

Building Blocks and the Christmas Story

Based on ideas from Sonlight CRC in Lynden, WA – Lynda Burke, team leader

For children in Kindergarten to Grade 5.

The Building Blocks themes are seen in the Christmas story. Children can move through the four stations in any order and at their own pace. While these ideas are written for children, they could be adapted to an intergenerational setting.

I Belong Station: **Genealogy Library**

Focus: Jesus belonged to a family and we belong to Jesus' family.

Materials: Copies of Matthew 1:1-17 (one for each participant)

Ask the children to read the Matthew passage. Encourage the older children to read it with the younger children. As the names in Matthew are read, have the children circle the names of people that they recognized. Take the time to stop and tell their stories.

Remind the kids that Jesus belonged to the family of David. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to be counted with the other members of the family of David. God cared for this family. Tell the story of Mary and Joseph's escape to Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-16)

Read Ephesians 1:4-6 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

We too are God's children too. We are adopted into his family. We belong to God.

Below are possible responses. Use one or more that fits your church:

- Make a family tree for Jesus. Each child adds their names on a branch of the tree.
- Enlarge the Matthew 1 passage and print it on a poster size paper. Glue pictures of your congregation on the passage.
- Write the names of the people listed in Matthew 1 on a 1" ribbon. Next, each participant writes their name on the ribbon. Place the ribbon in a place where it can be seen: as a bow hung on door or wreath, as a streamer on a wall or attached to pole so others can see it as a reminder that we belong to God.

I Know Station: **The Museum of Understanding**

Focus: The children will hear the nativity story.

Materials: This station could include a variety of children's books at various reading levels such as:

- Civardi, Anne. Ill by Susan Field. *The Story of Christmas : a Picture Puzzle Book*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1997. The story of Christmas is told with a picture on each page. That picture is enlarged into a puzzle piece. When the 16 pieces are put together, a mural is made.
- Green, Rhonda Gowler. Ill by Susan Gaber. *The Stable Where Jesus was Born*. New York, NY: Athenaeum Books, 1999. "Rhyming verse introduces the people who appear in the story of the birth of Christ and describes the setting of this event." This is a simple telling of the Christmas story. Great for young children.
- Hartman, Bob. *A Night the Stars Danced for Joy: A Story for Christmas*. Colorado Springs, CO: Lion Publishing, 1993.
- Heyer, Carol. *The Christmas Story*. Nashville, TN: Ideas Children Books, 1991.
- Kay, Terry II. By Eileen Blyth. *To Whom the Angel Spoke: A Story of the Christmas*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishing, 2009.
- Lloyd Jones, Sally. Paintings by Alison Jay. *Song of the Stars: A Christmas Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2011.
- Pfister, Marcus. *The Christmas Star*. New York, NY: North-South Books. 1993. The shepherds see the star and follow it to the manger. The wise men follow it also.
- Vivas, Julie, illustrator. *The Nativity*. San Diego, CA: Gulliver Books, Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1986. The text is excerpts from the King James Bible with wonderful, sometimes comic drawings of Joseph and Mary.
- Wendsell, Ulises. *They Followed a Bright Star*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1994.
- Wildsmith, Brian. *A Christmas Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: 1998.

Tell the nativity story to the children. Here are a variety of ways to tell the story:

- Play a video of the nativity story.
- Read a Children's book to the group
- Ask older children to read a nativity book to a younger child.
- As you read the story from Luke 2 or from a storybook, encourage the children to act out the story. Provide costumes for additional fun.

I Have Hope

Station: **Nursery of Hope** (A Garden of Hope)

Focus: The Christmas story is a story of hope. It is God stepping into our world to put things right.

Print several Scripture passages on paper that talk about the hope Jesus brings. Several examples are Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 61:1-3, Isaiah 11, John 3:16-17 or Ephesians 3:14-20. Place them in the station.

- The promise of Jesus is in the Old Testament. Each child should decorate a small flower pot and decoupage a piece of paper with the Old Testament passage on the pot. Fill the pot with soil and plant a seed in the pot. Our hope grows because of Jesus' birth.
- Each child selects one of the printed passages to read aloud to the group. Based on the passage, the group can pray for others as a way to speak hope into the areas of life where someone may feel hopeless (like those who are depressed, hungry, sick or homeless, for example.)
- Where do you see hope in the Christmas story? How does the Christmas story give people hope? Children can draw a picture or write about how Jesus' birth gives them hope.
- Children can draw a picture or write about how Jesus' birth brings hope on cotton fabric squares. An adult sews the squares together making a hope quilt to display in the church or to donate.
- Write the word "Hope" on a large paper or poster board. Decorate around it with colored pencils or markers. Put the names of the kids who worked on the poster in with the decorations. Remind them that we have hope because Jesus came to earth.

I am Called and Equipped

Station: **Bethlehem News Office**

Focus: The shepherds and the angels told the good news of Jesus's birth. We also are called to tell other the good news of Jesus's birth.

Read Luke 2:1-19 using one of these suggestions for reading with a group:

- Hand a Bible to everyone in the group. with Luke 2 bookmarked. Take turns reading the passage.
- Before the group arrives, write a number from one to nineteen on nineteen index cards. Print Luke 2:1 on the card with the number 1. Continue until all nineteen cards are completed.
Ask the children to sit in a circle. Hand the cards to the children in random order.

Then begin with card #1 and have the child holding that card read the verse. When the child is finished with the verse, he or she places the card in the center of the group. Continue until the whole passage is read. Encourage the older children to read with the younger children.

After reading the story, chose an activity:

- Point out how the shepherds were called by God through the angels to announce the birth of Jesus. Ask how we know that we are also called by God if we don't have angels singing to us?
- Bring out an empty scroll. Add the names of people for whom they are praying to hear the Good News to the scroll. The leader at the station then prays with the children.
- Make greeting cards telling the Good News of Christ's birth.
- Interview and record each other telling the Good News in their own words.

