



SESSION **2**

Christmas



MEETING AIM

To explore the biblical Christmas narrative and celebrate this story.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2



BACKGROUND

This is without a doubt the most well-known and widely celebrated story of the Bible. It is the most wonderful cause for celebration at Christmas time, but so often overlooked, mis-told or ignored. This session will give children the chance to revisit the narrative in a fresh way, and celebrate the birth of God's son on Earth.

+ CIRCLE TIME



As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and ask them about their nativity play memories. Which parts did they play? Which parts did they wish they could have played but missed out on? Any funny stories or memories? Perhaps the leaders of the group could bring along some of their own nativity play photographs from their childhood to share with the group and share their own memories.

+ CAROL-SINGING BATTLE



Arrange the children in two or more teams and place an adult with each team (you will also need a referee). Give each team a few minutes to think of as many Christmas carols as they can. The first team starts singing a few lines from their first carol. The second team then responds with a different carol. Teams take turns to sing a few lines, each from a different carol, until one team has run out of ideas. There can be no duplication of carols or hesitation. Depending upon the group, you will need to decide whether to allow Christmas songs as well or just pure carols!

Explain that we are going to be thinking about the Christmas story and getting beneath the surface of a lot of the ideas we have about what may have happened, to look at the Bible text itself.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: Bibles; nativity costumes; camera; photo-consent form (if appropriate)

Arrange the children in small groups. Give each group a portion of the Christmas story narrative, taken from the Bible texts below.

- Luke 1:26-38 (Gabriel visits Mary)
- Matthew 1:18-25 (An angel speaks to Joseph in a dream)
- Luke 2:1-7 (Jesus is born in Bethlehem)
- Luke 2:8-15 (Angels visit the shepherds)
- Luke 2:16-20 (Shepherds visit Jesus)
- Matthew 2:1-8 (Magi search for Jesus)
- Matthew 2:9-12 (Magi visit Jesus)
- Matthew 2:13-15 (Escape to Egypt)

Depending on your group (their biblical understanding and prior knowledge), you may also wish to add extra elements from the Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2.

Provide these extracts as printouts to make it easier for the children to access, using a translation familiar to your group. Ask the children to read the texts, with adult support as appropriate, and use the assorted costumes and props to create a freeze frame image based on the extract given. Encourage the children to look only at the texts given, and to ensure that the scene they create is based on that evidence alone, rather than any preconceived ideas about what the nativity story looks like.

When they have had time to read and research their scene, plan and create an appropriate freeze frame, photograph the group in their positions. (For smaller groups, you may need to give each small group a few of the scenes to recreate.) Upload all the images to a laptop and display them in the correct order, for all the children to see. Together with the children, briefly retell the story together.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of this story?
- What surprises you about the story?
- Do you think there is anything missing from the story?
- Which characters in the story interest you the most?
- How would you expect God's son to be born on Earth?
- Is there anything you want to ask God about the story?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: assorted craft materials eg small boxes, peg dolls, fabric, assorted collage

materials, glue, scissors, Christmas cards, Lego; a few different examples of a nativity scene; Bibles

Show the children a selection of different nativity scenes and talk about how these compare to the storytelling you have just completed together.

Provide a large selection of craft materials for your group, depending on their interests and preferences. Invite the children to each create a small nativity scene from the various materials to take home with them. They should be given a free choice about how to complete their scene but encourage them to think about what to include, by looking back at the Bible texts or talking about the story you explored earlier.

Allow plenty of time for your children to complete these well, and to take them away with them at the end of the session. Encourage the group to think about where they will display them at home, as a reminder to keep Jesus and the story of the nativity at the centre of their Christmas celebrations. Jesus' birth is not a distraction from the celebrations, he's the reason for it!

+ PRAYER



You will need: gift tags; pens; Christmas tree (optional)

Ask the children to think about what gift they would give to Jesus, to celebrate his birth on Earth or his birthday. Remind the group that each of us has within us something that we can give to Jesus; our love, our unique personalities and the gifts and talents that God has given to us.

Invite the children to write their prayers on the gift tags, giving back to Jesus words of thanks or celebration of the Christmas story, or words of promise to use the gifts the children have for God's kingdom. Invite the children to hang their gift tags up, perhaps on a Christmas tree and pray for the whole group and the prayers that they have written.

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