



MUST KNOW BIBLE STORIES

stories worth exploring

The Christmas Story

Early Level: Contexts to Explore the Story



For young children to get the most out of the story, it is important that they are given time to explore it for themselves in different ways. So have fun setting up your Nursery or Play area and allow the children to freely explore this wonderful story and internalise it in their own way. Give them space to talk about what they enjoyed and allow them to guide you into what they would like to explore further. There will be particular aspects of the story that fascinate them and that they will want to re-enact or delve into deeper. We hope that the ideas below will help you to develop the learning through their interests.

As you set up different contexts, keep in mind the links to the Christmas Story. Suggestions of how to link the activities to the story are found in [blue](#). Don't worry about making the links over complicated, just gently extend their thinking by asking questions such as "Who was the special baby that was born....?" or "What do Christians believe about ...". Ask them what they think too! "Do you think that?" "Do you think a stable is a nice place to be born?" Some suggested phrases to use in your discussions with children can be found in the [blue speech bubbles](#) in the 'Context mind-map – Christmas file.'

1. Sand

Fill your sand tray with straw.

Have small nativity figures hidden in the straw for the children to play with.

2. Small World

A stable and figures from the nativity story.

You could purchase a specific Christmas range, but you may have animals and people and a barn that you could use already.

3. Role Play

Set up a role play corner as a stable.

Go with your imagination – a plant trough for a manger (try not to use a cot); straw; a baby doll; strips of cloth in which to wrap the baby; dressing gowns or pillow cases with head holes for the shepherds; tea towels; pashmina type scarves for the kings or Mary; tinsel halos for the angels and angel wings; paper plate masks for sheep, donkeys, cows. Children love pretending to be pregnant, so a small cushion is handy too!

If you have animal costumes, angel costumes or nativity costumes you could provide these, but there is no need to buy any if you don't already have them.

4. Puzzle Table

- (a) A selection of nativity puzzles – table top and floor puzzles e.g.

www.usbourne.com

www.lionhudson.com

www.eden.co.uk

- (b) Nativity snap

(You can download some here: <https://littleowlsresources.com/christmas>)

5. Number Area

- (a) Counting down to Christmas advent calendar.
- (b) Provide some laminated stars. [Can the children make a star trail to follow to find the baby Jesus?](#) How many stars are in their trail? What shape can they make their star trail into? Can they challenge their friend to make a trail using a particular number of stars? Or to make one of a particular shape? Who can make the most interesting trail?
- (c) Shape angels. Make angels with circles for a head, triangles for a body and wings. This can be done as a puzzle with flat wooden shapes if you have them, or as a craft using white or gold paper shapes stuck onto black paper. [Talk about the angel speaking to Mary. What did the angel tell her?](#)
- (d) [The government wanted to know how many people there were in the country so Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be counted.](#)

Count the number of children at the drawing table, or in your group, or in your Nursery, or your class. Can you add them together? How many altogether? Display your finding as a bar chart or on a wall display. How many children are in P1 altogether? Or what about P1 to P3, or the whole school? Choose an appropriate size for the level of your children.

6. Art and Craft

- (a) Make angel wings or halos to use in your role play area. *Talk about the angel speaking to Mary. What did she tell her?*
- (b) Make animal masks. Talk about all the animals in the stable. *Do you think it was smelly?*
- (c) Make a stable from a cardboard box – you could use it at the playdough table.
- (d) Use lollipop sticks to make simple reminders of the story (see below)
- (e) Many more – just browse the Internet!



7. Story Corner

- (a) Provide a selection of nativity picture books and children's Bibles for children to look at independently. *Talk about the story together.*

Suggested Books to use to tell the Christmas Story

Younger Children (e.g ante-preschool children)

Jesus' Christmas Party	Nicholas Allan	ISBN 978-1-84941-526-2
The Play-Along Bible	Bob Hartman	ISBN 978-0-7459-7830-7
Welcome the Baby Jesus	Margaret Barfield	ISBN 9781859996119

Pre-school children /P1's

The Big Bible Storybook	Scripture Union	ISBN 978-0-281-08112-7
The Beginners Bible	Kelly Pulley	ISBN 978-1781283479
The Lion First Bible	Pat Alexander	ISBN 978-0-7459-6103-3
Jesus Storybook Bible	Sally Lloyd-Jones	ISBN 978-0-310-70825-4

- (b) Provide nativity finger puppets for the children to act out the story.
(You can find Lollipop puppets here:
<https://littleowlsresources.com/nativity-lollipop-puppets?rq=nativity>)
- (c) Provide a small box or bag containing three or four simple pictures for the children to sequence. Some P1 children could draw these pictures themselves? Pictures and scaffolding to support learning are given in the Additional Resources.

(d) Videos

The Jesus Storybook Bible is also available as DVDs, read by David Suchet. This is available from Amazon or other retailers.

There are three super Christmas video clips that can be downloaded free here:

<https://www.max7.org/en/resource/christmasstoryAll>

or why not try these lovely ones from you tube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkEypzmHwCI> (Mary and Joseph)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3656G6tWuI> (Jesus is born)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJIC57EvYFo> (The shepherds visit Jesus)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk1LhnqROCM> (The wise men visit Jesus)

8. Music Area

Play singing circle games and sing simple songs to consolidate the Christmas story. Some suggestions are given in the Additional Resources.

Allow children to be angels and make their own music to praise God.

9. Writing Corner

- (a) Name writing: [The baby's name was Jesus](#). Can you write your name?
(There is a worksheet provided in additional resources if you'd like one – or just allow the children to experiment with writing their name).
- (b) Drawing: Can they draw a simple nativity scene – stable with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus?
- (c) Colouring: Nativity colouring sheets
- (d) A message to Mary: [Pretend to be the angel in the story and write a message to Mary](#). What does it say? Read it to your friend. (NB formative writing is fine. Let the children pretend to write their own message.)
- (e) A special gift: Gift tags of love, joy, kindness, smile etc. (see additional resources)
[The wise men brought special gifts to Jesus](#). Can you think of a special gift (that you can't buy with money) that you could give to someone? Examples include a smile, some joy, love, kindness, helpfulness.

Allow the children to choose a 'gift' to give to someone special. They could colour the tag or decorate it to make it even more special.

Why is what they've chosen such a special gift?

[Christians believe that when God sent Jesus as a gift to us, he was saying to the world "I give you love" or "I give you joy" or "I give you peace" or "I give you friendship".](#)

Do you think that these are good gifts to receive?

10. Snack

Do some baking with the children and talk about the Christmas story as you bake and eat snack. Recipes can be found in the Additional Resources.

Suggestions are:

- Star Biscuits. [Talk about the star that the wise men followed. Where did it stop?](#)
- Baby Jesus biscuits.
- Baby Jesus Chocolate Crispies.

Healthy options:

- Use rice cakes as the basis for making some characters from the Christmas story (see additional resources).
- Make a breadstick stable with an apple star. [Talk about where Jesus was born.](#)

11. Wrapping up a Present

[The wise men brought gifts to the baby Jesus.](#)

Provide the following and set up an area for children to practise wrapping up presents:

- A selection of small cardboard boxes such as empty tissue boxes
- (NB picture books can be easier to wrap than 3D boxes)
- Some Christmas wrapping paper
- Sellotape
- Safety scissors

There is lots of learning in this - cutting skills, estimation (how much paper do I need?) shape, working in teams (one holds the paper while another puts on the sellotape), not least the skill of parcel wrapping itself which is quite tricky.

12. Outdoors

- Journey from [Nazareth to Bethlehem](#) – can you run, hop, skip?
- Make natural pictures of parts of the [Christmas story](#).
- Turn an outdoor play house into the stable and provide a manger, a baby doll etc. for role play.
- Make your own den to be the stable.
- Any of the games listed in 'Christmas Games' additional resources can be played outside, as can some of the singing games in the 'Rhymes and Circle Games for Christmas' additional resources.