

## ***Interactive Nativity Set: Playing Out the Christmas Story***

**Week One: Put Mary and an Angel on the table. Read Luke 1:26-33.**

<sup>26</sup> When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup> She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. <sup>31</sup> Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. <sup>33</sup> He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

**Wonder together:** How might Mary have felt when she heard the angel's news? Do you think she was excited? Scared? Overwhelmed?

Do you ever feel like God is telling you to do something, or has a plan for your life? How does that make you feel? Can you share something you feel God is calling you to do?

How do you feel about Christmas right now? Excited? Scared? Overwhelmed?

**Listen to or sing together:** Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

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**Week 2: Add Joseph to the table. Read Matthew 1:18-24.**

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. <sup>20</sup> As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

<sup>23</sup> *Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
And they will call him, Emmanuel.  
(Emmanuel means "God with us.")*

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife.

**Wonder together:** Joseph has a dream that helps him know what to do. Have you ever had a dream (either asleep or a daydream) that helped you know what to do or something you want?

Joseph marries Mary even though other people around him might disapprove. Have you ever done the right thing even when other people might make fun of you for it?

What does it mean to you that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us? Do you feel God with you? When?

**Listen to or sing together:** O Come, O Come Emmanuel

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**Week 3: Add the stable, donkeys, sheep and shepherds. Let your family know that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to have their baby. Read Luke 2:8-20.**

<sup>8</sup> Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. <sup>9</sup> The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

<sup>10</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. <sup>11</sup> Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

<sup>15</sup> When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." <sup>16</sup> They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. <sup>18</sup> Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

**Wonder together:** why do you think the shepherds were the first people told about baby Jesus? Does that surprise you or not?

The angels share words of peace with the shepherds. Do you feel like Christmas helps you be peaceful? How can you find God's peace when you are very busy?

The shepherds tell everyone they know about this amazing new baby. Have you ever told someone about Jesus when you weren't in church? Why or why not?

**Listen to or sing together:** Hark the Herald Angels Sing

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**Week 4: Add the wise men and camels. Read Matthew 2:1-12.**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. <sup>4</sup> He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
because from you will come one who governs,  
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." <sup>9</sup> When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

**Wonder together:** The magi, or wise men, travel a long way to see Jesus. What's the biggest sacrifice you've ever made for your faith?

Herod doesn't want Jesus around because he is afraid he will have to give up his own power. What is something that makes you feel powerful or comfortable that you might need to give up in order to fully welcome Jesus into your heart?

The wise men give gifts to Jesus. If you could get one gift for Jesus this Christmas, what would it be?

**Listen to or sing together:** We Three Kings of Orient Are

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**Christmas Eve: Add the manger and Jesus! Read Luke 2:1-7.**

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. <sup>2</sup> This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. <sup>3</sup> Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. <sup>4</sup> Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. <sup>5</sup> He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

**Wonder together:** what do you think Mary and Joseph felt on the very first Christmas? How do you feel tonight?

**Listen to or sing together:** Silent Night, Holy Night