

YEAR B | QUARTER 4

11

God, in Our Neighborhood

Grace
God gave Himself to us.

POWER TEXT

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV).

KEY REFERENCES

- Luke 2:1-40
- *The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 4; 5, pp. 43-58
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 7, pp. 35-46
- Student lesson on page 122 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 4, The Son
- No. 9, The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
- No. 3, The Father

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that Jesus came to help them understand how much God loves them.
- **Feel** comfortable knowing God knows all about them.
- **Respond** by thanking Jesus for helping them understand the love and character of God.

POWERPOINT

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Look closely at the birth of Jesus. Think about how afraid Mary must have been to give birth to her first baby while being so far from home. Examine the crude surroundings. Smell the musty, earthy odors. Listen to the sounds of the animals. Then gaze into the baby's face. He "moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14, *The Message;* this version of the verse provides a direct reference to the title of the lesson) in order to tell us about Himself.

This is a lesson about grace.

God closely identifies with humans. It was important for Him to have us understand the depth of His love for us. Jesus helps us understand our heavenly Father's character of love.

Teacher Enrichment

"That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for him was on a cross. He sought an entry to the overcrowded hearts of men; he could not find it; and still his search—and his rejection—go on."

The first announcement was made to shepherds, despised by the orthodox good people of Jesus' day. They were unable to keep the details of the ceremonial law and could not observe all the meticulous hand-washings and rules and regulations. It was to such simple men of the fields that God made His first announcement of Christ's birth.

When a boy was born in Israel, the musicians congregated at the house to greet him with simple music. Because Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, there were no musicians to greet Him. But the choir of heaven heralded His birth with angelic songs.

We are amazed at the simplicity of the circumstances of Christ's birth. A European monarch caused concern in his court by often disappearing and walking incognito among his people. When asked not to expose himself to danger, he answered, "I cannot rule my people unless I know how they live." We have a God who knows how we live, because He too lived in this world and claimed no special advantage over common humans (adapted from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975], pp. 20-24).

What do I know about God as a result of Jesus' life on earth?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson.

Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice. »

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	*A. Christmas Song Pictures* *B. Hearty Words* *C. Smelling Test*	paper, pencils paper, pencils small jars with various smells
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 117. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, gift-wrapped box
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story Experiencing the Story Exploring the Bible	guest parents Bibles Bibles, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Scenario*	
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*Stars*	star patterns (p. 121), colored paper, art supplies (optional: cardstock, decorative paper, ribbon)
* Closing		A. Prayer and Closing Comments B. Reminder to Parents C. Coming Up Next Week	

1

READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils

Christmas Song Pictures

Ask each student to draw a picture representing their favorite sacred Christmas song. When completed, number their pictures and tape them to the walls around the room. Next, give the students slips of paper and ask them to write the picture's number and the title of the song based on the picture.

Debriefing

Say: **Let's see who figured out the most correct titles.** One by one, point to the picture and have the artist tell what song it represented. Have the students check their answers. Ask: **What do these Christmas songs tell us about God?** You may want to supply music so that students can actually read the words for meaning.

Say: **Jesus came to earth as a human baby to help us understand God. Let's say together our power text, Luke 2:11:**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Our power point reminds us that

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

B

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils

Hearty Words

Distribute paper and pencils. Ask students to think of as many words as they can that contain the word "heart" (heartache, heartily, etc.).

Debriefing

Ask: **Who has the most "heart" words?** Have them read their list and have other students tell any additional words they found. Ask: **What does the word "heart" make you think of?** (love)

Say: **Today we'll be learning about the intense love God has for us. In fact, He wanted us to understand it so much that He sent part of Himself to live among us as one of us, in order for us to understand His character of love better. Let's say together our power text, Luke 2:11:**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Our power point reminds us that

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

Prayer & Praise

C

YOU NEED:
- ☐ small jars with various smells

Smelling Test

Note: Before conducting this activity, ask students if any of them have allergies, in order to avoid exposing them to a hazardous situation.

Beforehand, wrap each jar with paper and number the jars. Fill jars with a liquid that has a distinct odor, such as rubbing alcohol, vinegar, perfume, etc. Distribute paper and pencils, and ask each student to write down on their sheet of paper what is contained in each bottle after they have smelled the contents.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did you feel as you took the smell test? What do you think the stable where Jesus was born smelled like? What do you think the place you were born smelled like?**

Say: **Jesus was born into this world in lowly circumstances in order to help us understand God's great love to us. Let's say together our power text, Luke 2:11:**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Our power point reminds us that

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors. Close with a prayer that God will show everyone in your Sabbath School, adults and students alike, a way that He would have them "stand still" in their lives and allow Him to win victories for them.

Suggested Songs

"Special Delivery" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 51)
"Isn't He" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 50)
"Love, Love" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 132, second verse)

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ gift-wrapped box

Use Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

Offering

Say: **Our spirit of giving offerings can remind us that Jesus was willing to give Himself as a gift, to come to earth as a mere infant human being so that we could be saved forever.**

Prayer

Thank God for the beautiful gift of His Son, born as an innocent infant to save us from all of our faults and sins. Close with a prayer for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ guest parents

Introducing the Bible Story

Invite a couple in your church who have recently become parents to bring their infant to your Sabbath School class and share what it means to care for a newborn. Ask them to include details such as cleaning after them. Say: **Let's say together our power text, Luke 2:11:**

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV).

What is our power point?

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles

Experiencing the Story

Have all the students find Luke 2. Ask a volunteer to read Luke 2:1-5.

Ask: **Whom do you think Luke was writing this story for?** (He was writing for a Greek audience who would be interested in world politics, not just Jewish events.) **How do you think it happened that this decree of the first Roman emperor came at just the right time to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem?** (God is obviously in control of events and wanted His Son born in Bethlehem.) **What do you think the 80-mile (128-kilometer) journey was like for a very pregnant young woman on a donkey?** (Encourage discussion. Point out that following God's leading is not always comfortable, but it is always meaningful.)

Have a volunteer read Luke 2:6, 7.

Say: **Forget the Christmas cards you have seen. What do you think it was like when Jesus was born?** (Comment that the mention of a manger is the reason we imagine that Jesus was born in a stable. Animals in that area were often kept in caves with feeding areas carved into the side. It was probably dark and dirty. There was no running water. Encourage students to imagine sights, sounds, smells, and comfort level.)

Have a volunteer read Luke 2:8-15.

Ask: **What do you imagine singing angels sound like? What is the most beautiful musical sound you have ever heard? Can you imagine how the shepherds felt? Why do you think God told the shepherds and no one else in Bethlehem that night?** (Point out that most people were looking for a Messiah who would put the mighty Roman emperor in his place. The last thing they would be willing to believe was that their Messiah was a helpless baby born to poor people in a smelly old animal shelter.)

Have a volunteer read Luke 2:16-20.

Ask: **Have you ever had fear turned into joy? What happened? What did the fear feel like? What did the joy feel like?**

Say: **Notice that the shepherds ran to see the baby; then they spread the word about what they had experienced. Jesus is your Savior, your Messiah. Do you run to see Him every day in your personal devotions? Do you have a relationship with Him that is so joyous that you can't help sharing your joy with others? That is why God sent Jesus to us, to help us know Him better and have a joyous experience with Him.**

Optional: If you choose to, have a volunteer read Luke 2:21-40.

Say: **Notice in verse 39 that Jesus' family observed all the regulations that every other good Jewish family was supposed to observe. Jesus had truly come to be like us and show us in a way we could understand just how loving God really is.** You may like to read and discuss the following quotation with your students.

"Jewish families went through several ceremonies soon after a baby's birth: (1) *Circumcision.* Every boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth (Leviticus 12:3; Luke 1:59, 60). Circumcision symbolized the Jews' separation from Gentiles and their unique relationship with God. . . . (2) *Redemption of the firstborn.* A firstborn son was presented to God one month after birth (Exodus 13:2, 11-16; Numbers 18:15, 16). The ceremony included buying back—'redeeming"—the child from God through an offering. Thus the parents acknowledged that the child belonged to God, who alone has the power to give life. (3) *Purification of the mother.* For 40 days after the birth of a son and 80 days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was ceremonially unclean and could not enter the Temple. At the end of her time of separation, the parents were to bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or pigeon for a sin offering. The priest would sacrifice these animals and declare her to be clean. If a lamb was too expensive, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead. This is what Mary and Joseph did.

"Jesus was God's Son, but his family carried out these ceremonies according to God's law. Jesus was not born above the law; instead, he fulfilled it perfectly" (*Life Application Bible*, Notes and Bible Helps [Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1991], p. 1792).

Ask: **Why was it important for God to become a human, to move "into the neighborhood"** (John 1:14, *The Message*) **to tell us about Himself? Let's remember that**

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ white/chalkboard
- ☐ markers/chalk

Exploring the Bible

Ask: **Remember what we just read about the shepherds and how they were afraid at first when God, through the angels, started to communicate with them? Remember how they were filled with joy and wanted to tell everyone once they had seen the baby? That is part of the reason God sent His Son as a helpless baby—so that our fear of God could be turned to joy. As a result we would come to understand His character of love.**

Distribute the following texts among individuals or groups (write them where all can refer to them) and ask them to find someone besides the shepherds whom God told not to fear. When they find the person in each one of the following Scripture texts, have them share the name of the person and the situation with the rest of the group.

1. Genesis 15:1 (Abraham)
2. Numbers 21:34; Deuteronomy 3:2 (Moses)
3. Joshua 8:1 (Joshua)
4. Lamentations 3:57 (Jeremiah)
5. Daniel 10:12, 19 (Daniel)
6. Luke 1:13 (Zechariah)
7. Luke 1:30 (Mary)
8. Luke 5:8-10 (Peter)
9. Acts 27:23, 24 (Paul)
10. Revelation 1:17, 18 (John)

Say: **Let's stop right here and thank God because:**

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

Scenario

Give the students the following scenario:

Your new friend, Aziz, is very religious, but his religion teaches that gods are always angry and have to be appeased. Aziz is very careful to obey the rules his parents have taught him and to do everything that is expected of him so that the gods will not be angry. He has seen that you are also religious and talk about God. He wonders how you can be happy and still believe in God. He tells you that he wishes he didn't believe so that he could be free to have a good time and be happy.

Debriefing

Ask: **What would you say to Aziz? Is there anything about your religion that makes you fearful? Is there anything about your religion that makes you sad? Does thinking about Jesus' life make you fearful of God or joyous about God? Which ones of Aziz's feelings might be changed if he comes to know Jesus and His life here among us?**

Say: **Let's repeat our power point together:**

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ star patterns (p. 121)
- ☐ colored paper
- ☐ art supplies (optional: cardstock, decorative paper, ribbons)

Stars

Have students share if they had the opportunity during the past week to talk with someone about the true meaning of the holidays. Ask: **How did you explain to someone what is the true meaning of Christmas? What did you share about Jesus' birth who has come to live among us on earth?** Give each student a star pattern or photocopied star (see p. 121) and art supplies. (If possible, supply cardstock or decorative paper to allow your students to be especially creative.) Ask the students to create a decorative star and write the power text on it, Luke 2:11.

Debriefing

Ask: **What does this star represent? Who is there in your life that you can share this star with—who needs to know about the great love of God for them?** Give time for each student to think of a person and commit to sharing the star with them.

Say: **Let's repeat once again the power point:**

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

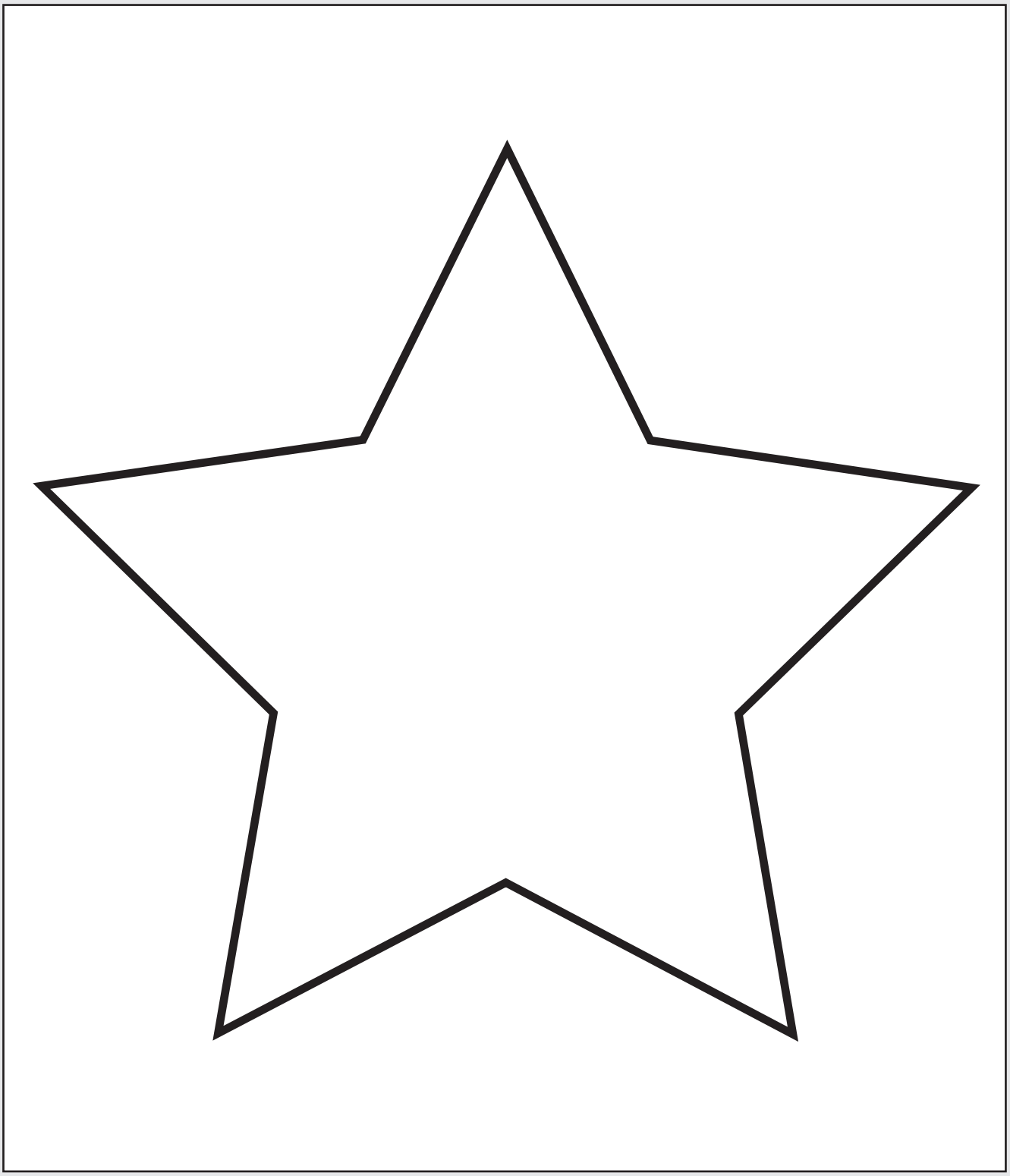
Say: **Dear God, thank You so much for Your awesome love to us. We didn't truly understand You until You gave the great gift of Jesus to us. Now we know how much You love us, because we have seen You. Amen.**

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **Jesus is God's gift to the world. We want to show our gratitude to God for His gift.**



Student lesson

God, in Our Neighborhood

What was something you studied in school that was particularly difficult to understand? And then one day, a friend or a special teacher explained it so clearly that you could never forget it? That is what happened when God the Son became a human baby and came to live among us to help us better understand the love of God.

It was nighttime. All was quiet. A gentle breeze blew across the fields where sheep were grazing. Stars shone brightly in the sky. Only the voices of a few shepherds could be heard as they talked of their hope in the coming Messiah.

With deep interest they recalled the words of the prophets about the promised King who would sit on the throne of David. It seemed that the time was near, according to the prophecies found in the Holy Scriptures. The shepherds continued talking with intense anticipation about the important event that was about to happen soon. They were sure that it wouldn't be long before God would send the Messiah to free them from the Roman oppression. They were hoping that the Messiah would take charge and save them from their enemies. Once again they earnestly raised their hearts to God in prayer for the promised Messiah.

But suddenly their talk was interrupted as the night sky began to glow around them—a glow so bright that the entire field seemed to come alive with a strange and beautiful light. They were terrified as an angel suddenly appeared before them and spoke: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12, NIV).

As soon as the angel had spoken, another sound filled the air. It was the most beautiful music they had ever heard. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests," the voices sang (verse 14, NIV). A throng of angels had come to share in telling the good news of Jesus' birth.

Suddenly the light disappeared as quickly as it had come. Once again, all was quiet and dark. The shepherds, at first stunned, began to speak all at once. Could it be? What could that mean? The city of David? That was Bethlehem! With one accord they decided to go to Bethlehem to see the Child that the angel had told them about. Quickly they made their way to find the special Baby.

When the shepherds arrived at Bethlehem, they soon found Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, just as the angel had told them. What a sight! There in an animal shelter, in a feeding trough stuffed with hay, lay the most precious Baby ever to be born. When they saw Jesus, they could hardly contain their joy.

The next morning they spread the word throughout the town. The shepherds' announcement, brought with great enthusiasm, drew the attention and interest of the people. Everyone who heard the report of the shepherds was moved and pondered in amazement the significance of the marvelous news.

Eight days later, when Mary and Joseph took Jesus for the special dedication and circumcision ceremony, they named Him Jesus, just as they had been told to do. Then, when the time came (about 40 days after His birth), Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him and to offer a sacrifice. There, the priest took the child and laid Him on the altar. Then he recorded the name "Jesus" in the book where the names of every firstborn son were written. But little did the priest know that the Baby he held in his arms that day was the special One—the Messiah—whom God had sent to save the world.

There were two people there, however, who did recognize Jesus. One of them, Simeon, held Jesus up and said, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" (verses 34, 35, NIV).

Have you recognized Jesus? One reason He came as a human baby, and "moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14, *The Message*), was so that we could better understand God's character of love.

KEY REFERENCES

- Luke 2:1-40
- *The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 4; 5, pp. 43-58
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 7, pp. 35-46
- Our Beliefs, nos. 4, 9, 3

POWER TEXT

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

POWER POINT

Jesus was born as a human being to help us understand God's character of love.







Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 88.

Sunday

READ Read Luke 2:1-5 and this week's story, "God, in Our Neighborhood."

LEARN Begin to learn the power text, Luke 2:11.

FIND From a Bible map, calculate the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem and from there to Jerusalem. Think of the young couple's journey to both places.

PRAY Thank God for coming to us in human form.

Monday

READ Read Luke 2:6-20.

WRITE Write a diary entry as if you were Mary, treasuring up and pondering in her heart the things that had happened (Luke 2:19).

FIND What is the "census" in your town?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for Jesus' first coming, which gives us hope in His second coming.

Tuesday

READ Read Luke 2:21-40.

CLIP From old magazines and newspapers, clip pictures of babies and make a collage that expresses for you what it meant for Jesus to come to this earth as an infant. Place the collage somewhere in your room to remind you of the true meaning of the Christmas season.

THINK Why was Jesus circumcised and why was He presented to God at the Temple? See Leviticus 12:1-8; Exodus 13:2, 12, 13; and Numbers 18:15, 16.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that we are all His special sons and daughters.

Wednesday

READ Read Matthew 1:21.

THINK Think of three ways you can personally help others this week to focus on the true meaning of the Christmas holidays.

SING Sing your favorite sacred Christmas song.

REVIEW Review the power text, Luke 2:11.

PRAY Ask Jesus to help you remember and focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Thursday

READ Read Luke 2.

TALK Talk about what it was like for Jesus to come from heaven and become a human being like one of us.

LIST List the event described in each of the following sections of Luke 2 and at least one lesson from that event that you can apply to your own life: (1) verses 1-7; (2) verses 8-20; (3) verse 21; (4) verses 22-24; (5) verses 25-35; (6) verses 36-38; (7) verses 39, 40; (8) verses 41-50; (9) verses 51, 52.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Praise God for being willing to come to us in the form of a helpless human baby.

Friday

READ Read Luke 1:46-55.

WRITE Imagine the role of the angel designated to write the song announcing the birth of Jesus to the human race. What kinds of things do you think you'd like to include in the song? Write the words out on a sheet of paper. Share your praise song with your family members.

SAY Repeat the power text, Luke 2:11, by memory.

PRAY With your family, pray aloud Mary's prayer found in Luke 1:46-55.