

MERRY



CHRISTMAS!

We pray that this devotion leads you and any you are gathered with to celebrate well the birth of Jesus, God with us, Immanuel. This devotional is designed to be able to be adapted for the needs of your gathered friends and family. You will see notes for the suggested use of this devotion but feel free to use as you wish. However, you use this, the point is to celebrate that we have a sovereign good God who loves us and that He showed us that love by sending His one and only Son, Jesus to save us. Enjoy!
Materials Needed: a bible, a candle, & something to light it with.

Read Aloud

[consider letting different people read]

Have you ever thought about all the ways we saw God work to bring all of life and history together for everyone and everything to be in place for the birth of Jesus? Think of all it took to fulfill all of the prophecies and promises that had been made? Do you think it was just by chance that Caesar Augustus called for a census? Did it just so happen that Mary and Joseph were traveling to Bethlehem-the very place the Messiah was prophesied to be born? (Micah 5:2) God is in control of all things, which He showed by using a pagan [You may need to define pagan] emperor to bring about His plan.

After Jesus was born, Mary laid Him in a manger [Adult Note: may need to clarify what a manger is for children]. A king in a manger! It was so unlikely. But Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent in the most humble of positions, "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life- a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Imagine the shepherd's surprise when an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared. The Bible says that they were terrified! But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David" (Luke 2:10-11).

What a relief! This angel had come to bring good news. He proclaimed a Savior. The people of Israel were well aware of their need for a Savior. They made sacrifices daily to atone for their sin. Finally, a Savior had come who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, once and for all.

This is the best news ever! An army of angels appeared, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors" (Luke 2:14).

Take a moment to remind everyone why Jesus came; He came because we needed Him. The purpose of Jesus' birth was twofold: to bring glory to God and to make peace between God and those who trust in Jesus' death and resurrection.

[Ask those you are with and allow some time for responses]

"What is your favorite thing about Christmas?"

Someone most likely said gifts (and if they didn't someone was thinking it...) We are meant to love the gifts. Our favorite thing about Christmas is hearing the story of how God sent Jesus to earth. God's people had been waiting a long time, and the Messiah was finally here! Jesus is the greatest gift of all. He is the reason that we exchange gifts at Christmas: our gifts to one another are meant to remind us of the gift of Jesus and cause great joy in our hearts.

Read: Jesus Was Born - Luke 2:1-20

[If you have young children present, read this simplified version of the Scriptures in bold below. Otherwise, someone use a Bible nearby. Preferably an ESV or NIV.]

When Mary was pregnant with Baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem.

They looked for a safe place to stay, but every place was full. So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby, Jesus. She

wrapped Him in cloth and laid Him in a manger.

Nearby, some shepherds were staying out in the fields. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them. A bright light shone around the shepherds, and they were scared!

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! I have good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you. "Go find the baby. He will be wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger."

All of a sudden, many angels appeared. They praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest.

The shepherds went to find Baby Jesus. They found Him, and they told others about Him. Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. everything had happened just as the angel had said.

(IF NO YOUNG CHILDREN PRESENT SKIP TO "ADULT QUESTIONS")

[Adult Note for summarizing for children - This story tells us that Jesus was born! This was very good news! Jesus was not like other babies. Jesus is God's Son. God sent Jesus to earth from heaven. Jesus came into the world to save people from their sins and to be their King. Jesus is our greatest gift]

Kids Questions *[allow for adults to answer after kids]*

- ❖ Why did Mary and Joseph have to stay in a place where animals were kept? *[Every place was full.]*
- ❖ Who did the angel tell the shepherds to go and find? *[Baby Jesus, the Messiah]*
- ❖ What did the many angels say as they praised God? *[Glory to God in the highest!]*
- ❖ What did the shepherds do after they found Baby Jesus? *[They told others about Him.]*
- ❖ Did you like opening the gift before we read the story?

We get to have the gift of Jesus and we get to tell people about the gift of Jesus! Just like the Angels told the shepherds about the good news of Jesus being born, we too can tell people that God sent Jesus to earth because He loves us so much.

Adult Questions

- ❖ Why do you think Jesus was born?
- ❖ *[Read what follows only after you have discussed a bit]*

Jesus was born to rescue us. We need to be rescued from sin.

Sin messed up the wonderful world God made, including us.

We are sinners, but Jesus came to take the punishment for sin so we could be saved.

- ❖ If this is indeed true, what is the greatest gift those who are saved by Jesus could give to the world around them?
- ❖ Who is someone you need to share the gift of Jesus with?

The Light of the World:

Read **John 8:12** and then light your candle.

Ask: "How are you thankful for the light of Jesus coming into our world?"

Read **Matthew 5:14-16**

Ask: "What does it mean to live as the light of the world?"

Prayer:

God, we cannot fully understand what a great thing You did when You sent Jesus to earth. How could Your Son be a human being like us? We do not understand, but we thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior and rescue us from sin. Allow us to use our voices to share the gift of who Jesus is to everyone. Amen.

SING: Joy to the World