



Popular Gospel Stories

Christmas "Presence"

Luke 2:1-20

1. Collect materials you need for this activity:

- Bible
- A pen and scroll of paper tied with Christmas ribbon—wrap as a gift and write Gift #1 on the tag
- A ring (any inexpensive ring will do)—wrap as a gift and write Gift #2 on the tag
- A baby blanket, or cloth, even an old towel or sheet—wrap as a gift and write Gift #3 on the tag
- A candle with matches—wrap as a gift and write Gift #4 on the tag
- A harmonica, simple child's flute or recorder, hand bells, or other small instrument, or a Christmas songbook or cassette tape of Christmas songs—wrap as a gift and write Gift #5 on the tag.

2. Gather with the family preferably around the family creche or the Christmas tree. Arrange the gifts. Assign each family member a number between one and five. Instruct the family to listen very closely to the Christmas story you are going to read.

3. Read from the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20:

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to

leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lords, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:

"Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God!"

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. Everyone listened and was surprised. But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant.

As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about him. Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said.

4. **Activity:** Announce that each of the gifts labeled 1-5 represent something in the Christmas story. The family will unwrap each gift, one at a time, and try to determine what part of the Christmas story the gift represents. Beginning with Gift #1, have the family member assigned to that number open the gift. Allow everyone to guess what part of the story the gift relates to, then read the verses as outlined below. Continue through all of the gifts.

- ▶ Gift One: scroll and pen representing the census (verses 1-4)
- ▶ Gift Two: a ring representing Mary's engagement to Joseph (verse 5)

- ▶ Gift Three: a baby blanket, towel or cloth representing the cloth in which Mary wrapped Jesus (verses 6-7)
- ▶ Gift Four: a candle and matches (light the candle) representing the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds (verses 8-12)
- ▶ Gift Five: musical instrument, songbook or cassette tape representing the songs of praise the angels sang, and the praises of the shepherds (verses 13-20)

5. After you have opened all of the gifts and read the verses related to them, talk about these questions:

- ◆ What do you think the place where Jesus was born was like?
- ◆ How do you think you would have reacted if you were one of the shepherds who saw the angels suddenly appear?
- ◆ Christmas is about presents, but more importantly it is about "presence." Whose presence?
- ◆ How is Jesus present to you every day of the year?
- ◆ How can you be the presence of Jesus to others?

