

STUDENT LEADER GUIDE



HOLIDAY ISSUES: CHRISTMAS EDITION

CHRISTMAS STORY

WELCOME & OPEN PRAYER

[Host] Hey everyone! Welcome to First Priority. We are really glad you're here. Today [insert name] is going to talk about something most of us think we already know — The Christmas story. But my hope is that you'll walk away seeing it in a new way. Before we begin, let's take a moment to pray and invite God into this time. Let's pray.

Sample prayer: God, thank You for bringing us together. As we take a closer look at the story of Jesus' birth, help us to hear it with fresh ears. Speak through [insert name] as they show us who You are and what Christmas really means. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

[Speaker] Most of us have heard some version of the Christmas story. We've seen the decorations, watched the movies, maybe even read parts of the Bible about Jesus being born. But somehow, even though it's one of the most famous stories in the world, people often miss what it actually means.

It's easy to hear it and think, "Yeah, I've heard that before." But the truth is, this story changes everything. Let's slow down and really look at what happened. This is from Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20.

Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem because the Roman emperor ordered everyone to go to their hometown to be registered. Mary was pregnant, and while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She had her baby, Jesus, and since there was no guest room available, she wrapped Him in cloth and laid Him in a manger. This wasn't a royal palace or a big celebration, it was humble and quiet. Jesus, the King of Kings, entered the world in the most unexpected way.

Meanwhile, out in the fields nearby, some shepherds were doing their regular night shift,

watching sheep. Then everything changed. An angel appeared and said, *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

Then, all of a sudden, a huge crowd of angels showed up, praising God and saying: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"* God didn't send this announcement to royalty or influencers. He told ordinary people, showing that Jesus came for everyone.

As soon as the angels left, the shepherds said, *"Let's go see this for ourselves."* They hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in the manger. When they saw Him, they couldn't keep it to themselves. They shared everything they'd been told about this child. People were amazed. Mary quietly took it all in and treasured it in her heart. The shepherds returned, full of joy, praising God for what they had seen and heard. When we really encounter Jesus, we don't stay the same. We're moved to share, praise, and live differently.

That's what Christmas is all about: *"Good news of great joy that will be for all people."* Jesus came for everyone, for you and for me.

But the story didn't start in Bethlehem. Before there was a manger, a star, or a group of shepherds, God already had a plan. He knew we would need a Savior, and He chose to send His Son to rescue us.

We can't just stop at the birth of Jesus. That baby in the manger grew up to be our Savior. He lived a perfect life, healed the hurting, showed grace to the outcasts, and then gave His life on the cross to pay for our sins. But He didn't stay in the grave. He rose again, defeating death so we could have eternal life.

So here's the question: Is Jesus just a part of a holiday tradition for you — or is He your Savior?

You don't have to stay separated from God. You can start a relationship with Jesus today. And if you already know Him, let this be a reminder: the Christmas story is still changing lives and God wants to use us to share it.

GOSPEL TOOL: CANDY CANE GOSPEL

[Speaker] Now here's a simple way to share Jesus with someone this Christmas using something most people already have: a candy cane. (Have student leaders pass out the Candy Cane Gospel card.) Let's walk through how to use a candy cane to share the Gospel and then we will pass out candy canes so we can practice.

- The shape of the candy cane reminds us of a **shepherd's staff**. Jesus says in John chapter 10 verse 14, *"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me."*
- The **red stripe** on the candy cane represents the blood that Jesus shed to forgive us of our sins. Romans chapter 5 verse 8 says, *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* We need forgiveness, because in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, we are reminded that we ALL have sinned: *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*
- The **white part** shows the forgiveness of sins and a clean heart. First John chapter 1 verse 9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- And when the candy cane is turned upside down, it makes a "J" for Jesus! This Christmas season you can choose the best gift EVER, and that is a relationship with Jesus!

To begin a relationship with Him, we must do what Romans chapter 10 verse 9 says, *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

(Have student leaders pass out the candy canes.)

Now it is time to practice with the person next to you. Ready, set, go! This little candy cane is more than a treat, it's a tool. Use it to share Jesus with a friend, a family member, or someone who needs hope.

(Have the student host come back up and give the CHALLENGE and PRAY.)

CHALLENGE AND PRAY

[Host] Here's our challenge for this week: Don't let this story stop with you. Think of one person you could share it with this week using the Candy Cane card or just starting a real conversation. The world needs this Good News, and God wants to use us to share it. Let's pray.

Sample prayer: God, thank You for the story of Christmas. The story of Jesus coming close to us. Thank You for loving us enough to send Your Son. Help us remember that this isn't just a story we hear once a year. It's the truth that changes everything. Give us boldness to share it with someone who needs to hear. In Jesus' name, amen.

GAME TIME – Optional

[Host & Mentor] (See the Game Time tab for options.)