



MUST KNOW BIBLE STORIES

stories worth exploring

The Christmas Story

Early Level: Teacher-led Activities



1. Introducing the Bible

To begin, introduce the word 'Bible' and the word 'Christians' to the pupils to allow them to have a clear understanding of what they are learning about. Show the children a children's Bible and say:

This is a very special book. It's called 'The Bible' and it contains lots of exciting stories.

Let's all say together. "The Bible"

And people who believe the Bible are called Christians

Let's all say together "Christians"

Christians learn more about God and Jesus by reading the Bible. Today, I want to tell you a very special story from the Bible. It's a very famous story, all about how Jesus was born. You might have heard it - it is the Christmas story; the story of what happened on the very first Christmas ever.

Try saying this rhyme together:

Here is a Bible, I've brought it for you (open hands like a book)

And Christians believe that what's in it is true! (use BSL for true – one hand flat, one hand comes down perpendicular to it. See: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/true>)

2. The Christmas Story

See story script for a suggested way of telling the Christmas Story. Remember to tell them that it is a story from the Bible (see 'Introducing the Bible' above)

If the lesson is done outside, use little insulated seats or a tarpaulin to sit on. If you have an outside den or could make one (a pretend stable!) this would be great too.

Now that you have introduced and told the story, choose from the following options to explore it further. Don't forget to tell the story again on each occasion. The first option contains some suggestions of how to do this.

1. Revisiting the Story

Revisit the Christmas Story in a number of different ways to allow the children to get to know it.

Try these suggestions:

- Read it from the Beginners Bible
- Give out Bibles to pairs of children and ask them to look at the pictures and 'read' or tell it to their partner. Feedback to the class. What was each pairs' favourite part? Why?
- Repeat your original way of telling the story. Young children love repetition!
- Allow lots of time for acting out the story and allow the children the opportunity to make their own suggestions.
- Use these videos from Saddleback Kids:

<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)

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

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

Suggested Picture 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 (or above picture books if more suitable for your class)

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

2. Star Hunt

(This may be a good activity to do as an introductory activity before the story)

Before the session, stick a picture of each of the following onto the back of separate coloured stars. Templates for stars, and pictures to stick on them, can be found in the Additional Resources. Laminate them if you are using them outside:

Mary	red star
Joseph	blue star
Angel	green star
Baby Jesus	yellow star
Bethlehem	purple star
Stable	pink star
Shepherds	brown star
Angels	white star
Star	gold star
Wise Men	pale blue star

Hide the coloured stars in your outdoor area for children to find. Each coloured star introduces one character from the story. For younger children, you can reduce the number of stars/characters. Allow the children to run around and find the first star (the red one). Remind them to leave it where it is. Once the star had been found, gather the children around the person who has found it. Show the children the picture of Mary on the back of the star and say something short to introduce her as one of the characters in the story.

Then set the children to find the next star etc. until each one has been found. Suggested 'comments' for each character are below:

Mary

This is a girl called Mary. In the story we are about to hear, the Christmas story, she gives birth to a very special baby. He was special because he was God's son!

Joseph

Show them the picture of Joseph. This is a man called Joseph. He is in the Christmas story too. He is engaged to be married to Mary, but he is not the baby's dad.

Angel

There is a special angel in the Christmas story. The angel is called Gabriel and he visited Mary to tell her she would be the mother of God's son.

Baby Jesus

This is baby Jesus - he is the star of the Christmas story. He isn't just a normal little baby. He is God's son. Wow! Did you know that God's very own son could come down from heaven and become a tiny baby?

Bethlehem

This is a town called Bethlehem. It is the place where the Christmas story takes place. It is where the baby Jesus, God's son was born.

Stable

This isn't a hospital, it's a dirty stable and it is the place where Mary and Joseph had their baby. What a strange place for God's son to be born! There wasn't anywhere nice left for them to stay in Bethlehem

Shepherds

These are the shepherds. Normally they look after sheep, but in the Christmas story we are about to hear, they went to the stable and visited Mary, Joseph and their new baby Jesus, who was God's own son.

Angels

We've already met the angel Gabriel, but here is a picture of lots and lots of angels, maybe Gabriel is there too! In the Christmas story, lots and lots and lots of angels appeared in the sky to tell the shepherds that God's son, the baby Jesus had been born. There was a whole choir of them singing songs of praise to God

This star is just a star!

...but it is a very shiny star. In the Christmas story there is a very bright star that shone brighter than any other star in the sky. It was so bright that some important men saw it and knew it meant that God's son had been born.

Wise men

These are the important men that saw the star. The Bible tells us that they are wise men and they look so important that some people call them kings. They followed the bright star from a far off land and it took them to the stable where God's son, Jesus was born. When they got there, they gave him special gifts.

Do feel free to adapt the activity for your own class. If you are on your own as a class teacher with no PSA support, you can easily hide all the stars in advance and ask the children to find the correct colour each time. For Nursery children it may be better for another staff member to hide the next star as you are introducing the previous character. This avoids lots of stars being 'found', moved, lost, dropped, brought to you at the wrong time etc.

3. Whose Birthday is it?

(This may be a good activity to do as an introductory activity before the story)

Blow up a Happy Birthday balloon, add string or ribbon and tie a picture of the baby Jesus to it. (or you can hide a picture of the baby Jesus inside the balloon and burst the balloon to find out what is inside, but beware of younger children who may find this frightening.)

Then lay out one Christmas card showing the birth of Jesus among a selection of old birthday cards. See if the children can notice the odd one out. Why is there a Christmas card among all these birthday cards?

When do we get birthday cards and balloons? **(When it's our birthday of course!)**
What do we celebrate on our birthday. **(It's a celebration of the day that we were born.)**

Ask them if they know that actually, Christmas is a birthday too! It is Jesus' birthday. It is a celebration of the day that Jesus was born. Can you sing 'Happy Birthday' to Jesus? You could lead on to telling the story of how Jesus was born

4. Create a Picture

Working in groups with an adult per group, ask the children to use any natural objects they can find to create a picture from the story. Give each group a simple suggested picture e.g. a star, a stable, an angel. If your class is able, you could take ideas from the children of other suggested pictures e.g. their favourite part of the story or what they think is the most important part. Provide them with a small rectangle of material to use as their background for their picture. Discuss their pictures. Can they tell you what is happening in that part of the picture? Why did they choose that part of the story? This activity can be also done inside using loose collage materials.

5. Hunt the Nativity Figure

Hide wooden nativity figures in your classroom (or outdoor) area. There should be enough for each child to find one. As they come back together, sit in a circle and use the figures they have found to recap who each character is and what they did in the story.

6. Kim's Game: Which One is Missing?

Sit in a circle and lay the following nativity figures in the middle of the circle: Mary, Joseph, a shepherd, a wise man, an angel and the baby. Cover them with a cloth. Put your hand under the cloth and carefully take one away without the children seeing. Remove the cloth and see if anyone can spot which one is missing. Can they tell you what part that character plays in the story.

7. Circle Game

Play one of the circle games suggested in the 'Additional Resources'.

8. Quiz

Have a quiz (all answers are yes to reinforce the correct things!). Children can jump up and shout yes or do any other suitable action that you choose!

- Is the Christmas story in the Bible?
- Do Christians believe Mary's baby was the son of God?
- Was the baby Jesus wrapped up cosily and put in an animals' feeding trough?
(what was it called? Answer: a manger)
- Was Jesus born in a stable because everywhere else was full up?
- Did the wise men find Jesus by following a star?

9. Christmas Scavenger Hunt

(Cards for this are available in the additional resources)

In groups of around 5, with an adult if necessary, give the children the opportunity to go hunting around the class area for the following:

- something soft to wrap the baby Jesus in
- money to pay the Innkeeper
- shoes for Joseph's feet
- milk for the baby to drink
- straw for the manger
- one of the shepherd's sheep
- food for the camel
- a star for the wise men to follow

Give praise for children who have used their initiative (e.g they may have used some pieces of lego for camels food or made a star using pipe cleaners.) As the teams return, go over the items and talk about the Christmas story.

10. Story Sequencing

Provide simple picture sequencing cards to retell the Christmas Story. These are available in 'Additional Resources' or you can download them from (<https://bibleworld.co.uk/resources>). Reduce the number of pictures according to the level of your children.

Story sequencing can be done in various ways:

- In P1 as a group activity - give each group of children a set of sequencing cards and allow time to discuss in groups which order to put them in. Feedback and reinforce the story.
- As a play activity in your play area. Allow children to independently sequence the pictures and talk about them together
- As an assessment activity - do they know the story?
- As a class activity:
 - (a) Outside (or in the gym) ask children in teams to run and collect a sequencing card. Which team can lay them out in the correct order the fastest? If outside, you can use a clothes line and peg the cards up.
 - (b) Inside, hide sets of cards around your area and allow children time to find them. Each complete set should be labelled on the back with the same number so that one group looks for all the number 1 cards, another group looks for number 2 etc. The cards should be brought back to the children's tables and they can then work as a group to put them in the correct order.

11. Extension Activity - Pass the Parcel

This extends the learning from hearing and exploring the Christmas Story, to investigating what the story tells us about what Christians believe. They believe that Jesus is God's Son. It is a good activity for P1's, but may be a little advanced for Nursery. It could be used for specific groups of children in Nursery as a differentiation activity.

You will need:

- Christmas music, 4 story pictures, 4 'Son of God' cards and one 'Jesus' card wrapped up as a parcel with one card at each wrapper level and the Jesus card as the final parcel (cards and pictures are available in '**Additional Resources**')

In groups of about 10, play pass the parcel. As each layer is unwrapped, ask the children to place the pictures they have unwrapped into the middle of the circle.

At the end of the game, you should have collected 9 cards:

4 picture cards (one for each part of the Christmas story)

4 cards with a picture of the baby Jesus and the words 'Son of God' on it and

1 card with a picture of the baby Jesus and the word 'Jesus' on it.

Put the 'Son of God' cards and the 'Jesus' card aside for the moment and ask the children to look at the 4 picture cards and quickly sequence them into the correct order.

Which comes first?

Then?

Then?

Well done! We know the story, but what does the story tell us about Jesus?

Look again at the first picture:

Story picture 1

The angel came to Mary and told her she would have a special baby. Why was he special? See if the children can tell you that he was special because he is 'God's Son' or 'the Son of God'

Place the card with the picture of the baby Jesus and the words 'son of God' on it beside the picture of the angel coming to Mary.

Story picture 2

Mary and Joseph, had to go to Bethlehem. It was a long journey and when they got there they had nowhere to stay so Jesus was born in a smelly stable! What a strange place for the Son of God to be born. I'd have expected him to be born in an amazing palace, or for God to click his fingers and magic him out of a star into a beautiful garden.

Place the card with the picture of the baby Jesus and the words 'Son of God' on it beside the picture of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

Story picture 3

Then, after Jesus was born, an angel appeared to the shepherds. The angel told the shepherds that the baby that had been born was very special and that they should go and see him. Why was he special?

(He was special because he was the Son of God.)

Place the card with the picture of the baby Jesus and the words 'Son of God' on it beside the picture of the angels in the sky above the shepherds.

Story picture 4

Later, some wise men came from a long way away, and brought gifts to the baby Jesus. They had seen a star in the sky and they knew that the star meant that a new what? had been born. See if the children can tell you that a special baby had been born. Why was he special?

(He was special because he was the son of God.)

Place the card with the picture of the baby Jesus and the words 'son of God' on it beside the picture of the wise men visiting Jesus.

Summarize what you have and as you do so, arrange the pairs of pictures around the last card which shows the baby Jesus and the word 'Jesus':

- The angel told Mary she would give birth to **the Son of God**
- **The Son of God** was born in a stable
- The shepherds left their sheep to come and visit Jesus because he was **the Son of God.**
- The wise men travelled a long way to bring Jesus special gifts because he was **the Son of God.**

This is what Christians believe about Jesus. Jesus is the **Son of God.**

Consolidation

Leave the cards from the pass the parcel game in an appropriate place as an activity for them to do independently at other times.

They can:

- Sequence the story cards
- Who is Jesus?

Work in pairs. Can they tell their partner why Jesus is special? (**because he is the Son of God**) Which picture do **they** think shows this best? E.g. the special visitors, the angel speaking to Mary.

12. Homework Challenge for P1's

The baby Jesus' name means 'God saves'. Can you find out what your name means?