



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Who Needs Christmas? / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Christmas is for people who need freedom.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that because He sent Jesus to the world, He can not only forgive us of our sins, He can set us free from our sins.

SCRIPTURE

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21 NIV).

“Then neither do I condemn you” (John 8:11b NIV).

“Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11c NIV).

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10b NIV).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body . . . (Romans 6:12a NIV).

For sin shall no longer be your master . . . (Romans 6:14a NIV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Andy Stanley uses a variety of Scripture to emphasize why Jesus came—not to condemn us, but to overcome sin and set us free from the power of sin. And none of this would have been possible if it didn’t start somewhere. And when it comes to Jesus, it all started with Christmas.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Let’s talk about the name *Jesus* for a second, shall we?

It’s important to understand that the name *Jesus* was really *Joshua*.

Joshua was a warrior leader, which is also what the people needed during his leadership.

Mary, Jesus’ mother, was engaged to a man named Joseph. But before the wedding day, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Who Needs Christmas? / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

TEACHING OUTLINE

She probably would've been burnt alive or stoned for being pregnant outside of marriage.

Joseph certainly didn't want Mary to be killed, so he planned on breaking up the engagement.

That's when, according to Matthew's account, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.

TENSION

With things like a virgin birth, I see why the Christmas story can seem unbelievable at times.

Matthew tells us that angels appeared to Mary and Joseph, telling them both that this boy named Joshua would be conceived by the Spirit of God.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a second.

Joseph obeyed the angel and took Mary to be his wife.

The message of Christmas is about more than just forgiveness of the consequences of our sin.

Jesus came to deliver us from the power of sin.

TRUTH

In fact, there's a story from the gospels where religious leaders catch a woman in adultery and they take her to Jesus.

This sounds nice, but is it even possible to leave our lives of sin and say no to it?

Jesus is saying that He came to do more than *forgive* us of sin, but to *free* us from sin.

This makes it sound like Jesus came to give us a choice.

Because it's true that wherever there's sin, something always dies.

The gift you receive when you place your faith in Christ is a gift you receive right now in this life.

Christmas is for people who need freedom.

APPLICATION

And here's the best news. When you put your faith in Christ, the Spirit of God is in you.

When you became a Christian, you placed yourself in Christ. It means you are free.

LANDING

The world needed Christmas. And God needed it to demonstrate His love for us. But it's also for anyone who needs freedom from sin.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Who Needs Christmas? / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

CHRISTMAS IS FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED FREEDOM.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Let's talk about the name *Jesus* for a second, shall we?

Jesus is a . . .

- Latin translation
- From a Greek word
- Having to do with the Hebrew name Yeshua.

Latin to Greek to Hebrew: that's a mental handful, I know!

Like the Greeks, the Hebrews don't have the letter J. So while we say *Joshua*, they say *Yeshua* (another tidbit of info for you!). But to understand the significance of Christmas, it's important to understand that the name *Jesus* was really *Joshua*.

See, from what we know based on Old Testament accounts, Joshua was a warrior—a military man. He led the ancient Jews after Moses. Moses was a lawgiving leader, which was necessary during his reign. Joshua, on the other hand, was a warrior leader, which is also what the people needed during his leadership. He delivered his people from enemies and oppressors. This is important for later, so just put it in your back pocket for a moment.

While you do that, I'm gonna tune us back into the Christmas story. As we've mentioned briefly over the past few weeks, Mary, Jesus' mother, was engaged to a man named Joseph. But before the wedding day, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Strange, I know. And probably not something Mary could easily explain to her mom, right?

But there was NOTHING light or humorous about the subject back then. In her day, she probably would've been burnt alive or stoned for being pregnant outside of marriage.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Needless to say, it was a no-messing-around kind of culture!

Joseph certainly didn't want Mary to be killed, so he planned on breaking up the engagement quietly. And honestly, it was a respectable plan. He didn't want to publicly shame her, but he also had some justifiable doubts about her story. After all, the whole an-angel-got-me-pregnant story isn't one that fiancées are prone to believe!

That's when, according to Matthew's account, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,

"Joseph son of David . . ." (Matthew 1:20b).

Now, Joseph wasn't a literal son of King David, the most famous king in Israel's history, but he was related. The angel reminded Joseph of his lineage, which is important to the Christmas story. It continues:

". . . Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife . . ." (Matthew 1:20c).

In a small village in ancient times, everybody knew everybody's business. They didn't need social media or text threads to learn about the latest gossip. This was a controversy in the making! So it makes sense why the angel told Joseph not to be afraid . . .

". . . Because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20d).

Nobody was expecting a virgin birth. Even in prophecies from the prophet Isaiah years earlier, where he said a virgin will have a baby named *Immanuel*, which means "God with us," the word *virgin* meant a young, unmarried person.

Bottom line: Everybody expected the Messiah to come from the line of David, but that meant having an earthly father who was related to David. A virgin birth wasn't necessarily a critical piece that people were looking for.

TENSION

4 MINUTES

With things like a virgin birth, I see why the Christmas story can seem unbelievable at times. But when you look at how everything fits into context, it starts to become much more believable.

Because why would people who passed down the account of Jesus include that He was born to a virgin if it wasn't true? If it wasn't evidence to convince or persuade people, why include it—unless it actually happened that way?

But the virgin birth is not the reason why people rallied around Jesus. The *resurrection* is the reason. After Jesus' death, no one was saying, "Well, He died. But remember, He was born of a virgin, so I think we can keep the dream alive!" Nobody said that.

Because when Jesus died, they expected Him to stay dead.

So if the virgin birth only raised questions and made the story seem more unbelievable—and it didn't support the fact that Jesus was the Messiah—why would a guy like Matthew make it up? It almost hurt the story more than it helped. And yet, Matthew tells us that angels appeared to Mary and Joseph, telling them both that this boy named Joshua would be conceived by the Spirit of God.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a second. Think of the questions you'd be asking . . .

- *Why me?*
- *Why can't I just get married and have a son the normal way?*
- *Did I really just get a visit from an angel who told me I'd be the Father of the long-awaited warrior king?*

The angel continues,

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because . . ."
(Matthew 1:21a NIV).

Now, Joseph wouldn't have even needed the angel to complete that sentence. (Although, does anyone ever interrupt a talking angel?) As a part of a people group that had been oppressed by Syria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome, the need for a "warrior king" was blatantly obvious.

The angel continues,

". . . Because he will save his people . . ." (Matthew 1:21b NIV).

This makes sense. The ancient leader Joshua drove out enemies and established his people in Canaan. So undoubtedly, Jesus—if He was the Messiah—was going to do the same thing.

The angel's not done with his monologue:

". . . Because he will save his people from their . . ." (Matthew 1:21b NIV).

Now, if you're Joseph, this is an easy sentence to finish. Oppressors. Invaders. Enemies. Any synonym will work. His son, Jesus/Joshua, is going to establish Jewish dominance and restore Israel to its glory days of King David and Solomon.

But then the angel threw Joseph a curveball . . .

*". . . Because he will save his people from their **sins**"* (Matthew 1:21b NIV, emphasis added).

People wanted to be saved from the Romans. But they already had a temple-and-priest system to save them from their sins. That part was covered! "Sins" wasn't priority #1 for the Messiah.



TEACHING SCRIPT

But Joseph kept all of that to himself. It's a good rule not to argue with an angel of the Lord! So he obeyed the angel and took Mary to be his wife.

But the truth is, a lot of us can probably relate to what Joseph may have felt. Sure, Christmas is a great time to talk about forgiveness of sins. But it's got to be bigger than that. After all, nobody's perfect. And God forgives us of all our messiness.

But like the message to Joseph, the message of Christmas is about more than just forgiveness of the consequences of our sin. **Jesus came to deliver us from the power of sin.**

Jesus came in the spirit of Joshua, the warrior king who led the Israelites into a land of freedom, to free you and I from the power and slavery of sin. When Jesus grew older and started preaching to crowds, He alluded to this a lot.

TRUTH

4 MINUTES

In fact, there's a story from the gospels where religious leaders catch a woman in adultery and they take her to Jesus. They drag her through the streets of Jerusalem, up a giant set of stairs at the temple. They throw her down about 30 yards away from where they sacrifice animals for people's sins.

They say to Jesus, "This woman was caught in adultery, and the law says we're to stone her. What do you say?"

It was a trick question, of course. He knew they weren't going to stone her—especially not right there, because it was illegal to stone people, especially at the Temple.

Jesus calls their bluff. "Fine. Take her down to the valley and stone her. Just one thing. Those of you who have not committed sin, you start the execution."

Everything got quiet. One by one, they walk away. Then Jesus says, "Daughter, where are your accusers?"

She gives a literal answer, "They left."

And then He says to her, with a smile on His face:

"Then neither do I condemn you" (John 8:11b NIV).

In other words, "We don't need to walk over there and offer a sacrifice for your sins. You are looking at the Lamb of God, and I do not condemn you." And then He says:

"Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11c NIV).

This sounds nice, but is it even possible to leave our lives of sin and say no to it?

TEACHING SCRIPT



Well, at another point in the Gospels, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, and says,

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10b NIV).

This sounds bigger than forgiveness, doesn't it? Because forgiveness just puts me back at zero: I'm on a level playing field. But Jesus is saying that He came for a completely different purpose. **To do more than forgive us of sin, but to free us from sin.**

Later, the apostle Paul, in a letter to Christians living in Rome, put language around the purpose of Jesus' coming. Paul said this:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body . . . (Romans 6:12a NIV).

This makes it sound like Jesus came to give us a choice. **He came to deliver us, but we can decide what we allow to master us.**

He goes on, saying,

For sin shall no longer be your master . . . (Romans 6:14a NIV)

If you've ever felt, *"I shouldn't, but yet I'm going to,"* about sin, it's being a master.

Paul is saying, "That's sin. And just so you know, it's no longer your master if you're in Christ."

Then Paul summarizes it with this powerful statement . . .

For the wages of sin is death . . . (Romans 6:23a NIV).

Wages are the payment, outcome, and consequence of something. And Paul says the result of sin is death.

Think about it. Isn't it true that sin kills things?

- Some of you have seen friendships die because of sin.
- You've seen your family fall apart because of sin.
- Sin has killed the way you see yourself.

Because it's true that wherever there's sin, something always dies.

Even forgiven sin kills things, right? Aren't prisons full of men and women who have prayed to be forgiven for their sins, and God forgave them? But they will still experience some type of loss because of their disobedience to God, won't they?

Because sin is an enemy that kills, God sent Joshua, the warrior king, to fight and defeat the enemy of sin. To set you and I free!

And then Paul continues,

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23b NIV).

TEACHING SCRIPT



The gift you receive when you place your faith in Christ is a gift you receive right now in this life. **You receive freedom from the power of sin and its control.**

Christmas was a gift—not just for the forgiveness of sins, but freedom from the power of it! Through Christ, you can have a new master! Simply put,

Christmas is for people who need freedom.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

And here's the best news. When you put your faith in Christ, the Spirit of God is in you. If the cycle of failing and asking for forgiveness, then failing and asking for forgiveness again, has failed you, know this: **You can so no to sin any time you want!**

- Sin is not your master.
- Lust is not your master.
- A lack of self-control in some area of your life is not your master.
- Alcohol is not your master.
- Gossip is not your master.
- Anger is not your master.
- Jealousy is not your master.
- Habits are not your master.

When you became a Christian, you placed yourself in Christ. It means you are free. You may say yes and live as if sin *is* your master, but it's not.

It's why nearly every morning of my life when I pray, part of my prayer is to give God every part of me. My hands. My eyes. My thinking. My ears, My feet. I want to agree with God and say, "I will not submit the members of my body to a master that is not really my master."

If you're not a Christian, sin doesn't have to be your master, either. And if you ever get tired of being dragged down by sin or whatever you call it, or if you get fed up with this thing that seems like it has control over you, I have some great news for you: **Christmas is for people who need freedom.** It's a standing invitation from your Father in heaven who is inviting you into a relationship where sin no longer has to be your master!

TEACHING SCRIPT



LANDING

1 MINUTE

The world needed Christmas. And God needed it to demonstrate His love for us. But it's also for anyone who needs freedom from sin. In the announcement of His birth, we see that Jesus was given His name because He is the One who will save us from the power of sin in our lives!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
