

Advent Lessons: Teaching through the Nativity

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This idea is one to be spread over several weeks leading up to Christmas. Each part could be expanded into a full lesson or simplified to be done each Sunday in addition to a planned lesson. If you structure your children's programming with a main session followed by age-segmented small groups, then perhaps this could serve as the main session activity during the month of December. This article includes dates to be used for this year ([Advent Dates 2018](#)), but can be modified to apply to future years.



Text: A variety of passages all taken from the accounts of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke

Lesson Objective: The children will learn the story of Jesus' birth chronologically through the reading of Scripture.

Target Age: Pre K-5th grade (can be modified for all ages)

- Pre K-K may need a separate coloring page for each part of the story.
- 4th and 5th may not want to do the coloring page. Instead they could leave for a longer break out small group session or create an alternative activity for them

Time Needed: 15-20 minutes for each part. The first and fourth week will be longer than the second and third.

Materials Needed:

- One nativity display with stable, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, an angel, shepherds, and three wise men
- Optional: Use our [nativity scene coloring page](#) & crayons. You could also get inspiration from these [photographs](#).

Week One (December 2nd): Introduction and Mary

1. "What is a nativity?" Take input from the children.
2. "A nativity is a display that shows the birth of Jesus. Sometimes it is called a crèche."
3. "Who do you usually see in a nativity scene?" Take input from the children.
4. "We see Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, shepherds, the wise men, angels, and sometimes some animals, too."

5. "This month as we are looking ahead to Christmas we will be using a nativity scene to learn about the story of Jesus' birth."
6. Set up the empty stable of your display. "This is a stable. Why would I be putting up a stable?" Take input from the children.
7. "Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room for him to be born in the inn. This stable is what we will use in the coming weeks to tell the story of Jesus. Make sure you bring your bible with you every week, so you can follow along with us as we read about Jesus' birth together."
8. "Today we are going to add our first person to the stable." Hold up Mary for the children to see.
9. "Who is this?" Mary. Choose a child to come up and place Mary in the stable.
10. "Open your bibles to Luke 1:26. We are going to read verses 26-38 together."
11. Read aloud the verses.
12. "What did God ask Mary to do?" Take input from the children.
13. "God chose Mary to carry and give birth to Jesus. He chose Mary to be Jesus' mother."
14. "Did Mary gladly agree? Did she have a good attitude?" Yes because she was a girl who loved God.
15. Pass out coloring pages and crayons. Have the children color just the stable and Mary for today.
16. When the children finish with their coloring, collect their pages so they can be used again in the coming weeks.

Week Two (December 9th) Joseph and Jesus:

1. Set up the stable and Mary as you review with the children what they learned from last week about these two parts of the nativity scene.
2. Hold up Joseph. "Who is this?" Joseph. Choose a child to come up to place Joseph in the nativity scene beside Mary.
3. "Open your bibles to Matthew 1:19. We are going to read verses 19-24 together."
4. Read aloud the verses.
5. "What did God ask Joseph to do?" Take Mary as his wife even though she was with child.
6. "Did Joseph do what God told him to do?" Yes, he took Mary as his wife.
7. Hold up baby Jesus. "Who is this?" Jesus! Choose a child to come up and place Jesus in the nativity scene.
8. "Now let's read Matthew 1:25 together." Read aloud chorally with all children reading out loud with you.
9. "Also turn to Luke 2:6-7." Read aloud these verses to the children.
10. "Who was born in the stable?" Jesus.
11. Pass out the coloring pages and crayons. Have the children color just Joseph and baby Jesus.
12. When the children finish with their coloring, collect their pages so they can be used again in the coming weeks.

Week Three (December 16th) Shepherds and Angels:

1. Set up the stable, Mary, Joseph and Jesus as you review with the children what they learned from the two previous weeks.
2. Hold up the shepherd. "Who is this?" A shepherd. Choose a child to come up to place the shepherd in the nativity scene.
3. "Why would there be a shepherd in the nativity scene?" Take input from the children.
4. "Let's see what the bible says in Luke 2:8-16." Read aloud the passage.
5. "So, why were there shepherds in the nativity scene?" Take input from the children.
6. "The angels had told them about Jesus being born and they wanted to see him with their own eyes."
7. "Thinking about the passage we just read, who else do you think belongs in the nativity scene?" An angel. Choose a child to come up and place the angel in the nativity scene.
8. "Angels are very important in the story of Jesus' birth because God used angels to bring the news that Jesus was coming. Mary was visited by an angel, Joseph was visited by an angel, the shepherds were visited by an angel, and then a whole host of angels appeared before the shepherds."
9. Pass out the coloring pages and crayons. Have the children color the shepherd and the angel.
10. When the children finish with their coloring, collect their pages so they can be used again next week.

Week Four (December 23rd) The Wise Men and Closing:

1. Set up the stable, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the shepherd, and the angel as you review with the children what they learned from the three previous weeks.
2. "As we finished up our nativity lesson last week you may have thought we were still missing some important people. Who was missing?" The wise men.
3. "With Christmas happening yesterday, we did not finish the nativity scene in time for Christmas day. But, did you know the wise men were not there the night Jesus was born? Instead they came a while after when Mary, Joseph and Jesus were no longer in the stable at the manger."
4. "We usually include them in the nativity scene because they are an important part of the story of Jesus' birth." Choose three children to come up and place the three wise men in the nativity scene.
5. "Turn in your bibles to Matthew 2:1-12." Read aloud this passage.
6. "What led the wise men to Jesus?" A star.
7. "Why was King Herod upset about the wise men coming to see Jesus?" He did not like the idea of Jesus being the King of the Jews because it meant he (Herod) might no longer get to be king.
8. "What gifts did the wise men bring to Jesus?" Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.
9. Pass out the coloring pages and crayons. Have the children color the wise men and any remaining uncolored parts.
10. Using the finished nativity scene, briefly retell the story of Jesus' birth.

11. The children can then find a partner and retell the story of Jesus' birth to each other using their colored pictures.

Need More Ideas? Browse our [free advent coloring pages](#) or explore all our free [Christmas lesson plans](#).