

God's Gift — Jesus

Lesson 28a — Angel to Mary and Joseph

Lesson 28b — Birth of Jesus

Lesson 28c — Shepherds Hear the Good News

Lesson 28d — Wise Men Visit Jesus

OVERVIEW

The Christmas story is one of the most beloved portions of the Bible, and also one which is familiar to most Primary children. During this month, we want to stress the great value of God's Gift to mankind — His own Son, Jesus. Weave the dramatic details of the events around an emphasis on this thought.

Throughout the month, we will trace the happenings of that first Christmas in step-by-step detail. Our first lesson begins the narrative by relating how the angel revealed to Mary and Joseph that God's own Son would be born to them. The second lesson tells how they journeyed to Bethlehem where the Christ Child was born in a humble stable.

Lessons three and four explore the way two entirely different types of people received the news of God's great Gift. The shepherds were filled with joy when the angelic choir announced in the sky above the Judean hills that a Savior had been born. Wise men from the East recognized the message of the special star, and followed its leading until they found the Child.

In many of our churches, this will be a busy month because of preparations for special Christmas programs. Class time should be focused on the theme that ties all of these lessons together — the wonder and great value of God's love for us, revealed through the gift of His Son.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS UNIT

Refer to Units 4 and 16 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

Enlarge the two nativity scene pictures (see Patterns) and use as a review aid. Several details are missing from the second picture: the star, the angel, etc. Ask the children to look carefully at the first picture. Then take it away and show them the second picture and have them list the things they notice that are missing. (If this is done as a departmental review, you may wish to make an overhead transparency of the two scenes and project them on the wall or screen for your group.) Have your group identify the missing parts and tell why they were important or what part they played in the story. Everyone who listed every missing item should receive a small prize.

Using simple silhouette shapes, make a cardboard cut-out of each figure in the nativity scene. (See Patterns

for shapes of stable, Mary, Joseph, manger, Baby, shepherds, angel, sheep, star, camel, wise men.) Hide the cardboard figures around your assembly area. At a given signal, allow your children to look for the figures. When they find one, they should return to their seat with the figure they located. Plan to have one shape per child, adjust the number by adding more sheep, angels, etc. When all of the shapes have been found, start reviewing the sequence of the four lessons. At the appropriate times, have the children bring up the shape they located and hold it up while you tell that part of the story.

Divide the children in your department into two teams. Using the Christmas riddles below (and others that you write) ask first one team and then the other to answer the riddles.

1. My message to Mary and Joseph was one
To let them both know God would soon send His Son.
Who am I?
2. I traveled so far, uphill and down,
Till my husband and I reached Bethlehem town.
Who am I?

3. The hillside was comfy, and I was asleep.
Then the voice of the angel woke me and my sheep.
Who am I?
4. My light shone bright
For wise men that night.
What am I?
5. The journey was long, but gifts we did bring
To give unto Jesus, the new Baby King.
Who are we?

CONTEST IDEAS

Make a large chart with a winding road leading to Bethlehem. Place markers along the way and the star and stable at the end of the road. Make a camel for each child to move along the road (see Patterns). Moves may be allowed for attendance, behavior, bringing a Bible, and learning the memory verse. Lesson-related questions may be asked toward the end to give a chance for those needing to catch up. The child with the first camel to arrive gets a prize.

Make a crown for each child. Emphasize the point that a King was born — Jesus. Let the children glue on stars and jewels for learning the memory verse, bringing their Bible, etc.

Create a nighttime sky with moon and a few stars on a portion of a wall in your room. Cut out a number of small angels, using white construction paper. Decorate the wings and halos with gold glitter. Use them as rewards for attendance, answering questions, etc. Put the child's name on each angel he earns and place it on the nighttime sky to make a heavenly host by the end of the unit. The child with the most angels wins a prize.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Before December, take a picture of each of your students. Cut out their faces and paste each over an angel face. Title your board CHRISTMAS JOY (see Patterns).

Cover your board with colored paper. Use the title, GOD'S GIFT — JESUS (see Patterns). Construction paper or wide ribbon may be used to make the ribbon and bow decoration. Place a nativity picture underneath the paper in the lower portion of the board where an opening has been cut that can be lifted up to reveal the picture.

Title your board, GIFTS FOR JESUS (see Patterns). For each student in your class, attach to the board one 8" x 10" sheet of paper which has been decorated to look like a gift package. Also, write the child's name on the "package" to indicate from whom the gift is. Ask the students to bring a picture (drawn or cut from a magazine) or write about something they would like to give Jesus. Let them attach it to the board underneath their "package" so others may look and see what they chose.

UNIT SONGS

- "Christmas Is the Time to Love" — Psalty's Christmas
- "Jingle, Jingle Happy Christmas Bells"
- "Bye-low My Baby"
- "Away in a Manger"
- "Stranger in the Straw" — from the musical
- "Loving Means Giving"
- "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" (leading wise men from afar)

UNIT PROJECT

Make a group wall hanging depicting the Christmas story as your unit project for this month. Purchase a large white bed sheet, and mark it off into a sufficient number of squares to allow one square for each child in your group plus a few extras for newcomers or visitors. Cut sheets of white paper the same size as the squares and give one to each child. Ask them to draw and color an illustration of one of the stories in the unit using special crayons for making iron-on designs. (It might be well to assign one fourth of your group to each lesson, so that each portion of the Christmas story is equally covered.) Be sure they write their name with the fabric crayon in one corner of their drawing. Prior to each Sunday, iron on the pictures that have to do with that week's lesson. You may wish to put border tape or trim between the various sections so the outlines are clearly defined. Display the hanging in your group assembly area, and point out the new pictures each week. At the end of the month you will have a colorful hanging which will last for years.

CHART IDEAS

Make a Christmas tree for each child (see Patterns). Each week let the children attach one or two small paper ornaments they have cut from colored paper.

Give the children some old Christmas cards from which to make ornaments. They may cut them into any shapes they wish. (You may want to provide cardboard shapes such as a bell, star, wreath, tree, for them to use as a stencil to trace around.) Let the children punch a hole at the top, string yarn through the hole, tie a knot and take them home to hang on their tree.

Help each student to make a small manger scene from construction paper (see Patterns). Fold background as indicated and attach the figures.

Help your students make winter place mats. Supply each of them with white, 8½" x 11" paper (typing, etc.). Have them fold the paper and cut out snowflakes. Let them glue their snowflakes onto construction paper (their choice of colors). Have them write a favorite Scripture on their mat with crayon or felt pen. Cover both the front and back of the place mat with clear contact paper. Trim excess.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. — Matthew 1:21

Angel to Mary and Joseph

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS — with right middle finger touch left palm, with left middle finger touch right palm

FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE — point around the room

FROM THEIR SINS — with cupped hands draw a cross in the air

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the large word "Jesus" surrounded by sections containing an angel and praying figure. (See pattern at end of lesson. This is a repeat of the memory verse pattern given for Lesson 4a). Assemble the puzzle piece by piece as the students learn each portion of the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Use the angel puzzle pattern described under Preschool Suggestions as your opener. (Or you could make a more complicated puzzle from any enlarged angel pattern previously given.) Spread the pieces out in front of your students and allow them to put the puzzle together. Explain that the completed puzzle will show who brought a special message to Mary and Joseph.

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 and obedient spirit.
4. After Mary was found with child, an angel appeared to Joseph. The angel 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: Students should be able to answer review questions concerning the announcement of the angel to Mary and Joseph. They should also be able to tell why Jesus was a special Child.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While it is rather unusual for angels to appear to mortals, God does use them as messengers occasionally. We have records of their having appeared to Abraham, Hagar, Lot, Balaam, Gideon, Daniel, and others. In all probability Mary had heard about the angel's foretelling that her elderly cousin would have a son. In any event, Mary does not seem to fear the angel as Zacharias did, but she was troubled at his salutation. Perhaps she wondered why she was blessed among women. The angel told her that she was the one the Lord had chosen to be the mother of Jesus. This was in fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, which foretold that a virgin would bear a son.

The willingness of Mary to accept the angelic announcement (Luke 1:38) was an indication of her devotion to God. Mary was engaged to Joseph and she undoubtedly was aware of the consequences of being found pregnant. She could be branded as an immoral woman and Joseph could legally divorce her. It was the custom of that day for the parents to arrange the marriage. For a period of a year the couple was engaged before they came together. This engagement was not to be broken unless one or the other proved to be unfaithful, and then it could be broken only by a legal divorce.

Since Mary left shortly after the angelic announcement, Joseph's knowledge of her condition may not have been until her return three months later. Joseph loved Mary, but he considered putting her away privately. Then an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to take Mary for his wife, as that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost. The Bible says Joseph was a just man and he proved his willingness to take Mary for his wife and endure whatever persecution might follow.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4a and 16a for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Make a paper-plate angel for each child (see Patterns). As they each hold their angel, ask them the various questions from the Teacher's Guide, about angels.

The children would probably enjoy making their own angel ornament to help remind them of the angel's visit to Mary and Joseph. Copy and cut out one angel for each student (see Patterns). Help them fold and tape (or staple) their angel. Stuff with tissue paper or shredded paper. Punch a hole in the top and tie together with yarn.

Use paper dolls to help tell this portion of the Christmas story (see Patterns).

Bring several props to illustrate ways we might receive a special message: a telegram, telephone, letter, newspaper. Talk about some dramatic ways people have chosen to deliver a message: sky writing, billboard, etc. Then tell your students that your lesson today is about the most exciting message ever received, and one that was delivered in the most exciting way.

QUESTIONS

How do you think Mary felt when the angel talked to her? How would you feel if an angel talked to you? Would you be afraid or excited?

How do you think Joseph felt when the angel talked to him?

How many people do you know who have seen angels?

What do you think an angel looks like?

Why do you think God chose Mary to take care of Baby Jesus?

Do you think Mary knew who Jesus was? Why?

Why did Jesus come to this earth? Why did He come as a poor baby instead of a rich king?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Popsicle stick figures can be used to act out the story (see Patterns).

Use paper-bag puppets to help you tell this story to the children (see Patterns).

Copy and cut out the angel puzzle for each of your students (see Patterns). Help them put their puzzles together in the frame to see who brought the special message to Mary and Joseph.

REVIEW IDEAS

Use three children to act as Mary, Joseph, and the Angel. (Narrate the story throughout the scenes.) First, have Mary sitting on a chair sewing or doing some handwork. Have the angel come into the room and Mary appear afraid. Both may then leave. (The scene changes to Joseph's house here.) Joseph is sleeping. The angel enters again. After the angel leaves, have Joseph sit up and rub his eyes as if just waking. He may then get up and leave, re-entering with Mary, as narrator concludes story with Joseph and Mary's getting married.

Choose the youngest girl teacher and have her come to the front of the room. Tell the children that God chose a young lady to be the mother of Jesus and compare the age of the young teacher and Mary. Have a large clean heart pinned or taped to the back of the young teacher ahead of time. Ask the children if they know why God chose Mary. Have her turn around and show them she had a clean heart and God was pleased with her. Mention that we want to have a clean heart so God can use us for something special too.

Tell of the angel's visit to Mary and Joseph by using patterns and illustrations from the Primary Pals and put together an overhead review. Make transparencies and overlays of the following:

Mary working — (overlays of Angel, Baby in thought balloon)

Joseph sleeping — (overlays of Angel, Mary in dream balloon, Baby in dream balloon)

Mary and Joseph together

COORDINATING SONGS

"All Night, All Day" — The Bill Gaither Trio for Kids

"Good News, Christmas Is Coming"

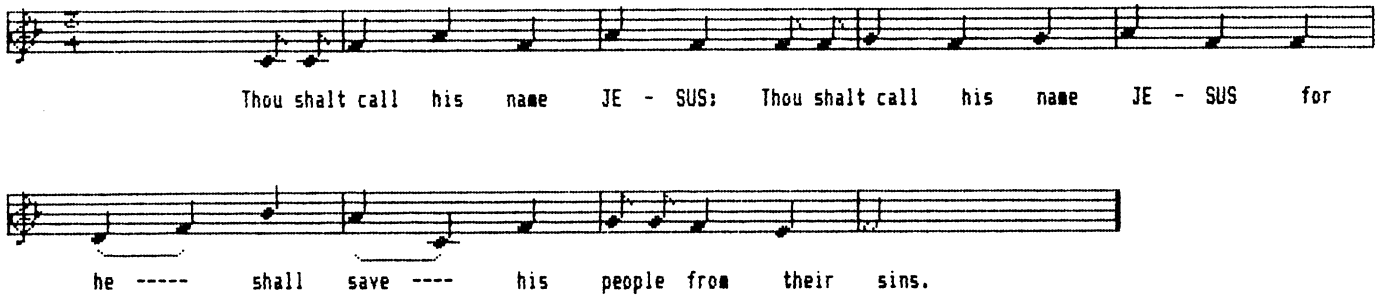
"It's Incredible" — The Bill Gaither Trio for Kids

SUPPORT MATERIAL

The Birth of Jesus — Elaine Iff, Thomas Nelson Publishing

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 100



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT Luke 2:1-7; John 3:16

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to recount the events that led up to, and the occasion of Jesus' birth. They will know that Jesus was God's greatest Gift to mankind.

MEMORY VERSE Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son. — I John 4:10

Birth of Jesus

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

HEREIN IS LOVE — Cross fists over heart.
 NOT THAT WE — Point to self and shake head no.
 LOVED — Cross fists over heart.
 GOD — Point up.
 BUT THAT HE — Drop hand to waist and point up again.
 LOVED — Cross fists over heart.
 US — Point to self and then to others.
 AND SENT HIS SON — Mimic rocking a baby in your arms.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

The visualization of this week's memory verse features a heart with rays descending to a Baby lying on the hay. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Cut apart the pieces as indicated by the heavy black lines, and display them one at a time as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Show your students a picture of a birthday celebration — either a family photograph or a magazine illustration. Ask them to tell you what they think is going on in the picture, and talk a little about birthdays. Then move into your lesson by reminding them that Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

1. Briefly review last Sunday's lesson, describing how the angel announced Jesus' birth to Mary and Joseph.
2. Describe the journey to Bethlehem and that it was necessary to obey the taxation law.
3. When Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem, they could find no place to stay except a stable.

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

Conclusion: Jesus' birth was a humble one, but it was the greatest event the world had ever known because it revealed the depth of God's love for mankind.

Response: Your students should be able to retell the story of Jesus' birth. They will be able to supply details such as where and why it took place in the way that it did.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

God knew of the need for a Redeemer from the very beginning and had a plan from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). This plan is first mentioned in the Old Testament in Genesis 3:15 where God says that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Later on we read that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through a descendant of Abraham. We are also told from which son of Abraham the Redeemer would come. The promise was reaffirmed to Jacob and then to the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). God promised David that He would establish his throne forever (II Samuel 7:16). This is also confirmed by the Spirit of God through the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1-5).

The Lord revealed through prophets other facts concerning Christ's birth. Isaiah spoke of a virgin bearing a Son whose name would be Immanuel. Daniel told the time of His appearing (Daniel 9:25). Micah 5:2 told where He would be born.

A Roman ruler had a part in Christ's fulfilling of Micah's prophecy. Caesar Augustus decreed that the world should be taxed and each taxpayer had to report to his own city. Joseph and Mary were of the lineage of David and had to go to Bethlehem to be taxed, thus bringing Micah's prophecy to pass.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4b and 16c for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Show the children pictures of different birthday celebrations. Have the children take turns telling about their birthdays. Use this as an opener to the fact that Christmas is Jesus' birthday. Stress that we receive gifts on our birthday but on Jesus' birthday He was the Gift to us.

Use a shoe box or box of similar size. Glue a picture of Baby Jesus to the inside bottom of the box so that it shows through the opening which you will cut in the

form of a cross. Title the picture, God's Greatest Gift. Wrap the box in Christmas paper and cut a cross into the top. Let the children look into the box through the cross cutout. Explain the contrast — an innocent Baby and the cross.

Bring several presents to class (one for each child to open and one for the teacher). Talk about God's Gift to us and open a box with the Baby in a manger picture or figures inside. Then show a picture of Jesus as an adult and tell how He grew to be our Savior. Have each child open his gift. Inside each gift, have a picture representing the different things we can give Jesus. Some suggestions: a clock to represent our time, a hand to represent doing for others, a smile, a church invitation, a map of the world to represent missionary work, a quarter, etc. Discuss the different things we give to Jesus as each gift is opened.

For each student, make a set of Joseph and Mary stand-up figures and the baby Jesus for Mary to hold (see Patterns). Cut on the heavy lines around Mary's arms and one hand. You may use these in telling the story and then the children can use them to retell the story when they go home.

QUESTIONS

What is a gift?

Tell about your favorite gift. How did you feel when you got it?

What is God's best Gift to the world?

How would you feel if you were the innkeeper and found out that Jesus was born in your stable?

The innkeeper didn't make any room for Jesus. Do all people make room for Jesus in their hearts and lives? If not, why not?

How do you think Mary felt when she saw her Baby Boy?

Have you ever seen a tiny baby who was just a few days old? What do you think Jesus looked like? Do you think He was different? How?

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

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Wrap up a pretty Christmas gift with a picture of Baby Jesus inside. Let all of the children help to open it. Talk about how God gave His Son Jesus to be born as a gift to us. That is why we have Christmas and give gifts to each other — to celebrate Jesus' birthday.

Prepare a lacing card of Baby Jesus for each of your students (see Patterns). Cut out and punch holes as indicated. Give each child a length of yarn and let them "sew" Baby Jesus' blanket.

Let the children make marshmallow birthday cakes for Jesus. Give each child a large marshmallow and one pretzel stick. Put the pretzel "candle" into the marshmallow "cake." Have the children sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

Take a doll wrapped in swaddling clothes and tell the nativity story and explain the swaddling clothes.

Cut one 3" x 5" (approx.) piece of felt for each of your students. Attach small pieces of Velcro to opposite sides of the felt so it can be closed around Baby Jesus. Purchase a tiny plastic baby doll for each child to wrap in the swaddling clothes.

REVIEW IDEAS

Talk about gifts God has given to us, using visual aids. Some examples could be: a globe — He gave us a beautiful world to live in; a Bible — He gave us the Bible to show us the way to Heaven; a picture of Baby Jesus — He sent His Son to be our Savior. Explain that this was God's greatest Gift.

Bring hay or straw and make a small manger. Have a small baby doll wrapped in cloth and ready to place in the hay. Tell about Joseph and Mary's journey and Jesus' first bed and how He was clothed. Show them what swaddling clothes are.

Have nine various Christmas pictures mounted on cardboard. On the back of each, write the letter the picture stands for. Talk about the picture to the children and have them guess what letter it stands for, then turn it over and put it up on the bulletin board. Go through all in scrambled order, then tell them to guess what it spells. Below are some ideas that can be used:

C — Christ Child
H — Heaven
R — Jesus (Redeemer)
I — Inn
S — Shepherds
T — Road to Bethlehem (travel)
M — Manger
A — Angels
S — Stable

COORDINATING SONGS

"Jesus Is His Name"

"Away in a Manger" — Songs of God and Me

"Oh Come, Little Children"

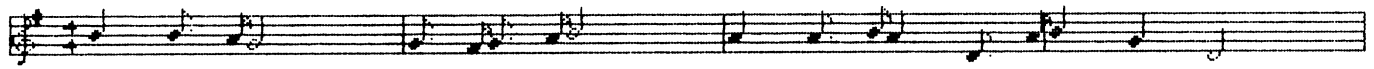
"Oh, Bethlehem" — 50 Songs for Boys and Girls of All Ages — Singspiration
"Baby Jesus" — 50 Songs for Boys and Girls of All Ages — Singspiration

SUPPORT MATERIAL

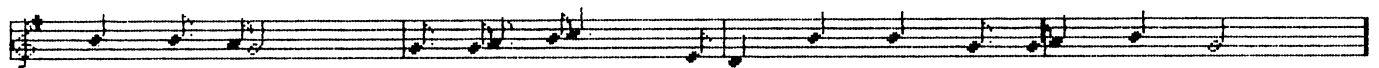
The Birth of Jesus — by Frances Todd Steward and Charles P. Steward III

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 90

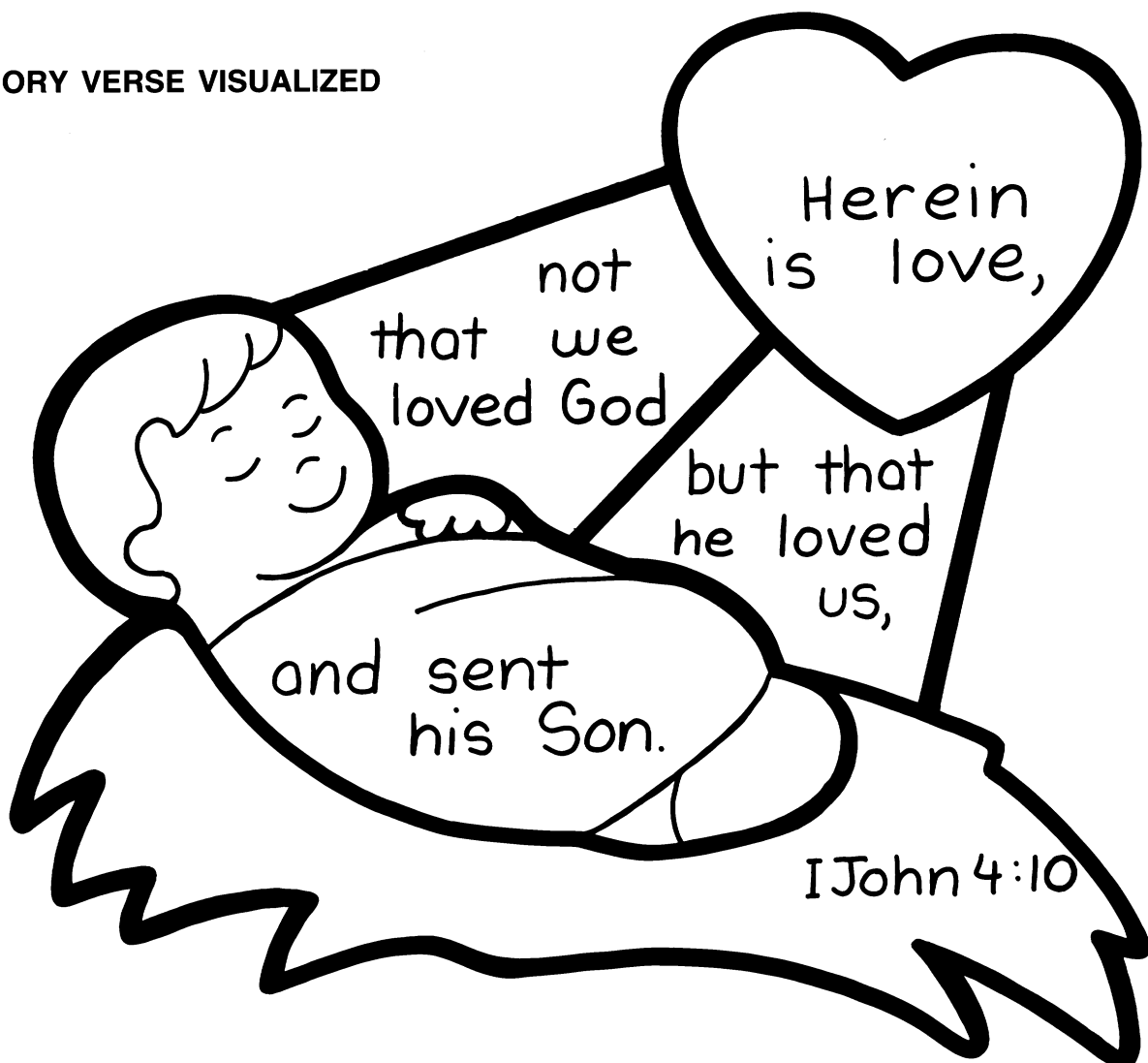


Here - in is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son.



Here - in is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT Luke 2:8-20

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to relate how the birth of Jesus was announced to the shepherds and that the news was received with joy.

MEMORY VERSE Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. — Luke 2:14

Shepherds Hear the Good News

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

GLORY — Extend left palm facing up, right finger tips touch left palm, raise right hand, wiggling fingers.

TO GOD — Point up.

IN THE HIGHEST — Extend arms straight up.

AND ON EARTH — Hold arms in a circle over head.

PEACE — Hold up two fingers (peace symbol).

GOOD WILL — Smile and pretend to shake hands with someone.

TOWARD MEN — Point to others.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Two singing angels, with clouds above and below, are the visual representation of this week's verse. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Cut the four pieces apart as indicated by the heavy black lines. Arrange the puzzle a piece at a time as your students recite each section of verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Give each of your students a shepherd or sheep finger puppet. (Pattern available with material for Lesson 4c.) Describe the usual things a shepherd did, and bring out that their job probably wasn't exciting. One night, however, a certain group of shepherds had something very exciting happen to them.

1. While the shepherds watched over their flocks, God chose a dramatic way in which to announce the birth of Jesus. An angel appeared in the sky and the glory of the Lord shone around them.
2. The shepherds were afraid, but the angel told them not to fear. He gave them the joyful news of the birth of the Savior.
3. A multitude of angels appeared in the sky, praising God.

Climax: The shepherds believed the message and hurried to Bethlehem to see the Christ Child.

Conclusion: The shepherds were full of joy at their great privilege, and told others of what they had seen and heard.

Response: Your students will be able to explain the

good news brought by the angels and tell how the shepherds responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It may seem strange to some that God would send the announcement of Jesus' birth to a group of shepherds. But as we study the Old Testament we find that many of the people God used were shepherds. The first shepherd of which we have a record was Abel whom Jesus mentioned as being righteous. Abraham, who was called the "friend of God," was also a shepherd. The Lord said to David, "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following sheep, to be ruler of my people, over Israel." Moses spent many years tending sheep in the land of Midian. Moses, Abraham, and David all prophesied of the One who was to come, who would be a prophet, ruler, and a blessing to all nations. But Jesus said of Himself, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

We have no record before or after this account concerning the shepherds. We can be sure they were righteous men as they did not doubt the angelic message, but hurried into Bethlehem to find the newborn Baby. And after finding the Christ Child they praised and glorified God and made known abroad the message the angels gave them.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4c and 16b for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Make woolly sheep to distribute during class time. Use a 2" x 1" piece of fluffy cotton and one white pipe cleaner for each. Make the body of the sheep from the cotton and cut the pipe cleaner in half for the legs. Twist one piece of pipe cleaner around the cotton about $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the end to form a head and front feet. Twist the second piece of pipe cleaner around the cotton about $\frac{1}{4}$ " from opposite end to form tail and back legs. Pinch a bit of cotton at each side of the head to form ears.

Roll between fingers a little cotton from body to form a tail.

Put many angel stickers on the inside of a shoe box. Tape the shoe box and lid together. Cut a hole in one end and in the bottom cut a larger hole into which you can fit the bulb end of a flashlight. Let the children look through the small hole in the end of the box and see how black the night could have been. Then turn on the flashlight and let them look in. Tell how dark it must have been on the hillside except for the moon and stars and perhaps a campfire. Then how exciting it was for the sky to light up with a host of angels and hear them fill up the quiet of the night with singing and praising God!

Invite a guest, dressed as a shepherd, to come to your class. Introduce him to your students as one of the shepherds who was on the Judean hills the night the angels appeared. Let your class interview him about what happened that night and his feelings and emotions.

Give each student a copy of the Touch-and-Feel nativity scene (see Patterns). Supply the necessary materials needed for the children to finish their scene (glue, scissors, and material listed on the handout).

A class of little girls will enjoy making this host of angels. Prepare a felt angel puppet (see Patterns) for each child. For each angel cut the face from pink or tan felt, the wings from yellow, and the robe from a pastel color. Sew or glue the pieces together. Attach the angel to a tube-shaped mitten to create a puppet. Sew several pieces of long, thick yarn to the top of the angel's head. Let the children style the yarn hair (pony tails, braids, etc.). Have ribbons ready for them to use on their finished hairdos. When they all put the puppets on their hands and hold them up, the "sky" will be filled with angels.

Give each of the children their own paper-plate tambourine to accompany the heavenly choir when it is time to sing. To make them, invert two paper plates and draw designs using colored markers. Use a paper punch to punch holes at intervals around the rim of each plate. (Be sure the holes of one plate match the other plate!) Lay one plate right side up on a table and put a handful of small pebbles, rice, or beans in the plate. Invert the other plate and place it on top of the first plate. Line up the holes and use yarn to tie the plates together. Let the ends of the yarn dangle free. You may want to glue or staple the edges of the plates together to make sure whatever you have put inside does not fall out. Hint: You can also use styrofoam plates, or disposable aluminum pie plates. If styrofoam plates are used, the children will need permanent colored markers to draw their designs.

QUESTIONS

What does a shepherd do?

Why do you think the angels told the poor shepherds about Jesus' birth?

What was the sign that the angels told the shepherds to look for so they would know it was Jesus?

Do you think the shepherds had been waiting for Jesus to come? Why did they believe the angels?

After the shepherds saw Jesus, what did they do? How can we tell people about Jesus?

Where did the angels find the shepherds?

What did the angels tell them?

Should we tell others about Jesus? Why?

Do you think the shepherds would have felt comfortable visiting Jesus if He had been born in a palace as most kings are?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Bring a toy lamb to use as an opener for a discussion about what it must have been like for a shepherd boy up there on the hillside that night.

Make paper sheep on which the children may glue cotton balls (see Patterns).

Talk about where Jesus was born and about the animals that might have been at the manger when the shepherds came to visit. Show pictures of sheep and other animals.

Use a fuzzy felt Bible Story Box (available at Bible book stores). Cut the additional figures needed from felt available at fabric and craft stores.

REVIEW IDEAS

Turn off the lights. Have a spotlight previously set up. Have an adult come in dressed up as an angel (turn on spotlight) and have the narrator tell how it must have been that night so long ago out on a dark hillside when an angel and bright light appeared with the good news. Then the sky was filled with bright shining angels — point to adult angel. Make sure your angel has lots of tinsel and well-glittered wings to shine in the spotlight. Play a tape or record of the song, "Angels We Have Heard on High."

Use a Christmas tree-top angel, stuffed lamb, and crown. Discuss (using objects) how God did not choose

to announce Jesus' birth first to kings and royalty (show crown). He had the angels (show angel) take the message to shepherds out on the hillside keeping their sheep (show sheep). God sent Jesus to be the Savior for all people.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Go Tell It on the Mountain" — Songs of God and Me
 "Silent Night" — Songs of God and Me
 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Use a large nativity scene and sandbox. Be very descriptive in telling the story.

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 100



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED



TEXT Matthew 2:1-12

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to tell of the wise men's journey as they followed the special star in search of the King — Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. — Matthew 2:10

Wise Men Visit Jesus

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

WHEN THEY SAW — Hold cupped hands around eyes.

THE STAR — Both hands up at sides of face, all finger tips touching thumb, open and close hands quickly.

THEY REJOICED — Palms toward body, make circles away from body with a bubbling motion.

WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY — Clap hands.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the star with words to the memory verse printed in the descending rays. (See pattern at end of the lesson. This is a repeat of the memory verse pattern for Lesson 4d.) Begin by putting up the star and then adding the rays in the proper order as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Bring a number of small star stickers and pass them out to your children. Then bring out a large star such as might go on the top of a Christmas tree. (Or you could use one you have made from gold foil, glitter, etc.) Explain to your students that today your story is about a very special star.

1. Explain that the wise men were important and powerful in their own land faraway in the East.
2. They saw the star, realized its importance, and purposed to follow it.
3. They came to Jerusalem, looking for the Christ Child, and there met King Herod.
4. They were rewarded for their persistence and faith when the star led them to the Child they sought.

Climax: The wise men worshipped the Child and offered the gifts they had brought.

Conclusion: God led and directed the wise men through the miraculous guidance of the star.

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 term “wise men” in Bible times applied to those who had spent much of their time learning the wisdom

of the day. Kings and potentates had wise men for advisors. Unfortunately, this class of people included astrologers (those who claim the position of the stars and planets foretell the future), soothsayers, magicians, and diviners. In the Bible, we first read about them when Pharaoh had a dream and called for his magicians and wise men. In Daniel we read that King Nebuchadnezzar called for the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to interpret his dream. Belshazzar called for astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers to interpret the writing on the wall. Of course, none of these so-called “wise men” could make any interpretation. Joseph was called in to interpret Pharaoh's dream and he told Pharaoh that God would give him the answer. Daniel was called in to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream and he bluntly told the king that the wise men, astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers could not show the king the dream, but God could. Daniel was also able to read the handwriting on the wall because he was truly a wise man and served the living God.

It is certainly apparent that the wise men who came to see Jesus were more than pretenders. In some way God had revealed to them that the King of the Jews was born. The revelation must have made a deep impression to cause these wise men to travel all that distance and bring gifts to a Baby they probably never saw again in their lifetime.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4d and 16d for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Discuss how the wise men brought beautiful gifts to Jesus. Show pictures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Tell the children that God wants our best. Cut a heart into several pieces and let them help you put it together to see what is the best thing we can give to Jesus.

Bring an empty gift-wrapped box to class in which you have cut a slit so slips of paper can be inserted. Give the children paper on which to write or draw what they would like to give to Jesus. Encourage them to think

about their own personal lives and to give something no one else could give. Place these slips in the box as gifts.

As you tell the story of the sweet-smelling gifts that the wise men brought to Jesus, help your students make their own sweet-smelling gifts to give. Fruit pomanders can be made with apples, oranges, or limes. You will need one fruit for each child. Prick the fruit's skin with a fork. Instruct the children to insert one whole clove into each hole. The fruit should be completely covered with cloves, then wrapped in nylon net (about an 8" square for each fruit). Secure the ends of the net with a ribbon. Tell the children to place their pomander on a saucer or small bowl and let it cure in a cool, dry place for about four days. Then it may be given to the person of their choice.

Help your students make soap sachets for gifts. Give them small bars of soap and some Christmas print fabrics in which to wrap the soap. Secure the ends with craft glue and trim with 1/4" ribbon to resemble tiny packages.

QUESTIONS

What do you think the wise men looked like?

What gifts did they bring?

How do you think the wise men heard about Jesus' birth?

What does *worship* mean?

How do we worship Jesus?

How did the star show the wise men where Jesus was?

How does God lead us?

What treasures or gifts can we give Jesus?

What would Jesus like for you to give Him that would be even better than all the treasures in the world?

PRESCHOOL IDEAS

Cut out several stars and cover them with foil or glitter. Give them to the children to hold up while you tell the story.

Make wise men envelope puppets for each child (see Patterns). Seal the legal-size envelopes and cut off one end of each. Cut out armholes for fingers to go through.

Decorate to look like wise men (each one different). Let the children help their wise men follow the star to find Baby Jesus.

Bake star-shaped cookies for the children to enjoy while listening to the story.

Let your little ones do the dot-to-dot star (see Patterns) as you talk about the special star the wise men followed.

REVIEW IDEAS

Show a large star and a Bible. Talk about how the wise men followed the star — it was their guide. Every night they checked to see where it was. The Bible is our guide. When the children learn their memory verse and do what it says they are letting God's Word be their guide.

Bring three gifts:

- bag of chocolate pieces covered with foil
- two large bottles of perfume — various shapes
- heart-shaped box with picture of Jesus inside

Talk about the gifts the wise men brought as you unwrap the gifts or have a child unwrap them. Save the heart-shaped box until last. As it is opened, tell them that each of them have a heart that they can give to Jesus.

Dress in a wise man costume. Fill a suitcase with things possibly needed for the journey to find the Christ Child. As you pull the items out of the suitcase, have the children name them. Discuss why they might have been needed. Examples: Best clothes — going to visit a King; Crown — to prove their royalty; Large handkerchief — to wipe brow in heat; Camel (toy, carved, or picture) — for transportation; Bucket — to give camel water; Gift — for Christ Child; Money — for food and lodging on journey. Have a large Christmas tree star hung nearby and have someone plug it in after you are through talking about gifts. Quickly put all the items back into your travel bag and say, "See, there's His star! I must be going!"

COORDINATING SONGS

"We Three Kings"

"Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (leading wise men from afar)"

"Father, I Adore You" — Songs of God and Me

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Early Readers, Level 1, Book 1 — Lavaun Lindi

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 100

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. When they saw the

star, they re-joiced. joiced.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the verse, with lyrics 'When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. When they saw the'. The second staff contains the melody for the second line, with lyrics 'star, they re-joiced. joiced.'. There are first and second endings marked above the second staff.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

