

The Love of God

Lesson 16a — The Angel Talks to Mary and Joseph

Lesson 16b — The Angels and the Shepherds

Lesson 16c — The Birth of Jesus

Lesson 16d — The Wise Men Come

OVERVIEW

The theme of our December unit is The Love of God. In Scripture, love is presented as the very nature of God — God not only loves, but He is love. God loves the world as a whole, but also every individual. What better illustration of God's love could there be than the fact that He sent His own Son to this earth?

Throughout the month we will study the Christmas story in step-by-step detail. Our first lesson tells how the angel appeared to Mary and Joseph and revealed to them the awe-inspiring news that a Child would be born who would be the Son of God. The next lesson focuses on the angelic messengers who brought the shepherds the joyous news that a Savior had been born in Bethlehem. On the Sunday before Christmas, the birth of Jesus will be taught. The

following Sunday will conclude the series with a lesson on the Wise Men who followed the Star to find the Christ Child.

Try to help your primary children to see this series of events as more than just a fragment of history. They need to feel the personal nature of God's Gift to them. They need to understand that it was because God loved them, individually, that He sent Jesus to this earth.

In many of our churches, this will be a busy month due to the preparation of special programs for the holiday season. The actual stories themselves may be somewhat familiar to your students, so particularly emphasize the theme of the unit, the love of God.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS UNIT

Refer to Units 4 and 28 for additional ideas concerning the lessons in this unit. Although the specific lesson objectives may be different, the patterns provided and activities suggested will be applicable in many cases.

GAMES FOR REVIEW

Make a large advent-type calendar, but don't number the windows. Use old Christmas cards and pictures to put behind the windows. Choose windows at random and open one at a time. Have the children tell what each picture is about and what lesson it goes with.

Use the picture cube to review the Christmas season events which are covered in this month's series of lessons (see Patterns). Cut, fold, and glue as indicated by tabs. Have your students take turns tossing the cube to one another. Each student should take a turn telling a part of the story surrounding one of the pictures.

Prepare a complete set of stars for each student (see Patterns). They should match up the two parts of each memory verse to make four stand-up stars. Have everyone say the verses together and tell to which lesson each verse belongs.

CONTEST IDEAS

Start a candy cane wreath for each child (see Patterns). Purchase small, cellophane-wrapped candy canes for the children to add to their wreaths each Sunday. Some children may add as many as four or five a week, so be prepared with plenty! They may add candy canes for attendance, learning their memory verses, bringing their Bibles, good behavior, missionary efforts, etc.

Give each student a copy of the treasure chest representing gifts for Jesus (see Patterns). Each Sunday give a colored star to each child for attendance, bringing his Bible, knowing the memory verse, bringing a friend, etc. The stars should be added to the treasure chest.

For each student make a copy of the chart depicting the shepherds on the hillside with their sheep (see Patterns). Each week add a sticker for each accomplishment; for example, an angel for attendance, a sheep for good behavior, a star for bringing Bible.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Have your students bring pictures of babies (from magazines, catalogs, photos, etc.) and let them have a part in

creating your board. (Be sure to label any pictures they will want returned to them.) Let them frame their pictures with colored paper and arrange them on the board. Place a larger picture of Baby Jesus in the center of the board. Be sure to frame it also. Title your board, **PRECIOUS GIFTS**. Use the subtitle, *The Best Gift Of All, Baby Jesus*.

Create a bulletin board featuring Christmas bells (see *Patterns*). Center the title, **COME ON, RING THOSE BELLS**, over a bright red background. Cut the bells from silver or gold metallic paper. Use blue or green construction paper for the ribbon and bow. Attach real evergreen branches where indicated, or make them from green paper.

Use a **JOY** bulletin board (see *Patterns*) to illustrate one of the most important words of the season, for the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth not only came to the shepherds, but to us as well. Use a light blue background. The letters of **JOY** can be cut from Christmas gift wrap. Cap each of the letters with white construction paper or cotton to give the idea of snow. Then hang a large ribbon bow from the letter **O**.

Over a dark blue background which represents the sky, put the title, **JOY TO THE WORLD** (see *Patterns*). On the left side of the board have a picture or drawing of children singing carols. Add silver stars and white snowflakes. On the right side place a Christmas tree cut from construction paper. Decorate the tree with tinsel garland and foil ornaments. Cotton may be used for snow on the ground. Add tinsel garland and lights around the border of the board.

Title your board, **COME AND WORSHIP** (see *Patterns*). To help illustrate the Bethlehem scene, place the city on the lower left-hand side of the board. Then put the Wise Men on the lower right-hand side. Place the stable in the center of the board, outside of the city. Above the stable have a star shining downward.

CHART IDEAS

Help the children create a Christmas memory ornament of God's love. Make copies of the angel ornament (see *Patterns*) for each child. Let them cover it with clear contact paper and cut it out. Then help them learn the

poem. Tell them to keep it with their other ornaments at home and use it each year. This can bring to mind the real meaning of Christmas.

Make a copy of the Christmas ornaments (see *Patterns*) for each of your students. Let the children color the ornaments, cover them with clear contact paper, then cut them out. Punch a hole in each ornament where indicated and string some thread or yarn through the hole. When they are finished, the students may take them home to decorate their Christmas tree.

For each child make a copy of the circle chart which has four pictures representing each Sunday's lesson (see *Patterns*). Fasten the two parts together in the center with a paper fastener. Show the appropriate picture each week.

Put together a gift booklet for each student (see *Patterns*). For each booklet, cut out the five gift shapes and staple them together along the left edge. Each week have the children color the pre-drawn pages illustrating that week's lesson.

Make Nativity napkin rings for the children (see *Patterns*). Cut paper towel rolls into one-inch rings. Glue one of the characters onto each ring. These napkin rings may be given to the children as favors or you may use them at your Christmas party. Another idea would be to let the children color the pictures, glue them to the napkin rings, and give them as gifts.

UNIT SONGS

"For God So Loved the World"

"Away In a Manger"

"Loving Means Giving"

"Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, Leading Wise Men From Afar"

"I'm His Little Lamb"

UNIT SUPPORT MATERIAL

Birth of Jesus — Pict-o-graph, Standard Publishing

Jesus Is Born — Classroom color and activity book, 8 each of 6 pictures, Standard Publishing