



# All Hands on Deck

## Jump In

The Book of Jeremiah tells the story of the prophet, Jeremiah, who was sent by God to warn the people of Israel's impending downfall. Jeremiah warned the Israelites that their homeland was going to be invaded and that those who survived would be sent into exile. Not all of Jeremiah's message contained bad news. When the Israelites were in exile in Babylon, Jeremiah delivered a message of hope. Jeremiah assured the people that God was still with them. "The time is coming" Jeremiah tells the people, "when God will raise up a new ruler." The wise king promised by God and foretold by Jeremiah would be a descendant of King David.

As we prepare to once again remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, we remember Jeremiah's words of hope. Through Jeremiah, God promised to raise up a righteous ruler. This month we prepare to celebrate Jesus, David's descendant and our righteous king.

## Dive Deeper Together

**Read Jeremiah 23:5-8 in the Deep Blue Kids Bible or "A Baby Is Coming" in the Deep Blue Bible Storybook.**

**OR**

**Read "A Baby Is Coming":** The people were sad. They had been forced to leave their homes and live in a new land. The prophet Jeremiah gave the people hope. "The time is coming when God will send us a special king," said Jeremiah. "This king will be from David's family. He will be a wise king and he will do good things for his people. This king will help his people be safe. Now is the time to wait for this special king."

## Grow Stronger Together

This is the beginning of Advent, a special time in our church when we wait and get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Prepare an Advent wreath with your family. An Advent wreath is a circle of greenery with four purple or blue candles. A white candle is placed in the center of the wreath. One purple or blue candle is lit each of the four Sundays in Advent. The white candle is lit on Christmas eve. You can find out more about Advent wreaths at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-do-the-candles-in-our-advent-wreath-mean>

## Pray Together

Share joys and concerns, and then say this prayer: Dear God, thank you for this special time to get ready for the birth of Jesus. Amen.

## Session 1

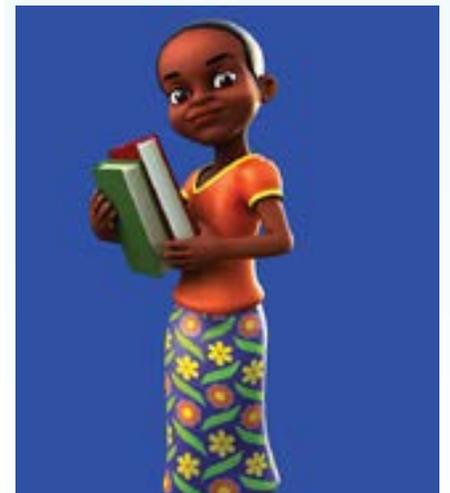
### Unit 1: A Time Is Coming

**BV: The Time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David's line, and he will rule as a wise king. (1 Kings 4:29)**

**AP: We prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth.**

**A Baby Is Coming (Jeremiah 23:5-8)**

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The Gospels of Matthew and Luke provide us with information about the birth of Jesus. The traditional story we often hear at Christmas is a combination of both Gospel stories. In both Matthew and Luke an angel messenger delivers the news that God's Son is to be born. In each case, the angel imparts the news that the baby is to be named Jesus. Luke tells of the angel's visit to Mary. Matthew tells of the angel's visit to Joseph.

Mary was a young girl, probably 12 or 13 years old. This was the age at which girls were married during Bible times. She was engaged to Joseph, but they were not yet married.

Overall, the Bible mentions very little about Joseph. We're told Joseph is a righteous man (Matthew 1:19), and this statement is supported by the fact that upon learning that Mary is pregnant before they were married, Joseph makes plans to divorce her quietly. According to Mosaic law, Joseph could have had Mary stoned to death.

Both Mary and Joseph willingly accepted the angel's message and trusted God.

## Dive Deeper Together

**Read Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 1:26-38 in the Deep Blue Kids Bible or "Joseph's Story" and "Gabriel's Message" in the Deep Blue Bible Storybook.**

**OR**

**Read "Mary and Joseph":** One day Mary was surprised by a special visitor. It was an angel! The angel told her that God had chosen her to have God's son. The baby's name would be Jesus. One night Joseph went to sleep and had a special dream. In his dream Mary saw an angel! The angel told Joseph to get married to Mary and that Mary's baby would be God's Son. Joseph and Mary did what God wanted them to do.

## Grow Stronger Together

Add an Angel to your Christmas decorations or make cookies using an angel cookie cutter. As you're out and about this week, try to find angel decorations at church and in stores.

## Pray Together

Share joys and concerns, and then say this prayer: Dear God, thank you for this special time to get ready for the birth of Jesus. Amen.

## Session 2

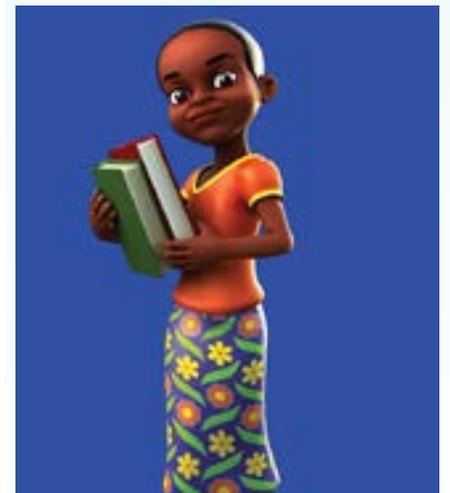
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**AP: We prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth.**

**Mary and Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 1:26-38)**

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Mary was nine months pregnant when the Roman Emperor, Ceasar Augustus, gave the order for a census. The purpose of the census was to raise tax money. Each man was required to go to the home of his ancestors. Because Joseph was part of the house of David, Mary and Joseph had to travel on a ten-day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Because of the crowded conditions in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were unable to find a place to stay, either in a private home or in a guesthouse or inn. And so, Mary's baby, Jesus, also known as Emmanuel, God with us, was laid in a manger on a bed of hay.

Take time to stop and consider Jesus' presence in your life. In the midst of Christmas preparations and celebrations, remember the reason we celebrate is because Jesus, God's Son, was sent to remind us that God is with us.

## Dive Deeper Together

**Read Luke 2:1-7 in the Deep Blue Kids Bible or "Jesus Is Born" in the Deep Blue Bible Storybook.**

**OR**

**Read "A Baby Is Born":** Mary and Joseph walked to Bethlehem. It was a long way. When Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem they were tired, but they could not find a place to stay. Mary and Joseph went to a stable, a place for animals. During the night, Mary's baby was born. She wrapped her baby in soft cloths and rocked him to sleep. Then she laid him in a feed box on a soft bed of hay. Mary and Joseph named the baby Jesus.

## Grow Stronger Together

Mary wanted baby Jesus to feel safe and warm, so she wrapped in soft cloths. This is called swaddling. Look up the word swaddling on the internet. Practice swaddling with a baby doll. How do you think Mary felt when she wrapped baby Jesus in soft cloths?

## Pray Together

Share joys and concerns, and then say this prayer: Dear God, thank you for this special time to get ready for the birth of Jesus. Amen.

## Session 3

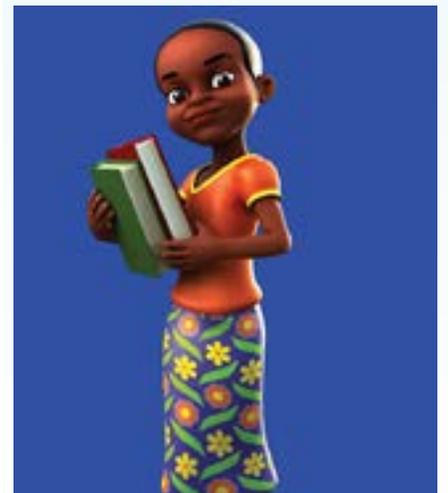
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### A Baby Is Born (Luke 2:1-7)

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Luke tells us that the first to hear the good news of Jesus' birth were shepherds. God chose to proclaim the birth of God's Son not to kings and emperors, but rather to people in the most lowly of positions. God's greatest gift is for all people, regardless of their position in life. God's call comes to everyone.

Shepherds had a hard life. Their work was often dirty, and they were considered unclean. This meant that they could not participate in many of the religious ceremonies. Yet God chose these people to be the first to know: Your Savior is born!

When the shepherds heard the angel's message they responded a once. They went immediately to find the baby. And when they saw the baby, they praised God and told everyone they met the good news that Jesus was born.

## Dive Deeper Together

**Read Luke 2:8-20 in the Deep Blue Kids Bible or "Joyous News" in the Deep Blue Bible Storybook.**

**OR**

**Read "The Shepherd's Visit":** Shepherds were out on the hillside taking care of the sheep. When it grew dark, the shepherds stayed awake, making sure that their sheep were safe. Suddenly a bright light appeared in the sky. The shepherds were afraid. It was an angel! The angels told the shepherds good news: God's Son is born! The shepherds watched as more angels filled the sky, praising God. Then, just as suddenly as the light appeared, all the angels disappeared. The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found the stable. The shepherds saw baby Jesus lying in the animal's feed box. The shepherds praised God for baby Jesus. They went back to their home, telling everyone about God's Son.

## Grow Stronger Together

The shepherds told everyone they met about baby Jesus. Make Christmas cards to give to your family and friends, reminding them to celebrate the joyous news that Jesus is born.

## Pray Together

Share joys and concerns, and then say this prayer: Dear God, thank you for this special time to get ready for the birth of Jesus. Amen.

## Session 4

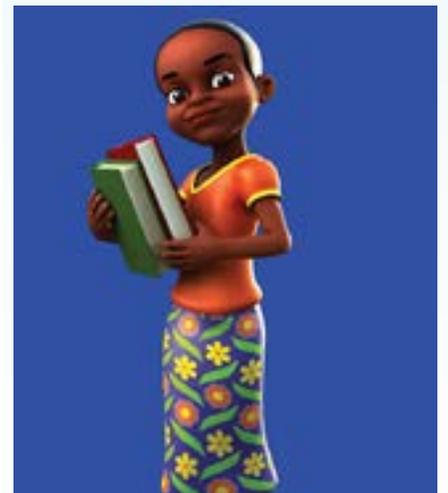
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**The Shepherd's Visit (Luke 2:8-20)**

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Joseph and Mary took the infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. The visit was to fulfill the requirements of Jewish law.

While they were at the temple they met two elderly people, Simeon and Anna. Both Simeon and Anna were prophets and faithful to God. Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus as the Messiah and prophesy what Jesus' role will be.

Simeon's blessing of Mary and Joseph foreshadow Jesus' rejection and death. Not all will welcome Jesus' message. Simeon's blessing also hints that Jesus' ministry would include the non-Jewish world.

Anna is mentioned only briefly, but her appearance is important. As a prophet, Anna continues the tradition of female prophets in the Old Testament and anticipates the role of women in Jesus' ministry and the early church.

## Dive Deeper Together

**Read Luke 2:25-38 in the Deep Blue Kids Bible or "Simeon and Anna" in the Deep Blue Bible Storybook.**

**OR**

**Read "Simeon and Anna":** Mary and Joseph carried baby Jesus into the temple, a special place to worship God. A man named Simeon was also in the temple. He was very old. He had been waiting and waiting to see God's Son. Simeon went to Mary and Joseph. He took baby Jesus in his arms. Simeon praised God for Jesus and declared that Jesus was God's Son. Anna was also in the temple. Like Simeon, Anna was very old. She stayed in the temple and prayed to God everyday. When Anna saw baby Jesus, she began to praise God. She told everyone that Jesus was God's Son.

## Grow Stronger Together

Simeon and Anna were excited to see baby Jesus. Ask each member of your family to name three things he or she found exciting this Christmas.

## Pray Together

Share joys and concerns, and then say this prayer: Dear God, thank you for this exciting time when we remember Jesus' birth. Amen.

## Session 5

### Unit 1: A Time Is Coming

**BV: The Time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David's line, and he will rule as a wise king. (1 Kings 4:29)**

**AP: We prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth.**

**Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38)**

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