



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

The Kid / Week 1

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

So much of the transformative power of the Christmas narrative lies in the reality that Jesus was born and raised in a place so small and inconsequential that it appears on no maps prior to the 1st century. This series encourages middle schoolers to consider how a Kid from nowhere (Jesus) changes everything: how you see your situation, how you see yourself and everyone else, and how you see your fear.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

The Kid from nowhere changes everything.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything

WEEK 2: The Kid shows us that Christmas is for everyone

WEEK 3: The Kid changes how you see your fear

WEEK 4: The Kid changes everything, especially you

SCRIPTURE

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room (Luke 2:1-7 NRSVUE).

“Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46 NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

It's easy to talk about the holiday season like you're talking about a Hallmark movie! Christmas decorations, holiday treats, cozy family time—why wouldn't we want to focus on all things merry and bright? While those parts of the Christmas season are great, they don't represent the way all your middle schoolers feel about or experience the season all the time. For some of your students, the holiday season isn't all that great. In fact, it can bring all kinds of feelings of loneliness, lack, and the like. Some don't have families to spend the season with, and others may have families who cause harm. Some may not be able to afford any gifts or decorations, and others may not have food to eat while school's out. You know your students better than anyone, so keep their context in mind as you lead this conversation. While you don't want to make this a doom-and-gloom Christmas conversation, it's important to create space for students to be realistic, honest, and open about their real feelings and experiences that impact this season.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

So much of this series is developed around what history and scholarship tell us about Nazareth and Galilee in the first century. To help bring more context into your talks throughout this series, check out the links about the history and backstory of Christmas in the provided Additional Resources document.

INTERACTIVE 1: A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show a few Christmas movie clips that depict Christmas being less than ideal.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- The following Christmas movie video clips:
 - *Home Alone*: Any scene that shows Kevin home without his parents for Christmas
 - *The Grinch*: Any scene that shows the Grinch watching people celebrate Christmas without him
 - *Elf*: Any scene that shows Buddy causing chaos in his family's home
- A way to show the clips for your audience

PREP

1. Watch your selected clips to make sure they're age and phase appropriate.
 2. Load the clips to make sure you have them ready to play during your Talk.
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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- It's Christmas!
This year, we're celebrating the real backstory behind Christmas with a series called *The Kid*.
- What's your favorite thing about the Christmas season?
- Now I want to know one of your least favorite things about the holidays.
- *[Tell a story from your own life about a time when Christmas was less than magical.]*

TENSION

- *[INTERACTIVE: A Very Merry Christmas?: This is where you'll show a few Christmas movie clips that depict Christmas being less than ideal.]*
- I think we've all had a moment (or maybe a few moments!) when we realized Christmas wasn't all it was cracked up to be. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- At some point you've likely had the thought, *Is Christmas really about all the joy, and light, and love everyone says it's about? Or is the stress, and struggle, and sadness that sometimes surrounds the season here to stay?*
- I think the best way to solve our Christmas dilemma is to go back to the beginning.
- To discover that the real story of Christmas is about . . . well, a Kid.

TRUTH

- What do we actually know about that first Christmas?
- Two people gave us specific details: Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, and Luke, a doctor turned journalist and biographer on Jesus' life.
- Luke's account is the most detailed, so that's where we'll start today.
 - *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of*

Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room (Luke 2:1-7 NRSVUE).

- With Luke's words in mind, let's start with what the Scripture actually tells us about that first Christmas. *[Give examples from Scripture.]*
- This sort of adds up to the image most of us have in mind when we think about that first Christmas, but it's a lot less dramatic than we might have imagined.
- So maybe it's also more likely that Jesus' birth was a lot more normal than we thought.
- It seems like God took care of every detail, and maybe, that's the real miracle to remember.
- The miracle of Christmas is simply Jesus.
- Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.
- That first Christmas wasn't all magic and miracles the whole time. In fact, as we read, it was pretty ordinary stuff for the most part.
 - Mary and Joseph? They were two regular people engaged to be married.
 - Jesus' hometown of Nazareth? It was so obscure that it didn't even show up on any maps before the first century.
 - One of Jesus' own followers asked, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46 NLT).
- The start of Jesus' life was far more ordinary than we might think. And it reminds us that not everything about the holiday season has to be magical and meaningful all the time.
- Because the heart of Christmas isn't really about all that stuff; it's about the Kid.
- Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.

APPLICATION

- The birth of Jesus is extraordinary, yes, but it's also pretty ordinary.
- That means that in our most ordinary moments this holiday season, we can still find Jesus.
- We can remember that Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.
- And here's how I think we can start:
 - Be real about what you're feeling this holiday season.
 - Embrace the ordinary.

LANDING

- Remember, Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.
- My prayer for all of us this holiday season is that we'd come to know that Kid in a new way.
- Whatever it is, I hope we'll all remember the ordinary details of that first Christmas.
- What's one ordinary thing you love about the Christmas story?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

The Kid / Week 1

BOTTOM LINE

CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT THE KID WHO CHANGED EVERYTHING.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

It's the most wonderful time of the year.
'Tis the season to be jolly.
So, deck those halls and get ready to turn up the Mariah Carey because...

It's Christmas!

I'm _____, and I'm so glad to be here to kick off the holiday season with you. This year, we're celebrating the real backstory behind Christmas with a series called *The Kid*.

Before we get going, I want to know: What's your favorite thing about the Christmas season? Tell somebody around you. *[Give students time to share their answers. If you have time, have a few students shout out their answers to you as well.]*

Those are some great answers! But I think we all know that Christmas isn't always all things merry and bright. So, now I want to know one of your least favorite things about the holidays. *[Give students time to share their answers. If you have time, have a few students shout out their answers to you as well.]*

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .

- Share a story about a time when Christmas was less than magical.
- Maybe it was a difficult season where your family couldn't afford gifts, or the first Christmas after your parents split up, or when your grandparents burned the holiday meal.
- Keep your subject matter light and phase appropriate.
- A sample story is included below.

A legend is told in my family about a Christmas when I was two years old. My parents, in the back of the house, heard the repeated sound of breaking glass. Running into the living room to protect me from harm, they found me taking the Christmas ornaments off the tree and throwing them against the wall. I guess I was waiting for one to bounce back. They took note and signed me up for T-ball as soon as they could.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

You all probably have a story similar to mine. And I know we've all watched holiday movies that show that Christmas might not be all it's cracked up to be.

INTERACTIVE: A Very Merry Christmas?

This is where you'll show a few Christmas movie clips that depict Christmas being less than ideal.

We've all been there, right?

Okay, maybe we haven't been left home alone while our parents went on Christmas vacation. And we probably don't live in a cave and watch everyone celebrate Christmas without us like the Grinch. And I think it's safe to say that we've never had an adult-sized elf move into our house and make our Christmas completely chaotic!

But I think we've all had a moment (or maybe a few moments!) when we realized Christmas wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

Maybe it was when you didn't get the gift you desperately wanted.
Or maybe it was when your family couldn't afford any gifts at all.
Maybe it was when someone you loved was missing from the table.
Or maybe it was when someone showed up to the table you wished hadn't been invited.
Maybe it was when you started to wonder if all this Christmas magic was really real.
Or maybe it was when you started to feel less joy and excitement and more dread and anxiety about the Christmas season.

Whatever the cause, at some point you've likely had the thought, *Is Christmas really about all the joy, and light, and love everyone says it's about? Or is the stress, and struggle, and sadness that sometimes surrounds the season here to stay?*

I've been there, too! And that's why I think the best way to solve our Christmas dilemma is to go back to the beginning.

To take a fresh look at that very first Christmas to understand what the season really means to us.
To see that the Hero of our story didn't drop from heaven like some superhero or magical figure.
To discover that the real story of Christmas is about . . . well, a Kid.

TRUTH

4 ½ MINUTES

Now, before we get to the Kid, let's do a quick deep dive into the actual Christmas story that we read every year here at church. What do we actually know about that first Christmas? Of course, none of us was there, so we have to rely on ancient stories, some of which we find in the pages of Scripture.

Two people gave us specific details: Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, and Luke, a doctor turned journalist and biographer on Jesus' life. Luke's account is the most detailed, so it's the one we'll start with today. Since even Luke wasn't around for Jesus' birth, he probably got his information from someone who was. Many believe he likely interviewed Jesus' mother, Mary when doing his research. How cool is that?

Let's take a look at his account:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she

gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room (Luke 2:1-7 NRSVUE).

With Luke's words in mind, let's start with what the Scripture actually tells us about that first Christmas.

- Joseph and Mary were engaged.
- Mary was pregnant.
- They left Nazareth to go to Bethlehem for a census, which is a count of people in a specific region.
- While they were in Bethlehem, Mary delivered a Baby.
- He was laid in a manger because the place they were staying was also a place where animals stayed.

So far, so good, right? This sort of adds up to the image most of us have in mind when we think about that first Christmas. But it's a lot less dramatic than we might have imagined. This isn't Mary and Joseph running in at the last minute like the McAllister family running through the airport in *Home Alone*. They weren't riding in on a donkey like the cartoon drawings show us. They weren't dealing with an evil innkeeper turning them away like a villain in a Marvel movie. That picture in our imagination of a desperate Joseph running and looking for a room to rent right before the baby was born could be more dramatic than reality.

It's far more likely that Mary and Joseph had been in Bethlehem for several days or weeks and were staying in the front room of a relative's house where animals came in on cold nights. So maybe it's also more likely that Jesus' birth was a lot more normal than we thought. Nothing is uniquely tragic or traumatic. Nothing is particularly exciting or magical.

It seems like God took care of every detail, and maybe, that's the real miracle to remember.

The miracle of Christmas is not that Jesus was born in a barn because that's all Joseph was able to find. The miracle of Christmas is not a baby arriving in an unexpected place. The miracle of Christmas is not about the animals, or the setting, or the other people there.

The miracle of Christmas is simply Jesus.

The miracle is God in human flesh in the form of a Baby.
The One who arrived to save us.

Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.

That first Christmas wasn't all magic and miracles the whole time. In fact, as we read, it was pretty ordinary stuff for the most part. And I think that's incredibly important for us to remember today!

Mary and Joseph? They were two regular people engaged to be married. Mary was a young woman unexpectedly about to become a mother, and Joseph was a carpenter working to support his young family.

Jesus' hometown of Nazareth? It was so obscure that it didn't even show up on any maps before the first century. It was very small—maybe as small as 35 houses and around 100 people. It wasn't highly regarded, even by other Jewish people in the area. One of Jesus' own followers asked, "***Can anything good come from Nazareth?***" (*John 1:46 NLT*).

The start of Jesus' life was far more ordinary than we might think. And that's good news! Because it reminds us that not everything about the holiday season has to be magical and meaningful all the time.

When things aren't going the way we thought...
When the holidays aren't all that fun for us...

When Christmas doesn't bring us the joy we thought it was supposed to...

That's okay! Because the heart of Christmas isn't really about all that stuff; it's about the Kid.

The Kid who had two ordinary parents.
The Kid whose family didn't have a whole lot.
The Kid who came from the middle of nowhere.
The Kid who showed up in a place that nobody expected.
Jesus, the Kid who came to save us.

Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

The birth of Jesus is extraordinary, yes, but it's also pretty ordinary. And honestly, that might be the best news for us today. Because it means that in our most ordinary moments this holiday season, we can still find Jesus. We can remember that **Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.**

And here's how I think we can start:

Be real about what you're feeling this holiday season. Instead of believing that Christmas has to be this big, magical experience or acting like your holidays are exactly what you hoped they'd be, just be real about what you're feeling this Christmas. Talk to God about what's going well and be honest with God about what's not. When it comes to Christmas, be real about how it feels this year.

Embrace the ordinary. Remember, when He was born, Jesus was an ordinary Kid born to ordinary parents in an ordinary place. And look how His life turned out! I'd say today that Jesus is anything but ordinary. So don't count out what God can do with your ordinary moments. The days when it feels like nothing good happens, the moments where the magic of Christmas is hard to find, the seasons where life doesn't feel all that exciting—God can and will do something extraordinary in the ordinary. That's what happened with Jesus, and that's what Christmas is all about!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.**

My prayer for all of us this holiday season is that we'd come to know that Kid in a new way. Maybe for some of you this will be the first year you really get to know Jesus. Maybe it's the first step into a relationship with Him. Or maybe it's a new way to think about and experience the relationship you already have with Him. Whatever it is, I hope we'll all remember the ordinary details of that first Christmas. And I hope we'll remember how those details connect to our lives in an extraordinary way.

So, as you head to Small Group now, think about this question: **What's one ordinary thing you love about the Christmas story?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
