



## The Sweet Gospel Message

### Bible Study Leader's Guide

[Please provide: a copy of this study for each participant, Bibles, and pen/pencil.]

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, You are our Maker and Creator. We are sorry for our sins and the times that we have rebelled against You. In Your great love for mankind, You planned our salvation by sending Your Son to be born, live a perfect life, suffer, die, and rise to life again. Because of the merits of our Savior, Jesus, and with faith generated by the Holy Spirit, we are saved and have faith in Christ. Please help us to tell the Good News of salvation in Jesus to those around us who need to hear His story – to tell what we have “heard and seen.” Be with us as we study Your Word. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

*And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them (Luke 2:20).*

Christmas is a time when our senses are on high alert. The sweet tastes of candy canes, chocolates, cookies, and other baked goods are readily available for our enjoyment. In addition, the special music and sounds of the season are sweet and melodious to the ear, and the sights and brilliant lights are pleasing and seem to dance before our eyes. Share with your group a particular sweet memory from a past Christmas. Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

We hear the Christmas Gospel from Luke 2 every Christmas. Many of us might even have memorized all of it or part of it as a child in the children’s Christmas service. Read Luke 2:1–21 and as you read, listen for one *new* thing that you might not have heard before.

**Faith Talk:** Share with your group something new that you heard in Luke 2 and/or your favorite passage from this biblical account. Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.

As a group, compile a list of possible sensory stimulants that might have accompanied the Christmas Gospel account.

**Sounds:** Answers may vary but could include: angel voices, crowded city noises, sheep bleating, other animal noises, newborn baby’s cry, running feet, people talking, words and expressions of praise and amazement from the shepherds.

**Sights:** Answers may vary but could include: brilliant angels’ light, shepherds, sheep, animals, people, manger, newborn baby with mother and father, shepherds’ running footsteps.

Sounds of glorifying and praise were to be heard from the shepherds in verse 20. What specifically had they *heard and seen*? The shepherds heard the angelic proclamation that the Savior was born and where He could be found. They had also seen and heard a multitude of angels praising God. The shepherds saw the newborn Baby right where the angels had said He would be.

### What?

Read the following Bible passages and determine **what** the Gospel message is that we have to tell.

Romans 3:23: All have sinned and need a Savior.

Philippians 2:1–11: This is a summary of what Jesus came to do to save us. Jesus Christ was conceived, born, lived a perfect life, suffered, died, and rose from the dead.

John 10:14–15 (Psalm 23): Jesus is our *Good Shepherd* who came to give His life for us, His sheep. He guides, leads, and protects us.

John 14:6: Jesus says, “*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.* Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Acts 4:12: Salvation is found only through faith in Jesus.

## **Who?**

Read the following Bible passages and determine **who** needs to hear the sweet message of the Gospel.

Mark 16:15: Everyone, everywhere needs to hear the Gospel.

John 3:16–17: Because of God’s great love for us, Jesus came to save everyone in the world.

Acts 16:31–34: Every family and household needs to hear the Good News of Jesus’ saving love.

1 Corinthians 1:23–24: Jews and Greeks need to hear the Gospel message.

Ephesians 3:6: Gentiles need to know that Jesus’ salvation is for them too.

## **How?**

Read the following Bible passages and determine **how** we as believers can share the sweet message of the Gospel.

Acts 1:8: It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can share the sweet Gospel with others. The Holy Spirit gives us the plan to share and the words to say.

John 1:41: The Holy Spirit empowers us to tell the Good News of Jesus face-to-face with those in our family.

John 13:34–35: The Holy Spirit helps us to show the love of Jesus to one another through our words and our acts of service.

Romans 10:13–15 (3 John 5-8): When we send missionaries and support them, we share the Gospel in places we cannot physically go ourselves.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9: The Holy Spirit works through our pastors and church workers, and congregation members to share the message of salvation found in Christ alone.

Ephesians 4:1–4: God calls us to work together to spread the Gospel in all that we do.

**Faith Talk:** Read the Parable of the Lost Sheep recorded in Luke 15:4–7. Discuss with your group this statement: “He [Jesus] left the 99 to find me!” Answers will vary. Lead participants to see that Jesus came to save every individual from sin, death, and the devil.

Take a moment right now to write a sweet Gospel message that you have *heard and seen*, then share it with your group. Encourage everyone to take up pen or pencil and do this exercise.

## Outcomes

The Gospel message we have to share is indeed sweet. The Gospel message is not just “Good News,” it is the best news ever. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16).

Read Acts 14:1–7. As Paul and Barnabas shared the sweet Gospel message, what outcomes did they experience? Paul and Barnabas experienced both positive and negative outcomes. As the Scripture account explains, ... a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed (v. 1). This positive outcome was then countered by a negative one: But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers (v. 2). With strength given them by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas did not leave Iconium, but continued to speak boldly for the Lord (v. 3). The result of their continued witnessing was both positive and negative: But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles (v.4). Eventually, Paul and Barnabas had to leave Iconium when they learned that some wanted to stone them (vv.5–6). Despite this threat to their lives, Paul and Barnabas were not deterred in their mission for the Lord. In Lystra and Derbe, there they continued to preach the gospel (v.7).

What outcomes have you experienced after sharing the truth of Jesus with others? Encourage individuals to share both positive and negative outcomes of their personal witnessing. Emphasize that the mission that Jesus has given us is to tell others the Gospel. We only deliver the Good News. It is the Holy Spirit that brings people to faith in the Triune God.

Jesus’ apostles experienced both positive and negative outcomes when they shared Jesus with people. As we share the sweet Gospel message, we will also experience these same outcomes. Read Isaiah 55:10–11. What assurance does God give us in these verses concerning the outcomes of our witnessing? Isaiah 55:11 assures that the Word that God has given us to share will not return to Him empty, but is shall accomplish what God wants it to. “The Word always brings about what God wants done” (The Lutheran Study Bible, CPH, ©2009, study note on Isaiah 55:11, page 1182). Only the Holy Spirit knows whose hearts are touched and changed by the sweet Gospel message. The Holy Spirit encourages us to continue to share the Gospel no matter what the outcome might be.

**Closing Prayer:** Please close by singing or praying the words to “I Love to Tell the Story:”

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,  
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.  
I love to tell the story, because I know it’s true;  
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

### Refrain

I love to tell the story;  
‘Twill be my theme in glory  
To tell the old, old story  
Of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat  
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.  
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard  
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word. *Refrain*

I love to tell the story, For those who know it best  
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.  
And when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song,  
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long. *Refrain* (Public Domain)

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