

# BORN



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# Lesson 1



Here and Now



Bible Verses: Matthew 1:18-23, Revelation 21:1-4



Bottom Line: Jesus' birth reminds us that  
God is always with us.

# SUPPLIES

- A way to show images to your students – either in-person and virtual.
- A way to play music for your students – either in-person and virtual.
- A copy of the “Christmas Name Game List.”
- An audio version of the song “It’s Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas” – possibly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ5DOWPGxwg>
  - *[At the time of this writing, this video is still available. If you can’t find it, any audio version of “It’s Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas” will do!]*

# OPENING GAME

## (IN-PERSON) The Christmas Name Game

### GAME PREP:

- Give a copy of “Christmas Name Game List” to your leader.
- Prepare to show each picture in the folder “Christmas Name Game” to your group, one at a time.
- Play a version of the song “It’s Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas” as you walk/dance/sing/shuffle up front.

• *[A great version is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ5DOWPGxwg> – start at 35 seconds.]*

• *[IDEA: Start each week this way. By week two or three, students probably will be singing along.]*

### HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Say,

- It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas, which means Christmas movies!
- Tonight, we’re going to play the Christmas Name Game, where you have to guess the names of the Christmas characters I put on the screen.
- Keep track of your score, and the winner will get \_\_\_\_\_.

• *[If you have a prize to give, share it here. If I had an unlimited budget, I’d get this for the winner: [https://poshmark.com/listing/Buddy-the-elf-wreath-6115795abcdb2f3e0b8f77b0#utm\\_source=gdm\\_unpaid](https://poshmark.com/listing/Buddy-the-elf-wreath-6115795abcdb2f3e0b8f77b0#utm_source=gdm_unpaid).]*

- If the character has a last name, you don't get the point unless you know it.

- One slide has two characters, so you can get two points if you know them both.

Show each image, one at a time.

Play around as students give answers.

Give the winner a prize (if appropriate).

# OPENING GAME

(ONLINE) The Christmas Name Game

## **GAME PREP:**

Same as above.

## **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:**

Same as above.

# TEACH

What's up, everybody?

In case you didn't know ... I LOVE CHRISTMAS!

*[I like staying positive about Christmas, but you can take this in the other direction if you don't like Christmas and your heart needs to grow three sizes.]*

The sights, the lights, the sounds, the smells ... I love it!

Sometimes people complain about Christmas music. I love that too!

One of my favorite parts of Christmas is the time I get to spend with family.

I love getting all my family and friends together to watch Christmas movies, sing Christmas carols, make Christmas cookies, see Christmas lights ... all the things!

Let's have a bit of MANDATORY FUN TIME: What is your favorite part of Christmas?

*[As time allows, allow students to share their answers; if appropriate, follow up their response by asking WHY their answer is their favorite part.]*

You're probably not surprised Jesus' birth is what gives everything else about Christmas its meaning.

Without Jesus, it's a fun holiday, and on December 26, it's all over.

But if we slow down a little bit as we celebrate this season – if we pay attention to what God may want to say to us about things – we can realize that Jesus' birth is a really big deal.

Tonight, we're starting a new series called "Born." In this series, we're going to look at four different parts of the story of how Jesus was born and the events surrounding his birth.

For the next few weeks, we're going to look at all the things Christmas can remind us of because we want to zoom in on that idea: **Jesus' birth is a really big deal.**

Let's jump in by reading a passage from Matthew.

If you remember, Matthew is one of the first four books in the New Testament called "gospels."

The gospels tell the story of Jesus' life, all from a unique perspective.

Would someone read **Matthew 1:18-23** aloud for the group?

*[I LOVE having students read from the Bible. If it doesn't work for your group, feel free to read it yourself or have another adult read it.]*

**18** This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**19** Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

**20** As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. **21** And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

**22** All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

**23** "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" (NLT)

Let's have a little more **MANDATORY FUN TIME**: What is your favorite Christmas movie and why?

*[As time allows, allow students to share their answers; if appropriate, follow up their response by asking WHY their answer is their favorite Christmas movie.]*

Here's what I wonder: Is Die Hard a Christmas movie? What about Iron Man 3?

I love all the Christmas movies, even the Hallmark ones!

All the characters in our opening game are from some of my favorite Christmas movies.

If you've seen any Christmas movie that tells the story of Jesus' birth, it's probably based on Matthew's record of Jesus' birth.

There's a lot in this short passage:

Joseph and Mary were engaged, which is a bigger deal than engagements in our culture today ... but still, they weren't married.

When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was going to end their engagement, but he wasn't going to do it in a way that embarrassed her. That tells you at least a little something about what kind of man he was.

Before he could end things, an angel appeared to Joseph, reassuring him that their relationship was solid and that this baby was from God.

We'll talk more in-depth about this next week, but next in this passage, we learn that Jesus' birth is a fulfillment of some prophecies (or some promises) about His birth.

But tonight, I want to focus on Jesus' name. Does anyone remember what the prophecy said Jesus' name would be?

*[Give time for answers.]*

Does anyone remember what the name means?

*[Give time for answers.]*

Sitting here in the 21st century, it's not surprising to hear "God is with us."

But in the first century, the people had never heard "God is with us." To them, it was super crazy.

The Israelites were very familiar with God.

They had heard stories about their ancestors who talked with God.

They celebrated feasts and festivals to honor God.

They memorized long chunks of verses that described Him.

Most Israelites would have been familiar with the prophecy quoted in Matthew, and most Israelites would have still misunderstood what God intended in these words.

The Israelites understood God to be powerful, loving, just, etc., but not necessarily near.

They understood God was for them, but they couldn't understand that God was near to His people.

And they had good reason.

God told Moses to take off his shoes and hide his face because God's holiness was too much for Moses to behold.

Isaiah's vision of God's holiness was so intense that he needed his lips to be cleansed with scorching hot coals.

The "holy of holies" was the place in the temple where God's presence dwelt, and only one person each year could enter – and only on one day – to ask for forgiveness for all the people.

Giving Jesus the name "God is with us" would have radically challenged the Israelites' understanding of God and the promised Messiah.

We still struggle to understand the meaning of that phrase today.

We hear that God forgives all our sins, but we feel distant from God when we sin.

We believe that God accepts all of us, but we all have things that few people know about because we think we can keep things from God.

We talk about the word "grace," but do we really understand it?

Can anyone guess what verse is the most popular and most quoted in all the Bible?

*[Give time for answers.]*

**John 3:16 - "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (NLT)**

We love that verse because it talks about God's love for people and gives hope to those who believe in him.

Would someone read the very next verse, **John 3:17**, aloud for the group?

*[Again, I love having students read, but if it doesn't work for your group, you or another adult can read.]*

**God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through him. (NLT)**

If we only focus on **John 3:16** and miss **John 3:17**, we might miss how beautiful and gracious Jesus' love is.

God created the world – and humanity – as a reflection of His creative nature. It was perfect in every way.

Adam and Eve were in perfect oneness with God, perfect oneness with one another, and perfect oneness with the world around them – just the way God intended.

Adam and Eve experienced a "God is with us" life – just the way God intended.

Then sin interrupted all that, causing pain and death and division between Adam and Eve's relationship with God, with each other, and with the world around them – NOT the life God wanted them to live.

But even while revealing the consequences of their actions, God responded to Adam and Eve with grace and forgiveness. God wanted to continue to be with them.

Fast forward a few thousand years, Jesus was born to perfectly reveal God's love and His character and His ways to ALL people.

The truth is that sin makes us feel distant from God. It makes us feel guilty, and we want to go and hide.

But Jesus says, “I love you, and I’m here for you, and I’m here with you – no matter how yucky life starts to feel, whether it’s because of your bad choices or the bad choices of someone else.”

He says, “The world is broken, but I’m here to help because I am with you.”

Before we wrap up, let me give you a peek at the end of the story.

Would someone read **Revelation 21:1-4** aloud for the group?

*[Again, I love having students read, but if it doesn't work for your group, have you or another adult read.]*

**1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.**

**2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.**

**3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” (NLT)**

I want you to notice how consistent God is.

In Genesis, we read about God creating the world, and we see just what He designed – oneness with Him, with one another, and with the world around us ... until sin messed it up.

In Matthew, we read about Jesus – God with skin – coming into the world to re-reveal God’s original design – oneness with Him, with one another, and with the world around us ... even though sin still messes that up sometimes.

And in Revelation, we read about God re-creating the world so we at last experience the life He designed us to experience – oneness with him, with one another, and with the world around us. This time with no more sin, no more death, no more sorrow or crying or pain.

Those things are gone forever because **“God’s home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be his people.”**

As we enter this season, I hope every time something Christmas-y happens, and you'll remember that God is always with you.

Every Christmas song, every Christmas movie, every Christmas food, every Christmas whatever ... **let it remind you that God is with us ...** God is with you.

Have a great small group!

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is your favorite Christmas movie, and why?
- What is your best Christmas memory?
- What is your favorite thing to do with your family for Christmas?
- When do you feel God is closest and why?
- When do you feel God is most distant and why?
- How can knowing that God is “with you” help you when you’re feeling God is distant?
- God wants us to experience oneness with him, with others, and with the world around us.
  - How can you make space to connect with Jesus over the Christmas season?
  - What are some things you can do to connect with others over this season?
  - How can you connect with the world around you this Christmas?
- What are some intentional things you can do to help you remember that God is with you throughout this season?
- How can you help others realize that God is with them during the Christmas season?