

**Objective:** Each child will be able to tell the Christmas story and explain why Jesus is called God's Gift.

**Bible Memory Verse:** II Corinthians 9:15

### Supplies

#### BIBLE LESSON

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *Visuals 4A-4C*
- ☐ Improvised stage for "shadow" plays
- ☐ White sheet, floodlight
- ☐ Robes, scarves, or headpieces for players
- ☐ Baby doll and manger used in Lesson 2
- ☐ Rope, sawhorse (optional)
- ☐ Helpers or leader to operate floodlight and read the narrations
- ☐ *Activity Sheets 4A*
- ☐ Pencils

#### BIBLE MEMORY VERSE

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Four prepared gift-wrapped boxes
- ☐ Four Christmas bows

#### BIBLE ACTIVITY

- ☐ *Activity Sheets 4B*
- ☐ Pencils

#### CRAFT

- ☐ Three paper plates of any size and 3-foot length of green or red ribbon for each child
- ☐ Old Christmas card pictures
- ☐ Crayons or markers
- ☐ Scissors, glue

#### GAME

- ☐ Small wrapped box of stickers or wrapped candy
- ☐ Box of toothpicks
- ☐ CD player and CD, MP3 player, or instrumentalist

### Planning Tips

If you have a sawhorse available, print the Donkey Head from *Visual 4A* onto card stock and attach it to the sawhorse (or use two chairs facing each other). Tie a rope around the sawhorse or one of the chairs. You may want to rehearse with the children who have parts in the play. Print a copy of the play from *Visuals 4C* for each participant (or simply read the parts yourself). For the craft, collect three pictures (from old Christmas cards) for each child, plus a few for visitors. The pictures could be of shepherds, the Nativity scene, angels, Jesus, the cross, etc. Read through this lesson for additional preparation instructions.

### Getting Started (10-20 minutes)

#### GATHERING

Follow your regular opening ceremonies: attendance, offering, announcements, and prayer. Look each child in the eye and welcome him as he arrives. Take this time to get to know your students on a personal basis.

**SONG TIME**

Sing JESUS IS HIS NAME and O COME, LITTLE CHILDREN from *All the Best Songs for Kids*. Then sing IMMANUEL, IMMANUEL.

**THEME INTRODUCTION**

Ask the children, **What is the best gift you received last Christmas?** Let several students respond. Tell them about the best gift you received last Christmas. Then ask, **What is the best gift you expect to receive (or you received) this Christmas?** Get several children to respond. Then ask, **If you could only keep one gift of all the Christmas gifts you have ever received, what gift would it be?** Have several students respond. Then say, **In today's lesson we are going to look at the very best Christmas gift of all that was given to us by God: the gift of Jesus.**

Say, **In the first two lessons of this unit (Lessons 1-2), you have considered the main events of the Christmas story. Today we want to fill in all the details we can, so you will not only know the main events — you'll also know everything that happened in between those events. So let's get ready for the play, SHADOWS OF CHRISTMAS.**

**Bible Lesson (10-15 minutes)****STUDY THE LESSON**

For the following shadow play, you'll need a sheet hung across a wide doorway or mounted on a frame. It should be higher than the children's heads. Set a floodlight about four or five feet behind it. Players will stand between the light and the curtain. Their silhouettes will show to the audience. If you have a large group, use different boys and girls to play Mary and Joseph in each scene to involve more students. Turn off the light between scenes. A leader or helper should tell the story of each scene. Robes and scarves or headpieces should be worn by the players to add realism. If you have a sawhorse available, print the Donkey Head from *Visual 4A* onto card stock and attach it to the sawhorse. Tie a rope around it. Hold your open Bible as you introduce the play. Explain that this is a true story from the Bible.

**SHADOWS OF CHRISTMAS**

(Matthew 1:18-21, 24; Luke 2:1-17)

**Scene 1**

(Mary is standing. A robed angel stands with arms outstretched near her.)

**Hint**

Ordinary things out of place are funny to elementary-age children. Mix things up. Do things backward. For this age, silly is fun. When you plant a seed, don't use a flower pot (that's too ordinary); plant your seeds in an old tennis shoe. That's something your students will talk about!

Mary loved God and wanted to please Him. She did her best to obey what the Bible told her to do. Because of this, God chose her for something special.

One day, God sent His angel to tell Mary that she was to become the mother of a son. God told her to name the baby “Jesus,” and that her Baby would be a king.

Mary asked the angel, “How can this be since I have no husband?”

The angel told Mary that God’s Holy Spirit would come upon her, the power of the Most High would cover her, and the holy Child who would be born would be the Son of God.

Then Mary said to the angel, “I am willing to be used of the Lord. Let it happen to me just as you have said.”

## Scene 2

(Joseph is lying on the floor. A robed angel stands with outstretched arms next to him.)

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married. But before they were married, Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a baby. Joseph wondered if he should send her away. Then, while he slept, God’s angel appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She is to become a mother by God’s Holy Spirit. A son will be born to her. You will give Him the name of Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.” When Joseph awoke from his sleep he did what the angel had told him to do. He took Mary to be his wife.

## Scene 3

(Mary is seated on a donkey, which can be made from a sawhorse with a cardboard head. Joseph is leading it with a rope.)

After Mary and Joseph were married, they had to go to Bethlehem because a law had been passed that everyone in the nation must have their names written down in a special census book. They went to Bethlehem because Joseph was from the family of David. Bethlehem was known as the City of David. Mary was soon to become the mother of God’s Son there.

## Scene 4

(Mary is kneeling at the manger, which is the baby doll and manger or box used in Lesson 2. Joseph is standing near Mary, looking down at the manger.)

When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem, there were many other people there who had come to have their names registered.

### Key Verse:

II Corinthians 9:15

*“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (KJV)*

*“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (NIV)*

There was no room at any of the inns in Bethlehem. It was time for Mary to have the baby, so one innkeeper let them stay in his stable. When God's Son was born, Mary wrapped Him in a cloth and put Him on the straw in a manger where the cattle were fed.

### Sing Together

Sing AWAY IN A MANGER from *All the Best Songs for Kids*.

### Scene 5

(Shepherds are holding up their hands in fear. The robed angel is standing with arms outstretched. The Bethlehem Poster from *Visual 4B* is taped to nearby wall.)

Near Bethlehem, shepherds were taking care of their sheep the night that Jesus was born. Suddenly a bright shining angel appeared to them. They were very much afraid. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news of great joy which is for all people. Today, the One who saves from the penalty of sin has been born in the City of David. He is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign that you will know Him: You will find Him wrapped with cloth, lying in a manger." At once there appeared hundreds of angels praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." When the angels went back to heaven, the shepherds hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph in the stable, and Baby Jesus lying in the manger.

### Sing Together

Sing JOY TO THE WORLD from *All the Best Songs for Kids*.

### REVIEW THE LESSON

Hand out pencils and *Activity Sheets 4A* to the children at work tables. Read the instructions for arranging the pictures of the story of Christmas in order. Then have the children number the pictures from 1 to 5. Tell the primaries that each picture is a scene they saw during the Bible Lesson shadow play. Allow plenty of time for each child to sequence the pictures (or let the children work in pairs). Then ask which picture happened first, etc. (Answers: 1-b, 2-d, 3-a, 4-e, 5-c.)

Have the children find their way to the Gift of God at the bottom of the page by following the words of their memory verse through the maze. Challenge them to share the good news of God's gift of Jesus with someone this week.



### PARTY TABLECLOTH

Help your students design their own party tablecloth. Use a flat, white, twin-size bed sheet. Place newspapers under it to prevent the colors from bleeding onto the floor. Use fabric dye markers for drawing or writing. Use acrylic paint in a shallow pan for handprints. Personalize the tablecloth with everyone's signature. If you wish, use a Christmas theme or illustrate the Christmas story the children have been learning.

## Bible Memory Verse (5 minutes)

II Corinthians 9:15 — *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”* (KJV)

*“Thanks be to God for His indescribable Gift!”* (NIV)

Before the lesson, gather four boxes that can be nested together. Cover them with white paper. Print portions of the verse on one side only of the boxes, beginning with the largest box. Fasten a pretty Christmas bow on the top of each box and place them on a table. Ask a child to remove one box at a time as you present the verse. Then read the verse together with the boxes lined up side by side. Ask the students what they think is meant by “unspeakable (indescribable) gift.”

Say, God gave Jesus to us. God gave Jesus to be our Savior. He gave Jesus to be the Savior of many people who wanted nothing to do with God. It’s very hard for us to describe that kind of gift. We say that God’s gift is unspeakable (indescribable). We can’t really understand how God can do this (give a precious gift to His enemies), but we love and thank God for doing it.

God knew that when baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He would one day hang on the cross and die to pay for our sins. Jesus came from God. Jesus lived with God even before the world was made. Jesus knew that God would send Him into the world to be born as a baby, and when He grew up He would die on the cross for our sins. Jesus left His beautiful home in heaven for us. Jesus gave Himself for us.

This is such a wonderful thing that it’s hard to find words to tell how great it is. All we can say is, “Thank You, God, for Your Son, Your Gift that is too wonderful for words.”

## Bible Learning Activities (20-25 minutes)

### BIBLE ACTIVITY

Hand out pencils and *Activity Sheets 4B* to the children. Ask a good reader to read the directions aloud. Then let the children decode the mystery message by matching pictures under the lines in the message with pictures in the code key. Say, **Match each picture under the lines to a picture in the code key. Then print the letter for that picture on the line.** See which child can be the first to decode the special message or let the children work in pairs. (Answer: JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!)

### BIBLE CRAFT

Before the lesson, collect three pictures (from old Christmas cards) for each child, plus a few for visitors. The pictures could be of shepherds, the Nativity scene, angels, Jesus, the cross, etc. Hand out crayons, glue, scissors, Christmas pictures (three for each child), and Activity Sheets 4C. Give each child a yard of red or green ribbon and three sizes of paper plates (white or pastel, no pattern) with the same edge design, or three dessert-size paper plates. Let each child glue a picture in the center of each plate and color the edges of the plates, if he wishes. Help him glue the plates to a yard of red or green ribbon, starting from the bottom, leaving a few inches between each plate. Leave a length of ribbon at the top to tie into a loop for hanging. This wall hanging may be given away as a Christmas gift, or kept to remind the children of God's Christmas gift to them.

Make sure they put their names on the crafts before they are collected. Compliment the children as they clean up their work tables.

### BIBLE GAME

Bring a CD player and CD or MP3 player or have someone play an instrument. Have all the children sit in a circle on the floor. Prepare in advance a prize wrapped in a box. (The prize is something everyone will later be given.) Each player gets five toothpicks. As the music plays, the "hot" box is passed around from child to child. When the music stops, whoever holds the box must give one toothpick to the child who gave him the box.

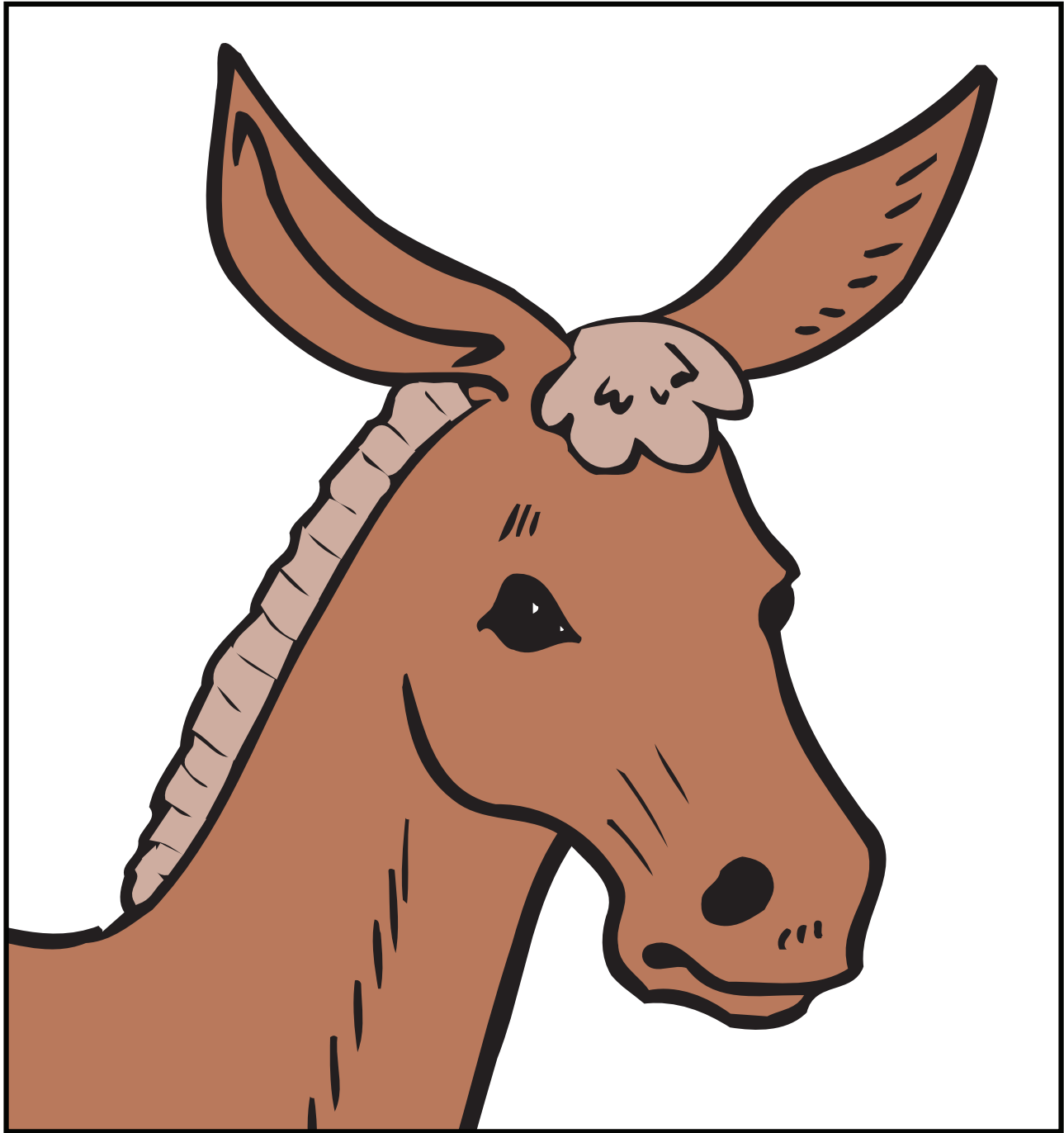
The player with the most toothpicks at the end of the time allowed wins the prize in the box (opens and shares the contents with everyone).

Tell the children that God's gift of Jesus is not a gift like the one they passed around and didn't want to be holding when the music stopped. Encourage them to share God's gift of Jesus this Christmas.

### Closing Prayer (5-10 minutes)

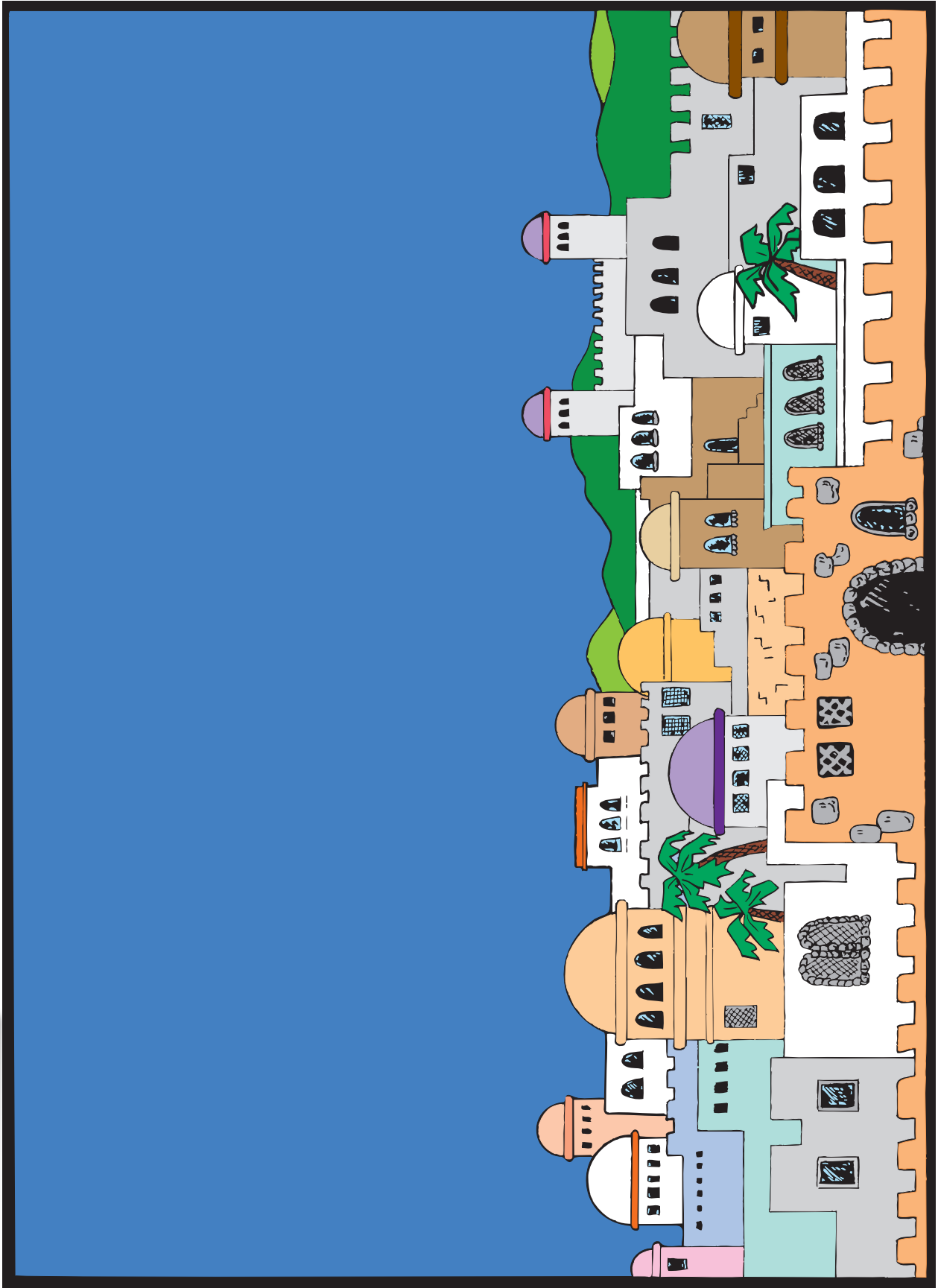
Close the lesson in prayer, giving the children an opportunity to pray, if they desire. Hand out the completed crafts and Activity Sheets to the children as they leave.





**Donkey Head**

Bethlehem Poster



Bible Foundations Sunday School Curriculum Downloads  
Copyright © 2011 Christian Ed. Publishers • P.O. Box 26639 • San Diego, CA 92196 • 800-854-1531  
ChristianEdWarehouse.com • Permission is granted to reproduce this lesson. Not for resale.



**Shadows of Christmas Play**  
(Matthew 1:18-21, 24; Luke 2:1-17)

**Scene 1**

(Mary is standing. A robed angel stands with arms outstretched near her.)

Mary loved God and wanted to please Him. She did her best to obey what the Bible told her to do. Because of this, God chose her for something special.

One day, God sent His angel to tell Mary that she was to become the mother of a son. God told her to name the baby “Jesus,” and that her Baby would be a king.

Mary asked the angel, “How can this be since I have no husband?”

The angel told Mary that God’s Holy Spirit would come upon her, the power of the Most High would cover her, and the holy Child who would be born would be the Son of God.

Then Mary said to the angel, “I am willing to be used of the Lord. Let it happen to me just as you have said.”



**Scene 2**

(Joseph is lying on the floor. A robed angel stands with outstretched arms next to him.)

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married. But before they were married, Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a baby. Joseph wondered if he should send her away. Then, while he slept, God’s angel appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She is to become a mother by God’s Holy Spirit. A son will be born to her. You will give Him the name of Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.” When Joseph awoke from his sleep he did what the angel had told him to do. He took Mary to be his wife.



**Scene 3**

(Mary is seated on a donkey, which can be made from a sawhorse with a cardboard head. Joseph is leading it with a rope.)

After Mary and Joseph were married, they had to go to Bethlehem because a law had been passed that everyone in the nation must have their names written down in a special census book. They went to Bethlehem because Joseph was from the family of David. Bethlehem was known as the City of David. Mary was soon to become the mother of God’s Son there.



**Scene 4**

(Mary is kneeling at the manger, which is the baby doll and manger or box used in Lesson 2. Joseph is standing near Mary, looking down at the manger.)

When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem, there were many other people there who had come to have their names registered. There was no room at any of the inns in Bethlehem. It was time for Mary to have the baby so one innkeeper let them stay in his stable. When God’s Son was born, Mary wrapped Him in a cloth and put Him on the straw in a manger where the cattle were fed.



**Sing Together**

Sing Away In A Manger from All the Best Songs for Kids.

**Scene 5**

(Shepherds are holding up their hands in fear. The robed angel is standing with arms outstretched. The Bethlehem Poster from Visual 4B is taped to nearby wall.)

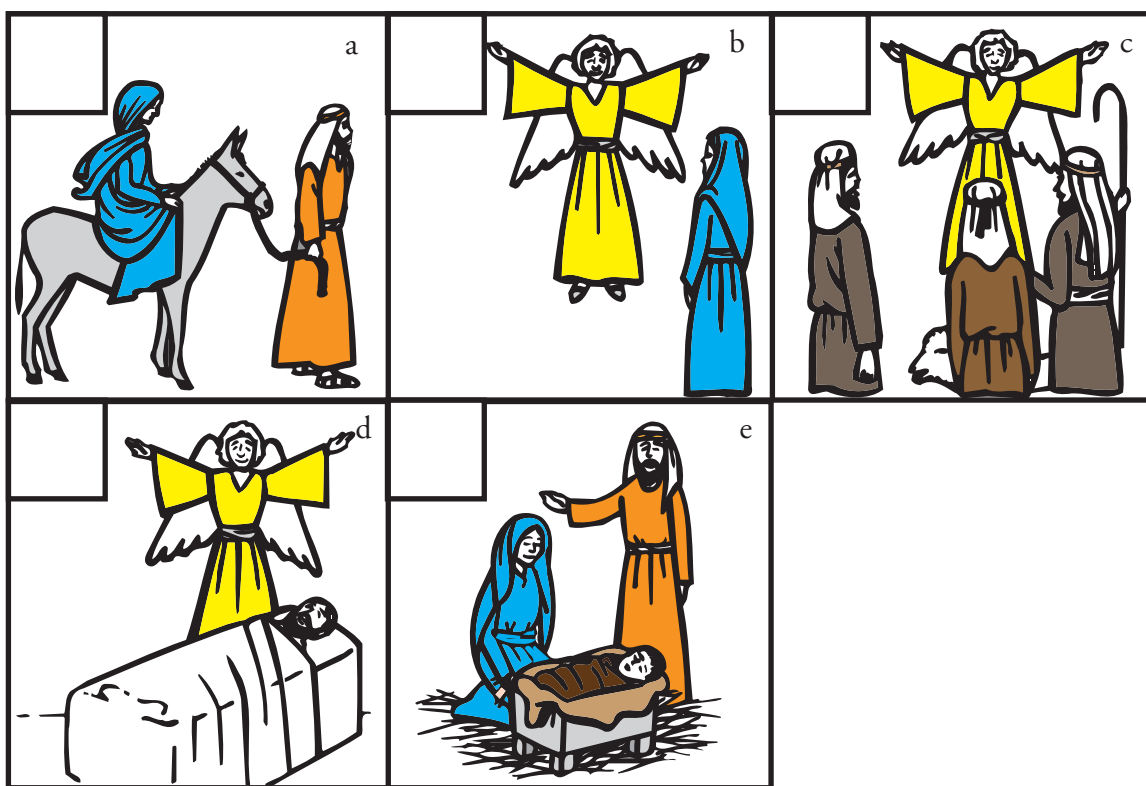
Near Bethlehem, shepherds were taking care of their sheep the night that Jesus was born. Suddenly a bright shining angel appeared to them. They were very much afraid. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news of great joy which is for all people. Today, the One who saves from the penalty of sin has been born in the City of David. He is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign that you will know Him: You will find Him wrapped with cloth, lying in a manger.” At once there appeared hundreds of angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” When the angels went back to heaven, the shepherds hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph in the stable, and baby Jesus lying in the manger.



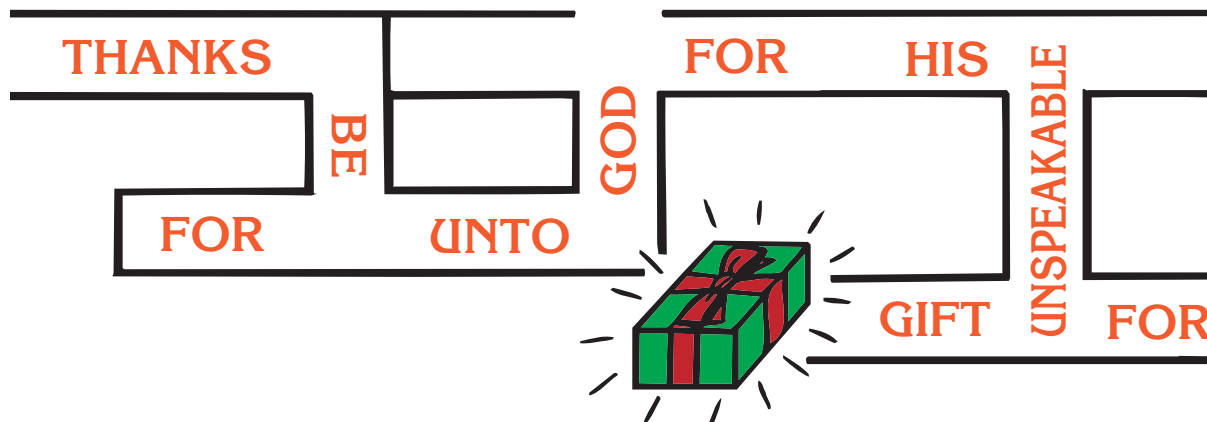
Name \_\_\_\_\_

## God's Gift

Arrange the pictures of the Christmas story in order from 1 to 5. Print the correct numbers in the boxes. Print "1" in the box of the picture showing what happened first, "2" showing what happened second, etc.














Find your way to the GIFT OF GOD by following the words of your Bible memory verse in order.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Mystery Message

Match the correct pictures to the correct letters. Print the letter on the line above the picture it matches. Find the mystery message.

A	E	H	I	J	N	O	R	S	T	U
										



F

O

R

T

H

E



## Memory Verse to Learn

II Corinthians 9:15 — “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (KJV)  
“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (NIV)