I BELIEVE

The Christmas story is full of the miraculous! But not everyone believes. In the center column below, jot reasons people give (or might give) for their skepticism, then list responses to the skepticism out to the right. Since skeptics might not accept an answer of "because the Bible says so," try to push deeper than that.

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222.3	Reason Skeptics Say, "No."	My Response
Angels can and have appeared in the physical realm.		
God intervenes in human history to bring forward his will.		
Jesus was conceived of a virgin, by divine activity of the Holy Spirit.		
God miraculously made conception and childbearing possible to those physically incapable by old age.		
Mary's baby, Jesus, was God-in-the-flesh (God incarnate).		

MARY AND I

Mary demonstrated all the following attributes of one who can be used by God. In what ways do you see yourself like Mary? In what ways do you fail? Use the checkboxes to mark your responses.

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	I am not like Mary since I still fail to honor God this way	I am like Mary since I do indeed honor God this way
Mary kept herself sexually pure, as God required.		
Mary believed God's Word, even though it seemed incredible.		
Mary submitted graciously to God's will for her life.		
Mary was willing to do something difficult (the trip to see Elizabeth) to share her good news with someone.		
Mary was willing to trust God in difficult circumstances.		

What changes do you need to make to move all your check marks to the right? Jot ideas below:				
	_			
	_			

GOD IS FAITHFUL

Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 is centered on God's faithfulness. The coming of Jesus in the flesh completes many of the promises God made to his people in the Old Testament. Look at these texts and identify how Jesus fulfilled the promise God made.

Genesis 3:15
Genesis 12:3
2 Samuel 7:16
Psalm 2:6, 7
Psalm 89:26-29
Isaiah 7:14
Isaiah 9:6, 7
Daniel 7:13, 14
Micah 5:2

MAGNIFY AND GLORIFY

Those who would follow God and his Son should do the same as Mary did: magnify and glorify the Lord! Mary affirmed what God had done and submitted to his will. How will you do so?

He has become my Savior, and I will				
He has done great things for me, and I will				
He has shown his mercy to me, a sinner, and I will				
He has filled those hungering for righteousness, and I will				
He has kept his Word to the fathers and the prophets, and I will				

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DIVINE ILLUMINATION

Zechariah, by the revelation of God, knew something of the future of his son, John. That future—although not fully disclosed to Zechariah—involved John's playing a key part in bringing God's mercy as the dawning of a new day when "the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness" (Luke 1:78, 79). What areas of darkness have been dispelled for you as a result?

but now I have replaced that with this "behavior of light":
One "belief of darkness" I entertained was this:,
but now I have replaced that with this "belief of light":
One "attitude of darkness" I wallowed in was this:,
but now I have replaced that with this "attitude of light":

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND I

John was to "go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:76, 77). How do you see yourself filling a similar role in various situations as a forerunner of Jesus?

Ways that I can be a forerunner for Jesus in bringing "knowledge of salvation" in these opportunities:



At work or school:			
At home:			
At church:			
On social occasions with unbelievers:			
At a family reunion:			
In missions I support financially:			
By participating in short-term missions:			
At a class reunion:			
In my prayer life:			

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

David How much do you know about Bethlehem's history? Without looking in your Bible, **Ephrathah** see if you can fill in the six blanks below from the nine possible answers on the right. or Ephrath A. After she died, _____ was buried on the way to Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19; 48:7). **Jesse** B. In the period of the judges, _____ and her husband left Bethlehem because of a Judah famine (Ruth 1:1, 2). Levi C. The Lord sent the prophet ______ to Bethlehem to anoint a son of _____ Naomi as king to replace Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-4). Rachel D. Bethlehem is also known by the name _____ (Genesis 48:7; Ruth 1:2; 4:11; Ruth Micah 5:2). Samuel E. Bethlehem was located in the tribal territory of _____ (Judges 19:1, 2, 18).

ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS AND ME

Regarding Luke 2:8-18, which of the following affirmations fit the shepherds or the angels or both? Put check marks in the boxes to the left as appropriate. Then jot notes out to the right regarding your own role in that regard.

Applies to <u>Shepherds</u>	Applies to <u>Angels</u>		How It Applies to Me
		Were submissive and supportive	
		Served as God's messengers	
		Cooperated with others for God's tasks	
		Completed their tasks anonymously	
		Didn't waste time	
		Honored and/or worshipped the Messiah	



SIMEON, ANNA, AND ME

Luke, by the Holy Spirit, notes certain characteristics of Simeon and Anna. Put check marks out to the left as you see the description applying to one or both. Then rate yourself on the scale to the right regarding how well the description applies to you, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). How can you get your scores up?



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<u>Simeon</u>	<u>Anna</u>	<u>Description</u>		<u>Me</u>		
		1. Remained faithful through a long life	2	3	4	5
		2. Worshipped regularly	2	3	4	5
		3. Patiently waited for God's plan to unfold	2	3	4	5
		4. Proclaimed Jesus' future	2	3	4	5
		5. Unashamedly told others of the Christ	2	3	4	5
		6. Thanked, praised, and/or blessed God for the Messiah 1	2	3	4	5
		7. Acknowledged that God's promise is for everyone 1	2	3	4	5



JESUS' MIDDLE NAME?

A birth announcement includes the name of the newborn, and today's text is no exception (see Luke 2:21). Since baby announcements today also list middle names, what middle names do you think Simeon and Anna might have suggested had the giving of middle names been a practice in the first century? Use the reactions of those two in today's text as a basis of your ideas as you fill in the blanks below. One example is given to get you started.

	Possible Middle Name	<u>Reason</u>
Luke 2:30		
Luke 2:31		
Luke 2:32		
Luke 2:34		
Luke 2:35	Pearce	"a sword will pierce"
Luke 2:38		

LORD OF THE SABBATH

Jesus' lordship involves *authority* (the right to do something) and *power* (the ability to do something), and he demonstrated both regularly (examples: Luke 5:20-26; 8:24). When Jesus stated, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" in Luke 6:5, he claimed both authority and power to do what he chose on and with the Sabbath. In which verses do you see Jesus exercising authority and/or power with regard to the Sabbath in today's text? Jot discoveries below.



Jesus'
Authority

Jesus' Power

Why

- A. God can set aside or modify laws he has established.
- B. Meeting basic human needs may supersede the need for Sabbath rest.
- C. God's Sabbath was designed for humanity's good, not oppression.
- D. Mercy and grace are always appropriate, even on special days of religious duty.
- E. A good thing carried to legalistic extremes becomes a bad thing.
- F. In the godly approach to life, motive is more important than external obedience.

TIME TO REST

One of God's principles for his creation is that there is a time to work and a time to rest (Exodus 23:12; Leviticus 25:4; Hebrews 4:9, 10; etc.). How do you see each of the following as playing a part in that principle in your life? Jot ideas below.

Day and night rhythm
A day set apart for gathering to worship
Seasons
Bodily strength and fatigue
Special days



Purestoo

HARD IMPERATIVES

Jesus presents four hard imperatives in Luke 6:27, 28. For each of the four, rate the level of difficulty you have: from 1, "It's a snap!" to 5, "I find it nearly impossible!" After each, write the reason(s) why you have so rated it. Add a brief commitment statement to moving closer to obedience.

My Rating	Why
1. "Love your enemies."	
2. "Do good to those who hate you."	
3. "Bless those who curse you."	
4. "Pray for those who mistreat you."	

THE GOOD LIFE

Jesus offers strong contrasts to what most today consider "the good life." Look at the following choices and describe the two opposing views.

ontemporary View	Jesus' View	
	Type of leader one chooses to follow or to be (Luke 6:12)	
	Level of wealth one pursues (Luke 6:24)	
	Degree of "creature comforts" that one seeks (Luke 6:21a, 25a)	
	Importance of "being happy" (Luke 6:21b, 25b)	
	Seeking to be popular or liked (Luke 6:22, 23, 26)	
nat needs to happen for	you to move from the contemporary view to Jesus' view? Be specific:	

TIME TO EAT

A reader of the Gospels will find Jesus frequently participating in table fellowship; one writer counts 19 such instances. In today's text, Jesus speaks of the bad motives of those who would issue and/or respond to invitations for such fellowship. How do you see each of the following principles in Jesus' teaching and in your own life?

1. Sometimes people issue or accept invitatio	ns to meals for the wrong reason.				
In Jesus' teaching:	How I can do better:				
2. One should not be presumptuous regarding which seat to take at a dinner party.					
In Jesus' teaching:	How I can do better:				
3. If one's goal as host is to receive a reciproc	al invitation, then the goal needs to be reevaluated.				
	How I can do better:				
4. Those who serve as hosts out of a motive of kindness will be honored by God at the judgment.					
In Jesus' teaching:	How I can do better:				
5. Christians should anticipate that the best meal to enjoy will be at the feast of Heaven.					
In Jesus' teaching:	How I can do better:				
6. A last-minute excuse for skipping a "by in-	vitation" meal may give a person a bad reputation.				
In Jesus' teaching:	How I can do better:				

YOUR CHURCH AND ITS CIRCLE

In the innermost circle to the right, characterize the people (without using names) who seem to form "the core" of your church family.

Then in the next circle out, describe those who seem to be "somewhat outside" the core group—those who attend congregational functions at least semi-regularly, but who don't really seem to "belong."

Finally, characterize in the outermost circle those whom you think would be downright uncomfortable coming to your church.

After characterizing these three groups, decide how those in the innermost circle can



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improve relationships and communication with those in the other two circles. Jot ideas below:

COLOR ME . . . WHAT?

The 15 words to the right, from today's lesson text, can be found in the puzzle below. Use your red pencil to circle the ones associated with the rich man; use your green pencil to circle the ones associated with Lazarus; use a regular pencil to circle the ones associated with Abraham.

L V S A D L R V Q P D U C L W A H J C U E Y E B K Y P W Q I D L R V P W Q I D L R E D Y I V P V A H G R O A T X B R T E R N E L B A T S R E B M E M E R R O N G S Y K Q F L D O G S C B A G T E Z N W X U Q K C H R F E C N S M C N K X N M A O F B F W E O R N A K U T S T O N B T I M M L M O Q R M H Q S K E S X R A A V U X Y E S E D A H N F O E Y P H S R J R R H F S N I T O M B B S D O B N N S W T B L S J B A B S Q P M W D S O O H T P J P U R P L E L X E O K Q M P S



CHOICES, GOOD AND OTHERWISE

The section of Luke within which today's lesson text is found is a treasure trove of teaching stories. Indicate good and bad choices made in each story below. Then recall both choices you made in a similar life circumstance. How did you grow spiritually from your choices?

Choices Made in the Story	My Choices in a Similar Situation

HERE AND NOW, HEAR AND DO

Select the appropriate action(s) for the speaker below from the list to the right. You may select more than one action for any given scenario; also, you might not use all the potential actions listed.

- A. "I feel so sorry for Julie and her kids, now that her husband has died of cancer. I would go over there, but I just wouldn't know what to say."
- ___ B. "You thought Sunday's sermon was really helpful? You know, I can't even remember what it was about."
- __ C. "When that lady let go of her shopping cart and it rolled over and dinged my car, I let her have a piece of my mind. She was talking about being dizzy, but I didn't pay much attention."
- ___ D. "Do you know what the preacher said to me? He said I need to try to forgive my husband. He's not getting off that easy!"
- E. "You aren't going to believe what I just heard about the Johnsons. You know, the ones at church who act so high and mighty? Listen to this."
- ___ F. "I know that place has a bad reputation, but I go there for the food."
- ___ G. "I can't help it if I swear occasionally. Sometimes it just slips out before I know it."

- 1. Be quick to hear.
- 2. Be slow to speak.
- 3. Be slow to become angry.
- 4. Get rid of all moral filth.
- 5. Humbly accept the word planted in you.
- 6. Do not merely listen to the word. . . . Do what it says.
- 7. Continue in the perfect law that gives freedom.
- 8. Keep a tight reign on your tongue.
- 9. Look after orphans and widows in their distress.
- 10. Keep yourself from being polluted by the world.

THE REAL PICTURE

As you reflect on today's lesson, circle the silhouette below that best represents your relationship with God and his Word right now. What changes do you need to make to improve that relationship?



HOW GOD LOOKS AT PEOPLE

Throughout Scripture, we read of times when God used those whom the world would have considered "less than desirable" to accomplish his purpose. Unscramble the words to the right to review some of those times from Scripture.

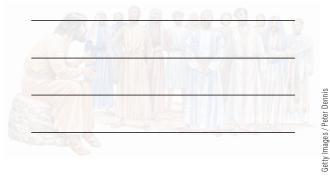
The World Would Choose	God Chose	
A great orator to present a case before a ruling authority	A man named, self-described as not "eloquent" and "slow of speech and tongue," to be God's spokesperson (Exodus 4:10).	ESSMO
2. A great general to lead a huge army	A man named, self-described as "least" in his family, to lead a group of 300 men armed with trumpets, jars, and torches (Judges 6:15; 7:7, 16, 22).	OEGDIN AIDDV RTEPE QLUAAI
3. A man of proper lineage to be king	A shepherd boy named to be king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1, 13).	QLU/
4. A noble statesman to prepare the way for a visit by the king's son	A rugged man dressed in camel's hair clothes called the Baptist to be the forerunner of Jesus (Matthew 3:1-6).	
5. Highly educated theologians to debate and confront others of similar standing	Two "unschooled, ordinary men" named and to confront the high priest and other members of the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4:13)	OJHN (used LILCPARSI
6. Professional teachers to teach others	The husband and wife tentmaking team of and, who had been expelled from Rome, to teach Apollos, who was already "a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures" (Acts 18:2, 3, 24-26).	ed twice)

LOVING MY NEIGHBOR

On the left, make a list of "categories" of people in your area (no names) who are treated unequally for no rational reason. On the right, identify how Jesus expects you to treat them. Avoid superficial answers such as "equally"—be specific!

People treated unequally and why

How Jesus expects me to treat them



ACTION TEST

In our text today, we see that faith or belief should result in actions. Fill in the blanks below with words or phrases that show this relationship. One has been done for you.

If I believe that my surgeon is an alcoholic, then I will <u>find someone else to perform my surgery</u>.

If I believe that the brakes on my car are worn out, then I will ________.

If I believe that my child is taking drugs, then I will _______.

If I believe that some food in my refrigerator has gone bad, then I will _______.

FAITH AND WORKS

Today's text demonstrates that *faith* and *works* are two sides of the same coin. Complete the acrostics below with words or phrases that show this relationship. One has been done for you in each acrostic.



What is one way you will put faith into action in the week ahead? How will you do so?

PUTTING MY FAITH INTO ACTION

Putting faith into action requires self-reflection. Before we can act, we must know what we believe. Take a few minutes to reflect on today's lesson and then fill in the blanks below.

I believe	; therefore, I will show it by	

IMPROPER TALK

Find the words at the right in the puzzle below. The unused letters will spell out an important issue, repeated several times, regarding the tongue. Write the resulting sentence in the blanks below the puzzle.

CGTHELITTLBETONGUEEC A O N N C A U S E O B I G P R O B A L E M S N I T E H E A L I T T L E T O R N G UECDSANSNCAUPSEBITGP ROBLERTEEMSOTHELLHIT HTAEDMUTCLICETONILGU F E C A N C N C A S U S O E B D V Y I H GIPROBLAOEBMSAETEHEE LILTTLENTTOONFRGULEC ANCTAUSEBIIGIPRSLOBL EMSTHHELITOLTLETEONG UECANYCAUSENEBIGPROB LEMSTHELISTTLETONGUE CANCAUSEBIGPROBLEMST HELITTLETONGUECANCAU S E B I G P R O B L E M S T F H E L I T TLETONGUECANCAUISEBI G P R O B L E M S T H E L I T T R L E T ONGUECANCAUSEBIGPERO B L E M S M L K P X P W W P N T R C K G



Boast
Coarse
Cursing
Condemnation
Death
Defiles
Earthly
Evil
Fire
Filthy
Hell
Obscene
Poison

A PRAYER FOR PERFECT SPEECH

If you struggle with a certain aspect of your daily speech, fill in the blanks below and then pray this prayer for God's help in taming your tongue.

Lesson 2

God is Faithful

Genesis 3:15—Jesus is the one who defeats Satan. Genesis 12:3—The blessing to all people on earth comes through a descendant of Abraham: Jesus (see Galatians 3:8).

2 Samuel 7:16—Jesus is the ultimate son of David; it is in that role that Jesus' throne is established forever.

Psalm 2:6, 7—Jesus is the one proclaimed to be God's Son (see Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5).

Psalm 89:26-29—Jesus is the one "firstborn" of God (compare Colossians 1:18).

Isaiah 7:14—Jesus is the one predicted to be born of a virgin (compare Matthew 1:23).

Isaiah 9:6, 7—Jesus is the one bearing all the titles and descriptions of these verses.

Daniel 7:13, 14—Jesus' favorite self-designation is "Son of Man" Micah 5:2—Predicted birthplace of Jesus.

Lesson 4

O Little Town of Bethlehem: A. Rachel. B. Naomi; C. Samuel / Jesse; D. Ephrathah or Ephrath; E. Judah.

Angels and Shepherds and Me: Learners can make a good case for checking all the boxes.

Lesson 5

Simeon, Anna, and Me: 1. Anna, v. 38 (vv. 25, 26 may also imply that Simeon also was old); 2. Anna, v. 37 (vv. 25, 26 imply that Simeon did so as well); 3. Both, vv. 25, 37; 4. Simeon, vv. 30-32, 34, 35 (implied for Anna, v. 38); 5. Anna, v. 38; 6. Both, vv. 28, 38; 7. Simeon, vv. 31, 32.

Lesson 6

Lord of the Sabbath

A. Authority, v. 5; Power, v. 10

B. Authority, vv. 1, 9; Power, v. 10

C. Authority, vv. 3, 4; Power, v. 10

D. Authority, v. 9; Power, v. 10

E. Authority, vv. 7-9; Power, v. 10

F. Authority, vv. 3-5, 9; Power, v. 10

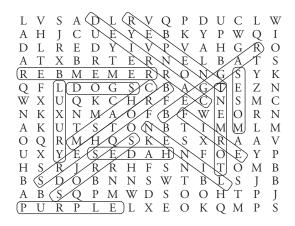
Note: Your learners may make a good case for other responses!

Lesson 8

Time to Eat

1. v. 12; 2. v. 8; 3. v. 12; 4. vv. 13, 14; 5. v. 15; 6. v. 24. Note: Your learners may make a good case for other responses!

Lesson 9



Red words: brothers, fire, hades, linen, purple, repent, luxury, torment; green words: beggar, carried, dogs, sores; uncolored words: chasm, Moses, remember.

Lesson 10

Here and Now, Hear and Do

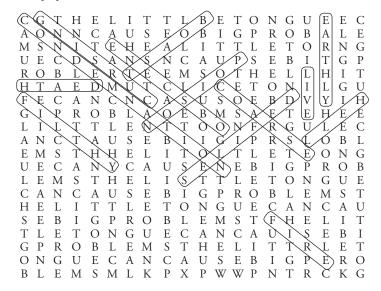
Possible answers: 9-A; 5-B; 1, 2, 3-C; 6-D; 8-E; 10-F; 2, 4-G. Note: these are only *possible* answers; learners may make a good case for others.

Lesson 11

How God Looks at People: 1. Moses; 2. Gideon; 3. David; 4. John; 5. Peter and John; 6. Aquila and Priscilla.

Lesson 13

Improper Talk



Hidden Phrase: The little tongue can cause big problems.