows more than he does, he’ll move, and that will keep him safe!

- How do you think Mary felt when the angel appeared to her?
- Mary trusted God, so she obeyed him even when it was scary. What is something God wants you to do that is scary or hard?

Challenge: Think about that thing God wants you to do, and do it!

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Joseph’s Compassion

Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph didn’t understand why Mary was going to have a baby, and he thought Mary had done something wrong. But he didn’t want to embarrass her. Even though he was scared and confused, he knew that God showed compassion to him, so Joseph chose to be compassionate to Mary. He was compassionate. He wanted to protect her. Matthew 1:19 calls Joseph “a just man,” and his actions show us that justice isn’t only about being fair. God’s justice is about treating others with compassion and mercy, even when they mess up. Joseph treated Mary with compassion even when he didn’t understand, and eventually, an angel told Joseph in a dream that Mary had done nothing wrong—in fact, she was carrying in her belly the very Son of God!

- What does it mean that Joseph was a righteous or just man?
- How does God show compassion and mercy to you?

Challenge: It is hard for us to know the purpose and motive of others' actions. Look for a way to show compassion today when someone does something different than you want or expect.

DEC
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The Innkeeper’s Generosity

Luke 2:1-7

Can you hear the bustle of Bethlehem in the details of these verses? Caesar Augustus had ordered a census across the whole Roman empire, so thousands of people were on the move, returning to the towns their families were from so they could be counted. The inns were packed. About to have a baby, Mary and Joseph needed a place to stay. The innkeeper didn’t have any open rooms, but he gave what he could: a stable. He offered what he had, even when it wasn’t much, and God used his gift. That night, the stable housed God.

- When Mary and Joseph asked for a room, what were the innkeeper’s options?
- Are there any places where you feel like your help would be too small to matter? (For example, maybe you feel like you’re too young or too busy to help someone, or maybe you think you don’t have enough money to get the gift that’d really help someone)

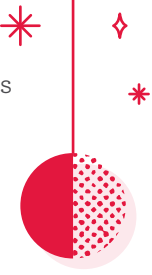
Challenge: Round up the spare change in the house and add it up—you might be surprised by how much money is hiding in overlooked places in your house! As a family, choose a ministry or organization (or your local church) where you can donate the money so it will help people who need a meal or a place to stay.

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The Angels’ Joy

Luke 2:8-14

Did you know that when verse 13 talks about a “heavenly host,” it literally means a heavenly army?



People sometimes imagine angels with long hair and flowing robes, like the angels in paintings and movies. But when angels appear in the Bible, they have to tell people not to be afraid of them. However, God’s heavenly army didn’t appear in the Bethlehem sky to fight something. These awesome creatures were celebrating God’s awesome plan for defeating sin and death through Jesus’ birth.

- How would you summarize what the angels said to the shepherds?
- What kinds of things you do sing about? Why do you think people sing?

Challenge: As a family, sing a Christmas song about Jesus today. If someone in your family plays an instrument, that’s a great way to start. Or you could turn on some Christmas carols while cleaning the kitchen, getting ready for school, or driving somewhere together.

DEC
13

The Shepherds’ Welcome

Luke 2:15-20

The angels could have appeared to anyone—to King Herod, to the priests and scholars in Jerusalem, to the rich merchants and tax collectors. But God sent them to appear to some shepherds working through the night. In Jesus’ day, shepherds were not who you’d expect as guests at the most important birthday party in the world. They were poor, they smelled like their sheep, and a lot of people didn’t trust them. In other words, they were outsiders. But God chose these outsiders as the first people to hear the news of Jesus’ birth and share it with others.

- Are there times when you feel like an outsider? How does it make you feel to remember God found the outsiders and invited them to his celebration in Bethlehem?
- Can you think of people who seem like outsiders to your group of friends? How could you reach out to them this week?

Challenge: Find one way to reach out to someone outside your group of friends.

DEC
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The Wise Men’s Worship

Matthew 2:1-12

What kind of gift would you buy for a toddler? The wise men brought Jesus pretty weird gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But each gift shows a reason the wise men had traveled so far to worship this baby. Gold shows that Jesus is our king. Frankincense was part of the incense that priests offered to God, so it shows that Jesus is our priest, offering sacrifices to God and mediating between God and us. And myrrh was used in burials, showing that Jesus would not just offer any sacrifice—he would offer himself as a sacrifice for us. The wise men hadn’t just come to see a baby. They were here to worship their king, their priest, and their sacrifice.

- Each of the wise men’s gifts shows us a role that Jesus fulfilled. Can you think of any other roles he fulfilled or continues to fulfill? What are gifts that would symbolize those?
- What has Jesus given to you?

Challenge: Think of something that God has given you (like time or talents or things) that you can give back to him—and then make a plan for how you’ll do that. For example, you could give back some free time by helping a friend, or you could give back some things by donating toys and clothes.