



The Christmas Story – Free Printable Family Christmas Guide PDF

A gentle guide to reading the Bible’s Christmas accounts together. Follow the story in Luke and Matthew, notice what each Gospel tells us, and make space for questions, wonder, and a simple family response.

A note for grown-ups

Read at your own pace. Children can join in by listening, drawing, or answering a question; adults can add context without needing to have every answer. The two Gospel writers include different details and emphases. This guide keeps those accounts distinct rather than blending them into one imagined timeline.

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LUKE 1–2 | MATTHEW 1

Mary, Joseph, and the birth of Jesus

The Christmas story begins with God at work in ordinary lives. Luke and Matthew each tell of Jesus’ birth, while placing their focus on different people and events.

Luke’s account: Mary and the shepherds

Luke tells how the angel Gabriel came to Mary in Nazareth and announced that she would have a son, Jesus, who would be called the Son of the Most High. Mary trusted God, though the news was extraordinary. Luke also tells of Mary visiting Elizabeth, whose child leapt with joy, and Mary praising God (Luke 1:26–56). Later, Luke describes a census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. While they were there, Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available to them. Nearby shepherds were watching their flocks when an angel announced the birth of a Saviour, Christ the Lord. They went to see the child and shared what they had heard (Luke 2:1–20).

Matthew’s account: Joseph’s choice

Matthew focuses on Joseph. When Joseph learned that Mary was expecting a child, he planned to end their betrothal quietly. In a dream, an angel told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, because the child was from the Holy Spirit. Joseph named the child Jesus, meaning that he would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:18–25).

TALK TOGETHER What might Mary have felt when Gabriel spoke to her? What helped Joseph choose a caring and faithful response?

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MATTHEW 2 | LUKE 2

Good news, and a journey of hope

The Gospel writers show people responding to Jesus in different ways: with wonder and worship, with fear, and with trust.

Luke: the shepherds hear the news

In Luke, an angel tells shepherds that a Saviour has been born in Bethlehem. A great company of angels praises God. The shepherds hurry to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. Afterwards, they tell others what they have heard, while Mary treasures these things and reflects on them (Luke 2:8–20).

Matthew: visitors from the east

Matthew describes magi, or wise men, who came from the east after seeing a star. They asked where the child born king of the Jews was, and later found Jesus with Mary in a house. They bowed down and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew does not say how many magi there were, or call them kings (Matthew 2:1–12). Matthew then tells of Herod’s fear and harmful order. Warned in a dream, the magi returned home by another road. Joseph was also warned in a dream to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. After Herod died, the family returned and settled in Nazareth (Matthew 2:13–23). These difficult events remind us that the Christmas story includes danger as well as joy, and that God’s care does not make every hardship disappear.

READING THE GOSPELS Luke tells about the census, manger, and shepherds. Matthew tells about Joseph’s dreams, the magi, Herod, and the journey to Egypt. The Bible does not give a precise combined timetable for every event, so we do not need to force every detail into one scene.

TALK TOGETHER Why do you think the shepherds went to see Jesus? What might the gifts have meant to the magi? Which part of the story would you like to ask more about?

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READ · REFLECT · RESPOND

Make room for wonder

There is no single right age for a conversation about Christmas. Invite each person to share what they notice, and let children pass or answer in their own way.

Family questions

- What detail from the story do you remember most, and why?
- How do Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, or the magi respond to what they learn?
- What does the name Jesus, and the angel’s message of a Saviour, mean to you?
- Where do you see kindness, courage, or hope in these accounts?
- What would you like to thank God for or ask God about this Christmas?

Suggested reading

Read Luke 1:26–56 for Gabriel’s message and Mary’s visit to Elizabeth; Luke 2:1–20 for Jesus’ birth and the shepherds; Matthew 1:18–25 for Joseph’s dream; and Matthew 2:1–23 for the magi, the journey to Egypt, and the family’s return.

A simple family activity

Make a paper star together. On it, write or draw one sign of hope you want to carry into the week. If you like, take turns naming one person you can encourage, then place the star somewhere your family will see it.

An optional family prayer

God of hope, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Help us to welcome your love, care for one another, and share kindness with our neighbours. Be close to those who feel lonely or unsafe, and give our family peace as we celebrate. Amen.