

The Good News Story

Four Sunday School Session Outlines for Advent

1. The Holy Family

Unwrapping the Theme

- Read the scripture: Luke 2:1–7.
- Read and reflect on the subject of the Holy Family (see the Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)).

Supplies and Preparation

- Purchase or borrow a Nativity set that has unbreakable pieces.
- Hide the pieces of the Nativity set in different locations. Do not include the magi.
- Have on hand Popsicle sticks, craft glue, raffia, ribbon or wire, wooden circles, brown construction paper or felt, felt tip pen, scissors, crayons, and markers.
- Organize ingredients for the manger snacks or prepare them ahead.

Welcome

Invite the children into a conversation about family, avoiding assumptions that each child lives in a nuclear family. Discuss why family is important to us. What do we like best about family? Ask some general questions about travelling with one's family such as, "Have you ever been on a trip with your family?" "Where did you go?" "What did you do?"

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for all those who love and care for us. We are happy to spend time with them at home and when we are travelling, and we know that you are with us wherever we go.

Bless our time together today and help us to learn more about you through our stories and activities. Amen.

Introducing the Theme

Share the story of Mary and Joseph: "Mary and Joseph travelled a long way to Bethlehem. They had to walk there, but sometimes, when she got tired, Mary would ride on their donkey. When they finally arrived in Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay. Mary was about to have a baby, so they had to accept the only place that was offered to them—a place where the animals were stabled. Here's our animal shelter, but where are Mary and Joseph? Where are the animals? Let's go on a scavenger hunt to find them!"

Travelling to Find the Family—a Scavenger Hunt

Either let the children loose to find as many pieces of the hidden Nativity set as possible or hand each child a clue to help them discover where a specific piece is hidden.

As the children bring their pieces back to form the Nativity scene, talk about the importance of each piece to the story of Jesus' birth.

Exploring the Theme

Share the Holy Family's Story (see the Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)). It's a dialogue between Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah. Then encourage a conversation with the children.

Conversation Starters

- Mary and Elizabeth were both going to have a baby. They were both excited, but Mary was worried, too. Why would she be worried? How did Joseph help ease her fears?
- Do you have a baby brother or sister? What does it feel like to have a baby in your family? Did the baby's arrival change your family?
- The story of Jesus' birth helps us to see how special Jesus was right from the time he was born. Even though he was born a long time ago, in a lowly shelter among the animals, he became a very important person for all of us today. What do you think about the story of Jesus' birth?

Following the conversation, invite the children to make an ornament as a reminder of how special the birth story of Jesus is for us.

Crafts and Colouring

- Jesus in a manger ornament: www.housingaforest.com/popsicle-stick-manger-craft/
- Christmas decorations: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503485752872/
- Colouring sheets: www.colorluna.com/jesus-nativity-in-cartoon-depiction-coloring-page/jesus-nativity-in-cartoon-depiction-coloring-page/
www.adventunwrapped.ca/stories/the-holy-family
- Activity sheets: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503485752882/
- Manger snacks: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503483816743/

Closing Prayer

God of light and love, we thank you for the gift of the baby Jesus. We thank you for loved ones and all the ways in which the people we care about help one another. May we remember to help out in our families every day.

Be with us as we travel through Advent and celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus. Amen.

2. The Angels

Unwrapping the Theme

- Read the scripture: Luke 2:8–14.
- Read and reflect on the subject of angels (see the Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)) in the Advent story.

Supplies and Preparation

- Have ready large paper clips, large white beads, coloured ribbon, crayons, and markers.
- Print out the following in a large font and then cut up the wording into short phrases and/or individual words:
“Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”
- Spread the words/phrases on a table.
- Organize ingredients for the angel snacks or prepare them ahead.

Welcome

Invite the children into a conversation about a time when they had exciting news to share, e.g., a new baby in the family or a new pet. How did they feel? Ask, “What was it like to share your good news with others?”

Opening Prayer

God of angels and Good News, we thank you for the opportunity to hear the story of Jesus’ birth and to feel the wonder of your love for us. Help us to share the excitement of the angels as we hear the Good News they came to give us. Amen.

Introducing the Theme

Ask the children, “What would it be like to receive a special message from God and to be asked to share that message with others? In the Bible, we learn about the message that the angel brought to the shepherds. Here are all the words that the angel said. Can you help to put them in order?”

Unscrambling the Angel’s Message—Group Activity

Invite the children to work together to put the words/phrases in order.

Exploring the Theme

Share with the children how, after Jesus was born, God sent messengers to herald the Good News of Jesus’ birth. Read the Angel’s Story (Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)). Invite the children into a conversation.

Conversation Starters

- Why was Angeline afraid? How would you feel if God gave you a special message to share?
- How did Angeline overcome her fear? Who do you talk to when you are feeling uncertain?

Following the conversation, invite the children to make an angel ornament as a reminder of the Good News that the angels brought.

Crafts and Colouring

- Angel ornaments: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503492115426/
www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503492115449/
www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503492115676/
- Angels to colour: www.adventunwrapped.ca/stories/angels/
- Colouring for older children: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845788/
- Angel snacks: www.pinterest.com/pin/197595502376298536/
www.pinterest.com/pin/176766354099843025/

Closing Prayer

God of love, we thank you for those that bring us messages of hope, peace, and joy. Help us to be messengers of that same good news every day. May we share your love with everyone we meet and celebrate the angel's message throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. Amen.

3. The Shepherds

Unwrapping the Theme

- Read the scripture: Luke 2:15–20.
- Read and reflect on the role of the shepherds (see the Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)) in the Advent story.

Supplies and Preparation

- Have ready beach balls (one per child) that have a little water in each to make them more stable.
- Depending on the crafts your group selects (see “Crafts and Colouring” below), have ready white yarn or large white pompoms or cotton balls or marshmallows, black construction paper, black pipe cleaners, small googly eyes, craft glue, craft wire, scissors, ribbon, crayons, and markers.
- Organize the ingredients for the sheep snacks or prepare them ahead.

Welcome

Invite the children into a conversation about a time when they were frightened. Ask questions such as, “What happened?” “Who did they go to for help?” “How did they feel?”

Opening Prayer

God of shepherds and sheep, we thank you that you bring your Good News to all of us. Help us to hear your message of hope and love and learn the story of Jesus’ birth so that we can share the Good News just as the shepherds did so long ago. Amen.

Introducing the Theme

Share with the children how the shepherds in the story of Jesus’ birth had a difficult and often lonely job. They watched over their sheep far from any town. Both the shepherds and the sheep were vulnerable to attacks from wild animals. Invite the children to imagine what it might have been like to be a shepherd by playing a herding game.

Herding Sheep—a Game

Bring out the beach balls and invite the children to draw an outline of a sheep’s face on each ball. Create a “corral” with a few chairs and then have the children work in relay teams to guide their “sheep” into the “corral.” Another option would be to have a “free for all” and see how fast the children can herd the sheep into the “corral” by working together.

Exploring the Theme

Emphasize again how difficult the life of a shepherd could be. Also, share how shepherds in the time of Jesus were marginalized members of society. They were seen as dirty and rough and of

an inferior social standing. And yet it was to shepherds that God first brought the Good News of Jesus' birth. Read the Shepherd's Story (Advent Unwrapped Story and Activity Cards).

Conversation Starters

- What would it feel like to have an angel visit you and share a message from God?
- What responsibility did God give to the shepherds?

Following the conversation, invite the children to make a sheep ornament as a reminder of the shepherds who first heard the Good News of Jesus' birth.

Crafts and Colouring

- Sheep ornaments: www.pinterest.com/pin/287597126184115041/
www.pinterest.com/pin/240942648790166653/
www.pinterest.com/pin/510103095269085308/
- Colouring sheets: www.pinterest.com/pin/354517801893134550/
www.pinterest.com/pin/550846598143351886/
- Activity sheets: www.pinterest.com/pin/465067099011135139/
- Sheep snacks: www.pinterest.com/pin/330803535106274449/;
www.pinterest.com/pin/249175791862403075/
www.pinterest.com/pin/306878162087916779/

Closing Prayer

God of love, we thank you for the message you gave to the shepherds. Help us to be brave messengers of your Good News so that others will know that you love them, too. Amen.

4. The Animals

Unwrapping the Theme

Read and reflect about the role of animals (see the Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)) in the Advent story.

Supplies and Preparation

- For mouse ornaments have small, wrapped candy canes, grey and red felt, and googly eyes, or grey and pink pipe cleaners, Popsicle sticks, and buttons depending on the craft idea chosen. For both mouse craft options, provide craft glue and scissors.
- Have crayons and markers for colouring.
- Organize ingredients for mouse snacks or prepare them ahead.

Welcome

Ask the children about their favourite animals. Then ask them what kind of animals they think would have been present when baby Jesus was born.

Opening Prayer

God of creatures great and small, we thank you for all the wonderful varieties of animals in the world. Help us to take good care of all your creatures—the ones that crawl and the ones that swim and the ones that walk and the ones that fly—because you created them all with love. Amen.

Introducing the Theme

Talk with the children about Mary, Jesus' mother, and how she chose to lay the new baby in a manger. Make sure the children know that a manger is a trough where animals, like cows and horses, would come to eat their food. Ask the children, "Can you imagine the animals' surprise when they found a tiny baby sleeping in their manger? Let's play a game to find out which animals might have been there."

The Animals at Jesus' Birth—a Memory Game

Print out memory game sheets (www.pinterest.com/pin/472033604673079968/) on cardstock (or use memory game cards that feature animals) and have the children take turns trying to match the animals.

Exploring the Theme

Share the story of Ya-akov the mouse in The Animals' Story (Advent Unwrapped [Story and Activity Cards](#)). Use the following conversation starters to begin an exchange of ideas.

Conversation Starters

- What do you think the animals thought of having such a special baby use their manger for a bed?
- How do we celebrate this special gift that we receive at Christmas?

Following the conversation, invite the children to make a mouse ornament as their reminder of Ya'akov's story and how the little mouse recognized that Jesus was a special gift.

Crafts and Colouring

- Mouse ornaments: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845596/
www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845741/;
- Colouring sheets: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845663/
- Mouse snacks: www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845600/;
www.pinterest.com/pin/335377503491845665/

Closing Prayer

God of love, thank you for your gift of Jesus. We are grateful for all the animals, all the people, and all the angels that helped to share your message of love at Christmas. Help us to hold on to your gift of love throughout the Christmas season and always. Amen.