

The Love of God

Lesson 16a — The Angel Talks to Mary and Joseph

Lesson 16b — The Angels and the Shepherds

Lesson 16c — The Birth of Jesus

Lesson 16d — The Wise Men Come

OVERVIEW

The theme of our December unit is The Love of God. In Scripture, love is presented as the very nature of God — God not only loves, but He is love. God loves the world as a whole, but also every individual. What better illustration of God's love could there be than the fact that He sent His own Son to this earth?

Throughout the month we will study the Christmas story in step-by-step detail. Our first lesson tells how the angel appeared to Mary and Joseph and revealed to them the awe-inspiring news that a Child would be born who would be the Son of God. The next lesson focuses on the angelic messengers who brought the shepherds the joyous news that a Savior had been born in Bethlehem. On the Sunday before Christmas, the birth of Jesus will be taught. The

following Sunday will conclude the series with a lesson on the Wise Men who followed the Star to find the Christ Child.

Try to help your primary children to see this series of events as more than just a fragment of history. They need to feel the personal nature of God's Gift to them. They need to understand that it was because God loved them, individually, that He sent Jesus to this earth.

In many of our churches, this will be a busy month due to the preparation of special programs for the holiday season. The actual stories themselves may be somewhat familiar to your students, so particularly emphasize the theme of the unit, the love of God.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS UNIT

Refer to Units 4 and 28 for additional ideas concerning the lessons in this unit. Although the specific lesson objectives may be different, the patterns provided and activities suggested will be applicable in many cases.

GAMES FOR REVIEW

Make a large advent-type calendar, but don't number the windows. Use old Christmas cards and pictures to put behind the windows. Choose windows at random and open one at a time. Have the children tell what each picture is about and what lesson it goes with.

Use the picture cube to review the Christmas season events which are covered in this month's series of lessons (see Patterns). Cut, fold, and glue as indicated by tabs. Have your students take turns tossing the cube to one another. Each student should take a turn telling a part of the story surrounding one of the pictures.

Prepare a complete set of stars for each student (see Patterns). They should match up the two parts of each memory verse to make four stand-up stars. Have everyone say the verses together and tell to which lesson each verse belongs.

CONTEST IDEAS

Start a candy cane wreath for each child (see Patterns). Purchase small, cellophane-wrapped candy canes for the children to add to their wreaths each Sunday. Some children may add as many as four or five a week, so be prepared with plenty! They may add candy canes for attendance, learning their memory verses, bringing their Bibles, good behavior, missionary efforts, etc.

Give each student a copy of the treasure chest representing gifts for Jesus (see Patterns). Each Sunday give a colored star to each child for attendance, bringing his Bible, knowing the memory verse, bringing a friend, etc. The stars should be added to the treasure chest.

For each student make a copy of the chart depicting the shepherds on the hillside with their sheep (see Patterns). Each week add a sticker for each accomplishment; for example, an angel for attendance, a sheep for good behavior, a star for bringing Bible.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Have your students bring pictures of babies (from magazines, catalogs, photos, etc.) and let them have a part in

creating your board. (Be sure to label any pictures they will want returned to them.) Let them frame their pictures with colored paper and arrange them on the board. Place a larger picture of Baby Jesus in the center of the board. Be sure to frame it also. Title your board, **PRECIOUS GIFTS**. Use the subtitle, **The Best Gift Of All, Baby Jesus**.

Create a bulletin board featuring Christmas bells (see Patterns). Center the title, **COME ON, RING THOSE BELLS**, over a bright red background. Cut the bells from silver or gold metallic paper. Use blue or green construction paper for the ribbon and bow. Attach real evergreen branches where indicated, or make them from green paper.

Use a **JOY** bulletin board (see Patterns) to illustrate one of the most important words of the season, for the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth not only came to the shepherds, but to us as well. Use a light blue background. The letters of **JOY** can be cut from Christmas gift wrap. Cap each of the letters with white construction paper or cotton to give the idea of snow. Then hang a large ribbon bow from the letter **O**.

Over a dark blue background which represents the sky, put the title, **JOY TO THE WORLD** (see Patterns). On the left side of the board have a picture or drawing of children singing carols. Add silver stars and white snowflakes. On the right side place a Christmas tree cut from construction paper. Decorate the tree with tinsel garland and foil ornaments. Cotton may be used for snow on the ground. Add tinsel garland and lights around the border of the board.

Title your board, **COME AND WORSHIP** (see Patterns). To help illustrate the Bethlehem scene, place the city on the lower left-hand side of the board. Then put the Wise Men on the lower right-hand side. Place the stable in the center of the board, outside of the city. Above the stable have a star shining downward.

CHART IDEAS

Help the children create a Christmas memory ornament of God's love. Make copies of the angel ornament (see Patterns) for each child. Let them cover it with clear contact paper and cut it out. Then help them learn the

poem. Tell them to keep it with their other ornaments at home and use it each year. This can bring to mind the real meaning of Christmas.

Make a copy of the Christmas ornaments (see Patterns) for each of your students. Let the children color the ornaments, cover them with clear contact paper, then cut them out. Punch a hole in each ornament where indicated and string some thread or yarn through the hole. When they are finished, the students may take them home to decorate their Christmas tree.

For each child make a copy of the circle chart which has four pictures representing each Sunday's lesson (see Patterns). Fasten the two parts together in the center with a paper fastener. Show the appropriate picture each week.

Put together a gift booklet for each student (see Patterns). For each booklet, cut out the five gift shapes and staple them together along the left edge. Each week have the children color the pre-drawn pages illustrating that week's lesson.

Make Nativity napkin rings for the children (see Patterns). Cut paper towel rolls into one-inch rings. Glue one of the characters onto each ring. These napkin rings may be given to the children as favors or you may use them at your Christmas party. Another idea would be to let the children color the pictures, glue them to the napkin rings, and give them as gifts.

UNIT SONGS

"For God So Loved the World"

"Away In a Manger"

"Loving Means Giving"

"Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, Leading Wise Men From Afar"

"I'm His Little Lamb"

UNIT SUPPORT MATERIAL

Birth of Jesus — Pict-o-graph, Standard Publishing

Jesus Is Born — Classroom color and activity book, 8 each of 6 pictures, Standard Publishing

TEXT Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to recount how the angel announced the birth of God's own Son to Mary and Joseph.

MEMORY VERSE She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS. — Matthew 1:21

The Angel Talks to Mary and Joseph

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

SHE SHALL BRING — Extend both hands out, palms up, move toward body.

FORTH A SON — Point up.

AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME — First two fingers of both hands should be tapping at right angles.

JESUS — With right middle finger, touch left palm. With left middle finger, touch right palm.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Our memory verse for this week is illustrated by five choir children reciting the verse together. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the five sections on the heavy black lines. Reassemble the picture with your group as each portion of the verse is learned.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Make an angel puppet as described under In-Class Activities. Use this to open your lesson. Discuss what it would be like to have an angel appear and speak to you.

Progression of events:

1. An angel appeared to Mary and told her she was highly favored and blessed.
2. He explained that she would bear God's Son, Jesus.
3. Mary showed her willing spirit.
4. After Mary was found with child, an angel appeared to Joseph and told him the Child was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Climax: Mary and Joseph believed the message of the angel.

Conclusion: Jesus was a very special Baby because God was His Father.

Response: Have your students retell the announcement of the angel to Mary and Joseph and tell why Jesus was a special Child.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Man's religion is a story of his search for God, how he might find enlightenment or appease some angry deity. The Christian religion, however, is a story of God's search for lost mankind. Because of an eternal love for His own creation, God was willing to make the supreme sacrifice of His only begotten Son that we, too, could become the children of God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). What better time than at Christmas to reflect upon God's love when He gave to us His Son. Jesus "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). See also John 1:12-14; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:1.

Angels are created, holy beings, sometimes described as "spirits" although often appearing in bodily form to man. Scripture doesn't say when they were created but assuredly before man was created, because some of them fell from their original state of purity and innocence and were cast out of Heaven.

The work of good angels is ordered by God and includes assisting, protecting, and guiding God's children. Hebrews 1:14 says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

The Bible records many instances when angels were used as messengers for God, sometimes bringing warnings, sometimes words of comfort, or glad tidings such as to Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4a and 28a for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

For a touch of the dramatic, use a hidden tape recorder to

play the words the angel spoke to Mary and Joseph when you come to that part of the story.

Use an angel puppet to tell today's story (see Patterns). Trace the pattern onto a piece of white paper and color in the hair and details of dress using fabric crayons. Transfer the design to white fabric, following the instructions given on the crayon box. Cut around the figure allowing a half-inch seam allowance. Cut a second piece to be used as back of puppet. With right sides facing, sew the two pieces of the puppet together, leaving the bottom open. Trim and clip the seams. Turn the puppet right side out.

Give each child a copy of the picture of the angel talking to Mary (see Patterns). Have the children write, in simple words, or draw a picture of what the angel told Mary.

Let the children make Christmas-card angel bookmarks (see Patterns). Provide plenty of old Christmas cards. Let the children choose a card and cut around the angel outline of the pattern. Punch a hole, and thread a piece of yarn or ribbon through it. Have the children write the memory verse or attach pre-printed verse cards (which you may provide) to the back of their bookmarks.

QUESTIONS

What is the greatest Gift ever given?

For what purpose did God send Jesus to earth? Was it a good plan? How does it affect you?

Why do you think God chose Mary to be the mother of His Son, Jesus? Was she different from the other women? What made her special?

Joseph was a humble man who trusted God. How do you think he felt about the Baby Jesus?

Why was Joseph told to name the Baby *Jesus*?

What are some of the other names for Jesus?

Will God ever ask you to do something for Him? Talk about things that God may ask a child to do.

Tell about something that has happened to you that shows God loves you.

How can we show God we are thankful for His Gift — Jesus?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Children love to hear about angels and babies so this will be an exciting time. Use puppets or cutouts from Christmas cards to act out the story of the angel's visit to Mary and Joseph. Explain that this Baby was a promise from God and God always keeps His promises.

Take a batch of clay to class. Using an angel-shaped

cookie cutter, let your students cut out an angel shape. Make a small hole at the top so a ribbon can be strung through. Allow the angels to dry, and then attach the ribbon and send them home with the children the next Sunday. (Write the children's names on the angels they made.) Following is a simple recipe for play dough which will harden without baking.

Clay for Play and Posterity

Mix: 1 cup cornstarch, 2 cups baking soda (1 lb.), and 1 1/4 cups cold water. Stir in a saucepan over medium heat for about four minutes until the mixture thickens to moist mashed potato consistency. Remove from heat, turn out onto a plate and cover with a damp cloth until cool. Knead as you would dough. Store in an airtight container or bag. For color add a few drops of food coloring to the water before it is mixed with the cornstarch and soda. Or, objects may be left to dry and then painted with water (tempera) colors or acrylics. Dip in shellac or brush with clear nail polish for a sealer.

For each child, prepare a set of the Mary and angel figures (see Patterns). Attach a small round tube to the back of each one so it will stand alone. (A portion of a paper towel tube works very well for this.)

REVIEW IDEAS

Make a recording of the angel's talking first to Mary and then to Joseph. Also record their responses. For your review, use an overhead projector with yellow transparency which has an angel shape cut out of it (so it will be white). Project the image on a screen behind Mary as she and Joseph pantomime while they listen to the angel and respond.

Using Christmas program costumes, act out the angel's appearing to Mary.

On a chalkboard or large posterboard, write out a significant verse from the lesson in code form. For example, across the top write the question, "What did Mary reply to the angel?" Then write her response in code. Put the chart showing the code solution to one side. Call on volunteers from your group to write in one letter at a time, until the whole answer is written out.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Mary's Story — Arch book available with cassette, also available with filmstrip and cassette, Concordia

The Bible Story Set, Volume 7 — by Arthur S. Maxwell, Pacific Press Publishing Association

The A,B,C's of Christmas — by Jane Belk Moncure (for beginners), Standard Publishing

Primary Cutouts — a cut-out flannel set that can be used all year for small children, available at teachers' supply stores.

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 90

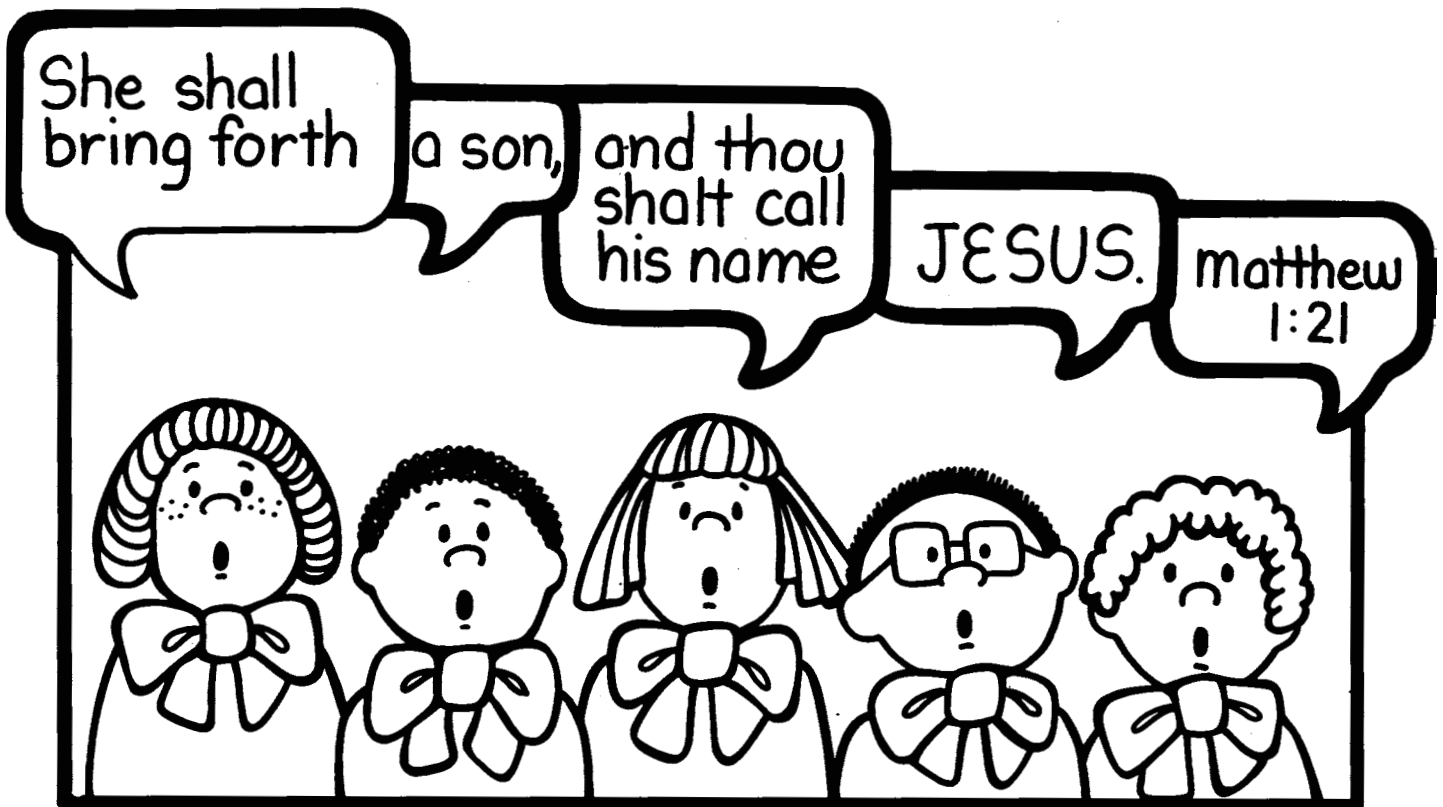
She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JE - SUS. Thou shalt

call his name JE - SUS, thou shalt call his name JE - SUS. She shall bring forth a

son, and thou shalt call his name JE - SUS, Mat - thew one: verse twen - ty -

one.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT

Luke 2:8-20

OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to relate how the angel announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds who received the news with joy.

MEMORY VERSE

Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. — Luke 2:9

The Angels and the Shepherds

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

LO, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD — Hold hands at shoulders, pointing out, flutter like wings.

CAME UPON THEM — Extend right hand out, palm up, move toward body.

AND THE GLORY — Hold left palm out, facing up. Have right finger tips touch left palm, raise right hand while wiggling fingers.

OF THE LORD — Point up.

SHONE ROUND ABOUT THEM — Open palms facing each other with finger tips pointing up. Spread hands apart to the sides while the fingers are wiggling.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

The visual representation of our memory verse for this week is the angel of the Lord announcing Jesus' birth to a shepherd. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the five sections as indicated by the heavy black lines. Arrange the sections on your display board, one at a time, as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Bring a printed birth announcement to class. Let your students look at it and talk about how this is the way we often let people know of a baby's birth. But God chose a very special way to announce the birth of His Son. Progression of events:

1. God chose a dramatic way to make the announcement to mankind — the appearance of the angels to shepherds watching their flocks on the Judean hills.
 2. Explain the angel's message.
 3. Explore the probable emotions of the shepherds.
- Climax: They left their sheep and hurried to Bethlehem.
Conclusion: The shepherds believed, therefore they saw the Baby Jesus with their own eyes.

Response: Your students will be able to explain the good news brought by the angels and tell how the shepherds responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Shepherding may be considered by some to be a lowly occupation, but it is given considerable mention in the Bible. It is good to know something about those who are mentioned in the Bible as being shepherds. The first shepherd we have record of is Abel, the son of Adam. Joseph and his brethren were shepherds and later Joseph became a ruler in Egypt. King David was a shepherd in his youth. Amos, the prophet, was a shepherd. And Jesus Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King, is known as The Good Shepherd, saying Himself: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

While the task may seem simple on the surface, to be a good shepherd involves many duties and responsibilities; and we see these exemplified in Christ's care for His sheep. The shepherd secures pasture and water for the flocks, shade from the summer sun and protection from vicious animals. The sheep depend on him. He is their security. The shepherd knows the number of sheep in his flock and will go to extreme lengths to locate a missing one; he knows each one by name. Various Scriptures describe good shepherds as being faithful, fearless, unselfish, considerate, and believing.

Angels had an important place in the life and ministry of Christ. They made their appearance to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds in connection with His birth. After His temptation in the wilderness, angels ministered to Him; and an angel strengthened Him in the Garden. It was an angel who rolled away the stone from His tomb, and angels were at His ascension. And it will be with His angels, and the

great sound of the trumpet, that Christ will announce His return and the Rapture of the saints.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to lessons 4c and 28c for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Make a file-folder hillside scene showing the angels, shepherds, and the sheep (see Patterns). Using a file folder, paste the picture of the Bethlehem hillside and angels on the background. Connect the cloud with a paper fastener to cover the angels. On the foreground paste or tape the angel, shepherds, and sheep to the designated places. Attach a paper strip to the back of each standing figure and secure that strip to the background scene (see thumbnail sketch with pattern). As the file is opened it makes a pop-up scene of the hillside.

Have your students help you make an angel choir for use in teaching the lesson. Give each child a copy of the angel, and have him cut out the components, following the outlines (see Patterns). Decorate as desired before assembling. Roll skirt into cone shape and fasten by gluing the flap. Glue the head and wings onto shaded area (A) after folding wings back. Next, glue arms directly over shaded area (B), completing the figure.

Use cut-out angel cookies to make a heavenly choir. Let each child hold one angel. Then enjoy the angels as your snack for the day, or send one home with each child.

Let the children make the Good News! Christmas cards (see Patterns). Cut around the heavy lines. Have the children color their cards and sign their names. Then fold on the dotted lines, making sure to fold number 1 first, number 2 second, etc. Glue or tape the top flap in place. Have each child write on the outside of his card the name of the person he will give it to.

Help the children make paper-plate lamb masks. Cut eye holes, about one inch apart, just above the center of the plate. Attach the ears, cut from black felt, to each side of the plate. Cover the plate with cotton balls. Add a black nose cut from felt. Attach a stick to the back of the mask so the child can easily hold it in front of his face.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever seen a birth announcement? What did it say? What was its purpose? What was the purpose of Jesus' "birth announcement" by the angels?

Do you think the shepherds were surprised to hear that Jesus was born? Do you think they were looking for His coming? Why?

When the shepherds heard about Jesus' birth, what did they do?

The Bible says, "...the glory of the Lord shone round about them," (the shepherds). Tell how you think it looked to have the glory of the Lord shining all around them.

Why do you suppose God chose the countryside where the shepherds were, to tell of the good news of Jesus' birth instead of the busy city where most of the people were?

The shepherds spread the good news. How is that like a testimony?

When people hear about Jesus today, what do they do?

When did you first hear about Jesus? Do you pass the good news on to others?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

For each child make one finger puppet of a shepherd and one stand-up angel (see Patterns). Have shepherds listen as the angel tells them the good news. Then the shepherds can tell how excited they are over the news the angel brought them.

Paper-chain angels cut from gold foil make a bright, shiny display (see Patterns).

Give each child a copy of the lamb picture (see Patterns). The children may add fleece to their lambs by gluing cotton on them, or they may scribble curly fleece all over them.

Prepare a shepherd and a lamb for each child (see Patterns). Attach a small round tube to the back of each one so that they will stand alone. (A portion of a paper towel tube works very well for this.)

REVIEW IDEAS

Give an overhead review and compare the shepherds' reaction to the Sunday school students' reaction when learning of Jesus' birth (see Patterns).

Use students or large pictures in tableau-style scenes. Make a cassette tape of Christmas music to go along with the story. Narrate between songs. Suggested scenes: shepherds and flocks in fields (one angel appears to them); a multitude of angels appear to them; shepherds go to Bethlehem to find Baby Jesus and worship Him. Corresponding songs: "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" — one verse; "Angels We Have Heard on High"; "Drummer Boy."

Copy the angel finger play poem onto an overhead transparency or a large sheet of posterboard (see Patterns). Display it as you teach the children this little finger-play. Have the children hold up one of their hands with all five fingers extended. For the first line of the poem they should wiggle all five fingers. When they say, "The first one said..." they should wiggle just their thumb. When they say, "The second one said..." they should wiggle just their pointer finger, etc. When you again talk of the "five little

angels," they should wiggle all five fingers. And when they say, "Glory to God..." they should clap their hands.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night"

SUPPORT MATERIAL

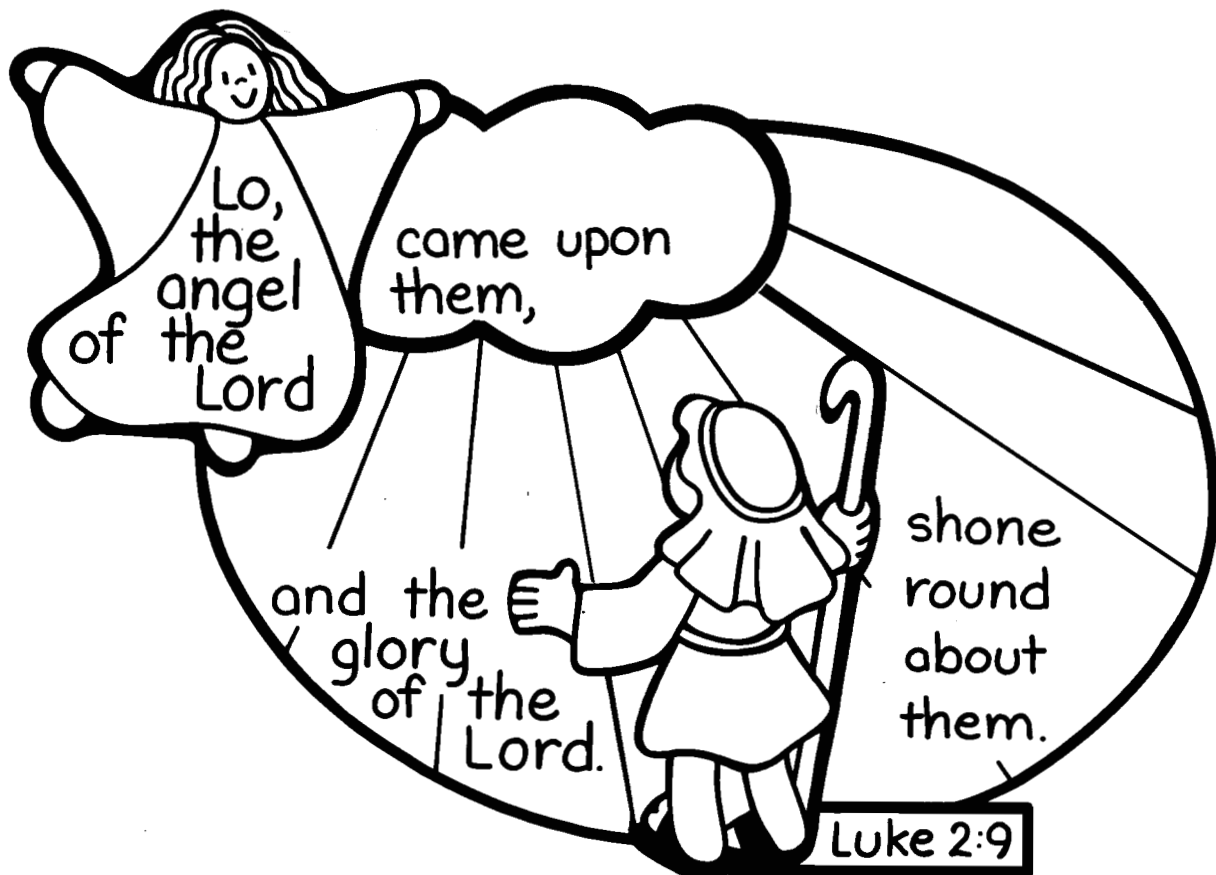
The Night the Angels Sang — Arch Book, Concordia
The Little Shepherd and the First Christmas — Arch Book, Concordia

Little Benjamin and the First Christmas — Arch Book, Concordia

MEMORY VERSE SONG



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT

Luke 2:1-7

OBJECTIVE

The students will realize that God loved us so much He sent His Son to earth. They will also be able to recount the events surrounding His birth.

MEMORY VERSE

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. — John 3:16

The Birth of Jesus

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

FOR GOD — Point up.

SO LOVED — Cross fists over heart.

THE WORLD — Hold arms in circle over head.

THAT HE GAVE — Palms toward self, touching chest, move hands away from body, opening hands out in front.

HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON — With right middle finger, touch left palm. With left middle finger, touch right palm.

THAT WHOSOEVER — Point to others.

BELIEVETH IN HIM — Make fists, one on top of the other.

SHOULD NOT — Shake head No.

PERISH — Left palm up, right palm down. Change over to left palm down, right palm up.

BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE — Hands in front, palms up. Throw hands up and out like you're excited and rejoicing.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

A silhouette of Bethlehem in a heart and a boy praying is the visual representation of this week's memory verse. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the six pieces on the heavy black lines. Put the arrangement back together, one section at a time, as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Give each child the first piece of the miniature felt scene described under In-Class Activities (the dark blue rectangular background). Tell them that today they are going to build on that piece of felt a little scene that tells the greatest story in the world.

Progression of events:

1. Review how the angel announced Jesus' birth to Mary and Joseph.
2. Briefly describe Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. Place their figures on the dark blue piece of felt.
3. Detail the surroundings. Add the manger and lamb to the scene.

Climax: Jesus was born at a time and place appointed by God and detailed by prophecy.

Conclusion: Jesus' birth was humble in origin, but it was the greatest event the world had ever known.

Response: Your students will be able to tell you the story of Jesus' birth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem when Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth? Historians would say that Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, ordered a census to be taken and all people under his rule, to pay a tax. Joseph and Mary were obedient to that command. It was necessary for the people to return to their ancestral home, and Bethlehem was where Mary and Joseph's ancestor, King David, had lived as a boy. But there was more to their being in Bethlehem at that time than just to pay a tax. The prophet Micah, centuries before, spoke of Bethlehem, "...out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." God spoke it and it came to pass.

Why is Christmas celebrated on December 25? Early tradition fixed December 25 as being the time of Jesus' birth, the calendar suggesting the year 0. However, through the years, research into the census that was taken shows the time to be closer to 4 or 5 B.C. No one is really sure. Sometime during the 4th century A.D., the Western Church settled on December 25 and the Eastern Church on January 6. The important factor is that throughout the world people celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and we call it Christmas.

"On a cold winter's night...." How cold? That night when Jesus was born was no doubt a cold night, both outside and in the stable as well. Winter in Palestine, the coldest temperature being about 19° F, is the cold, rainy season, often accompanied by hail, thunder, and lightning. On the Bethlehem hillside where the shepherds watched their flocks that night it probably wasn't down to freezing temperatures, but a lonely, dark hillside could be miser-

able. The cold was probably uppermost in the thoughts of the shepherds until that glorious moment when the glory of the Lord brightened the night and they heard the glad news, "A Savior is born."

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4b and 28b for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

For each child, make a miniature nativity scene cut from felt (see Patterns). The pieces will include a dark blue felt rectangle for a background, a tan stable, Mary (cut from pale blue), Joseph (cut from brown), the manger (cut from gold or yellow), Baby Jesus and one lamb (cut from white). If you wish, make a larger set with which to present the story in class, allowing the children to assemble their smaller scenes as you go through the story.

Make a simple manger and stable from construction paper (see Patterns). Use as props for teaching the lesson.

Choose a favorite book about the Christmas story. Record the story onto a cassette tape and use this as a background while you act out the story, using dolls. A very appropriate story book is, "The Baby God Promised," by Arch books.

Help your students make Christmas cards in class to take home and give to a person of their choice (see Patterns). Copy the pattern onto heavy white paper and trim around the heavy lines. Let the children color the holly leaves and berries. Then fold on dotted lines so the beginning of the verse is on the front of the folded card.

Make donkey masks out of brown grocery bags (see Patterns). You can either make just one to use as you tell the story or let each child make a mask to keep for himself. As the pattern shows, cut eye holes about one inch apart, and then trim the sack around the bottom to form the shape of a donkey's head. Attach the ears to each side of the sack and the nostrils near the center bottom. Use black or dark brown yarn to form the mane.

Prepare a concentration game to use in reviewing the Christmas story (see Patterns). On tagboard or other heavy paper, make two copies of each picture. Mix them and lay them face down on your table or floor. Let each child take a turn trying to find matching pictures by remembering where they were in each of the previous turns. If the pictures match correctly he should tell what part of the story that picture represents and then he may choose again. If the pictures do not match, it is the next child's turn to try. NOTE: This would make a fun gift for each of the children in your class.

QUESTIONS

Was it part of God's plan that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem? How do we know?

How do you suppose the innkeeper felt when he found out a baby had been born in his stable? Do you think he knew who the Baby was?

How was Jesus different from other babies? How was He the same?

How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus was born?

What type of clothes did Mary have to put on Jesus?

How would you feel about having been born in a stable?

How can we make room for Jesus?

What does *humble* mean?

Why do you suppose God sent Jesus to earth as a baby? Why not as an angel or a grown-up man?

Do you think Jesus knows how little children feel? Why?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Give each child a Baby Jesus and a manger made from felt (see Patterns). Let them put the Baby in and out of the manger as you tell the story. This would also make a nice Christmas remembrance to put in your Christmas card for each child.

Give each child a copy of the picture of Mary holding the Baby Jesus (see Patterns). Let the children paste straw on the manger. As an alternative, they may glue on strips of gold-colored felt, or use crayons to color some straw.

Make a "gift" card for each child (see Patterns). Copy the pattern onto the bottom half of a piece of construction paper (dotted lines in the center of paper). Then fold the paper on the dotted lines. Cut around the double thickness to make a card that opens. Provide stickers with the Christmas nativity theme. Let the children put these inside their cards as you talk about God's greatest Gift — Jesus.

REVIEW IDEAS

Give a review on "Gifts From God." Have several different-sized gift-wrapped boxes. (You might like to wrap them in such a way that you will need only to lift off the lids.) Inside each box have an article representing a gift God has given us; such as, an animal puppet (animals), a poinsettia (plants), a mobile of stars (night sky), sun glasses (day sky), jar of sand or dirt (earth). The list is endless. Finally, spotlight the remaining gift — God's greatest Gift — Jesus.

Have a large manger scene behind you as you review the story. Make masks (see Patterns) to represent the six animals in the following poem. Cut out the holes for the eyes and attach a Popsicle stick to the back of each mask. Begin your review with these remarks and questions: "I wonder what it was like on that first Christmas! Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have been at the manger when

Jesus was born? I wonder what it was like for the animals in the stable? Let's pretend to visit the manger." Hold up the appropriate mask as you read, slowly, each section of the poem. After reading each stanza, attach that mask to the manger. End by reemphasizing God's great love to us through Jesus.

POEM:

The donkey walked softly, uphill and down,
Took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem town.
The cow gave her manger, with hay soft and deep,
To make a nice bed for the Baby to sleep.
The mouse, who liked mostly to hide in the hay,
Came quietly out to see where Jesus lay.
The cat with its fur so soft, cuddly, and warm,
Was impressed by the sweetness of Jesus, God's Son.
The lamb with the shepherds heard angels above.
He came to see Jesus — God's great Gift of love.
The dove cooed from rafters that first Christmas morn.
He wanted to tell the world, "Jesus is born!"

COORDINATING SONGS

"What Child Is This?"
"Away in a Manger"
"Silent Night"

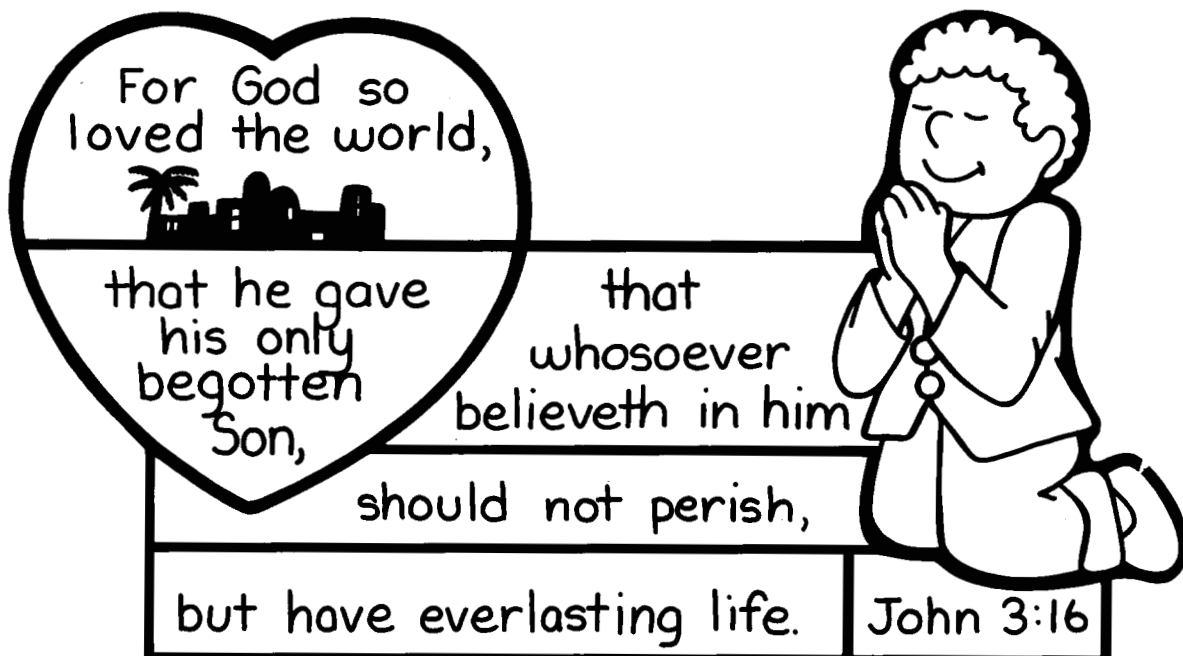
SUPPORT MATERIAL

The Very Best Book of All — Happy Day Book by Fran Flourney, Standard Publishing
The Very Special Night — Happy Day Book, Standard Publishing
The Gift of Christmas — Jane Belk Moncure book, Standard Publishing
Jesus Loves Us — Coloring book, 8 each of 6 pictures, Warner Press
Frances Hook's "Bible Pictures" — Includes "Birth of Jesus," Standard Publishing

MEMORY VERSE SONG



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT	Matthew 2:1-12
OBJECTIVE	The students will be able to recount how the special star sent from God led the Wise Men to the Christ Child.
MEMORY VERSE	Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them. — Matthew 2:9

The Wise Men Come

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

LO, THE STAR — Hold both hands up at sides of face. With finger tips touching thumbs, open and close hands quickly, to represent blinking stars.

WHICH THEY SAW IN THE EAST — Point to eyes, then move hand away and point toward the east.

WENT — With index fingers moving forward, rotate around each other (palms toward self).

BEFORE THEM — Point in front and away from self.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Three Wise Men following the star is the visual display of our memory verse this week. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the four pieces as indicated by the heavy black lines. Arrange them in order, a piece at a time, as your students recite each section of the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Spread out a large, dark blue cloth on your table. Sprinkle it with small, gummed stars or other types of small stars that can be purchased at a craft store. Tell your class this represents the sky on the night Jesus was born. Then hold up a large star cut from yellow construction paper and decorated with glitter. That night a special star appeared!

Progression of events:

1. Explain who the Wise Men were.
2. They saw the star, realized its importance and purposed to follow it.
3. They came to Jerusalem, sought there for the Child King, and met with King Herod.
4. Their persistence was finally rewarded when the star led them to the Christ Child.
5. They worshiped the Child, and then returned by another way.

Climax: The persistence of the Wise Men was rewarded when they saw the young Child, Jesus.

Conclusion: God led and directed the Wise Men and He will also lead and guide us.

Response: The students will be able to explain how and why the Wise Men made their journey and what happened when they reached their goal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Wise Men from the East, are believed to have been from an area where astrology was practiced and where the Israelite's Messianic expectations were known.

The Wise Men brought three types of gifts to Jesus — gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold was a gift of royalty. As far back as the patriarchs, gold and silver have been standards of money. Of all the standards of wealth, gold is perhaps the supreme gift fit for any king.

While gold adorned the crowns and palaces of kings, frankincense was mingled with the offerings of priests. It was the gift of worship. The Song of Solomon mentions it as a perfume of love, from a king for his bride. Frankincense is acquired from the resin of the Boswellia tree. In the summer the bark is peeled back and the tree is cut with a knife. From this wound the gum exudes as a white substance which turns amber color.

Myrrh was a gift of suffering. It was myrrh which was mixed with vinegar and offered to the suffering Savior on the cross to ease His pain. It was also myrrh that Nicodemus brought to anoint the body of Jesus after He had died. Myrrh is extracted from a small tree that is almost like a thorny bush. Usually, like frankincense, it comes from a cut made in the tree. Also, like frankincense, myrrh gives out a fragrant aroma when crushed.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4d and 28d for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Cut simple shapes of Christmas-related things (see Patterns) from old Christmas cards. Let the children string yarn through the shapes and make a colorful mobile.

Gift-wrap a box, wrapping the lid separately so it can be easily removed. Decorate your box with foil, glitter, "jewels" from discarded brooches, sequins, or anything else that you feel might make it look as if something of value is inside. Attach a tag which says, "To Jesus, from Teacher _____'s class." As you talk about the gifts the Wise Men brought to Jesus, move into a discussion of what kinds of gifts we can give to Jesus. Give each child a piece of paper on which he may write or draw what he would like to give to Jesus. At the end of your class time, collect all the papers and put them into the box. Explain that although they can't give these gifts directly to Jesus, He sees what they put into the box and He accepts their gifts.

If you want to elaborate on the gifts brought by the Wise Men, here are a few ideas. The gold, of course, can be represented by "gold" stars, a gold watch, etc. The frankincense and myrrh were fragrances. You may not be able to find those scents, so explain to the children that they were wonderfully fragrant gifts. Then use one or more of these examples (which can also be given as gifts): a small sachet pouch or box filled with aromatic potpourri, a small bar of soap wrapped in pretty fabric and tied with a thin ribbon, a little "calling card" with the child's name on the right side and a Scratch-N-Sniff sticker on the left side, a Christmas wish written on a pretty paper with scented marking pens.

Make star headbands for each of the children (see Patterns). Cut construction paper or tagboard into 24" by 2" strips. Arrange the stars on the strips as shown with the larger star in the center. Give a headband to each child and talk about how the Wise Men followed the special star.

Prepare a Wise-Men puzzle for each child (see Patterns). Copy the picture onto blue construction paper and cover it with clear contact paper. Cut the finished picture into approximately six pieces. Put each puzzle into a Ziploc bag. Let the children put these together in class and then take them home to share with their families.

QUESTIONS

Who were the Wise Men who followed the star, and where did they come from? Why were these men called *wise*?

How would the Wise Men know about the King of the Jews and that it was a young child they were seeking and not a grown man?

Why did the Wise Men go to Jerusalem when Christ was born in Bethlehem?

Why did the Wise Men talk to King Herod? What did King Herod want the Wise Men to do?

What gifts did the Wise Men bring?

After the Wise Men had seen Jesus what did they do? Why?

King Herod also sought Jesus. Why couldn't he find Him?

Do you think it is wise to seek Jesus? What type of people seek Jesus today?

Christmas is a special holiday. What does the word *Christmas* mean? Do all the people who celebrate Christmas love and believe in Jesus?

What gifts can we give to Jesus?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Give each child a copy of the camel without legs (see Patterns). Let the children attach snap-on clothespins for legs. Have them pretend that these camels are the ones that carried the Wise Men as they followed the star.

Make a small coloring book for each child (see Patterns). Copy the pattern onto sheets of typing or copy-machine paper. Fold on the dotted lines so the title page is on the front. Provide crayons and let the children color the pictures as you tell the story.

Give each child a copy of the gift-star picture (see Patterns). Copy and cut the stars from yellow construction paper. Provide crayons so the children may color the picture. Impress upon the children that the special star shone just for Jesus on those nights so many years ago. It was God who made that star lead the Wise Men to Jesus.

REVIEW IDEAS

Talk about the gifts the Wise Men brought to show their love for Jesus. Then have the children do any of the following to show their love for Jesus: sing a song, say the memory verse, say the Lord's Prayer, show a heart that represents what we can give to Jesus, give a glass of water in Jesus' name, etc.

The wise men journeyed a long distance in search of the young Child. Ask your class to imagine some of the adventures the Wise Men must have had and what they thought they would see when they found Jesus. Have a group story about what might have happened on the long journey. Use a star-shaped beanbag (see Patterns) and a bell or timer to signal each person's turn. You start the story. When the timer rings, pass the star beanbag to the next person and let him continue the story as you reset the timer. Each person takes his turn from where the last person left off. When the star beanbag comes again to you, finish the story with a reemphasis of God's love.

Use children from your class to pantomime the actions of the Wise Men as they followed the star. Hang a large star from the ceiling. Have a few people walk by and wonder aloud about the star, or say it is pretty, but not really show much interest in it. Then the Wise Men see it and they know immediately what the star is for because they have been waiting and waiting for this event. Have them

prepare for the journey by wrapping the gifts they will take to the new King. Then they travel across the desert, enter the City of Jerusalem, talk to King Herod, again follow the star, and end their journey by finding the Christ Child.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

The Happiest Search — Arch Book, Concordia
 Clem the Clumsy Camel — Arch Book, Concordia
 Bethlehem's Brightest Star — Arch Book, Concordia
 Strange New Star — A Magic Picture Book, David C. Cook Publishing Company
 The Mysterious Star — J. Marxhausen, Concordia
 Andro, Star of Bethlehem — A Happy Day Book, Standard Publishing
 Secret of the Star — Arch Book, Concordia

COORDINATING SONGS

"We Three Kings"

"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, Leading Wise Men From Afar"

MEMORY VERSE SONG



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

