

References

Luke 2:1-7;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 43-49



Memory Verse

“Every good and perfect
gift is from above,
coming down from
the Father”
(James 1:17, NIV)



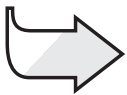
Objectives

The children will:

Know God gives good
and perfect gifts, the best
of which is Jesus.

Feel wonder that this gift
is for them!

Respond by accepting Jesus,
God’s best gift.



The Message

God gives perfect gifts,
and His best gift
is Jesus.

A Gift for Me?

Monthly Theme

God is our best Friend.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Caesar Augustus decrees that a census be taken of his empire. Every man must go to the town of his father to register. This means that Joseph is to take Mary and go to Bethlehem. While they are there, the time comes for Baby Jesus to be born. There is no place for them to stay, so Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable. She wraps Him in cloths and lays Him in a manger.

This is a lesson about grace.

Our God is not only a gift-giver. He is the best Gift-Giver. He loves humanity so much that He wants to give us only His best. Nothing less will do. The greatest example of this concept is when God gave His only Son as the embodiment of the gift of salvation. No other gift can top this. Even though there was no place prepared for God’s Gift Baby, God gave Him anyway. What matchless love!

Teacher Enrichment

“Not only did the Messiah come at the time indicated in Daniel’s prophecy, He came at the most favorable time in all history. The world was at peace, under one government. Travel by land and sea was relatively safe and expeditious. There was a universal language, Greek. The Scriptures had been available in Greek . . . for about two hundred years. Men were dissatisfied with their religious beliefs and were longing for the truth about life and human destiny. The Jews were dispersed everywhere, and in spite of themselves, bore witness to the true God. From all parts of the world they came to attend the feasts at Jerusalem, and could carry with them, as they returned, news of the Messiah’s coming. Providence could have appointed no place and time more auspicious for launching the gospel message to the world than Palestine at this period of history” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 965).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 9.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>The Perfect Gift Search</i> B. <i>Gift Wish List</i>	assortment of nature specimens, Bible old catalogs or magazines; picture of Jesus; scissors (or paper bag, paper and pencil); the word "Jesus" written on a piece of paper, tape
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> gift-wrapped box used last week none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible-times costumes, paper rolled like a megaphone, cardboard box, dry grass or straw, baby doll, strips of white cloth, Bible Bible, wadded paper ball Bibles; slips of paper; small basket, bowl, or jar
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Invisible Gifts</i>	lemon juice; paper; heat source such as an iron, lamp without a shade, or hair dryer for every 6 - 8 children; extension cord, if necessary; Bible
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Perfect Christmas Gift</i>	lemon juice; paper; toothpicks; Christmas wrap, aluminum foil, or green construction paper

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Ask them to begin the readiness activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- assortment of nature specimens
- Bible

A. The Perfect Gift Search

As the children arrive at Sabbath School, direct them to a table on which an assortment of nature specimens has been placed. For instance: shells, flowers, beetles, toads or turtles (if available), fish in a fish tank, animal skins, smooth stones or rock crystals. (Optional: observation aids such as small magnifying glasses, rulers, microscope.) Have an adult who is interested in science or nature ready to help the children observe the detail and beauty in the specimens.

Debriefing

What was the most amazing thing you observed? (Take answers.) **What did you observe that was beautiful?** (Take answers.) **How do you feel when you see God's perfect, amazing, beautiful handiwork?** (amazed, grateful, etc.) **Where did these things come from?** (Take answers.) **Before we found the specimens, where did they come from?** (Keep saying "before that" as necessary to get them to recognize that God made them.) **How much did God charge us for these gifts?** (Nothing, they are a gift to us.) Read aloud James 1:17. **What is God's free, perfect, and best gift to us?** (Jesus) **Today's message tells us:**



GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS, AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.

Say that with me

You Need:

- old catalogs, magazines
- scissors
- tape
- picture of Jesus
- paper bag
- or
- paper and pencils
- word "Jesus" on paper
- paper bag

B. Gift Wish List

Give the children the catalogs/magazines and ask each child to cut out pictures of two things they would like to get for Christmas. (Or have each child write on a slip of paper.) Put all the pictures (or papers) into a bag in which you have already dropped the picture of Jesus or the word "Jesus."

Have the children pull the pictures out of the bag one at a time. Then have the class arrange the gifts in order from best to not-so-good by taping them to the chalkboard or wall. Encourage discussion about which gifts are best. If necessary, have the class decide between gifts by voting. Save the picture of Jesus for last. Ask the children to decide where Jesus should go in the lineup of gifts.

Debriefing

Ask: **Do you usually think of Jesus as a gift? Sometimes it can be easy to forget that Jesus is a gift to us from God—the best gift God could have given us. What is the only gift that will last forever?** (Jesus) **What will happen to each of these other**

things over time? (They will break; we will get tired of them; outgrow them; etc.) **Not even the thing that you decided was the best gift in the bag will last forever. But the gift of Jesus will last forever. In fact, that's the reason God sent Jesus to us—so that we could live forever. What do you think about Jesus—the best gift of all?** (I can't describe Him, He is so wonderful! There is no better gift.)

Today's message tells us:



GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS, AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

"Away in a Manger" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 73 or 74)

"Silent Night, Holy Night" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 76)

"Joy to the World" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 81)

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 75)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Ask: **Is there a gift for anyone in the story? Missionaries share Jesus; He is the best gift.**



Offering

Say: **Our offerings are gifts that we bring to Jesus. They help others to learn about Jesus—God's best gift to us. Our offering is one way that we can thank God for His gift.**

You Need:

- gift-wrapped box used last week



Prayer

Ask for prayer requests and reporting on any obviously answered prayers. Remind the children to record this information on their prayer calendars at home. Form prayer bands of 3-4 children. Encourage children to thank God for sending Jesus, His best gift; tell Him that they accept Jesus, His best gift. Close by asking God to help children remember that the perfect gift of Jesus is the reason for Christmas.

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- Bible-times costumes
- paper rolled like a megaphone
- box filled with dry grass or straw
- straw to spread on the floor
- baby doll
- strips of white cloth
- Bible

Experiencing the Story

Dress the children in Bible-times costumes and involve everyone in the story.

Characters: Mary, Joseph, messenger, innkeeper

Props: Paper rolled like a megaphone, box filled with dry grass or straw (set it up front to one side), straw to spread on the floor, baby doll, strips of white cloth

Read or tell the story.

(Bring Mary to stand before the class.)

Mary smiled to herself. An angel had told her that she would have a very special baby, Christ the Lord. Mary thought a lot about that.

First she wondered why God chose her. She and Joseph *(Bring Joseph to stand by Mary.)* were from the same family as King David, just as the Bible said. But they were very poor, and they lived in the wrong town. The prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, not Nazareth where Joseph and Mary lived.

But then a messenger from the king walked through the streets. *(Enter the messenger, shouting through the megaphone.)*

“Hear ye, hear ye!” he called.

(Prompt the messenger.) “Emperor Augustus decrees: every man must go to the town of his fathers to register.” *(Exit the messenger.)* The government was taking a census—counting the people. This meant that Joseph would have to take Mary and go to Bethlehem.

God had arranged everything. At just the right time, the government was *requiring* them to go to Bethlehem.

The trip was slow and tiresome.

(Mary and Joseph walk around the room.) The roads were crowded with travelers. The dust sometimes filled Mary’s throat and made her eyes burn.

When they finally reached Bethlehem, Joseph couldn’t find any place for them to stay, though he asked at every house. *(Joseph taps the shoulder of a seated child.)*

“Do you have a spare room for some weary travelers?” he asked. *(The child shakes her head and points to someone else. Repeat the question for that child.)* But every rooftop and covered porch was already packed with tired travelers. Joseph was discouraged. Mary was weary.

Finally Joseph stopped at an inn. “Do you have a room?” he asked.

“Sorry,” the innkeeper replied, “every room is taken.” *(Prompt the innkeeper.)* Then the man noticed Mary. She looked so tired. “Well, I don’t know . . .” Then he pointed to the barn. “It’s clean,” he said. “And there are a few animals . . . but you can stay there if you like.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you,” Joseph replied. And he led Mary to the barn. *(They stand by the box of hay.)* It was certainly not very special. Animals shuffled restlessly in the stalls. They crunched and munched their food and snorted and snuffled. *(Add sound effects.)*

But at least there was plenty of dry straw. It made a clean place for them. *(They spread the straw.)*

That night Baby Jesus was born. *(Give the doll to Mary.)* His mother wrapped Him carefully in the soft cloths she had brought from home. *(Mary wraps the doll with cloth strips.)* She cuddled the baby and placed Him in the manger that Joseph had filled with new hay.

Mary sank back down on the soft straw bed that Joseph had prepared for

her. (*She sits by the manger.*) She was tired! But she was also content. God had sent so many gifts. A way to get to Bethlehem. A dry place to stay. And best of all—He had sent Baby Jesus Himself. Even though she was tired, Mary smiled to herself in the darkness. She knew in her heart that **GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS, AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.**

Debriefing

Ask: **How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they heard the decree that sent them to Bethlehem?** (Sure that God was leading.) **How would you have felt if you couldn't find a place to stay in Bethlehem?** (afraid, worried, frustrated) **How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about staying in a stable?** (thankful, glad for a place to stay) **Where did Baby Jesus sleep?** (in a manger) **Let's remember today's message:**



**GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS,
AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.**

Memory Verse

You Need:

- Bible
- wadded paper ball

Read James 1:17 together. Have the children form a circle. Say the first word of the memory verse and gently toss the paper ball to a child.

That child catches the paper ball, says the next word, then throws the paper ball to someone else. If the paper ball is dropped or someone misses a word, start the memory verse over. Continue until the verse has been said several times and each person has participated.

Bible Study

In advance, write each of the following questions on a slip of paper (without the answers)—one for each verse in Luke 2:1-7. Put the papers in a container. Have

seven children take one each from the container. Then have other children take turns reading Luke 2:1-7, one verse at a time.

After reading each verse, ask the child who has the question for that verse to read and answer it or ask someone else to answer.

1. Luke 2:1 Who made a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world? (Caesar Augustus)
2. Luke 2:2 Who was Quirinius? (Governor of Syria)
3. Luke 2:3 Where did everyone go to register? (to his own town)
4. Luke 2:4 Where did Joseph go to register? (to Bethlehem, the town of David) Why? (He belonged to the house and line of David.)
5. Luke 2:5 Who went with Joseph to Bethlehem? (Mary and unborn Baby Jesus)
6. Luke 2:6 What time came while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem? (The time came for Baby Jesus to be born.)
7. Luke 2:7 Describe Baby Jesus' baby blanket and crib. (His blanket was cloths and His crib was a manger.)

Debriefing

Say: **We usually hear this story once a year at Christmas time. What is your favorite part of the story?** (Accept answers.) **The people in Bethlehem had no place for Baby Jesus to stay. They did not give Him any baby gifts. But what did God give to the people of Bethlehem and to us? Let's answer by saying our message:**



**GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS,
AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.**

You Need:

- Bibles
- slips of paper
- container (small basket, bowl, or jar)

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- lemon juice
- paper
- heat source (an iron, a lamp without shade, or hair dryer) for every 6-8 children
- an extension cord, if necessary
- Bible

Invisible Gifts

In advance, use lemon juice to write different gifts from God on pieces of paper (love, forgiveness, pets, etc.). Give each child a paper.

Help them warm each paper. (Move the paper above the light bulb, or iron the back of the paper.) The writing will turn a light brown. (Large group option: iron the papers. Test this before class.)

Help the children read their paper. Make sure each appreciates that this is a gift of God. For instance, if forgiveness is the gift, remind the children how it feels to know that you have done wrong. Then describe the joy that comes from knowing that you are forgiven.

Debriefing

How do you feel about the gift written on your paper? (Take responses.) **Is yours a perfect gift?** (If the gift is from God, it is perfect.) Read aloud James 1:17. **From whom do all good gifts come?** (from above, from God)

We have read about some of God's gifts in the Bible. Some of God's best gifts are things we cannot see, such as love, joy, peace, etc. Read aloud Galatians 5:22, 23. **How do we get these gifts?** (By accepting Jesus, God's best gift.) **Let's say our message together:**



**GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS,
AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.**

Sharing the Lesson

Perfect Christmas Gift

Help the children write with lemon juice on paper, "Jesus loves you." When the juice is dry, slip it inside a folded sheet of Christmas wrapping paper, foil, or green construction paper.

Debriefing

Ask: **To whom do you plan to give your "perfect gift"?** (Accept answers.)
How would you feel if someone gave you this gift? (Accept answers.) **The good news is that Someone *has* given you this gift. That Someone is God.**

Role-play giving the gift to someone and helping them ask an adult to warm the gift over a light bulb or iron the back of the paper. They can follow up by sharing their memory verse. Say the message together:



**GOD GIVES PERFECT GIFTS,
AND HIS BEST GIFT IS JESUS.**

Closing

Have the children stand in a circle with their gifts. Thank God for Jesus, His perfect gift. Ask Him to bless the children as they give their gift to someone.

You Need:

- lemon juice
- paper
- toothpicks
- Christmas wrap, aluminum foil, or green construction paper

A Gift for Me?

References

Luke 2:1-7;
The Desire of Ages,
 pp. 43-49

Memory Verse

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father”
 (James 1:17, NIV).

The Message

God gives perfect gifts, and His best gift is Jesus.

Maria was so happy that she could not stop smiling. She loved babies, and her mother was coming home soon with a new baby boy! Last Christmas, she had received a beautiful baby doll for a gift. Now she would have a real baby to love and play with. What a perfect gift—much better than her baby doll gift!

Many years ago, another family rejoiced because of a special gift baby. Who do you think it was?

Mary smiled to herself. She just couldn't help it. She would soon have a very special baby, Christ the Lord.

Since the angel had told her about that, she had wondered. First she wondered why God chose her. True, she and Joseph came from the family of David. And God's Word said the Messiah would come from that family. But they lived in the wrong town. The prophet Micah had foretold that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, the City of David. But Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth.

Then important news had reached their village. Emperor Augustus had decided to take a census. He wanted to know how many people lived in his kingdom. This meant that every family would be counted. And they had to be counted in the town of the father's ancestors. That meant that Joseph would have to go to Bethlehem.

It was almost time for Mary's baby to be born. And God had arranged everything. Her baby would be born in Bethlehem, just as

the prophet Micah foretold. At just the right time, the government was *requiring* them to go to Bethlehem.

The trip was slow and tiresome. The roads were crowded with travelers. The dust sometimes filled Mary's throat and made her eyes burn.

Tired and weary, they finally reached Bethlehem. But Joseph couldn't find any place for them to stay. No one had an empty room. Even the covered porches of the inns were packed with tired travelers. Joseph was discouraged. Mary was worn out.

Finally an innkeeper took pity on them. He saw Mary and knew she would soon have her baby. "I'm sorry," he explained. "Every room is taken. But there's a stable out back. If you . . ."

"We'll take it," Joseph replied. "We're glad to have a place."

Animals shuffled restlessly in the stalls. They crunched and munched their food and snorted and snuffled. But there was plenty of straw. It was quiet. And it was clean and dry.

That night Baby Jesus was born. Mary wrapped Him carefully in the soft cloths she had brought from home. She cuddled Him, filled with wonder all the while. Finally, she placed Him in the manger that Joseph had filled with clean, sweet hay.

Mary sank down on the soft straw bed that Joseph had prepared for her. She had never been so tired in her whole life! But she was also happy and content. God had kept His word. He had given her the perfect gift. Jesus is God's perfect gift to us too.



Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Take a walk with your family. Collect samples or make a list of growing things that God has given us. Talk about the gifts. Then read today's lesson story about God's greatest gift to us.
- Read James 1:17 together. Thank God for His wonderful gifts in nature.
- Sing a Christmas carol before prayer.

Sunday

- Read Luke 2:1-7 with your family for worship.
- Start to make a "Jesus' Baby Book" from used Christmas cards, etc. (You will add to this book each week.) This week, include pictures of the angel talking to Mary, the journey to Bethlehem, and Jesus' birth. Write a title for each page. If your parents made a baby book about you, ask to see it.
- Say the memory verse. Find the word *perfect* in a dictionary. What does it mean?

Monday

- Read Micah 5:2 together during family worship. In what town was the Messiah to be born?

• Name some of Joseph's famous ancestors who came from Bethlehem. See Ruth 1:1, 2, 22; Matthew 1:5, 6, 16. Write three of them here:

(1) _____, (2) _____,
(3) _____

- Ask adults in your family to tell about where they were born. Where were you born? _____

Tuesday

- With your family, read Luke 2:5-7. Set up a nativity scene in your home. How does Jesus' first home compare with your home?
- Imagine what animals might have been living in Jesus' first home—the stable. Add pictures of them

to your "Jesus' Baby Book." Learn two new things about the animals you drew.

- Teach your memory verse to your family. Then thank God for a place to live.

Wednesday

- During worship today, place some wrapped Christmas gifts near the nativity scene at your house. Let them remind you that Baby Jesus is the best gift of all.
- Make and decorate a gift-shaped cutout with ribbon, etc. On it, write your memory verse. Hang it where you can see it every day.
- Sing "Silent Night" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 76). Then thank God for His best gift—Jesus.

Thursday

- During worship today, look at a Bible map. How far is it from Nazareth to Bethlehem? Find a place the same distance from where you live. How long would it take to walk there? To go by car or bus?
- Read John 1:10, 11 together.
- Sing a Christmas carol.
- After worship, help make some Christmas cookies for Friday evening. Say or sing your memory verse while you help.

Friday

- For family worship, create a human nativity scene. Read Luke 2:7 together. Have each family member be a character: Joseph, Mary, an angel, the innkeeper, animals, etc. (Save the shepherds for next week.) Ask each to tell who they are and what they think of Jesus' birth.
- Sing carols to celebrate Jesus' birth.
- As you share your "Gift Cookies," say the memory verse together. Tell God in prayer that you accept His wonderful gift.