

***Bethlehem Barn* Activity Guide for Religious Educators**

Please also see the Parent/Caregiver Guide,
which contains additional discussion and activity suggestions.



- Write the following Bible verses on sticky notes. Have children work together to decide the best place in the story *Bethlehem Barn* for that particular Bible verse. Have them place the post-it on that page and explain their reasoning.
 - "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Luke 2:12 (This could be placed on the page where the animals are studying the sleeping infant).
 - "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." Matthew 2:10 (This could be placed on the page when the animals thrust their heads out the window to see the star).
 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall...have eternal life." John 3:16 (This could be placed in several different places: when the animals realize who the baby is, when Donkey tells about Mary and Joseph's talk of the angel, or at the end of the story.)
 - "I am a new creation in Christ; old things have passed away and all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:16 (This could be placed on the page when Donkey realizes he carried Mary and the unborn baby, without faltering).
 - "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for which such sacrifices God is pleased." Hebrews 13:16 (This could be placed when the animals are gathering their wool and feathers and hay to warm and comfort the baby Jesus).
 - "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (This could be placed on the page when the animals realize their gifts worked together to make the baby Jesus warm and comfortable).
- *Bethlehem Barn* cites some of the names Jesus is known by: King of Kings, Prince of Peace, and Lamb of God. Ask the children what other names He is known by. Have some Bible verses ready if they need help with this. Have children write the names on construction paper stars and use the stars to decorate a tree or string them together to make a garland. Another idea is to have the children write the various names on book marks for them to take home to use or to give as gifts.

Some names include Wonderful Counselor, Bread of Life, Deliverer, Good Shepherd, Advocate, Immanuel, Light of the World, Messiah, Christ, Redeemer, and Rock.

- We know from the story that Bird listened to sermons at the temple and shared what he learned with the other barn animals. Ask the children what the Bible says about sharing the gospel. Matthew 28:19-21 says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." What are ways, big and small, Christians may do this?

Possibilities include growing up to be a church leader; doing missions work; teaching Sunday school or religious education; joining the choir or a band to share the message through music; inviting someone to church; reading a Bible story to a younger sibling, friend or relative; sharing a bookmark or homemade ornament with a Bible verse on it.

- Bird knew about the prophecies of Jesus' birth from listening to the sermons at the temple. What prophecies may he have heard? If children are able, have them locate Bible verses about Jesus' birth and the significance of His birth, or use the verses provided below. Have children write them on cards or on cut-out shapes of stars or ornaments for Christmas tree decorations.

Biblical prophecies about Jesus' birth:

"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

"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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6



The significance of the birth of Jesus:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall ... have eternal life." John 3:16

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." John 6:51

"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness." John 12:46

- The animals each gave a gift that worked together to warm and comfort the baby Jesus. Have children work in pairs to read the Bible verses below and determine the common thread among them (caring for others). Can they share other Bible verses about caring for others? Discuss ways to fulfill these verses in everyday lives as well as in more significant ways.

"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Hebrews 13:16

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Romans 12:13

"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:17-18.

- Discuss the hustle and bustle surrounding this time of year. Talk about ways to focus on the true meaning of Christmas and not become distracted by the busyness of the holiday season. Some possibilities are below.
 - Make time for reading and reflecting on the Bible. The book of Luke, which tells of Jesus' birth, has twenty-four chapters; one could be read each day in December leading to Christmas. There are also many advent devotionals available for children as well as adults.
 - Bake a birthday cake for Jesus on Christmas Eve or Christmas, or make Him a birthday card. Be sure to include a note about all the things for which you are thankful.



- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or ring the bells for the Salvation Army.
 - Visit someone in a nursing home.
 - Send cards to people in nursing homes and/or to veterans' organizations.
 - Find quiet time each day, even if it's just a few minutes admiring the stars at night or turning out the lights at home and enjoying the glow of the Christmas tree.
 - Make a list of things for which you're grateful.
 - Read books and watch movies that are about the true meaning of Christmas.
 - Visit a live nativity scene.
- Discuss why it is important to memorize Bible verses. Ask each child to select a Bible verse from the activities above that they will commit to memory.



If you've created other discussion questions or activities for *Bethlehem Barn*, please share them at www.debrawestgatesilva.com.