**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 2 of 4

# Jesus’ birth

### MEETING AIM

To investigate how Jesus identifies with the poor and marginalised.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 2:1-7

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

A heavily pregnant young woman and her fiance make a long and potentially dangerous journey because of the whims of an oppressive government. And somehow, God’s purposes are fulfilled in the midst of it all. For those of us caught up in similar upheavals, it’s comforting to see how God works not only in spite of human decisions but through them to bring about his plans. And the story of Jesus being born in an animal shed, as the child of parents forced to move to a new town, should prompt us to reflect on the poor and marginalised around us, and how God would have us serve them.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Take some time to eat, drink and chat with your young people. You could also play a few rounds of ‘Good news, bad news’. The first player thinks of a piece of good news (eg: “We’re going to the beach.”.). The next player thinks of a reason why this is bad news (eg: “It’s raining.”.). The third player finds another reason why this is good news (eg: “There will be fewer people on the beach, so more space for us.”). Continue for as long as the young people’s interest allows.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** foam balls

Ask the young people to stand at one end of the room or an outdoor playing area. Equip the leaders (and one or two volunteers, if need be) with foam balls. On the word “go”, the young people must attempt to reach the opposite end of the room, without being hit below the waist by the balls thrown by the leaders. Anyone hit by a ball is out of the game and joins the leaders for the next round. The last player left in the game wins. For an extra complication, divide the players into pairs and insist that everyone must join hands with their partner, as they move from one end to the other. Failing to do so results in disqualification.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; Nativity images; felt-tip pens; paper

Before the session, gather a few different images of the Nativity: some cutesy, some understated, some classic works of art – you should find plenty of images from the internet. For a little extra edge, include one or two more provocative images. For instance, try searching for ‘refugee Jesus’. Show the group the images you have collected and ask them which they think is the closest to how the birth of Jesus would really have been.

Next, give out Bibles and have the group read Luke 2:1-7. Let the young people draw their own pictures of how they think the Nativity scene would really have looked. Encourage the young people to think about what the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and giving birth where the animals lived would have been like. Compare the finished pictures with the images you showed earlier.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Following on from ‘Bible exploration’, use the following questions as a starting point for discussion:

* How did Jesus end up being born where the animals lived? What was the sequence of events that led to that?
* Why is Bethlehem significant? Check out Micah 5:2 if you’re not sure. (This suggests that Jesus fulfils a prophecy of a great leader coming from Bethlehem.)
* This must have been a scary and confusing experience for Mary and Joseph – a strange order from a hostile government, a long and dangerous journey and giving birth in difficult surroundings. What comfort is there for us when our own lives are scary and confusing?
* If Jesus was born into poverty, how should that affect our attitude towards poor people around us?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** football or similar; written or printed Bible references; Bible

Before the session, write or type out the following Bible references onto slips of paper: Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; John 9:1-3; Isaiah 53:4; Romans 8:38-39; Isaiah 43:2; Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 61:1-3; Galatians 6:2.

All of these verses relate to how God might be at work in confusing situations. Either tape these references onto a football or similar or, if possible, write them directly onto an old ball.

Gather the young people in a circle. Throw the ball to one of them. Ask them to look read out the nearest Bible reference to their left thumb. Ask someone else to look up this reference in the Bible and read it out. Briefly discuss how God might be at work in situations we find scary or confusing, in the light of this verse. Repeat with different group members and different Bible verses.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Invite the young people to make themselves comfortable and close their eyes. Allow plenty of time for the following reflection:

Ask the young people to think about a situation they’ll face in the next week or two which they’re expecting to find hard. Ask them to picture this situation in their mind. Next, ask them to imagine that Jesus is with them in this situation – walking, standing, sitting – whatever they’re doing. What do they want to say to Jesus? And what does Jesus say to them? Finally, how does having Jesus there change the situation? Do things go differently? Or perhaps it all just feels easier to handle with Jesus there?

Finish with a short, spoken prayer, thanking Jesus for walking with us and for understanding how scary and confusing life can be.

The Christmas story has a poor, marginalised and probably confused family at its heart. This would be an excellent time of year for your group to take action to help the poor in your community. Give some thought to how you might best do this.

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