

GOD'S GIFT

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

BIRTH OF JESUS

CHRISTMAS

MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS

SALVATION

GOD'S LOVE

FAITH IN GOD

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Luke 2:1-7; John 3:16

MEMORY VERSE

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV*).

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help children learn and be able to explain the true meaning of Christmas as the celebration of Jesus' birth.

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The Emperor Counts the People!

Just before Jesus was to be born, Emperor Caesar Augustus ordered a census of the entire Roman Empire.

Everyone was required to go to the city of their birth, where they were to register and pay their taxes. Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David. For this reason, Joseph was to return to Bethlehem. It was a three-day journey from Nazareth.

This was a very difficult journey for this young couple. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the birth of Jesus. God told His people that it would happen this way in the Old Testament book of Micah. Micah was a prophet of God who lived many years before Jesus was born. God told Micah how it would happen that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem!

Mary and Joseph looked for a place to stay but all the inns were full. However, some inns at that time had stables to provide shelter for the travelers' animals. These were sometimes cold and dark, but it was there that God showed his immense mercy to mankind by the birth of his Son, Jesus. Mary wrapped the baby in cloth and laid him in a manger; there lay God's greatest Gift for all, his Son, Jesus!

John 3:16 is considered the golden verse of the Bible and the heart of the gospel. It shows the gift God gave in all its splendor. He gave us his Son to give us eternal life!

ADAPTATION

It is possible that your children do not understand that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth. This date should be one of the most important dates for children, but sometimes, for wrong reasons, this is not the case. Receiving gifts and social celebrations become a priority for many people.

Christmas should be the most important celebration of the year. We celebrate the best gift ever given. God gave his Son! Help your children discover in Jesus the best gift of all!

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Write on the chalkboard: "What does your family do to celebrate Christmas?" Invite them to tell about the religious celebrations they have experienced in their family, such as going to church or reading the story of Jesus' birth in the Bible. Ask them how they imagine Christmas. After hearing the answers, tell them that God sent his Son as the most precious gift to be our Savior, and that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

TEACH THE LESSON

Prior to the session carefully study Luke 2:1-7 and John 3:16. Be prepared to tell the story in your own words.

Tell your children the context of the story. Tell them about the journey that Joseph and Mary made to get to Bethlehem, and the problems they faced in order to get a place to stay. It is important that they understand that the birth of Jesus occurred in the midst of special and unexpected circumstances. He received no honors or attention as the king of the earth, but on the contrary, he came to the world in a humble way to show he was a servant.

To visualize the history of this day, you can use some illustrative teaching material if you have it. If not, consider making some yourself or buying some pictures used in traditional Christmas packets (there are some inexpensive ones) to represent the characters in the story (Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, and the angel). Take advantage of all the resources that you can find.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Nativity scene

Give your children Student Activity Sheet #155 plus scissors, and glue or tape. Begin by having your children cut out the stable and the pictures at the bottom of the worksheet along the solid black lines. Then fold along the dotted lines under the stable; starting at the bottom, fold forward, then backward and repeat. This should create folds or channels where your children can glue or tape into place the figures of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the animals. (If you wish, you can attach cardboard to the back of the stable to make it sturdier.)

When they have finished, have them practice telling a friend in the class the story of Christmas. Encourage them to take their nativity scenes home and share the story with their friends and family.

What can I give?

Consider bringing a wrapped box as a prop to focus students during the discussion. Talk to your children about the gift of giving. Say: "It is fun to give and receive gifts." Then ask: "How do you feel when you give a gift to someone?" (Let your children comment.) Then ask: "Is it true that when we give someone a gift, it is fun to see their face when they receive it and open it?" (allow some responses) Then say: "We have talked about giving gifts to others in the last two lessons."

Ask: "What has been the best gift that was ever given?" (When God gave us his Son, Jesus.) Remind them: "That is why we celebrate Christmas."

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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If you have a chalkboard or white board available, write the verse out on the board. Have the class read the verse five times together. Erase one word and have them read it again. Keep erasing words or phrases until they can recite the verse John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

First read it together and then read it out loud. Ask the children the following questions (they should answer keeping their Bibles closed):

Who did God love? (The world.)

According to the memory verse, who did God give? (His one and only son.)

Why did God send his Son? (Because he loves us.)

What happens to those who believe in the Son of God? (They have everlasting life.)

What is the name of God's Son? (Jesus.)

WRAP-UP

Pray

Use this opportunity to teach children a structure for their prayer life. An English acronym is PRAY, and it might be useful in many settings. Consider how to best include the elements of praise, repentance, asking and yielding in your context.

P = Praise – Thank God for His wonderful gift of His Son, Jesus.

R = Repent – Ask God to forgive your sins (when you have acted in a way that doesn't please God.)

A – Ask God to help you live a life pleasing to Him and ask for requests/needs that you know about, and finally,

Y = Yield – Pray for God's will to be done, even if it is not what you think should happen. Ask the children to share their requests and pray with them modelling the structure you have taught them.

Encourage

Encourage children to practice praying this way this week and to always be thankful for Jesus. Each Sunday, the celebration of Christmas is closer, and it is a good time to prepare the hearts of your children to give others the gift of love that God gave through his Son, Jesus.

Invite

Invite children to keep track of how their prayers went this week, what answers they saw, and if they feel closer to God. Tell them you hope to see them again in the next session. Also, encourage them to invite their friends.