

Lessons for the Leader

Have you ever heard people reminisce about how they walked barefoot through the snow to get to school, just to make you appreciate the luxuries of your life? Does knowing this make us celebrate what we have more or wonder what it was like to have less?

- Read Luke 2:1-7. Consider the conditions Mary and Joseph endured while traveling for the census. They had no car, no plane, no train, nor any of the luxuries we have today, yet they traveled roughly 70 to 80 miles to fulfill a government decree. How far do we travel to fulfill our commitments? How timely was it that Mary gave birth during the census? This was God's timing to fulfill Scripture.
- Read Luke 2:8-12. Think about being a shepherd in the middle of the night, no street lamps or cars—aside from the moon's light and maybe a campfire, no light at all to add guidance. How startling would it be if an angel came out of nowhere and delivered news of a newborn baby?
- Read Luke 2:13-16. Children are a celebration of life; note the celebration in verse 13 and following. After hearing the news about Jesus' birth, the shepherds were so excited they were described as "hurrying" to see the Christ Child. How excited are we to share and celebrate Jesus' birth this season?
- Consider the worship of the angels. They could not contain their excitement, so they worshiped. How excited are we to lead our children in worship? Pray to have a renewed excitement as you lead children to worship today.

What do these symbols mean?

Application Activities Format:

1→ Follow the numbers with arrows for a 30-minute, large group plus 20-minute Application Activities format.

Large Group Format:

1 Follow all the numbers for a 45- to 60-minute large group only format.



Jesus Was Born

Focus Passage: Luke 2:1-20

Key Bible Verse: John 3:16

Life Application: I can celebrate Jesus' birth.

Session at a Glance

Introduction to Worship (6-8 minutes)

Welcome the Children
Play "Opening Presents"

Worship (30 minutes/45 minutes)

Sing "I Can't Wait"
Sing "United"
Discuss Life Application/Pray
Show "Lads" Video
Sing "You Will Be Called"/Receive Offering

Introduce the Bible Story

Tell the Bible Story

Review the Bible Story

Discuss the Key Bible Verse

Make Life Application

Sing "Always Faithful"

Pray

Application Activities (20 minutes)

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Introduction to Worship

1 → Welcome the Children

2 → Play "Opening Presents"

Pull It Together

5 boxes, wrapping paper, bows, oven mitts, tape, scissors, paper, marker, table, stopwatch

- Write *I can celebrate Jesus' birth* on individual sheets of paper (1 word per page).
- Place 1 page inside each box and gift wrap.
- Place the boxes on the table.
- Say: "We have some boxes to unwrap. Who would like to help me?"
- Select volunteers.
- Call attention to the boxes.
- Ask: "Is it easy to unwrap gifts? What if you had to wear these?"
- Display the oven mitts.
- Place the mitts on the volunteers' hands.
- Say: "You have 20 seconds to unwrap the gift. At the end of 20 seconds I will select another volunteer to try."
- Time the children as they unwrap the gifts.
- Enlist additional volunteers.
- Play until each gift is unwrapped.
- Display the life application statement.

Worship

3 → Sing "I Can't Wait" (DVD, 3 minutes)

4 Sing "United" (DVD, 3 minutes)

5 → Discuss Life Application/Pray (3 minutes)

Pull It Together

Life application pages from Introduction to Worship

- Ask: "What do you do on Christmas morning? Do you open Christmas presents? Do you get to play with new toys?"
- Invite the children to respond.
- Continue: "In the middle of all that action, do you stop to think about the real meaning of Christmas? How many of you take time to celebrate Jesus' birth? Do you take time to thank God for sending Jesus?"
- Display pages from Introduction to Worship.

- Say: "We can celebrate Jesus' birth. Let's thank God for sending Jesus."
- Pray, expressing appreciation to God for Jesus.

6 → Show "Lads" Video (DVD, 8 minutes)

- Show the video.
- Talk about how Steve helped Mark focus on the real meaning of Christmas.

7 → Sing "You Will Be Called" (DVD, 3 minutes)/Receive Offering

8 → Introduce the Bible Story (4 minutes)

Pull It Together

Nativity (remove the wise men)

- Print "Jesus' Birth" Teaching Picture (CD).

- Display the Nativity.
- Ask: "Do you have pictures of you when you were a tiny baby?"
- Say: "When Jesus was born, cameras had not been invented, so we do not know exactly how Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the stable looked. Jesus' birth is such an important event that many artists have drawn, sculpted, and painted Jesus' family and birthplace."
- Guide the children to compare and contrast the teaching picture and the Nativity scene.
- Ask: "Do you have a Nativity scene at home? How does it compare to this one?"
- Allow the children to respond.
- Say: "Let's discover what happened the day Jesus was born."

9 → Tell the Bible Story (6 minutes)

Pull It Together

Tape, marker

- Print "Bible Story Pictures" (CD). Number the backs of the pictures in order.
- Tape pictures to the wall with numbers showing.
- Say: "As we listen to the story, we'll create a time line of Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to open their Bibles to Luke 2:1-20.
- Open your Bible to Luke 2.
- Tell the Bible story. Guide volunteers to turn the pages around as you tell the story.

Jesus Was Born

Based on Luke 2:1-20

[Turn around picture 1.] Caesar Augustus (aw GUHS tuhs) was emperor of the Roman Empire. He declared that the whole empire should be registered or counted. Each person went to his own town to be counted. Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of King David, because he was in the family line of David. Joseph took Mary with him because she was engaged to be his wife and was pregnant.

[Turn picture 2 around.] While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary's baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. Since there was no place for the family in the inn, Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, in a stable. There, Mary wrapped the baby in soft, clean clothes and laid Him in a feeding trough.

[Turn picture 3 around.] That same night, there were shepherds watching their flocks out in the fields. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them. The shepherds were very afraid! The angel told them, "Don't be afraid! I bring you good and joyful news for all people. Today, in the city of David, a Savior is born. He is Christ, the Lord. This is the sign for you—the baby will be wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding trough." Then there was a great number of the heavenly host appearing with the angel. They all praised God and said: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the people."

[Turn picture 4 around.] After the angels left, the shepherds said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what has happened that the Lord has revealed to us." So the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph. The baby was lying in a manger, just like the angel had said.

[Turn picture 5 around.] The shepherds were so amazed at what they found, they told others about the baby and the message from the angel. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. The shepherds returned to their fields praising God and giving Him glory for everything they had seen and heard.

[Turn picture 6 around.] Mary treasured all the moments and marveled how God had brought Jesus into this world.

10→ Review the Bible Story (4 minutes)

- Ask: "How would you feel if you were Mary or Joseph? How do you think Joseph felt not being able to find a room for Mary and Jesus?"
- Continue: "If you were one of the shepherds, how would you feel? Imagine being the angel who announced Jesus' birth. How do you think the angel spoke?"
- Ask: "In what ways do people celebrate Jesus' birth today?"
- Share your favorite part of the Christmas story.

11→ Discuss the Key Bible Verse (5 minutes)

Pull It Together

Worship Guides, pencils

- Ask: "Why did God send Jesus to the world?"
- Say: "Open your Bible to John 3:16. This verse is one of the first verses many people memorize. Let's read it together."
- Guide the children to read aloud.
- Say: "If we had to select one verse to summarize why God sent Jesus, John 3:16 may be the best verse. Let's think about the words and how they help us celebrate Jesus' birth."
- Distribute Worship Guide and pencils.
- Guide the children to complete "A Reason to Celebrate."

12→ Make Life Application (3 minutes)

- Guide the children to complete "A Yearlong Celebration."
- Summarize: "We do not have to celebrate Jesus' birth just at Christmas. We can know the reason God sent Jesus to earth is to provide forgiveness for our sin. Through Jesus, we have a relationship with God. That is something to celebrate."

13 Sing "Always Faithful" (DVD, 3 minutes)

14→ Pray (2 minutes)

- Say: "Let's pray a popcorn-style prayer. I will open our prayer and then give you time to say what you are thankful for. When you are ready, pop up and say aloud your prayer."
- Lead the children in prayer.

15→ Transition to Application Activities or Wrap-Up

Wrap-Up

(Large Group Only Format)

16 Play "Race to Tell" Review (7 minutes)

Pull It Together

2 shepherd costumes, scissors, construction paper, marker, tape, scrap paper

- Print "Cube" (CD). Cut apart and assemble.
- Write *Start* on 1 sheet of paper.
- Place the construction paper around the perimeter of the room (about 2 feet apart).

- Form two teams.
- Guide each team to select a volunteer.
- Dress the volunteers in the shepherd outfits.
- Direct the "shepherds" to stand on the start space.
- Say: "Your teams will take turns answering 'Race to Tell' questions. If your team answers correctly, one member will roll the cube. This will tell you how many spaces your shepherd may move forward. The object of the game is to be the first shepherd to travel around the room."
- Alternate asking questions and allowing team members to roll the cube.
- Direct the shepherds to move the corresponding number of spaces.
- Continue as time permits.

17 Sing "Whoa!" (DVD, 3 minutes)

18 Dismiss the Children to Their Parents

Wrap-Up

(Application Activities Format)

16→ Review Application Activities (7 minutes)

- Invite the children to share their Application Activities experiences.
 - Arts and Crafts—Christmas Mosaic
 - Dramatic Play—Birth Announcements
 - Games—Pass the Present
 - Exploration and Discovery—Graham Cracker Greetings

17→ Sing "Whoa!" (DVD, 3 minutes)

18→ Dismiss the Children to Their Parents

"Race to Tell" Questions

- Who was the emperor of the Roman Empire when Jesus was born? (*Caesar Augustus*)
- Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem? (*to be counted in the census*)
- Why did Joseph have to travel to Bethlehem? (*It was the town his family came from.*)
- Where did Joseph and Mary stay when they arrived in Bethlehem? (*in a stable*)
- What happened while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem? (*Jesus was born.*)
- Where did Mary place Jesus? (*in a feeding trough*)
- Who were the first people to hear about Jesus' birth? (*shepherds*)
- Who told the shepherds about Jesus' birth? (*an angel*)
- What did the angels say as they praised God? (*"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the people."*)
- What did the shepherds do after the angels left? (*went to Bethlehem to find the baby*)
- After visiting Jesus, what did the shepherds do? (*They told the people in town about Jesus.*)
- How did Mary respond to the shepherds? (*She remembered everything they did and said.*)
- Quote John 3:16.
- Why should we celebrate Jesus' birthday throughout the year? (*Jesus came to earth so we can have a relationship with God. Answers will vary.*)
- Name a way we can celebrate Jesus' birth. (*Answers will vary.*)
- What is your favorite part of the Christmas story? (*Answers will vary.*)

Application Activities

Select from the following choices. Each choice is designed for 20 minutes of small group time.

Pull It Together

Construction paper, scissors, glue, Christ-centered Christmas cards, clear contact plastic (laminare)

- Prepare a sample mosaic to display.

Teacher Tip

Precut pieces of paper for children to use.

Worship Through Arts and Crafts

Christmas Mosaic

- Ask: "Have you ever seen a stained glass window? Can you recognize the pictures in the window? Let's create a mosaic to help us remember the real meaning of Christmas."
- Distribute supplies.
- Guide the children to cut shapes from the cards to resemble Jesus, Mary, Joseph, or the shepherds.
- Review the Bible story as the children design their cards.
- Talk about the feelings Mary and Joseph experienced.
- Ask: "How do you think Mary and Joseph felt the first time they saw Jesus? What do you think their family members thought when they saw Jesus for the first time? Do you think the people recognized Jesus as a very special baby? Why or why not?"
- Allow each child to share his picture.
- Cover the pictures in clear contact plastic or laminate.
- Say: "Jesus came to earth in human form. We can celebrate Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to say John 3:16 as a group.
- Pray, thanking God for the gift of Jesus.

Pull It Together

Construction paper, markers, crayons, stickers, additional items to create birth announcements

Teacher Tip

Check with parents for birth announcements.

Worship Through Dramatic Play

Birth Announcements

- Review the Bible story.
- Talk about the feelings Mary and Joseph experienced.
- Ask: "How do you think Mary and Joseph told their families about Jesus' birth? What do you think their family members thought when they saw Jesus for the first time? Do you think the people recognized Jesus as a very special baby? Why or why not?"
- Invite the children to role-play how Mary and Joseph reacted to the shepherds' visit.
- Continue: "How did your parents announce your birth? Did they call people? Did they put your picture on a website? Did they send out cards with your name, pictures, and other information on them?"
- Say: "Let's create birth announcements for Jesus."
- Place the supplies on the table.
- Guide the children to create birth announcements for Jesus.
- Display the birth announcements for parents to see.
- Say: "Jesus came to earth in human form. We can celebrate Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to say John 3:16 as a group.
- Pray, thanking God for the gift of Jesus.

Pull It Together

Scissors, tape, candy canes (1 per child), gift box, wrapping paper

- Print "Questions" (CD). Cut apart. Tape 1 question to each candy cane.
- Place the candy canes in the box. Wrap.

Teacher Tip

Direct the children to be careful as they pass the box around the circle.

Worship Through Games

Pass the Present

- Guide the children to form a circle.
- Ask: "What are some things you do at your birthday parties? Do you like to play games? Do you like to open presents?"
- Say: "Let's play a party game like 'hot potato.' We will pass the present around the circle. If you have the present when I say, 'Merry Christmas,' you will be out for a few minutes."
- Pass the present around the circle. Call out "Merry Christmas" and allow the child holding the present to stand with you.
- Continue until only one child remains or time permits.
- Say: "Now let's open the present and see what is inside."
- Invite the children to unwrap the present.
- Distribute a candy cane to each child.
- Say: "Read aloud the question attached to your candy cane. Select someone to answer the question."
- Guide each child to read aloud the question and select a friend to answer.
- Say: "Jesus came to earth in human form. We can celebrate Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to say John 3:16 as a group.
- Pray, thanking God for the gift of Jesus.

Pull It Together

Graham crackers, white icing, tubes of colored icing, sprinkles, napkins, items to decorate crackers

- Prepare and post an allergy chart.

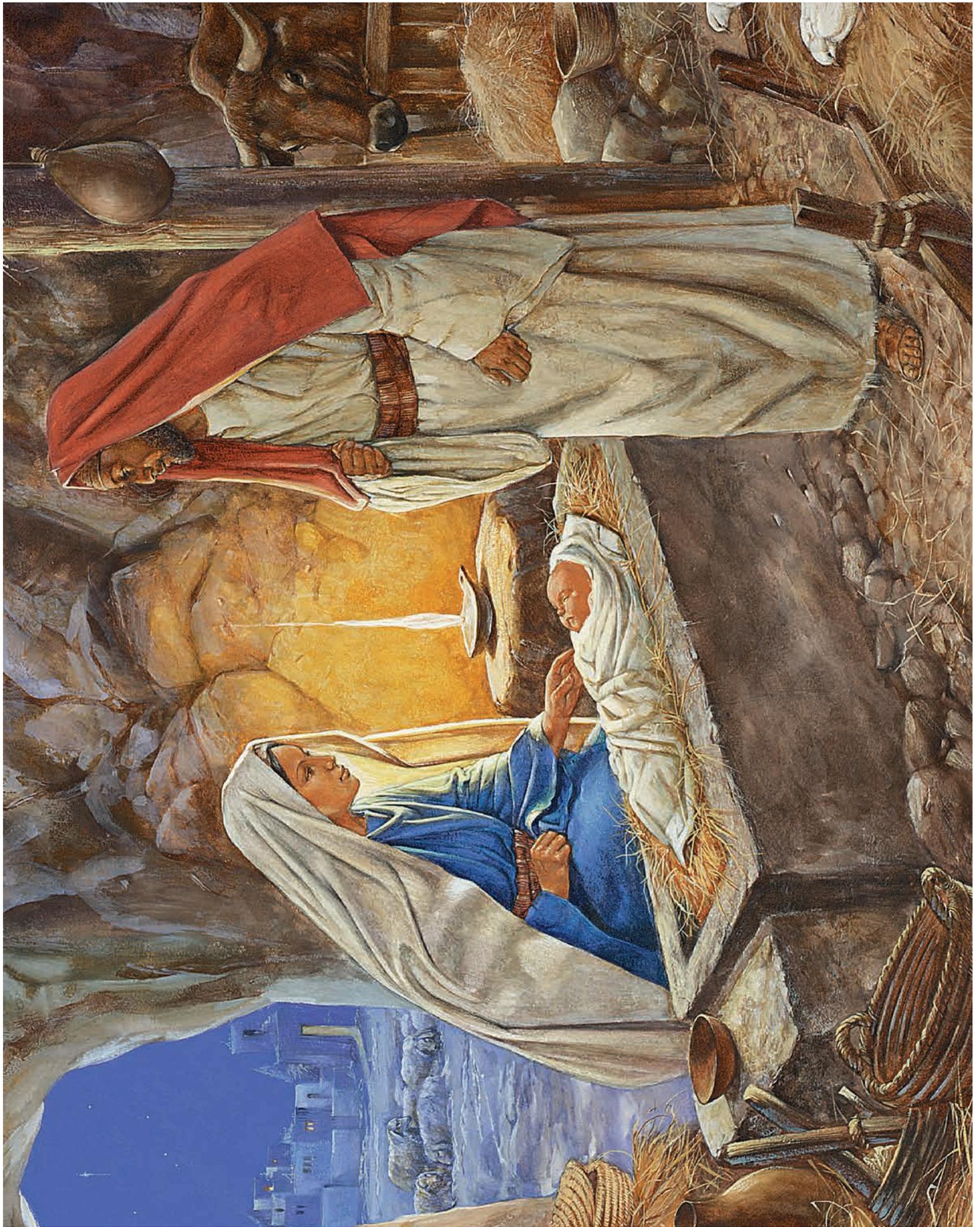
Teacher Tips

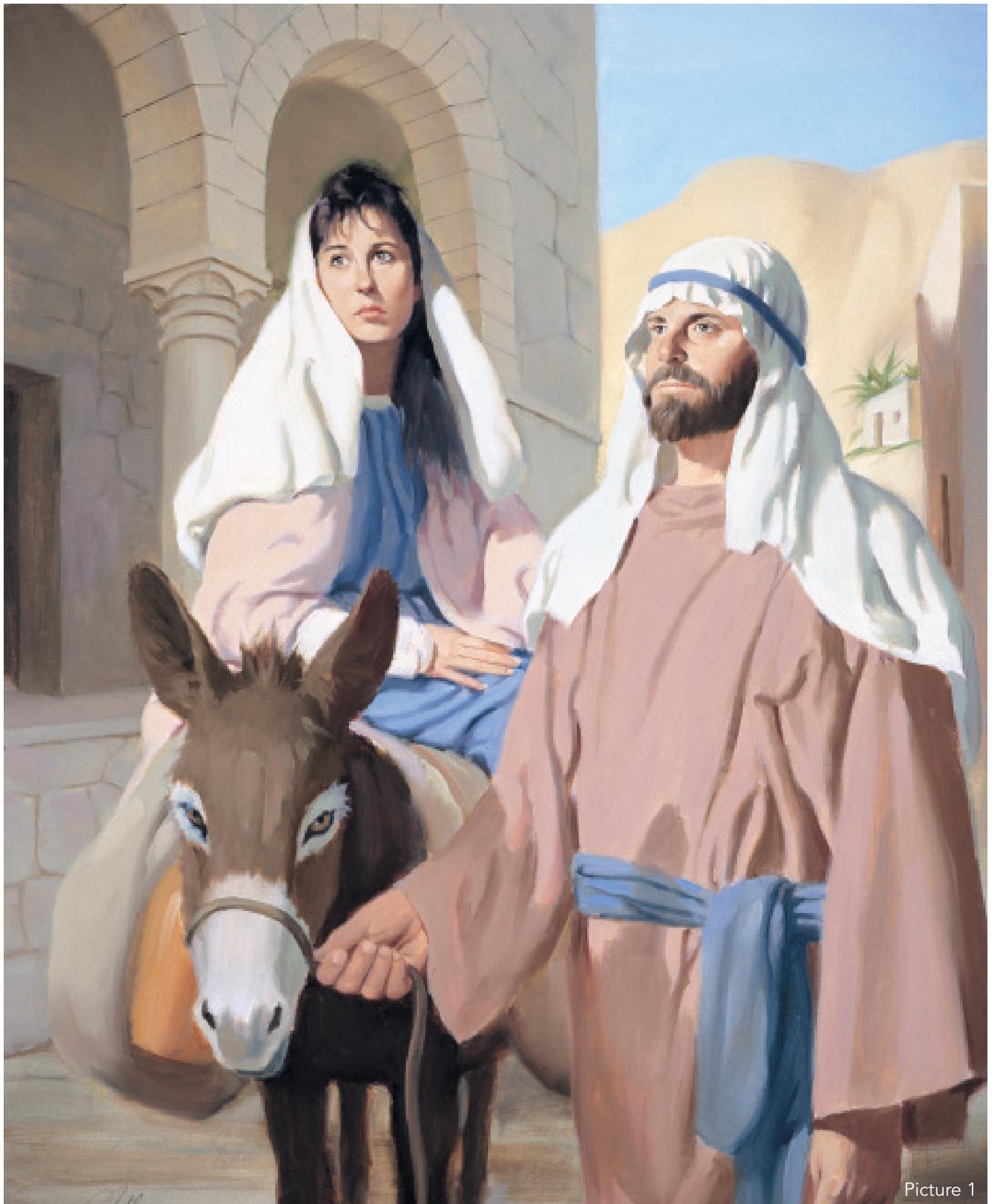
- Invite the children to decorate crackers to take home and share with their family members.
- Place the icing in ziplock bags. Cut a corner tip off and guide the children to squeeze the icing through it to decorate their crackers.
- Provide ziplock bags for the children to place their crackers in.

Worship Through Exploration and Discovery

Graham Cracker Greetings

- Review the Bible story.
- Talk about the feelings Mary and Joseph experienced.
- Ask: "How do you think Mary and Joseph told their families about Jesus' birth? What do you think their family members thought when they saw Jesus for the first time? Do you think the people recognized Jesus as a very special baby? Why or why not?"
- Say: "Let's create edible postcards telling about Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to wash their hands.
- Distribute graham crackers, icing, and decorations.
- Encourage the children to decorate their crackers.
- Direct the children to write *Jesus is born* or other statements announcing Jesus' birth on their crackers.
- Ask: "How do you think Mary and Joseph celebrated Jesus' birth? What are some things we do to celebrate Jesus' birth?"
- Decorate additional crackers to serve in Wrap-Up.
- Say: "Jesus came to earth in human form. We can celebrate Jesus' birth."
- Guide the children to say John 3:16 as a group.
- Pray, thanking God for the gift of Jesus.





Picture 1





Picture 3



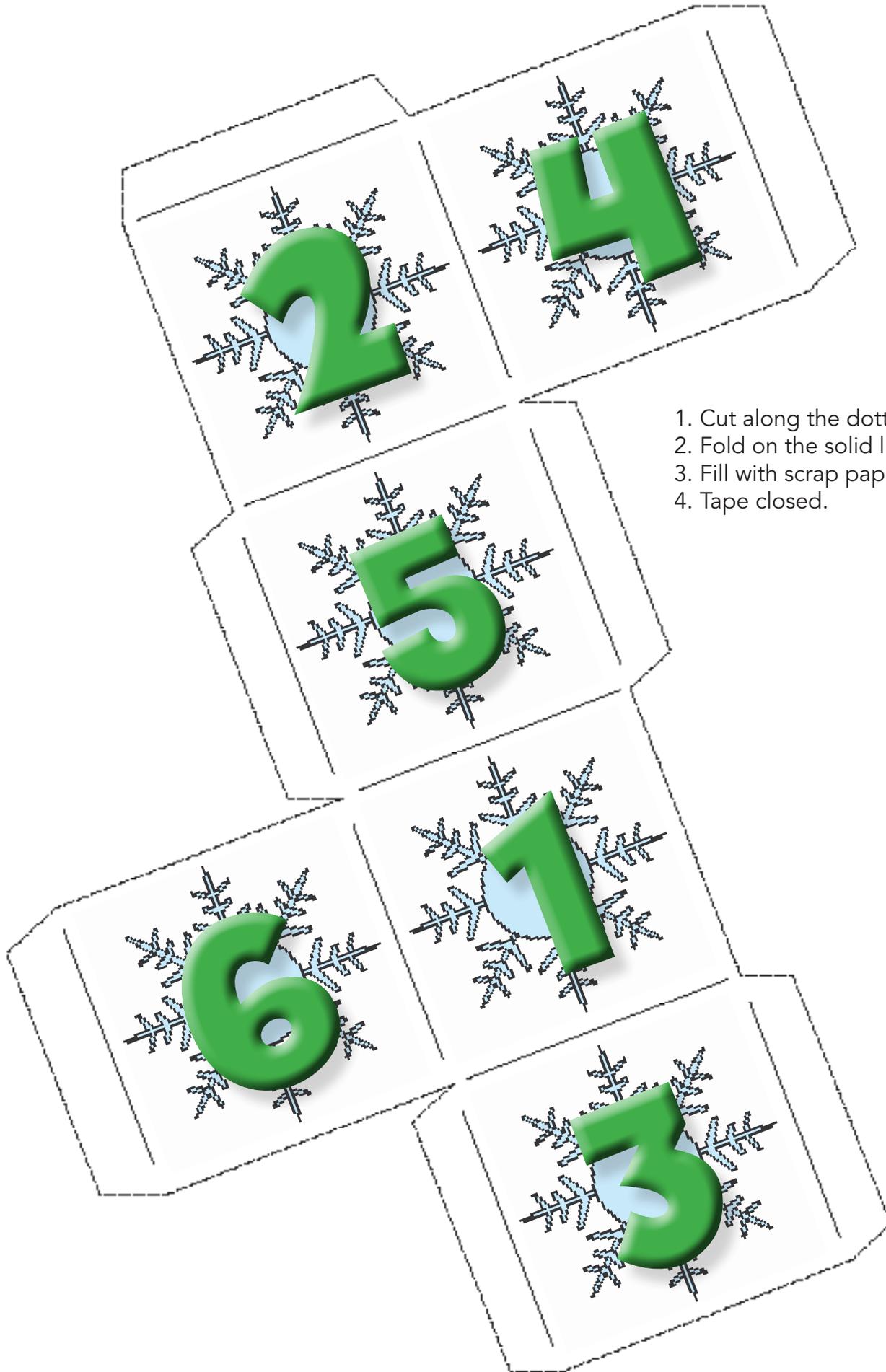
Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



1. Cut along the dotted lines.
2. Fold on the solid lines.
3. Fill with scrap paper.
4. Tape closed.

Who was the emperor of the Roman Empire when Jesus was born?

(Caesar Augustus)

Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem?

(to be counted in the census)

Why did Joseph have to travel to Bethlehem?

(It was the town his family came from.)

Where did Joseph and Mary stay when they arrived in Bethlehem?

(in a stable)

What happened while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem?

(Jesus was born.)

Where did Mary place Jesus?

(in a feeding trough)

Who were the first people to hear about Jesus' birth?

(shepherds)

Who told the shepherds about Jesus' birth?

(an angel)

What did the angels say as they praised God?

("Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the people.")

What did the shepherds do after the angels left?

(went to Bethlehem to find the baby)

After visiting Jesus, what did the shepherds do?

(They told the people in town about Jesus.)

How did Mary respond to the shepherds?

(She remembered everything they did and said.)

Quote John 3:16.

Why should we celebrate Jesus' birthday throughout the year?

(Jesus came to earth so we can have a relationship with God. Answers will vary.)

Name a way we can celebrate Jesus' birth.

(Answers will vary.)

What is your favorite part of the Christmas story?

(Answers will vary.)