

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.