

# IN THE WORLD



John 17:9–19

**LESSON 4**  
December 22, 2024

Connect timeless truths with today's news.

## **CHILDREN WANTED**

Starting in 2025, government workers in Japan will implement a four-day workweek. While shorter workweeks have been shown to reduce stress, encourage the retention of employees, and improve their mental health; the shortened workweek for Japanese workers is intended to improve the country's record-low birthrate of just 1.2 births per person. In contrast, it takes a fertility rate of 2.1 births per person to maintain a population, which has a large impact on a country's economic and cultural stability. Without enough children being born, Japan has struggled to maintain its social safety net and standard of living for a rapidly aging population. The impact of a reduced workweek is being watched by researchers and policymakers in other countries, most eager to find ways to prop up their own declining birthrates.

## **A SAVIOR GIVEN**

Luke's Gospel records the birth of Jesus amidst a census and the counting of people. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem in obedience to this decree, which is why Jesus is born in the city of David—born a king in the humblest of circumstances. Then, God sends word of this blessed child's birth to the poor and lowly shepherds in nearby fields—far from what we might expect as the welcome party for a heavenly king. But through the birth of this promised Savior, God shows favor to the socially marginalized and those ready to receive the Messiah's birth with joy.

1. Why do you think many wealthy countries of the world are seeing declining birthrates?
2. What makes the birth of any child a sign of hope?
3. What makes Christ's birth a sign of even greater hope?

## **Additional Resources**

*Any videos or web materials are for your personal use. If you play any media files in class, be sure to have the necessary rights to do so.*

[Contemporary Worship Weekly](#)

[Echoes Worship Weekly](#)

[Traditional Worship Weekly](#)

[Gilberto A. Ruiz's "Commentary on Luke 2:8–20"](#)

[Video: BibleProject's "The Birth of Jesus: Luke 1–2"](#)

[Video: BibleProject's "Shalom/Peace"](#)

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