



Stonebriar Community Church

Christmas 2020

God has a history of choosing unlikely characters to be part of His story. From the beginning of time the people whose stories are told in the Bible were flawed—but showed faith in God. Hebrews Chapter 11, sometimes called the Hall of Faith, tells the story of followers who overcame life's obstacles to develop uncommon faith and follow God. In this story, we see seven characters with unique perspectives but uncommon faith. Each character must overcome his or her circumstances to follow the path God has laid before them. Each character must have faith to follow God's plan when it does not seem likely or reasonable. Each character is unlikely to take part in the story of the birth of Jesus.

In our children's programming we talk about the "Big God Story." For ages children were taught about God and people in the Bible in stand-alone stories. There was the story of Adam and Eve, then Jonah, and other great tales. But a few years ago, we realized that kids needed to see how God's story is woven together from beginning to the end. From the very beginning of time God had a plan. He knew each person, He knew each event, He gave promises, and He asked only that we have faith in Him to fulfill His promises. God established a covenant with His chosen people knowing there would be a second covenant, even better than the first.

Each year at Christmas time we retell the story of Jesus' birth, display our nativity sets, and anxiously look forward to the celebration. It is easy to skip through and miss the intentional roles each person played in fulfilling God's prophecy.

Because of the
tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to
shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death, to
guide our feet into the path of peace.

LUKE 1:78-79





FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Christmas has always been magical for me. I grew up in church and was surrounded by good teaching. The Christmas story was artfully told and retold (maybe occasionally with less artistry . . . but when the little boy in the sheep costume would not stop picking his nose—that was amazing and memorable).

What happened on the first Christmas is such an important story that needs to be told not only with deep reverence but also with a smile. The scenes we have provided in this year's Advent package are meant to be fun and memorable. I hope you enjoy telling this narrative and hearing your kids tell the story in a way that is hopefully somewhere between deeply reverent and nasal probing. Have fun, and remember the story of Jesus is the best story ever told.

Dave Carl
Lead Pastor of Family and Children's Ministries



How to Use This Guide

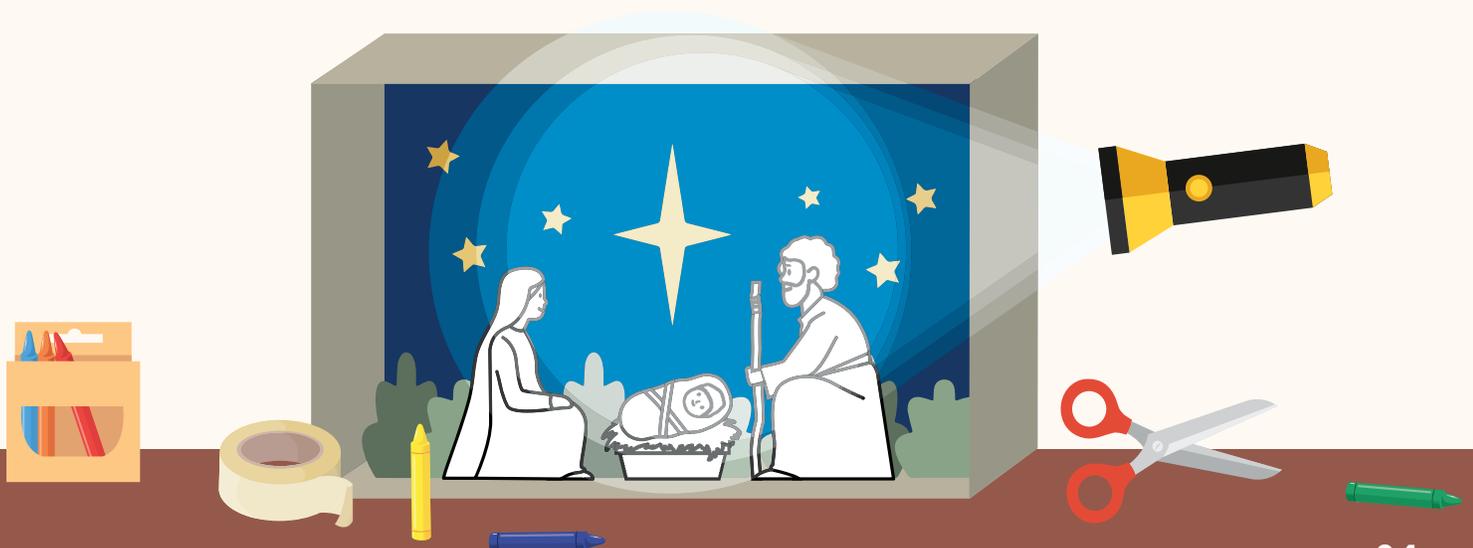
CHRISTMAS SHADOW BOX THEATER

Telling and retelling the story of the first Christmas is a favorite pastime during the Christmas season. We are introducing you to seven very special characters of the Christmas story and providing you with the tools to make a Christmas Shadow Box Theater. The theater, devotionals, and scripts will give you and your family the opportunity to tell the extraordinary story of Jesus' birth in creative ways for endless fun.

Grab a flashlight, and gather the characters and scenery you colored and cut out. As you read each script, act out the scenes with the characters. Consider placing some characters and scenery behind or in front of the parchment paper "screen." Use the flashlight to make shadows with your characters to help tell the story.

There are so many ways to tell the narrative with light and shadows, so be creative! Have fun acting out the scenes, add comedy, and use them to explore any and all wonderings you have about these stories.

You may also choose to use this as a light display to tell the story of Jesus' birth each week of Advent. There are instructions and photos on the next few pages, and we hope that you enjoy making your own Christmas Box Theater.



STORIES FROM THE WORKBENCH WITH PASTOR DAVE

If you are a fan of the new series *Stories from the Workbench with Pastor Dave*, we have provided you with a second set of props and characters to dig deeper into each character's story of uncommon faith. Pastor Dave has developed scripts for you to interview each character in the workshop and use tools you probably have never seen before. This will be a fun way for you and your family to step into the workshop and get to know each character better.

CREATE YOUR OWN NATIVITY SCENE

Cut out and color the characters as we learn about each one. Add in a different character each day. Talk about what that character might be feeling and what they are learning about God's big plan.

It is our humble desire that you will use this guide to challenge your family to look at the story of the first Christmas with fresh eyes and a new perspective.





CONTENTS

07

**SEVEN CHARACTERS
OF THE NATIVITY**

09

**PROPHETS OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT**

11

**JOHN THE BAPTIST
PREPARES THE WAY**

17

**MARY
A HEART FOR GOD**

23

**JOSEPH
ENTRUSTED TO GUIDE**

29

**ANGELS
GOD'S MESSENGERS**

30

SHADOW BOX PUPPETS

47

**SHEPHERDS
UNLIKELY MESSENGERS**

53

**THREE WISE MEN
BRINGING A MESSAGE
FOR ALL**

59

**JESUS
THE PROMISED ONE**

65

SHADOW BOX

7 Characters OF THE NATIVITY



John the Baptist

PREPARES THE WAY
MARK 1:1-7

Mary

A HEART FOR GOD
LUKE 1:26-38



Joseph

ENTRUSTED TO GUIDE
MATTHEW 1:18-25

Angels

GOD'S MESSENGERS
LUKE 2:8-14

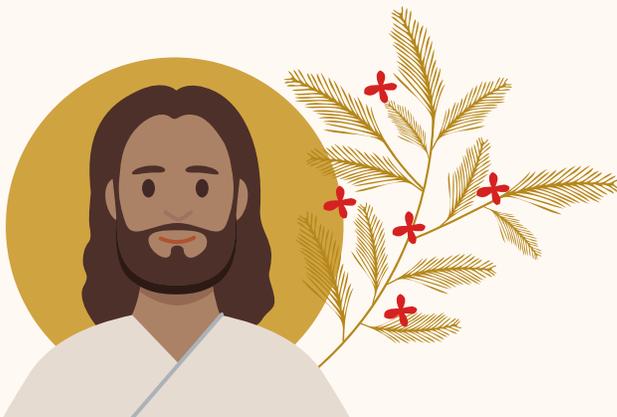


Shepherds

UNLIKELY MESSENGERS
LUKE 2:15-20

Three Wise Men

BRINGING A MESSAGE FOR ALL
MATTHEW 2:1-12



Jesus

THE PROMISED ONE
JOHN 1:1-8

Prophets of the Old Testament

Isaiah had asked Judah's King Ahaz to ask God for a sign that the kings of Syria and Israel would not attack his kingdom, but Ahaz responded by saying he would not test God by asking for a sign. Isaiah's response included the famous prophecy that was supposed to be a "sign" for King Ahaz.

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test."

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? **Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.** —Isaiah 7:10-14 (NIV)



God promised Isaiah that a child would be born, and the government would rest on His shoulders. He would be from the house of David.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. —Isaiah 9:6–7 (NIV)

The Magi, following the prophecy of Micah, journeyed to Bethlehem to find He Who was born to be King of the Jews, the son of David, and the son of Abraham.



But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me One Who will be

Ruler Over Israel,

whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

MICAH 5:2



John the Baptist

PREPARES THE WAY

“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way—
a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for Him.’*

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: **“After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.”**
—Mark 1:1–7 (NIV)

One of the carols often heard at Christmas time is George Handel’s “Joy to the World.” The first verse says “Let every heart prepare Him room.” That is exactly what John the Baptist encouraged the crowds to do. God gave him this very special job. He was to tell the people to prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus. It was a tough job. Not everyone wanted to hear what he had to say.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, his parents, recognized the calling of the Lord on their son. They embraced it and encouraged God’s purposes be fulfilled through their child.

. . . grew and became strong in spirit and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.
—Luke 1:80 (NIV)

He was not your average guy. He lived in the desert. His clothing and diet were simple. His life may seem extreme and most of us may not easily relate to a diet of locusts and honey. He said “yes” to God’s mission. Even when it probably was not easy. Even when he could have chosen his own way. He didn’t allow his own desires—his “stuff,” or even other people to interfere with what he knew he was here to do.

Many people asked John who he really was. They wondered if he was the promised Messiah, Elijah, or even a false prophet. Yet John clearly and firmly answered “no” to all of those questions and pointed them to Christ. John was careful not to give in to the need for his own success. He knew this was not a popularity contest. His purpose remained strong, “He must become greater, I must become less.” —John 3:30 (NIV)

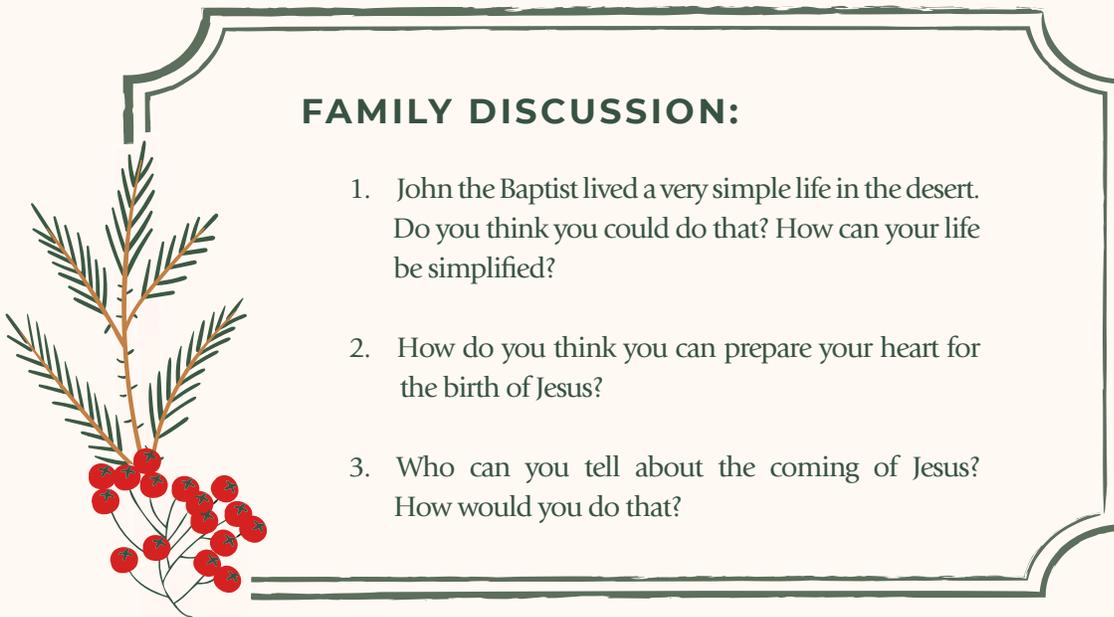
John's mission was to encourage everyone who would listen to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

But how were they to prepare for something they did not fully understand? By repenting the path of their sinful life and by being baptized. John used the waters in a nearby lake to submerge their old life completely, and encourage people to reemerge from the water changed.

Take the plunge this Advent season. Jump into the deep waters of God's grace. It is only by completely surrendering our lives to God that we can truly and eagerly anticipate Christ's arrival.

God wants us to get our hearts ready for Christmas!

Words: Watts | Music: Handel; arr. Mason | Public Domain | CCLI #1579266



FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. John the Baptist lived a very simple life in the desert. Do you think you could do that? How can your life be simplified?
2. How do you think you can prepare your heart for the birth of Jesus?
3. Who can you tell about the coming of Jesus? How would you do that?

Joy to the World (First Verse):

Joy to the world
Joy to the world
Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: JOHN THE BAPTIST, TREES, AND ROCKS

NARRATOR: A special messenger was sent by God to prepare the world for the arrival of the Messiah. He lived a simple life in the desert with few possessions. He was passionate about his message.

JOHN: People of Judea, I want to share with you a special message. After me comes the One more powerful than I, the straps of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

We have all sinned, but God wants us to repentant from our sins and turn from our evil ways. He is willing to forgive our sins. Join me in baptism as a symbol of repentance.

NARRATOR: The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Many people wondered if he was the promised Messiah, or Elijah, or even a false prophet. But John was careful to make sure he pointed his message to the coming of the Messiah.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome to our show, and Merry Christmas! I will be your guide as we visit some of the people God used for that very first Christmas so long ago.

BEAU THE DOG: John the Baptist! John the Baptist!

WORKSHOP GUY: And this is my talking dog Beau.

BEAU THE DOG: Woof! Tell 'em. I'm so excited. Go on. Go ahead and tell them about John the Baptist.

WORKSHOP GUY: (Laughs) I'm trying. John the Baptist was the slightly older cousin to Jesus. Before they were born, Mary, Jesus' mother and Elizabeth, John's mother got together, and John jumped for joy in his mother's tummy because he was near Jesus. They were both miraculous babies that first Christmas season, but there is much more to their story together after they grew up.

BEAU THE DOG: Can I tell him we're ready? I'm ready. Can I tell him we're ready?

WORKSHOP GUY: OK. Yes, go get him.

Beau runs off stage.

WORKSHOP GUY: As I said, John was a very special baby. God even gave him his name—which for the record was NOT John the Baptist. We call him that because he became well known for baptizing people. So it was more of a job description. John - the - Baptist.

Beau and John enter together.



BEAU THE DOG: He's here. I'm so excited. Ladies and gentlemen, I am so pleased to introduce to you today—John the Baptist. Can I get you anything? Coffee? Tea? Chew toy?

JOHN: No, thank you, and thanks for having me.

WORKSHOP GUY: Our pleasure. So, John it was your job to get people ready for the Messiah. How did you go about telling folks?

JOHN: I would talk of the Messiah constantly and as God would prompt people about their sins, they would come to me, and I would baptize them for forgiveness of their sins in the Jordan River. This was before Jesus really started His ministry.

BEAU THE DOG: Then He came to be baptized. Tell them about that part. This is my favorite part. I love this part.

JOHN: Then one day Jesus came to me. He wanted me to baptize HIM. I was baptizing people who needed to have their sins forgiven. Jesus was the Messiah and He had NO sin. I was so confused. I told Him I couldn't. He told me again to baptize Him.

BEAU THE DOG: When Jesus says to do something, you should do it even if it doesn't make sense at the time.

WORKSHOP GUY: That's exactly right.

JOHN: What I didn't know at the time is Jesus was being an example for others. Showing everyone that they should be baptized too when they begin their life following God.

BEAU THE DOG: Tell them about the heavens opening up.

JOHN: So, I baptized Jesus and when He came up out of the water the heavens opened up, and God spoke to Jesus and we all heard too. God said; "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." It was amazing.

BEAU THE DOG: Chills. I just got chills. Look at the chills on my arm. Well it's under the fur. You just have to believe me. I totally have the chills.

WORKSHOP GUY: And that was the beginning of Jesus' Ministry. Thanks for being with us today. Don't forget to join us again next week where we will meet Mary, the mother of Jesus.

BEAU THE DOG: MARY? You didn't tell me that. Next week? I got to go get a shampoo. I'm in no shape to be meeting Mary.

Beau walks off stage talking to himself.



Mary

A HEART FOR GOD

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.
— Luke 26–38 (NIV)

Each Christmas season at Stonebriar Community Church the talented artist David Gaschen has sung the song *Mary Did You Know?* While I love to sit in our Worship Center and hear the beautiful music wash over me, it was not until I recently that I thought more about the role Mary played in the life of Jesus. The song asks:

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God?

Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am?

lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc, Capitol Christian Music Group

My thoughts run in circles . . . Did she know? How much did she know? Mary was uniquely chosen by God to fulfill His prophecy. She was from the house of David, engaged to be married, and a virgin. She was favored by God for being pure, a woman of faith, and obedient. But she was not remarkable.

She was born in a poor family from the insignificant town of Nazareth. She was not a princess. She was not an exceptional beauty or specifically talented. And yet God “favored” her. In Luke 1:28 the angel Gabriel comes to Mary to bring her news that she will give birth to the Christ child promised to generations of Jewish people.

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. —Luke 1:28–30 (NIV)

In Mary’s nature was the ability to love God and His Son greatly. God knew Mary’s heart. Following the birth of Jesus and visits from angels and shepherds, we learn the most about Mary’s heart.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. —Luke 2:19 (NIV)

I can picture her huddled in the stable, holding her new baby wrapped in her arms. She could be counting His fingers and toes, tracing the angle of His nose, kissing the top of His head. She was probably overwhelmed by the love a mother feels for her child but also in awe of the special nature of this Child wrapped in her arms. As Jesus grew, and events started reveal His true identity, Mary continued to ponder and treasure all these things in her heart. As she faded into the shadow of Jesus’ ministry, her character is revealed. Mary loved her son Jesus, but she loved her Heavenly Father more.

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Why did God choose Mary?
- What do you think the relationship was between Mary and Jesus as He grew to adulthood?
- Why was Mary favored by God?
- What can we learn from Mary?



Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: MARY, JOSEPH, ANGEL

NARRATOR: This is how the birth of Jesus came about. Jesus' mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph. Before they were married an angel came to visit Mary.

ANGEL: Greetings Mary, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.

NARRATOR: Mary wondered what was going on here and felt very anxious when the angel spoke to her.

MARY: Who are you? Where did you come from? How did you get in here? How do you know if I am favored?

ANGEL: Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; His kingdom will never end.

MARY: What do you mean? How will this be since I am a virgin?

ANGEL: The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.

NARRATOR: Mary felt great peace and confident that the words the angel was telling her were true.

MARY: I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.

ANGEL: Mary, rejoice! God is with you! Blessed are you!

NARRATOR: Then the angel left.

NARRATOR: When it was close to the time for Mary to have her baby, she and Joseph made a long and difficult journey to Bethlehem.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show and Merry Christmas! Last time we met John the Baptist. This week, as promised . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Mary! Mary the Mother of Jesus! I can't stand it. This is so exciting.

WORKSHOP GUY: Yes, it is Beau.

BEAU THE DOG: I want to ask her about the angels and the stable and the . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: Yes we will get to all of that. . .

BEAU THE DOG: Woof. Not to mention the shepherds . . .

Mary enters behind Beau.

WORKSHOP GUY: Yes, Beau. I want to tell you that . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Did you know about the wise men? There were actual wise men . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: Yes, Beau I knew that, but right behind you is . . .

BEAU THE DOG: When I meet her I might just pass out . . .

MARY: Hello Beau. It's so nice to meet you.

Beau turns around to see Mary and passes out.

MARY: Oh my. Is he all right?

WORKSHOP GUY: Don't worry about Beau. This happens all the time. He's a little excitable. So, Mary tell us what it was like to meet a real angel.

MARY: Well, it was terrifying at first. That's not something you see every day. He told me I was going to give birth to the Messiah, that I would be a very blessed woman.

WORKSHOP GUY: Wasn't that a little hard to take in?

MARY: It really was. My people, the nation of Israel, had been waiting for the Messiah since the Garden of Eden. This was what we had prayed for, for centuries. The angel said the Messiah would come through me.

BEAU THE DOG: Well that was a lovely little nap. (Yawn) Hi there, Mary. Did you know that Mary is coming to talk with us today? Wait—you are Mary, aren't you?

MARY: Yes. It's true . . .

BEAU THE DOG: It's so nice to . . . (Beau passes out again)

WORKSHOP GUY: What about that night in the stable? What was that like?

MARY: Well, that was also terrifying. It was dirty, and I missed my mother. Then He was born, and it was all so amazing.

BEAU THE DOG: (Still half asleep) Shepherds. What about the shepherds?

MARY: Then the shepherds came. I thought the stable smelled bad—have you ever smelled shepherds? (laughs) They were so sweet. They told me all about the angels and the singing, and they told the shepherds to go into Bethlehem to find a baby wrapped in swaddling and laying in a manger.

WORKSHOP GUY: And what is swaddling?

BEAU THE DOG: (Half asleep) It's a baby wrapped in cloth like a burrito.

MARY: That is a very good description. That was the very first Christmas.

WORKSHOP GUY: Mary, thank you for joining us today. What a pleasure to meet you.

MARY: It was my pleasure. Will you tell Beau I enjoyed . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: I will. Enjoy the Christmas season everyone. We'll see you next time when we will meet Joseph.

BEAU THE DOG: (Half asleep) Joseph? I love Joseph . . .





Joseph

ENTRUSTED TO GUIDE

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. —Matthew 1:18–25 (NIV)

Do you know a woodworker or furniture maker? These are unique people. Their passion for their craft is hard to resist. When they are launching into a new project it seems they are just filled with joy and excitement. They plan by drawing plans, measuring, and making adjustments in their design until they know it will be perfect. But the best is the pursuit of the perfect piece of lumber. Will it be a red cherry, a hard walnut, or a rich creamy color of beech wood? The feel, the look, and even the smell of the lumber is all part of the pursuit. When they have found the right piece of lumber for the right project it's like there is a glow of passion. You can almost feel their excitement.

Typically, we would view Joseph as a reluctant carpenter in the life of Jesus. But how could a furniture maker so passionate about the process of building not feel that same passion as he raised this perfect and special son placed in his life by his heavenly father? I recently read an article, **The Top Five Qualities of a Good Carpenter**⁽¹⁾ the list includes qualities that would also make a great earthly father:

1. Physical Strength and Stamina
2. Problem Solving
3. Mathematical Skills
4. Experience and Training
5. Honesty and Trustworthiness

So as we look at the character of Joseph in this story we should reconsider his passion to be the earthly father to Jesus. At each turn in the story, Joseph was obedient to God and disciplined in his stewardship of Jewish law. We can expect that he shared these qualities with Jesus as Joseph shepherded His growth from newborn to adulthood. Joseph also spent time teaching his son the trade. Jesus is very often described as working and being taught by Joseph in his carpenter's shop. This was an inherited occupation Jesus

performed before going into His ministry. Joseph was also the protector and guardian of Jesus. Later when Jesus spoke of God as being like a loving Father, he could draw from his youth the kind of love he had from Joseph. Joseph stands as a testimony to the value of integrity, obedience, faithfulness, and especially honoring the entrusted role of “fatherhood.”

Scripture tells us:

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him. —Luke 2:29–30 (NIV)

⁽¹⁾(<https://www.mrright.in/ideas/home-improvement/carpentry/top-5-qualities-of-a-great-carpenter/>)

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. Why do you think God chose Joseph?
2. How would you respond if an angel delivered a special message to you? Would you do what he asked?
3. What do you think Jesus was like as a child? If you were His Dad, what would you want to teach Him?
4. What qualities do you think make Joseph a good earthly father to Jesus?
5. Do you think he is an important person in the story of Jesus' birth? Why?



Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: JOSEPH, ANGEL, NARRATOR, AND WORKSHOP

NARRATOR: Jesus' mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but they were not yet married. Before they lived together, Mary found out she was pregnant with baby Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This scared Joseph.

JOSEPH: How can this be? We are engaged and have not been together yet? I want to trust Mary because I love her, but her story seems very hard to believe. Angels, Holy Spirit, mother to the Messiah. I need to think about what to do.

What will people think? They will be gossiping about her and me in the streets and marketplace.

NARRATOR: Joseph decided he would break up with her quietly so he wouldn't cause Mary to be shamed in front of her friends and family. He then went to sleep and had a dream.

ANGEL: Joseph! Don't be afraid to marry Mary. She is going to have a baby boy. When He is born, name Him Jesus. This name means salvation because He will be a savior to everyone.

NARRATOR: Then Joseph woke up.

JOSEPH: That was some dream. It was so vivid. It seemed so real. But now I know what I must do.

NARRATOR: Joseph did exactly what the angel told him to do. He took Mary to be his wife and made plans to raise Jesus as his child teaching Him the family trade of woodworking and furniture making.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show, and once again, Merry Christmas!

BEAU THE DOG: He's here. I just talked to him in the other room. He's here.

WORKSHOP GUY: Our guest today is none other than Joseph, husband to Mary.

Joseph enters the stage.

WORKSHOP GUY: Thank you for being here today, Joseph.

JOSEPH: It's a pleasure to be here. Thanks for having me.

BEAU THE DOG: OK, you are like my favorite guy in the story. You were courageous, wise, you listened to God, and did the hard stuff. That is what MEN are supposed to do.

JOSEPH: Well thank you for saying that.

WORKSHOP GUY: Now your part in this story started off a little rocky. Tell us about that.

JOSEPH: Yes it did. Mary and I were engaged to be married, and all was going well. But there was a catch . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Catch? Catch? Yes, yes, yes. I got it!

Beau runs off stage playing catch.

JOSEPH: I didn't mean . . .



WORKSHOP GUY: Don't worry. He'll be back. So, you were engaged. But in your culture being engaged is a big deal. You don't just break it off. But I'm getting ahead of myself. You were engaged . . .

JOSEPH: Yes, and then Mary told me . . . well . . . that she was pregnant. I was shocked, and sad, and . . . well . . . all kinds of things. I assumed she had done something wrong, so I quietly began the process of not getting married.

BEAU THE DOG: I was waiting out there, but you didn't throw anything . . .

JOSEPH: Sorry. It was a misunderstanding . . .

BEAU THE DOG: No problem. Then the angel. Tell them about the angel. I love the parts with angels.

JOSEPH: Yes, the angel came to me. When that happened, I was absolutely overwhelmed. I thought I was gonna have a heart attack or something. Here is this holy angel, and I'm just a guy. I felt like a wretch in front of him . . .

BEAU THE DOG: FETCH? YES, yes, yes. I'm going long!

Beau runs off stage to fetch.

JOSEPH: I really don't mean to keep . . . Let me call him back.

WORKSHOP GUY: Never mind. You get used to it after a while. So the angel . . .

JOSEPH: Yes. The angel told me not be worried about the pregnancy. It was God's Son, He was going to be the Messiah—coming to save us all. It was all very overwhelming, but I got to be there when He was born that first Christmas. I'm so grateful that God chose to use me to bring up and train Jesus . . .

BEAU THE DOG: You are a tricky trickster, Joseph. You got me that time, but I'm on to you now . . .

JOSEPH: When you ran off, I wanted to call you . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Ball? Ball? Yes, yes, yes.

Beau runs off stage to get the ball.

JOSEPH: I'm so sorry.

WORKSHOP GUY: I'll toss the ball for him later. Thanks for being with us again, everyone. Merry Christmas, and we'll see you next time when we will meet the angels from the Christmas story!

BEAU THE DOG: (Off stage) Throw it Joseph! I'm ready! I'm always ready!



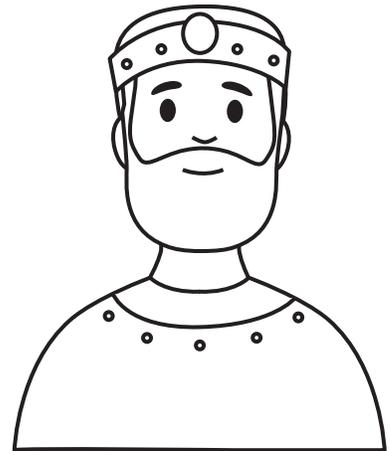
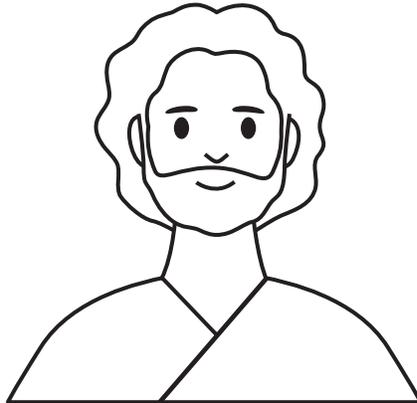
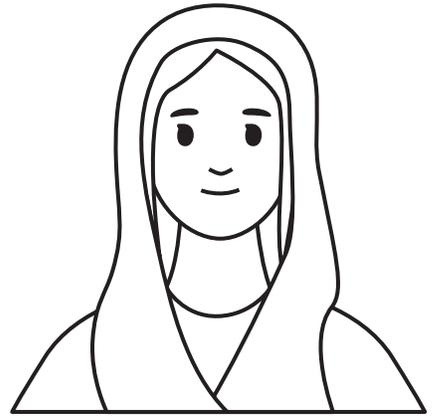
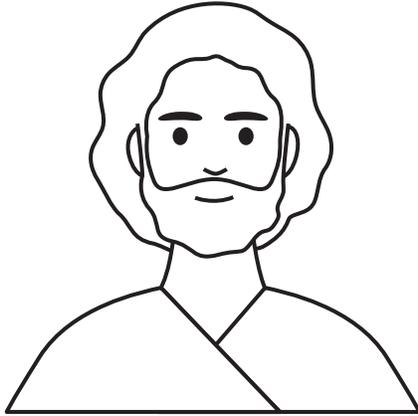
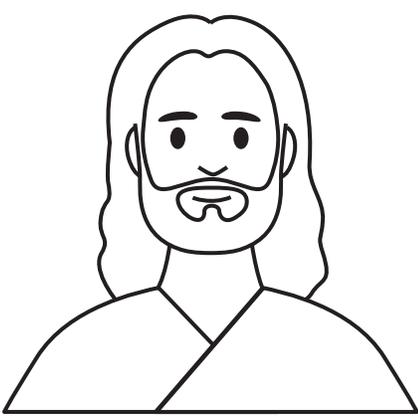
Angels

SHADOW BOX PUPPETS

Pull pages 30–41 to color and cut shadow box puppets.
Refer to page 65 for shadow box instructions.

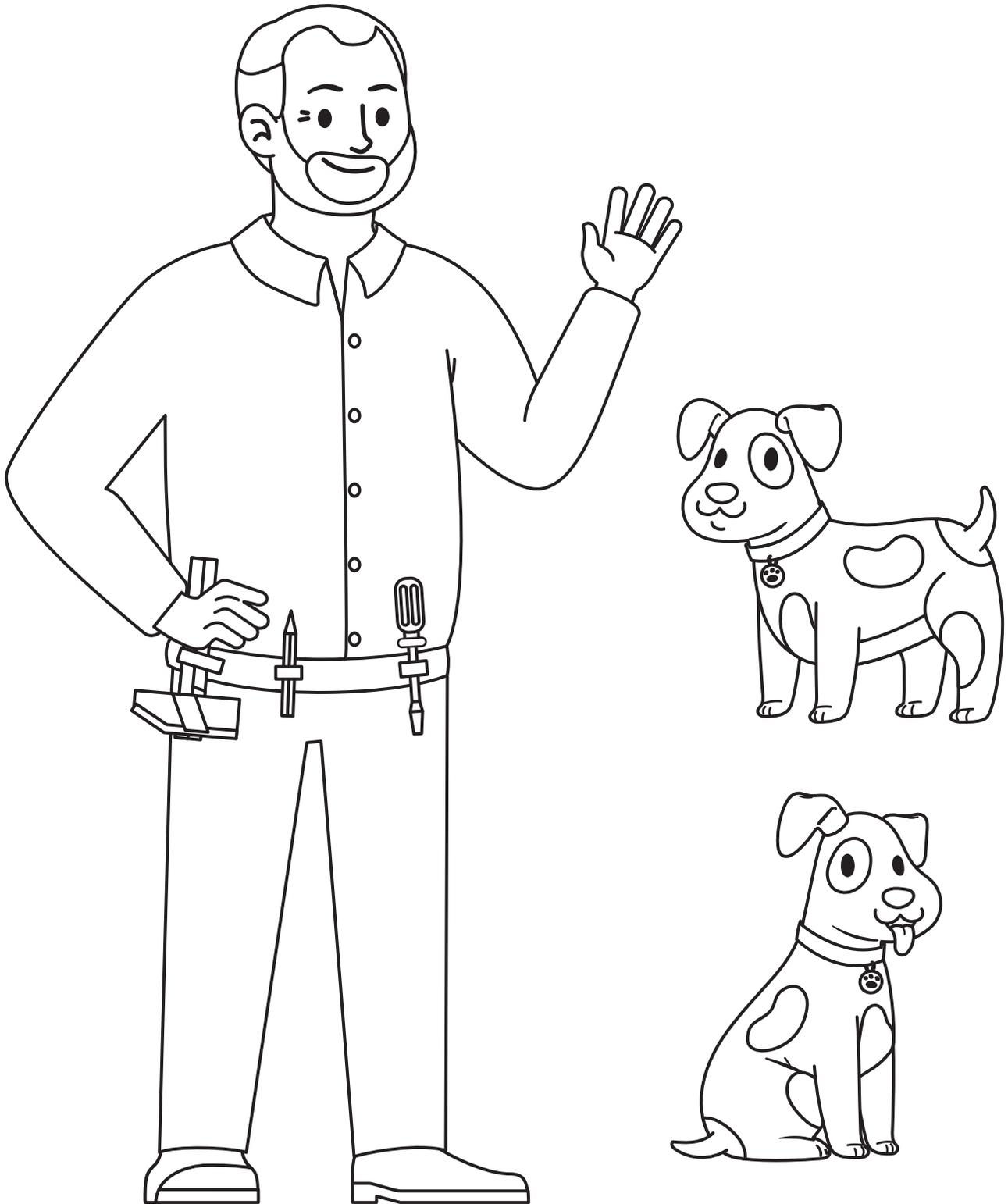
CHARACTERS

Jesus, John the Baptist, Mary, Sheperd, Joseph, Three Wise Men, and Angel



CHARACTERS

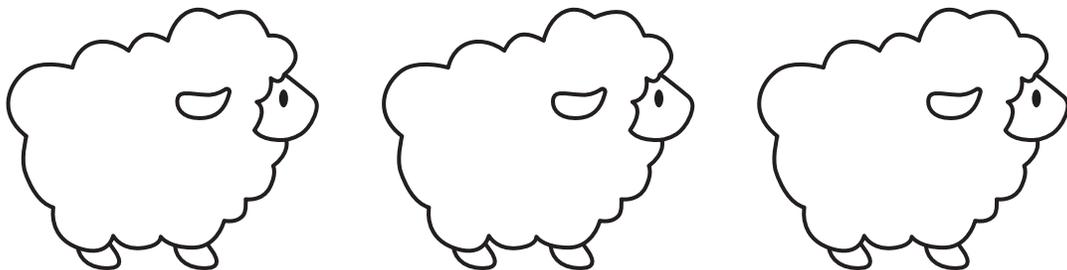
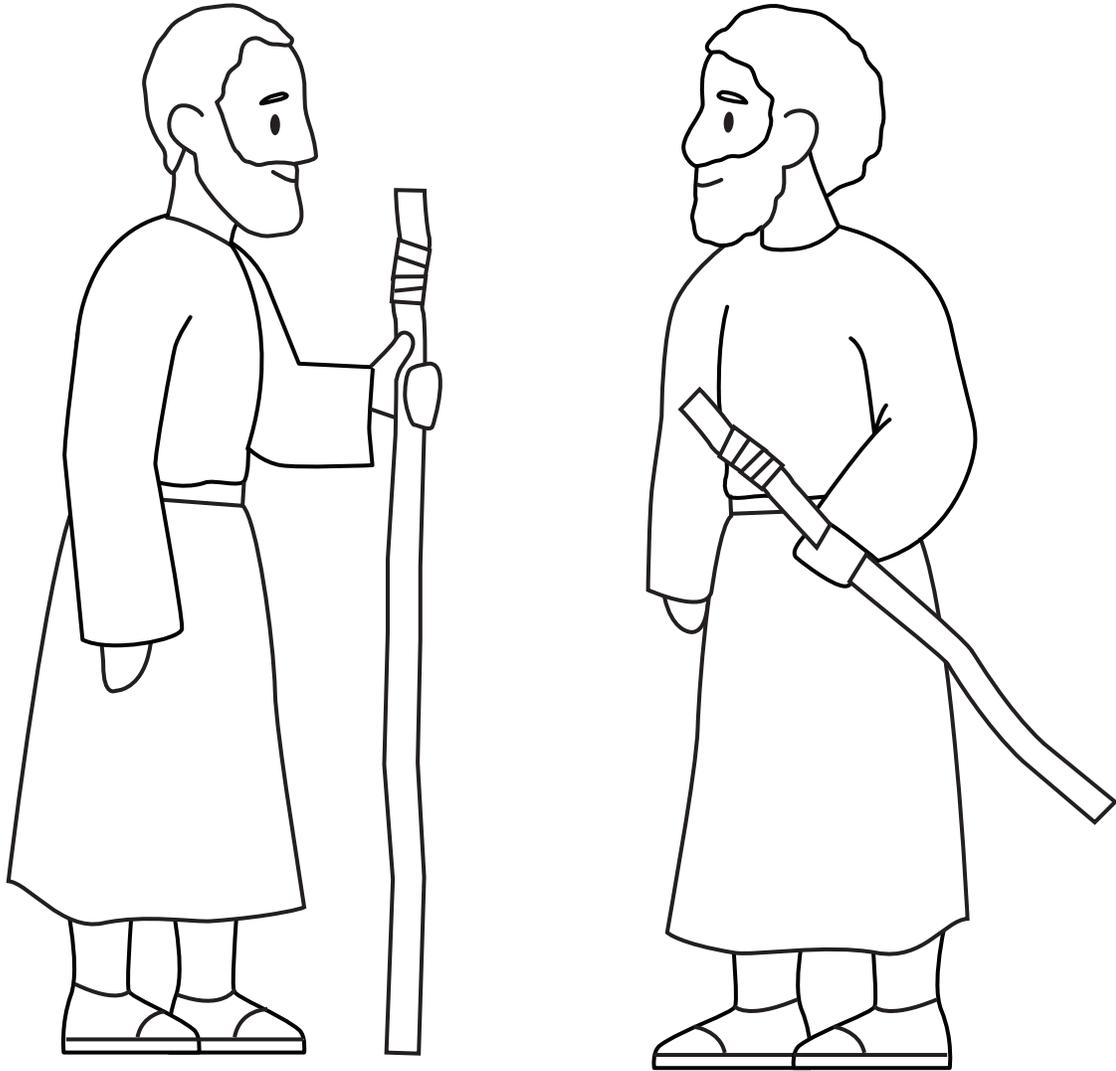
Workshop Guy and Beau the Dog



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CHARACTERS

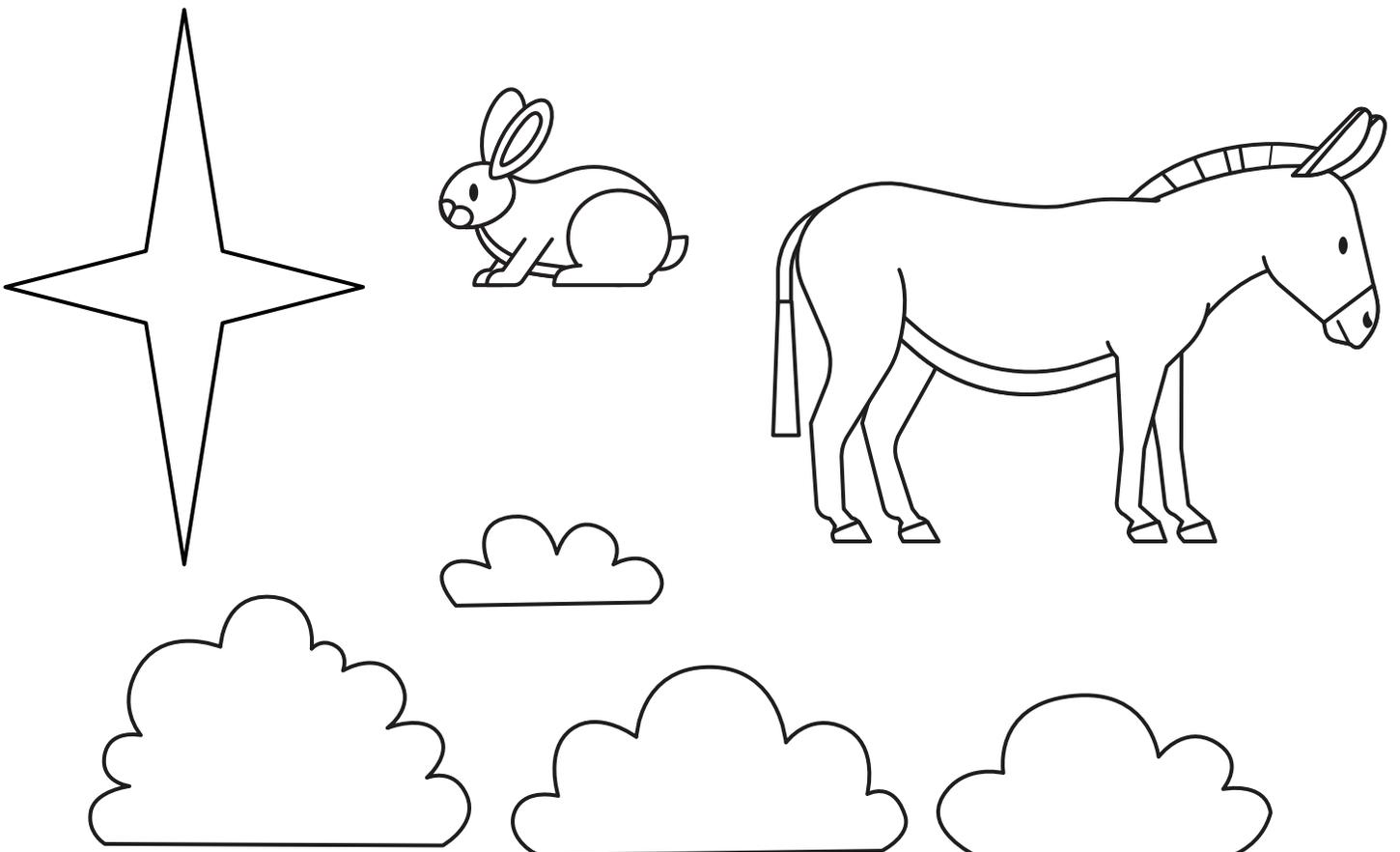
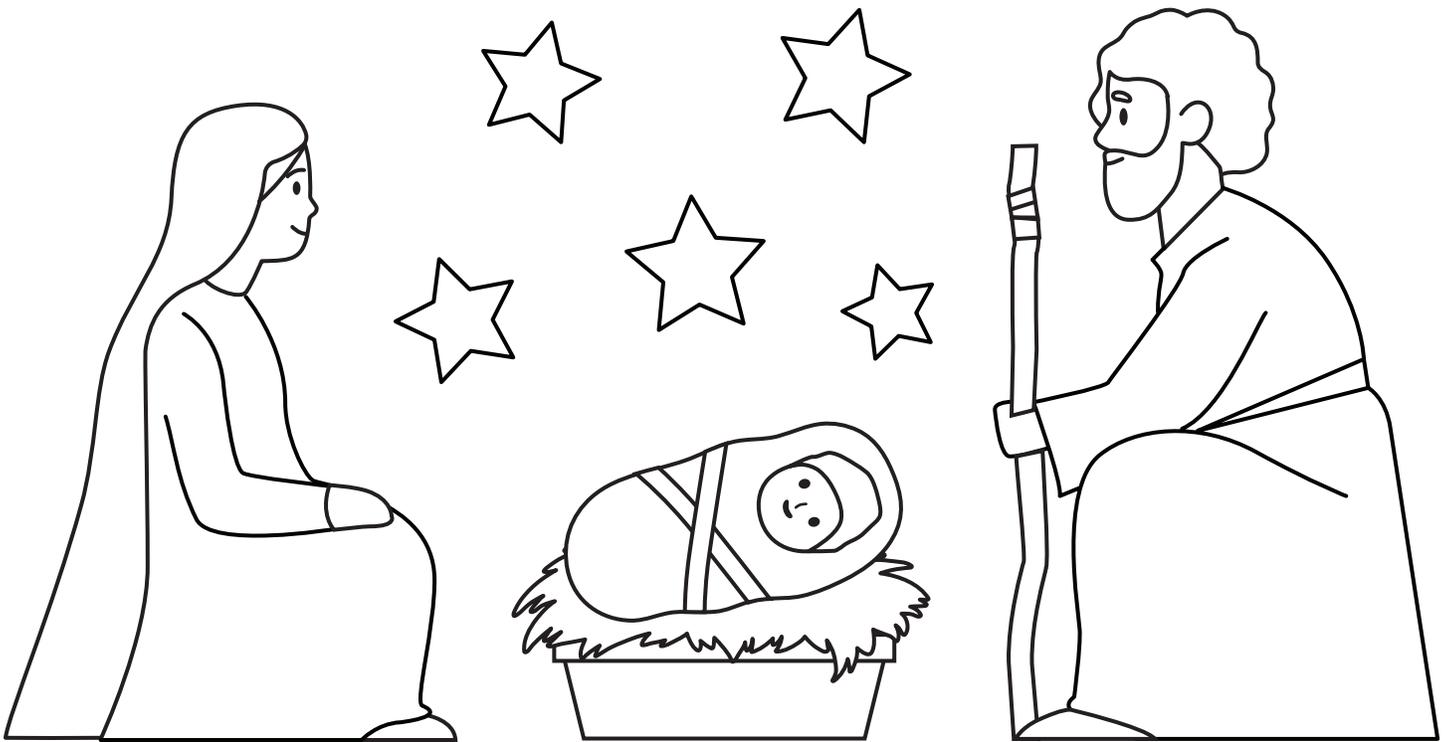
Shepherd One, Two, and Sheep



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CHARACTERS AND SCENERY

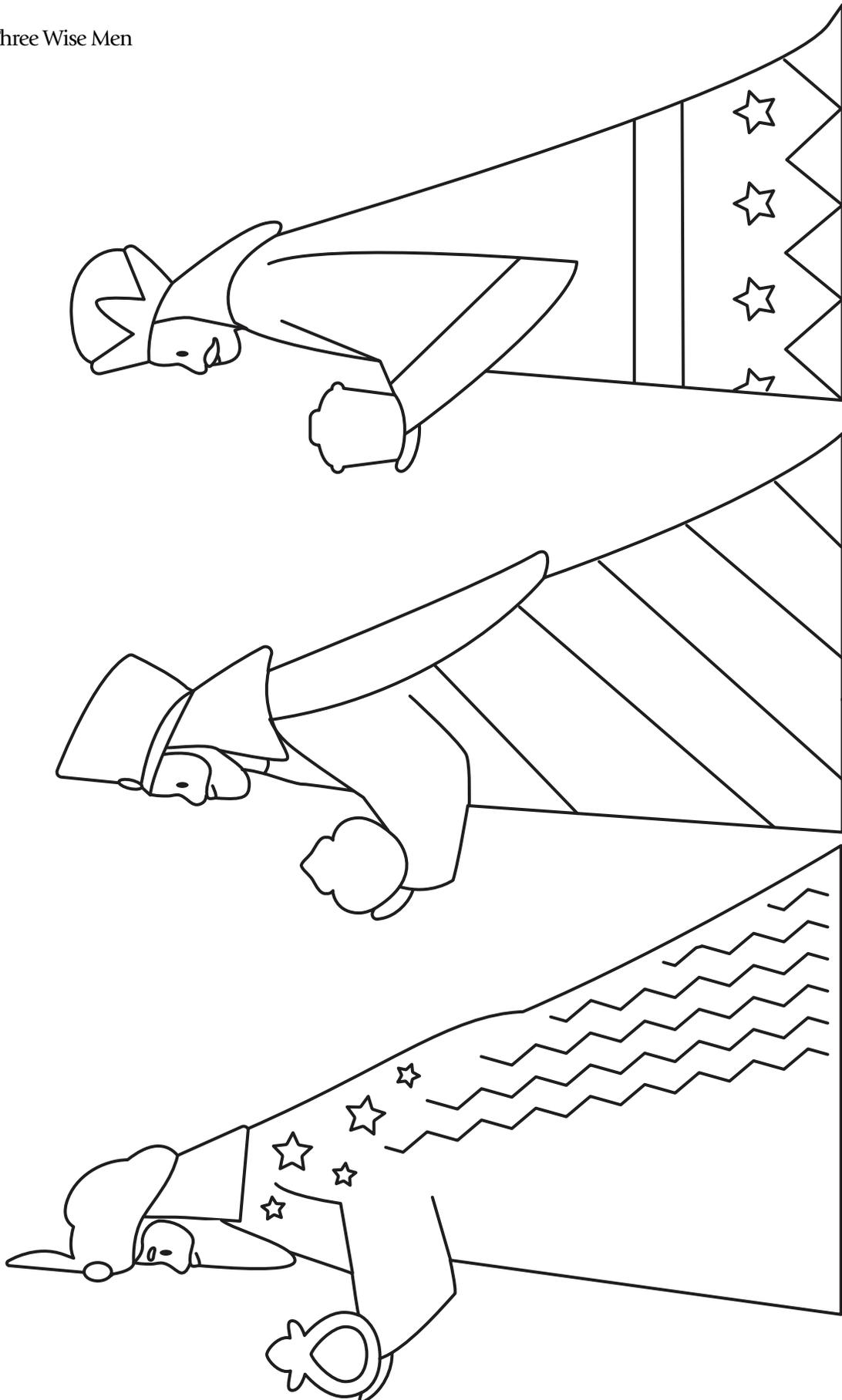
Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, Stars, Rabbit, Donkey, and Shrubs



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CHARACTERS AND SCENERY

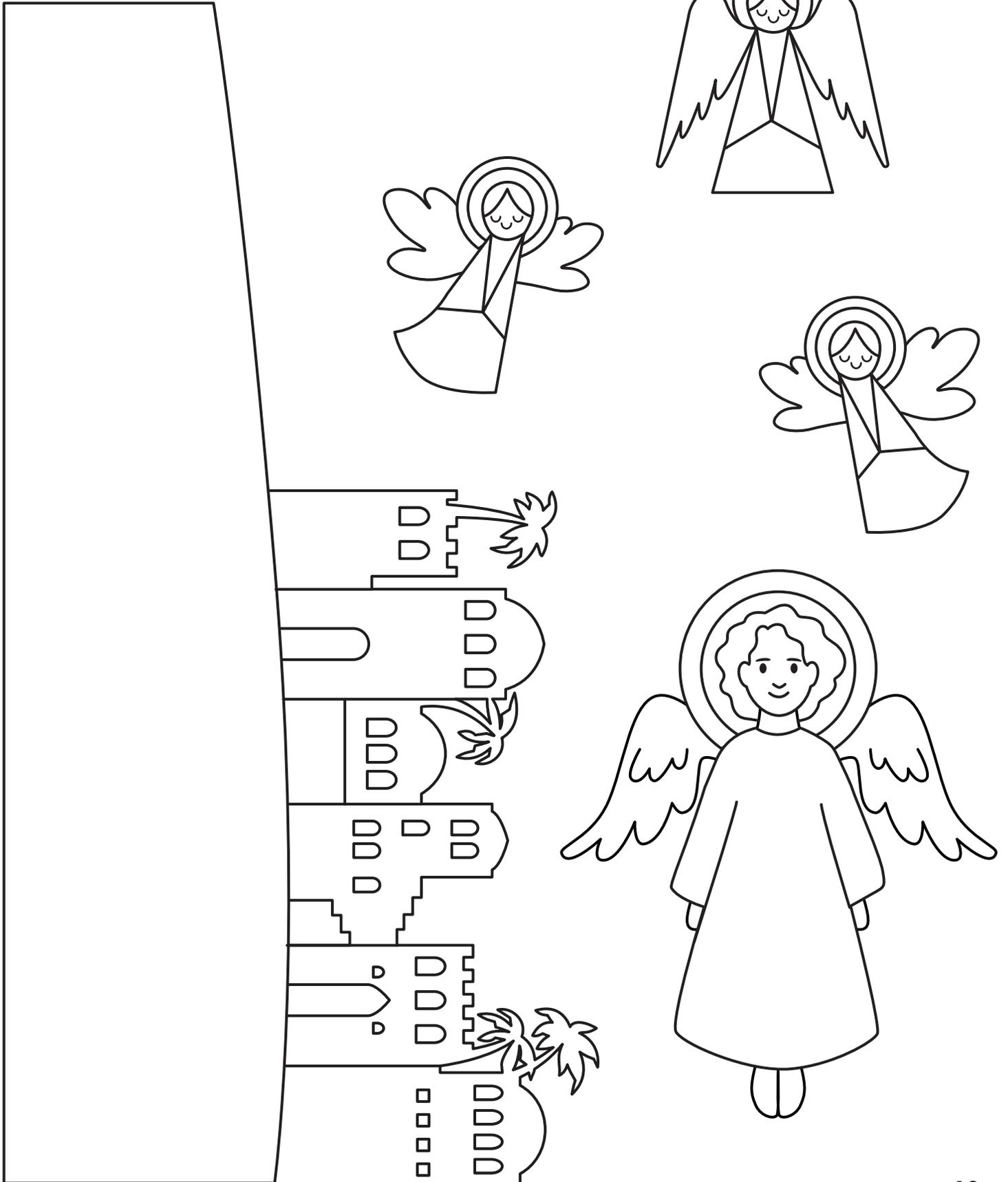
Three Wise Men



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CHARACTERS

Angel, Angels, and City of Bethlehem



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GOD'S MESSENGERS

A favorite part of any Christmas play, especially the little preschool plays, is the parade of little girls and boys dressed as angels. Who can resist the long white robes, white sparkly wings, and shiny halos hanging off to the sides of their heads? They bring smiles to your face and joy to your heart.

The word Advent means “coming.” Usually the first reading of any Advent celebration does not point to the manager but to the skies.

The Christmas angels were heavenly beings sent by God to deliver the news of Jesus’ conception and birth. But angels are not unique to the Christmas story and actually appear 273 times in Scripture.¹ They are spiritual beings created by God to do His work and share messages from God. The meaning of the word angel in Greek is messenger. Angels were created by God (Psalm 148:5) and they are spirits sent to serve believers (Hebrews 1:14).

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? —Hebrews 1:14

Angels play a big role in the Christmas story. The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to share God’s message that she would give birth to a baby (Luke 1:26-28). An angel also appeared to Joseph in a dream to tell him the news of Mary’s condition (Matthew 1:20). It was because of the message shared in Joseph’s dream that Joseph took Mary as his wife. An angel appeared to shepherds keeping watch over their sheep to tell them the good news of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10). Finally, the heavenly hosts were praising God came along with the angel who appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:13).

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” —Luke 2:8–14 (NIV)

The story would not be the same without the angels fulfilling the important role of carrying God’s message. But listen carefully to each message the angels carried. There was a common theme: “Do not be afraid.” Have you ever thought about what it would be like to see an angel in your dream, in front of you in your bedroom, or in the sky above? I would guess fear is probably the first response for most of us. But in learning to trust God’s faithfulness and fulfillment of His plan we learn not to fear.

“Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.” Marianne Williamson²

¹<https://www.learnreligions.com/what-does-the-bible-say-about-angels-701965>

²Williamson, Marianne. A return to Love: Reflections of the Principles of A Course



FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. How do you think you would feel if an angel appeared to you?
2. What do you think God might be asking you to do?
3. Have you ever felt God prompting you to do something hard or uncomfortable? Were you afraid?



Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: NARRATOR, SHEPHERDS, SHEEP, ANGEL, CLOUD OF ANGELS

NARRATOR: Close by, there were shepherds living in the fields.

They took turns watching their flock of sheep at night.

Suddenly, an angel of God appeared and the glory of God shone brightly around them.

NARRATOR: The shepherds stood there, afraid!

ANGEL: Don't be afraid! You have nothing to fear! I bring you good news. News of great joy to share with everyone! Today, in Bethlehem, a Savior, the Messiah, has been born. Here is your sign: look for an infant wrapped in simple cloth, lying in a manger.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, the whole sky shone even brighter and was filled with so many angels. They began praising God saying...

**ANGEL
(READ BY ALL):** Glory to God! Peace on earth and good will to all!

NARRATOR: Then the angels and the bright light left the sky.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show, and Merry Christmas! I hope this won't send you into orbit, Beau, but today our special guest is the Christmas angel!

BEAU THE DOG: I know this is gonna be great.

WORKSHOP GUY: I'm surprised you are being so calm about this. Well, let's get right to it then. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to the Christmas angel!

Angel enters stage.

WORKSHOP GUY: It is so good to have you with us.

ANGEL: It is so good to be here. Hey Beau.

BEAU THE DOG: (very calm) It's good to have you, Gabe.

WORKSHOP GUY: OK, I'm confused. You are almost out of control with each of our guests, and when we have an actual angel join us you act like you two hang out all the time.

ANGEL: Well, actually, we do hang out fairly often.

WORKSHOP GUY: You and my dog Beau hang out?

BEAU THE DOG: Sure. Most animals see angels. They are all over all the time. I saw you a couple of days ago?

ANGEL: Tuesday.

BEAU THE DOG: Yes, Tuesday.

WORKSHOP GUY: I find it hard to believe that you can just see angels.

BEAU THE DOG: You are all "okie dokie" that I can talk, but you get sideways cause I see angels?

ANGEL: That's weird.

BEAU THE DOG: Yeah, it is. So anyways—Gabe, tell us about the big night when y'all came down to the shepherds.



ANGEL: Well, there is a lot that God does that is surprising to us angels. But that night was crazy!

WORKSHOP GUY: Wait—so all animals see angels?

BEAU THE DOG: Well, not cats.

ANGEL: Of course not cats. When God told us that Jesus was being born that night—in a manger—well, it was the biggest thing since creation. We were so excited.

BEAU THE DOG: So why did you go to the shepherds and not the kings and the important folks first?

WORKSHOP GUY: Yeah why that . . . ?

ANGEL: This is sooooo God. Jesus was not coming to impress anyone. He came to save, and heal, and give hope to those who would listen. Kings mostly want things to stay the same. The poor and the lonely—the shepherds—were so ready for change. We came, and I told them about Jesus in the manger.

BEAU THE DOG: That was a shocker. The Messiah in a feeding trough.

WORKSHOP GUY: Yeah, shocker . . .

ANGEL: Then the choir of angels . . . Okay, I hear them sing a lot but just thinking about that night—it gives me chills. It was amazing. We all sang and worshipped Jesus. Immanuel . . .

BEAU THE DOG: That means “God with us”.

WORKSHOP GUY: Right . . . “God with us.”

BEAU THE DOG: Well Gabe, it was amazing to have you with us tonight. I thank you, the families thank you, and when he gathers himself, the Big Guy here will thank you, too.

ANGEL: My pleasure. Merry Christmas, everyone.

BEAU THE DOG: Thanks for being with us again. Come back next time and we will chat with the shepherds who heard y’all sing that night. Merry Christmas. (To Workshop guy) You come with me. We need to get you in a chair and maybe get you a nice hot beverage. Maybe some Ovaltine. How about that?

WORKSHOP GUY: But not cats. That makes sense . . .





Shepherds

UNLIKELY MESSENGERS

We treasure images of the nativity and the humble nature of Christ's birth. When I delve a bit deeper into who attended the birth, I have to admit I'm surprised God chose shepherds to reveal the truth about Jesus so quickly.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. — Luke 2:15–20 (NIV)

David, Israel's greatest king, had been a shepherd on Bethlehem's hills a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. Jerusalem and its temple were just a few miles from Bethlehem. The shepherds' income was derived by supplying lambs for Passover sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. Shepherds had been on those same hills for centuries.

Why would angels appear to shepherds? Though shepherding was the most ancient profession, it was not a particularly desirable one. It was a dirty job. Sheep are not independent animals and are completely dependent on their Shepherd for their food, health, and safety. Shepherds were seen as outsiders: looked down upon, resented, made fun of, and despised by the rest of the community.

But shepherding is a prominent theme in Scripture. Psalm 23 states "The Lord is my Shepherd . . ." God described as a shepherd is all over the Old Testament, and Jesus is described as a shepherd in the New Testament. John 10: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays His life down for the sheep . . . I know My own and My own know Me . . . I lay My life down for the sheep."

God clearly saw significance in the role of shepherding. He used the term shepherd to describe the leaders of His people in both the Old and New Testaments and even used the word to describe Himself. The book of Isaiah says, "He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young."

A 20th century shepherd Phillip Keller writes, "Our behavior patterns and life habits are so much like that of sheep it is well nigh embarrassing." Sheep are slow, weak, foolish, nervous, fearful, helpless and most importantly, totally dependent on their shepherd. The care of the shepherd profoundly impacts the condition of the sheep. Keller writes, "Under one man sheep would struggle, starve, and suffer endless hardship. In another's care they would flourish and thrive contentedly." Since humans are totally dependent on God, it is a wonderful blessing that Jesus, the "Chief Shepherd," is a good shepherd.¹

Two reasons come to mind when I question why God told the shepherds of Jesus's birth. First, shepherds had the capacity to be humbled and amazed that God chose them to hear the news. Imagine how unworthy they must have felt—but how honored. The second reason I think God chose shepherds is after they had seen Jesus, they “spread the word” concerning what they had seen (Luke 2:17).

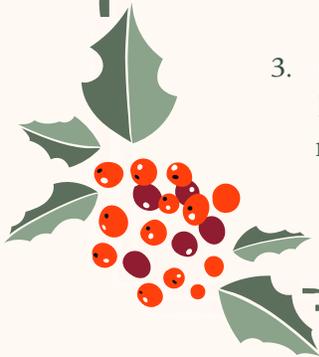
You know what happened when those simple shepherds spread the word that a Savior had been born? People were amazed! Those humble men took the Good News of Jesus and did just what God wanted them to do— told others.

God is always looking for the most unlikely person to share His message. God chose the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ to show the world He can use anyone.

¹Copyright © 2008 by Angie Mosteller. Source: http://www.celebratingholidays.com/?page_id=1586.

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. Why are the shepherds important to the Christmas story?
2. If the angels had appeared to you and you had the opportunity to see baby Jesus personally, would you have told others about it or kept it a secret? Why?
3. Come up with a list of people in our culture today who are looked down upon. Share why you think they have a negative reputation.



Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: NARRATOR, SHEPHERD1, SHEPHERD 2, ANGELS, SHEEP, SHRUBS, STARS, CITY OF BETHLEHEM

NARRATOR: We find a group of men sitting around a campfire on a hill outside of the city of Bethlehem. They were shepherds. Their job was to watch and lead their flocks of sheep, keeping them safe from harm.

SHEPHERD 1: Wow, it is such a beautiful night. The stars are shining, it's warm, and there is little wind. We should rest well tonight.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, there was a bright light in the sky and an angel of the Lord appeared.

ANGEL: DO NOT be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord. Here's what to look for: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

SHEPHERD 2: What was that? What did he say?

NARRATOR: Suddenly the sky was full of angels —lots of angels! They were singing, laughing, and praising God.

ANGEL: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill to all men.

SHEPHERD 1: Can you believe that? I'm not sure what that was. Did we really just see a bunch of angels singing in the sky?

SHEPHERD 2: I'm not sure, that light was so bright.

SHEPHERD 1: Do you think we should go to Bethlehem and see if we can find this baby they were talking about?

SHEPHERD 2: Let's go to Bethlehem! I have to see this.

NARRATOR: The shepherds hurried off and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying the manger just as the angels had told them. They were so excited they told everyone they knew and saw as they went back to the hills to take care of their sheep.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show, and it's getting closer . . . Merry Christmas! Tonight, we are going to meet one of the shepherds that was actually there on that first Christmas.

BEAU THE DOG: I can't wait! I have so many questions. So many things I want to find out.

WORKSHOP GUY: Well, let's get started then. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm so excited to introduce Sam the Shepherd!

Sam enters.

WORKSHOP GUY: Wow—that is quite . . . Welcome.

BEAU THE DOG: Stop the bus! What is that aftershave you are wearing, Sam?

SAM THE SHEPHERD: Oh, that? Well, it is well known that shepherds eventually smell . . . like stinky sheep.

WORKSHOP GUY: Oh my . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Oh, my heavens. That is the most wonderful scent. I smell sheep sweat with hints of shepherd sweat and some high notes of—mmmmm is that eucalyptus? Yes, I think so, and of course all over a foundation of sheepy droppings.

WORKSHOP GUY: (Suffering) Yep, that's what I got, too.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: I'm so sorry.

BEAU THE DOG: It's a little bit of heaven to us. Right?

WORKSHOP GUY: AH, yes. So, tell us about that first night in the fields outside of Bethlehem.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: It was just like any other night. I was getting sleepy, starting to doze off when—it was like the sun popped out— it was so bright.

BEAU THE DOG: It was Gabe. Gabe and I are friends.

WORKSHOP GUY: Stop. Let him talk.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: It was an angel. I thought my heart was gonna burst. We were frozen in fear. But he told us "Fear not." But his voice was so powerful I got even more scared.

BEAU THE DOG: Yeah. Gabe sings bass. Really powerful voice.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: He told us to go look for the baby Messiah in a feeding trough in town. It was crazy. No one would put a baby in a feeding trough—especially not the Messiah.

BEAU THE DOG: Then the choir. Tell us about the choir of angels. I love this part.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: As if one angel was not terrifying enough, the whole sky was filled with them. They sang, and I just stared and listened. I remember it like it was last night. It was the most beautiful thing I ever saw or heard.

WORKSHOP GUY: Then you went to find the baby?

SAM THE SHEPHERD: Yes. We went into town, and we looked into every nook and cranny. Then we found them. He was wrapped up tight in cloth and sure enough, He was in a feeding trough.

BEAU THE DOG: It's hard to write a song around a feeding trough so we—we call it a manger.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: I have to tell you—that stable was a mess. It smelled so bad in there—you cannot imagine.

WORKSHOP GUY: I think I can . . .

SAM THE SHEPHERD: But there He was. Sleeping in the manger. Mary was so tired. We told her about the angels. She smiled and praised God. She needed to hear that heaven opened up for her little boy. I'll never forget.

WORKSHOP GUY: Sam the Shepherd, thank you for coming to join us today. What a great story.

SAM THE SHEPHERD: My pleasure.

WORKSHOP GUY: Beau, why don't you take Sam and show him your toys outside.

BEAU THE DOG: Ooooh, good idea. Come on, Sam. I'll even dig up a couple things for you to see.

Beau and Sam exit the stage.

WORKSHOP GUY: Be sure to join us again next time when we will meet the wise men. You will not want to miss it. Thanks for being here. Merry Christmas. OK, Jerry, we need some air freshener in here now. Ivan, open some windows. I think my nose is burning . . .





Three Wise Men

BRINGING A MESSAGE FOR ALL

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the One Who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

*'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"*

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him."

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.
—Matthew 2:1–12 (NIV)*

Kings at that time were in the habit of gathering the best and brightest men and using them in advisory roles. These advisors would have been wise men, stargazers, and dreamers. "Magi" used in the Scripture comes from the Greek word "magos." This is the source of the English word "magic," and indicates these men were astronomers, astrologers, and interpreters of omens or dreams. We see that Magi are consulted in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 2:48) and by Pharaoh in the time of Joseph (Genesis 41). The Magi, being learned men, ones who had studied and would have known about the prophecies of the special Jewish savior. They would have seen an unusual and sudden appearance of a new star in the sky.

Although there are many myths about where these men came from, who they were, and their true intent for following the star, we know they are important to the story of Jesus' birth. They are not merely an afterthought to add pageantry to the telling of the Christmas Nativity story.

Why is this in the story of the birth account of the Savior? Firstly, Matthew's gospel presents Jesus as King of the Jews—a fulfillment of the Jewish prophecy of the Messiah. The fact that non-Jews could seek the Messiah reveals that Jesus isn't just the Jewish Messiah; He came for everyone. There is also significance in the types of gifts the Magi presented. Each one represents one aspect of Jesus. Gold

*represents His kingship, frankincense was a symbol of His priestly role and myrrh was an anointing oil used in preparation for a burial, which prefigures His sacrificial death.*¹

The most important thing about them, however, is what they did. First, they looked for Jesus. Second, when they found Him, they bowed down before Him and worshiped Him. They also gave Him costly gifts. The Bible says, “When they saw the star, they were overjoyed” (Matthew 2:10). Third, by modeling the gentile pursuit of Jesus, they illustrate the inclusion of gentiles and recognition of the Christ child as a Messiah ultimately for everyone.

Soon millions of people around the world will be celebrating Christmas, the birthday of Jesus Christ. What about you? Will it simply be another holiday, filled with food, presents, and good times—and nothing more? Or will you be like the wise men, seeking Him and coming to Him, and then worshiping Him and committing yourself to Him as your Savior and Lord?

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shone.” —Isaiah 9:1 (NIV)

¹The Reverend Joseph Garofalo, Outreach pastor, Island Christian Church, Northport



FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. Do you think God gives people signs today?
 2. What gifts do you think you would bring to baby Jesus if He was born today? Consider what would represent His kingship, roles as priest for all, and His ultimate sacrifice.
 3. What has been the shining star of the Christmas season for you? Has there been a moment when you realized God is really with you?
- 

Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: NARRATOR, WISE MAN 1, WISE MAN 2, STAR, CITY OF BETHLEHEM, MARY, JOSEPH, AND BABY JESUS

NARRATOR: One day a group of well-dressed men, their camels, and lots of servants entered the city of Bethlehem. These were not the everyday residents of this little town outside of Jerusalem. They started to ask questions around town.

WISE MAN 1: Where would we find the child born who is said to be the king of the Jews?

WISE MAN 2: We saw His star appear some time ago in the sky and have been following it here.

NARRATOR: Several people in town directed them to Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, who had moved to a small house in town. The star they had been following was over this place. They were overjoyed to have found Him at last.

WISE MAN 1: Is this the child who the prophets told us about many years ago? We have traveled a great distance to see Him. This is so exciting.

WISE MAN 2: We have brought gifts for you. These are special and priceless gifts to honor a King that has been born.

NARRATOR: The Wise Men had seen in a dream that they were to return to their own country after meeting Jesus.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show. What is getting closer all the time?

BEAU THE DOG: Christmas. Christmas is almost here!

Beau runs in circles.

WORKSHOP GUY: Of course, Christmas. So, as we celebrate and prepare to celebrate, I'm thrilled to introduce you all to our very special guests today . . .

BEAU THE DOG: We could have chatted with the three clever dudes. They were available, but we did not settle for that . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: What are you doing?

BEAU THE DOG: The three pretty smart brothers were begging to get on the show but noooooo—that would not have been good enough. Tonight, we have “The Three Wise Men”! See what I did there?

Enter the Wise Men.

WORKSHOP GUY: I saw. Welcome, gentlemen. Welcome to our show.

WISE MAN 1: (High voice) What a pleasure. Thanks for having us.

WISE MAN 2: (Low voice) We've been looking forward to this.

WISE MAN 3: (Funny voice) The snacks you have out back there are sooo nice. Been forever since I ate at a decent buffet.

WORKSHOP GUY: (Chuckles) I'm glad you like them. So, we have some questions for you . . .

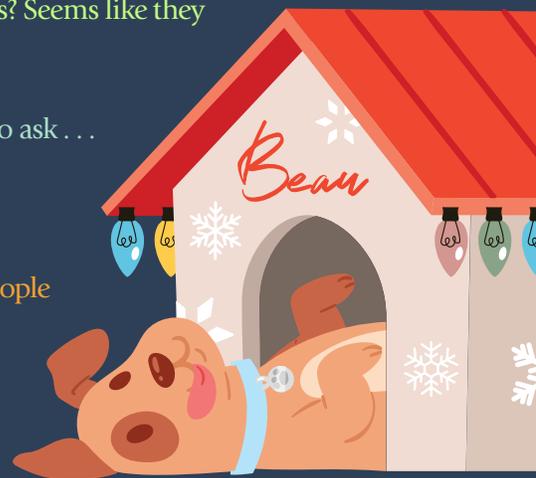
BEAU THE DOG: First off, do you always wear such fancy outfits? Seems like they would get hot after a while.

WORKSHOP GUY: That is not the kind of question we are going to ask . . .

WISE MAN 1: Mostly I do. You can get used to anything.

WISE MAN 2: Yeah, me too. It's the “Wise Men” uniform. People expect it.

WISE MAN 3: On casual Fridays I wear a ball cap.



WORKSHOP GUY: OK, let's get back on track. When did you first see the Christmas star?

WISE MAN 1: Months before. It took us a long time to get there.

WISE MAN 2: It was so exciting. Most of our friends thought we were crazy, but we have a saying, "Don't bet against a wise man." (laughs)

WISE MAN 3: It was worth all the miles and all the trouble. We got to see the baby Messiah and worship Him. Best day of our lives.

BEAU THE DOG: Next question . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: Stop Beau . . .

BEAU THE DOG: Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Really? For a baby? How about some cute PJs, a rattle, and a nice bouncy ball? What's up with the gifts, fellas?

WISE MAN 1: To tell you the truth, we didn't know why those gifts were chosen ourselves.

WISE MAN 2: We felt God prompting us to give those gifts. They were very expensive gifts.

WISE MAN 3: We learned later that the poor family was gonna have to move to Egypt just to be safe for a while. They had those gifts to sell and make it possible to keep the baby safe.

BEAU THE DOG: OK, sure if God told you and all . . . but next time you go to a baby party, take some toys and maybe a onesie for the kid.

WORKSHOP GUY: Thank you for coming gentlemen. What a treat. Next time . . .

BEAU THE DOG: I know what he's gonna say. I know what he's gonna say!

WORKSHOP GUY: We will chat with Jesus himself.

BEAU THE DOG: JESUS. JESUS. J-E-S-U-S, JESUS!

WORKSHOP GUY: We will see you next time. Goodbye everyone and good night.

BEAU THE DOG: Last one to the snack table has to eat the whole wheat bagel!

Beau and the three wise men run off stage.

WORKSHOP GUY: Whole wheat bagels are delicious. I don't understand why no one like whole wheat bagels . . .

WG exits too.



Jesus

THE PROMISED ONE

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."—Matthew 1:21 (NIV)

Christmas Eve services typically focus on images of the world's darkness being overtaken by the light of God's grace. As we gather this evening it is important to remember that this night is a celebration, a night to remember with family and friends. For many, after the busyness of the Christmas season, this is the first time you have sat down, taken a breath, and reflected on all that Christmas is really about. So let us reflect on Jesus and why He was born to walk this earth.

1. **Jesus was born to be a merciful High Priest**—The High Priest in the Old Testament stood as a mediator between God and man. He had to enter the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkle blood on the Ark's mercy seat in order to make an atonement for the people's sins. Jesus had to be born of a human in order to qualify as mankind's merciful High Priest in heaven. He had to experience the same temptations we do in order to be man's perfect intercessor with God.

For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. —Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

2. **Jesus was born to establish a new covenant**—Jesus was born to both end the Old Covenant in the Old Testament and establish a New Covenant with man made possible by His sacrifice. This new agreement with man promises, upon repentance and obedience, an eternal life full of love and happiness.

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. —Malachi 3:1 (NIV)

3. **Jesus was born to bring us into His family**—He was born to pay the price for our sins. He was born to die for us. Throughout all of His ministry He consistently showed us that God was loving, merciful, and full of grace. Ultimately, He showed us that through Him, He was the one way to have eternal life with God.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." —John 14:6 (NIV)

On Christmas morning we tend to ponder what took place the night before, we can hear Isaiah proclaim:

*How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
"Your God reigns!" —Isaiah 52:7 (NIV)*

Two thousand years after Jesus' birth He still promises to come back into our world. God's promise is a promise of peace. A promise of freedom. A promise of plenty, safety, and healing. When our world looks like the world God had envisioned, it will be time to sing.

In order to experience the magnitude of the Christmas story and really see the role of each character in the story, we must be willing to sit in the darkness, be visited by angels, follow God's calling even when it seems hard, wait for the morning dawn to appear, and ponder the mystery of a newborn Christ child sent from heaven to walk the earth as a human being just like you and me.



FAMILY DISCUSSION:

1. What is your favorite part of the Christmas story? Why?
2. If you could be anyone in the Christmas story, who would you be? Why?
3. What can you do during the new year that will help you remember the story of Christmas?

Christmas Story Script

CHARACTERS AND SCENERY: NARRATOR, MARY, JOSEPH, BABY JESUS, SHEPHERDS, SHEEP, SHRUBS, AND CITY OF BETHLEHEM

NARRATOR: So the shepherds hurried all the way to the city of Bethlehem. When they got there, they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. Baby Jesus was wrapped in simple cloth, lying in a manger . . . just like the angel said He would be. Then they left and told everyone they could about it. Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.



NOTE:

Turn to Luke 2 to read the whole story of Jesus's birth together as a family and act out the parts using the puppets.

Stories from the Workbench Script

WORKSHOP GUY: Welcome back to our show. Beau, is your place decorated and ready for Christmas?

BEAU THE DOG: My kennel has been decorated since September! Been playing Christmas carols since August. Is my place ready for Christmas?? YESSSSSSSSSSSS! I'm so excited for today!

WORKSHOP GUY: (Laughs) Me too, Beau. This is the high point of all our Christmas shows. Everyone we have met and heard from—everything in the entire Old Testament in fact—it all points to one thing . . .

BEAU THE DOG: JESUS!

WORKSHOP GUY: Let's give a warm welcome to Jesus, the Messiah.

Enter Jesus.

JESUS: So good to be here.

WORKSHOP GUY: Well, we are all beside ourselves today. Big question.

JESUS: OK.

WORKSHOP GUY: Why? Why go to all the trouble to leave heaven, become a helpless baby, live out a life of joy but also of struggle . . .

JESUS: There were struggles.

WORKSHOP GUY: Then to be killed on a cross . . . why would you willingly go through all of that?

JESUS: That's THE question. I'm glad you asked. If you get the answer to that question wrong, nothing makes sense. I did not come to find the good people only.

BEAU THE DOG: Thank goodness for that . . . Don't ask.

JESUS: I came to find the people who are lost and confused, the people who need to be freed and who need hope. I came to save people who need saving.

WORKSHOP GUY: We all need saving.

BEAU THE DOG: (Emotional) OK, I did it. I chewed up the leg of your chair.

WORKSHOP GUY: Buddy, I knew that.

BEAU THE DOG: (Very upset) And I scratched the paint off the back door!

WORKSHOP GUY: Beau, I know that.

BEAU THE DOG: I DRINK OUT OF THE TOILET SOMETIMES! (cries)

WORKSHOP GUY: OK, that one surprised me.

JESUS: I came to bring Good News to the poor. To proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free. I came because I love you. I came and died so we can spend eternity together. To answer your question simply—I came and lived and died because— I love you. Merry Christmas.

BEAU THE DOG: I just need a minute. That was sweet and powerful. Don't think I'm crying cause I'm not . . .

WORKSHOP GUY: That is the story of Christmas. Thank you, Jesus, for all you did for us. I can't wait to be with you in heaven.

JESUS: Me too. Merry Christmas.

WORKSHOP GUY: Merry Christmas, Jesus. Merry Christmas, everyone. Goodnight.

Jesus and WG exit stage together.

BEAU THE DOG: OK, I'm crying. So what? It was a very powerful moment. Merry Christmas.

Beau exits the stage.





Shadow Box



Instructions

Follow the instructions to create your own Christmas Shadow Box Theater. Don't be afraid to be creative and have fun!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Shoebox (any size)
- Wrapping Paper
- Characters and scenery pages 58–64
- Three to five pieces of color paper for the background and foreground of the shadow box. Paper count varies depending on box size.
- Scotch tape, double-sided tape, or glue
- Coloring pencils, crayons, or markers
- Toothpicks or dowel rods
- Flashlight



Shadow Box Assembly

STEP 1

Gather all of the materials needed. Tear off character and scenery pages for coloring and cutting.



STEP 2

Grab the shoebox and wrap it with your favorite wrapping paper.



STEP 3

Line the inside with colored paper. Cut out a strip of paper and tape it to the front of the box.



STEP 4

Color characters and scenery.



★ HELPFUL TIP

For areas with small spaces, color in with a dark color to avoid overcutting.



STEP 5

Cut out characters and tape toothpicks or dowel rods on the backs.



STEP 6

Arrange parts and start the show!





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