

Bible Point ▶

Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.

Bible Verse

“The Savior...has been born today in Bethlehem” (Luke 2:11a).

Growing Closer to Jesus

Children will ■ learn that Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem,
 ■ understand that God kept his promise by sending Jesus,
 ■ discover the best gift they can give Jesus, and
 ■ teach Pockets about Jesus’ birth.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

■ **Jesus is born in Bethlehem.**

**Luke
2:1-7**



Today’s story begins with the announcement of a census by the king of the known world and ends with the birth of the King of the entire universe!

In between, we see Mary and Joseph experiencing a long, arduous journey of several days from Nazareth to Judea. We see that they made this journey to obey the law, but that it led them to Bethlehem—not only the boyhood home of Joseph’s ancestor David, but the town prophesied in Micah 5:2 to be the birthplace of the Messiah.

When Jesus was born, Mary took care to wrap him carefully with strips of cloth, as was the practice of the day to keep babies’ arms and legs straight. This also would have identified the baby as a newborn, so that the shepherds coming to worship the baby Jesus would recognize him.

This week the kids in your class will undoubtedly be excited about Christmas, and that’s good! But the birth of Jesus can easily take a back seat to the excitement of gifts and parties. Use this lesson to help your children focus on what Christmas is really all about.

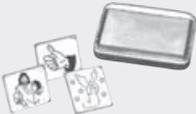
Prayer

- Read Micah 5:2. How does this verse play into this week’s story?
- Where does the birth of Jesus fit into your Christmas celebration?
- Pray: God, help me to give my class an example of someone who’s devoted to you this Christmas as I...

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use. Refer to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies columns to determine what you’ll need.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned...” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction in teaching the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome Time	Welcome! —Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.	“Star Name Tags” (p. 26), markers, pins or tape	
Let’s Get Started Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Option 1: My Heart —Make heart ornaments.	Colored wrapping paper, stapler, ribbon	
	Option 2: Light Up the Sky! —Paint a night sky on the <i>Learning Mat</i> to prepare it for today’s story.	Clothespins, cotton balls, liquid soap, blue paint, pie tins, newspapers, crayons	
	Option 3: Class Counting —Make a record of class members.	Paper, pencils, crayons	
	Pick Up Our Toys —Sing a song as they pick up toys, and gather for Bible Story Time.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Setting the Stage —Try to fit in where there’s no room.	Masking tape, paper plates	
	Bible Song and Prayer Time —Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.	Bible, basket of surprise cards from Lesson 1, CD player	
	Hear and Tell the Bible Story —Participate in a puppet show about Jesus’ birth based on Luke 2:1-7.	Blanket, craft sticks, facial tissue, transparent tape, CD player	
	Do the Bible Story —Guess what noises Joseph and Mary might have heard in the stable that night, sing a song to celebrate Jesus’ birth, and visit the nativity scene with clay figures.	CD player, toothpicks	
Closing 	No Kangaroo —Help Pockets learn that everyone can celebrate Jesus’ birth.		
	Hearts for Jesus —Wrap gifts for Jesus, and pray.	Hearts from Option 1, wrapping paper, tape, scissors, ribbon	

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.

Welcome Time

Welcome!

SUPPLIES: “Star Name Tags” handout (p. 26), markers, pins or tape

- Kneel down to make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s “Today I Learned...” discussion. Ask questions such as “How did your family celebrate Jesus’ birth?” and “What ways did you praise God?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.**
- Hand out the star name tags children made in Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if some of the children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout.
- Direct the children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.



It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.



Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and direct children’s conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “What’s the best gift you’ve ever received?” or “What gifts does God give to you?”

Option 1: My Heart

SUPPLIES: colored wrapping paper, stapler, ribbon

Set out 1x9-inch strips of red, green, and gold wrapping paper. Have children work in pairs to make heart ornaments. Demonstrate how to place three strips together and make a loop and then pull each strip to a different length, as shown in the margin. Help each child staple the loop at the bottom and then make a second loop. Have one partner hold the two loops together while the other partner staples them together to make a heart. Show children how to slip a loop of ribbon between two halves of the heart and staple it to make a hanger. As children work, explain that God loves us and sent Jesus to save us. Tell children that ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.



If some children don’t choose Option 1, have volunteers make extra hearts so each child has one.



Option 2: Light Up the Sky!

SUPPLIES: clothespins, cotton balls, liquid soap, blue paint, pie tins, newspapers, crayons



Cover your work area with newspapers, and lay the *Learning Mat: Nativity* on top. Have children use yellow and white crayons to color in the small stars in the sky. As children are working, pour dark blue or violet paint in pie tins, and add a few drops of liquid soap. Make paint daubers by clipping cotton balls to the ends of several clothespins. Show children how to dip their cotton balls in paint and then paint over the sky, being careful to avoid the large star in the middle. Explain that today's story tells us that **Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem**. Set the finished *Learning Mat* in a warm, sunny place to dry.



BIBLE POINT

Option 3: Class Counting

SUPPLIES: paper, pencils, crayons



Before class make a census chart like the one in the margin. As children come to class, have a helper show them how to write their names in the left-hand column and then write the number of people in their families in the right-hand column. Give children a sheet of paper, and instruct them to make a class census. Children may draw a picture, make a thumb print with the *ink pad*, or make a simple crayon mark to represent each member of the class. Explain that in today's story they'll hear about a time when the king ordered that a record be made of all the people in his kingdom.

When everyone has arrived and you're ready to move on to the Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they're doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick Up Our Toys

SUPPLIES: CD player



Lead children in singing "Pick Up Our Toys" (track 2) with the *CD* to the tune of "Skip to My Lou." Encourage the children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

You'll be using this song each week to alert children to start picking up. At first they may need a little encouragement. But after a few weeks, picking up and singing along will become a familiar routine.

If you want to include the names of all the children in your class, sing the song without the *CD*, and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the *CD*, vary the names you use each week.



SING

**We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys
And put them all away.**

**There's [name] picking up toys.
There's [name] picking up toys.
There's [name] picking up toys,
Putting them all away.**

(Repeat.)

Bible Story Time

■ *Setting the Stage*

SUPPLIES: masking tape, paper plates

Tell the children you'll clap your hands to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, children are to stop what they're doing, raise their hands, and focus on you. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Before this game, use masking tape to make a large X in the middle of the room. Then put three paper plates at different places around the room. Gather children and say: **When I say "go," you'll have five seconds to touch a paper plate. When I say "stop," you need to be either on a plate or on the big X. The X is our safety zone. If you're not on a plate or on the X when I say "stop," you're out of the game. Ready? Go!** After five seconds, say: **Stop! Let's make this a little more challenging by taking one of the paper plates away.** Take one plate away, and play again. Then remove one more plate before playing again. After you call "stop," gather children together and ask:

- **What was it like to look for a spot to fit into?** (Exciting; it made me nervous; I didn't want to be left out; fun.)

- **What happened when there was no room for you on a plate?** (I knew I could go to the safety zone; I hurried to the X.)

Say: **The safety zone gave everyone a place to go. Our Bible story today is about a time when there wasn't enough room for Mary and Joseph, and it was time for Mary to have her baby! Joseph had to find a safe place—fast! Let's hear about how ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.**



◀ **BIBLE POINT**

■ *Bible Song and Prayer Time*

SUPPLIES: Bible, basket of surprise cards from Lesson 1, CD player



Set the basket of surprise cards that you made in the first lesson next to you. If you don't have surprise cards, follow the directions in the "Bible Song and Prayer Time" section of Lesson 1 for this activity. Bookmark **Luke 2:1-7** in the Bible you'll be using.

Have the children sit in a circle. Say: **Each week when we come to our circle for our Bible story, I'll choose someone to be the Bible helper. The Bible helper will bring me the Bible marked with our Bible story for that week. Before I choose today's Bible helper, let's sing our Bible song. As we sing, I'll pass out the surprise cards. Don't look inside your card until the song is over.**

Lead children in singing "Read God's Book" (track 3) with the CD to the tune of "The Muffin Man." As you sing, pass out the folded surprise cards.



**Now it's time to read God's book,
Read God's book, read God's book.
Now it's time to read God's book.
Let's hear a Bible story.**

**Now it's time to read God's book,
Read God's book, read God's book.
Now it's time to read God's book.
Let's hear a Bible story.**

(Repeat.)



Choose children to be the surprise card collector, the Bible-replacer (to put the Bible away), and the cheerleader. Just be sure to keep track of who fills your roles each week so each child gets a chance to feel special.

After the song, say: **You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the angel stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible helper for today.**

Identify the Bible helper, and then have the rest of the children clap for him or her. Ask the Bible helper to bring you the Bible. Assist the Bible helper in opening the Bible to the marked place, and show the children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible helper sit down.

Say: [Name] **was our special Bible helper today. Each week we'll have only one special Bible helper, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we're all learning that ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.**

Let's say a special prayer now and ask God to help us learn why Jesus came to save us. I'll pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, "God, thank you for sending Jesus to save us."

Pass around the basket or box. When you've collected everyone's surprise card, set the basket aside for use next week, and pick up the Bible. Lead children in this prayer: **God, thank you for the Bible and all the stories in it. Teach us today that ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.**



BIBLE POINT ►



BIBLE POINT ►

This Bible story is featured in *My First Hands-On Bible*. Order several now for your ministry at group.com.



■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: blanket, craft sticks, facial tissue, transparent tape, CD player



Before this activity, tape the *Learning Mat: Nativity* to a wall near your story area. Place two chairs in front of the *Learning Mat*. Drape a blanket over the front of the chairs to make them into a puppet stage. Pinch off some of the *sticky tak*, and press it onto the back of the Mary, Joseph, and donkey *nativity kit figures*. Then press a craft stick into the *sticky tak* on the back of each figure to make stick puppets. Secretly give the Baby Jesus figure to a child, and instruct him or her not to let anyone see it.

Form a circle and say: **God always keeps his promises, and today our Bible story is about God's greatest promise.**

Ask: • **Who can remember what God promised Isaiah?**

(That God would send Jesus; that things would be peaceful; that Jesus would be born.)

Say: **That's right! Long ago, God gave that promise to Isaiah to share with God's people. A long time later, God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary how she would be part of God's plan to send Jesus to save us.** Hold up the angel and Mary figures.

Ask: • **What special plan did God have for Mary?** (She would be Jesus' mother.)

Put the figures down and say: **That's right. And God has a plan for all of us. God sent Jesus to save us. Our Bible story today is about how God kept his promise when ► Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem. God always keeps his promises! I need some volunteers to help me tell today's story.** Choose three volunteers, and give each one a stick puppet. Explain that they'll hide behind the stage and use their puppets to act out the story with the *Learning Mat* in the background.



BIBLE POINT ►

Now the time was getting very near for Mary to have her special baby. But the king had ordered that all the people in the land go to their hometowns to be counted. That way he'd know how many people were in his kingdom. Let's see how many children are in our class today. Call up a volunteer to count the children. Well, that's what the king wanted to do. So Mary and Joseph packed some things on their donkey and traveled to the town of Bethlehem. Wait for puppeteers to move their figures toward Bethlehem on the *Learning Mat*. When they got there, it was very crowded. So many people had come to be counted that there was no place for Mary and Joseph to stay! Joseph looked everywhere. Let's help him look. Have children shade their eyes with their hands and look around the room. Finally, someone told Joseph that he and Mary could stay in a stable with the animals. Have puppeteers move their puppets to the stable.

Ask: • **What animals might be in a stable?** (Donkeys; horses; sheep; cows.)

Say: **Let's make the barnyard noises that Joseph and Mary might have heard that night.** Lead children in making animal noises for a few seconds. **Well, right there in that stable, God's Son, Jesus, was born. Now we can bring out our baby Jesus figure to add to the story!** Have the child holding the figure bring it out and show everyone. **We've been waiting for his arrival!** Instruct the child holding the baby Jesus figure to tape a soft facial tissue around the figure, like a blanket. **Mary didn't have a crib or a cradle, so she wrapped the baby in cloth and laid him in a manger where animals ate. There's a song that tells about Jesus' birth in a stable. Let's sing "Away in a Manger" together as we pass baby Jesus around.** Lead children in singing "Away in a Manger" (track 5) with the CD while they gently pass the figure around the circle. When the song ends, turn off the CD player.



SING

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

(Repeat.)

"Away in a Manger" by John Thomas McFarland and James R. Murray.

Call the puppeteers forward, collect the *nativity kit figures*, and put them out of sight. Then ask:

- **What was it like when Jesus was born?** (There were animals; there was no room for Mary and Joseph in a house.)
- **Why wasn't he born in a hospital or a house?** (There weren't any hospitals; it was too crowded; they were staying in a stable.)
- **How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus was born?** (Happy; excited; glad; tired.)
- **Why is it so important that Jesus was born?** (Because he came to save us; he's God's Son; he's a special baby from heaven.)

Say: **Our Bible verse is from Luke 2:11. It tells us what made Joseph and Mary so happy that day in the stable. Let's say our verse together:**
► **"The Savior...has been born today in Bethlehem."** Good job! Let's say it one more time, but this time you can celebrate by jumping up and down as you say the verse. Let the children repeat the verse again, encouraging them to jump enthusiastically at the same time before sitting down again. Say: **God kept the promise that he'd made long, long ago. Our Savior was born!**

◀ BIBLE VERSE



Say: **When Jesus was born, he was born for all of us. He cares about each and every person. When I point to you, stand up until we're all standing—then we'll see who Jesus came to save in this very room!** Point to each child in turn as you say "Jesus cares for you, and you, and you..." When all are standing, ask children to join hands as you pray.

Pray: **Dear God, thank you for keeping your promise and for sending Jesus to save each and every one of us. We love you. In Jesus' name, amen.**

■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: CD player, toothpicks



tracks 6-7

Before this activity, divide the *modeling clay* from the Learning Lab into equal pieces, one for each child. Place the *Learning Mat* and *nativity kit figures* on the floor. Remove the *sticky tak* and sticks from the figures used in the "Hear and Tell the Bible Story" activity, press the figures into the *sticky tak* to stand them up, and set up the figures like a nativity scene on the *Learning Mat*.

Say: **Jesus was sure born in a strange place! Our CD has some sounds that Mary and Joseph might have heard that night in the stable. I'll play the CD and have you guess what those sounds are.**

Play the "Bethlehem Barnyard" segment of the *CD* (track 6). Pause the *CD* after each noise, and allow children to guess what the sounds are. Children will hear cows, sheep, chickens, a donkey, and a hoot owl.

After the last animal sound, cue the *CD* to track 7 and say: **Now that we've heard lots of sounds from a stable, let's make our own sound! We can celebrate Jesus' birth by singing "The Savior Has Been Born."** This song (sung to the tune of "Jesus Loves Me") is recorded in two versions on the *CD*—in this lesson, you'll be singing version #1.



SING

**The Savior has been born today,
Born today in Bethlehem.
Horses, donkeys, cows, and sheep
Watched the little baby sleep.**

He came to save me. (*Point to self.*)

He came to save you. (*Point to someone else.*)

He came to save us (*open arms to include others*)

Because God loves us so! (*Hug self.*)

Gather children around the mat.

teacher tips

To make this more active, you may want to allow children to act out the animal after they've correctly guessed it.

Say: **We learned from our Bible story what it was like when Jesus was born, and we guessed what kinds of animals were in the stable that night. As we sit in our circle, let's take turns telling one thing about Jesus being born. Then I'll give you each a small piece of clay. Hold on to it so it gets nice and warm in your hands until I tell you what to do with it.** Ask for a volunteer to start with a fact about Jesus' birth. Give each child a piece of clay after he or she tells something about the Bible story.

Ask: • **Why was Jesus born?** (Because he came to save us; because God wanted to send us a gift; because he loved us.)

• **Who did Jesus come to earth for?** (Everyone; me; you.)

• **What are some ways we can celebrate Jesus' birth?** (Have a party for him; worship him; sing songs.)

• **Who visited Jesus in the stable?** (Angels; shepherds; sheep; animals.)

Say: ► **Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem. We set up our stable to remind us of that. Now let's put ourselves in the nativity to show that we worship him, too, just like the shepherds, animals, and Mary and Joseph did.**

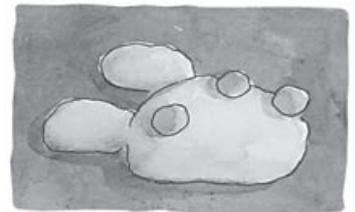
Show kids how to roll the clay into a ball. Then have them press it flat. Give each one a toothpick, and have them draw their faces in the clay. Have them place the faces in the nativity scene. If some kids want to make more elaborate figures or embellish the clay in any way, allow them to do so.

Then sing the song "The Savior Has Been Born (#1)" one more time while kids place their clay figures in the nativity.

Say: **Singing is a great way to share good news! Let's share the news about Jesus' birth with our friend Pockets.**



While kids work on clay faces, make one to represent Pockets, adding long ears and tiny balls for eyes and a nose. Give the figure to Pockets at the end of "No Kangaroo" so that she can add herself to the nativity.



Closing

■ No Kangaroo

SUPPLIES: none

Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo, and go through the following puppet script. When you finish the script, take Pockets with you to the "Hearts for Jesus" activity. Then put her away and out of sight.



.....

• **Pockets:** *(Comes in sadly singing "Mary Had a Little Lamb.")* I wish I'd been the little lamb, the little lamb, the little lamb...Oh, hi, everyone.

• **Teacher:** Hi, Pockets! Why are you sounding so sad?

• **Pockets:** We got left out. The sheep were there, the donkey was there—but we weren't.

• **Teacher:** Who wasn't where, Pockets?

• **Pockets:** At the stable! There were *no* kangaroos in the stable when baby Jesus was born. I wish a kangaroo had been there, too!

.....



Teacher: Oh, I see. You know, Pockets, just a few animals were there when Jesus was born. None of our friends in class were there, either. But we're not left out. (*Help Pockets add her clay face to the Learning Mat.*) God wants everyone to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Pockets: Really?

Teacher: Yes! So you can celebrate right along with the rest of us!

Pockets: Wow! Now I don't feel left out at all.

Teacher: Jesus wasn't born in a fancy place; he was born in a stable. That was God's plan so people everywhere would know that Jesus came for everyone—not just rich people or important people.

Pockets: I'm glad we can all celebrate Jesus' birth!

Teacher: Well, we're getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birth with some special gifts. Would you like to join us?

Pockets: I'd love to! Let's go!

Permission to photocopy this script from Group's Hands-On Bible Curriculum® Pre-K & K granted for local church use.
Copyright © Group Publishing, Inc., 1515 Cascade Ave., Loveland, CO 80538. group.com



■ Hearts for Jesus

SUPPLIES: hearts from Option 1, wrapping paper, tape, scissors, ribbon



BIBLE POINT ▶



Set out squares of gift wrap, ribbon, scissors, tape, and the hearts children made in Option 1. Gather children and say: ▶ **Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem. God's greatest gift to us is Jesus.**

Ask: • **What is the best gift we can give to God?** (Our love; our hearts.)

Say: **Yes, our best gift to God is our love. Let's gift-wrap the hearts we made earlier as gifts for Jesus. Take them home, and put them under your Christmas trees and on Christmas morning you can open your gifts to Jesus and place them on your trees.**

As children work, take Pockets around to talk with children and tell them the Bible Point. After children have wrapped their ornaments, pray: **Dear God, we thank you for giving us the greatest gift of all by sending Jesus to save us. In Jesus' name, amen.**



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week's topic.



For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

Lively Learning: Baby Jesus

Lead children in singing “The Savior Has Been Born” to the tune of “Jesus Loves Me” without the *CD*. Form pairs and have one partner make up motions to the first verse, while the other partner copies the actions. Then have everyone do the motions for the chorus.



**The Savior has been born today,
Born today in Bethlehem.
Horses, donkeys, cows, and sheep
Watched the little baby sleep.**

He came to save me. (*Point to self.*)
He came to save you. (*Point to someone else.*)
He came to save us (*open arms to include others*)
Because God loves us so! (*Hug self.*)

Sing the song a second time. This time have partners switch roles so each person has a turn making up motions.

Make to Take: Bethlehem Journey



Photocopy the “Bethlehem Journey” handout on page 55 so you have one for each child. Have children cut out the figures and color the handouts. Show them how to bend a paper clip and tape it to the Mary and Joseph figures, as shown in the margin, and then place the figures on the map. Give each child a craft magnet, and demonstrate how to hold it under the paper, right behind the paper clip. Children can move the magnet so Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem.

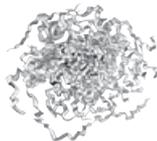
Warning! This activity uses magnets. Swallowed magnets can attract each other through opposing intestine walls, causing serious infection or even death. Seek immediate medical attention if magnets are swallowed or inhaled.

Treat to Eat: Trail Mix Tally

Set out muffin tins filled with items such as chocolate chips, banana chips, raisins, coconut, or roasted pumpkin seeds. Distribute plastic bags, and have children count a certain number of each item into their bags such as 10 chocolate chips, 15 raisins, or 20 pumpkin seeds. Remind them that Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem because the king wanted to count the people in his kingdom. Explain that trail mix is good to take on a long journey.

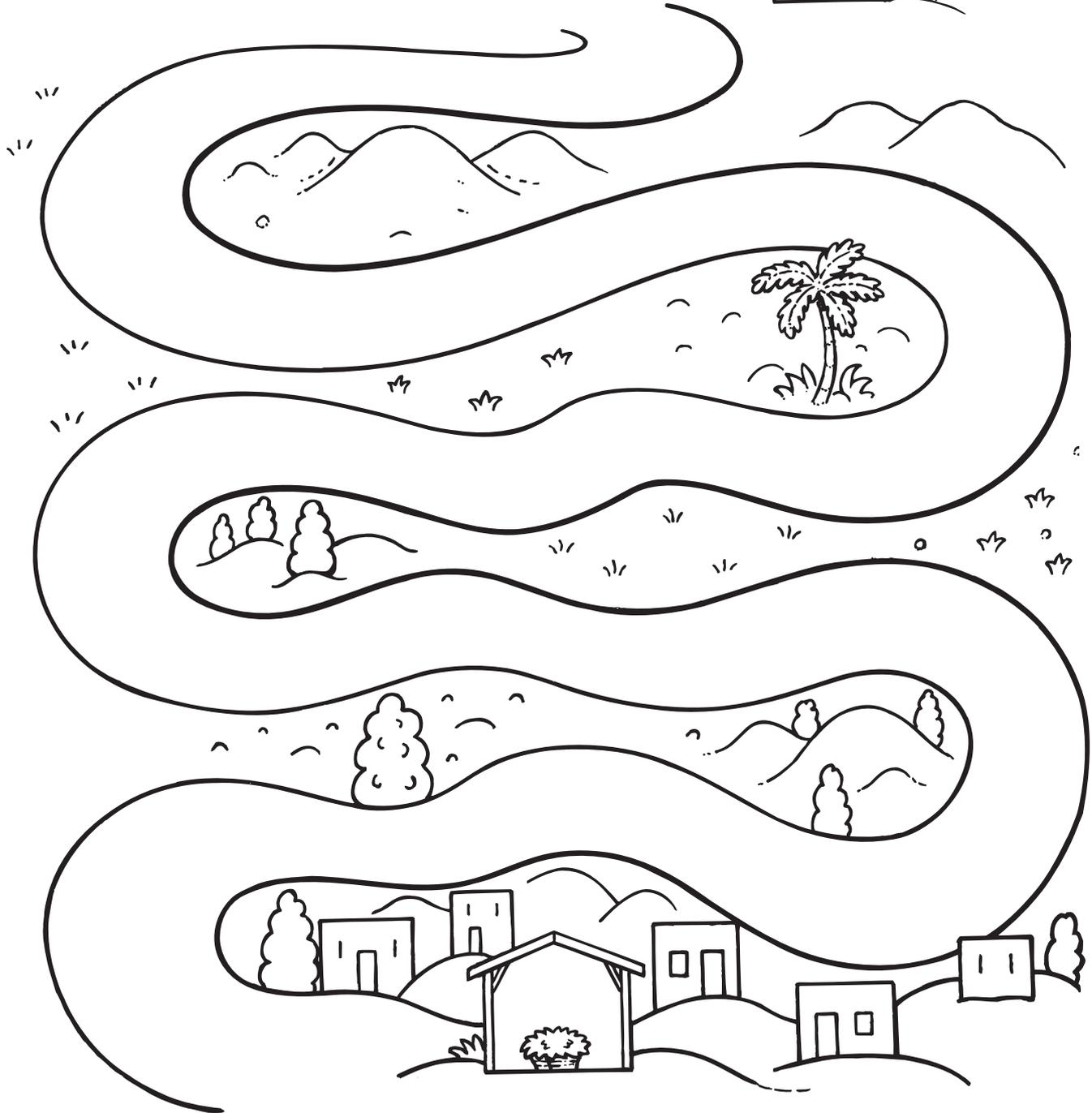


Story Picture: Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem



Give each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned...” handout. Put crayons, glue, and *springfill* on the table for children to use. Invite children to color the picture and then glue *springfill* as hay on the manger and as the floor of the stable.

Bethlehem Journey



Today I learned...

Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem.

Today your child learned that Jesus came to save us and was born in Bethlehem. Children learned that Jesus is God's greatest gift to us. They discovered that the best gift we can give to God is our love.

Verse to Learn

"The Savior...has been born today in Bethlehem"
(Luke 2:11a).

Ask Me...

- Where was Jesus born?
- What is the best gift you can give Jesus?
- How can our family make room for Jesus?

Family Fun

- Make a birthday party for Jesus a key part of your Christmas celebration. Encourage each family member to tell about a gift he or she will give to Jesus in the coming year.
- Go through the Christmas cards you've received. Pray together that the people who sent the cards will know that Jesus came to save them.

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7)

