

Jesus Is God's Gift

Bible Basis: Matthew 1:18–2:11

The birth of Jesus was one special event! Not only did God tell Mary about it by sending an angel, but he made sure that Joseph stuck with Mary after she became pregnant by sending an angel to speak to him, too! Once Jesus was born, Magi who had come from far away found Jesus to worship him. And even they experienced something supernatural: They were warned in a dream not to go back and tell Herod about Jesus' birth.

When the Magi came, they brought gifts to Jesus—fancy, expensive gifts fit for a king! Isn't it interesting that they brought gifts to the One who himself was a gift—the best, most valuable gift ever? What a wonderful gift that was, when Jesus died and came back to life again to provide salvation for all who would believe. God loves the children in your class, and that wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus is just waiting for them.

Jesus Is God's Gift

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1	Jesus is God's gift, born on Christmas.	11
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Parent Page

Jesus Is God's Gift

For the next five weeks, the toddlers and 2s class will be learning that Jesus is God's gift. The children will use their five senses to discover that Jesus was a special gift of love from God to humankind.

Use the Parent Page ideas to help reinforce the point that Jesus is God's gift.

Tips for Toddlers and 2s

Birthday parties are such fun! Even toddlers realize that birthdays are special celebrations where love is generously sprinkled among pretty presents and gooey cake. By celebrating Jesus' birth with a joyous party, your toddler will begin to learn that Jesus' birthday is extra special—a birthday the whole world celebrates! Bake a cake, wrap pretty presents, and sing "Happy Birthday to You" to Jesus as you nurture a spirit of celebration for God's wonderful gift of love.

Together Time

- Provide building blocks or boxes and a small, unbreakable Nativity set for your child to play with. Encourage your child to use the figures to act out the story of Jesus' birth as you tell the story.
- Invite your child to help wrap Christmas gifts with festive wrapping papers and colorful bows. As you enjoy your "wrap session," explain that Jesus is our special gift of love from God.
- Repeat this simple action rhyme from class together:

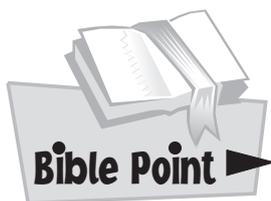
Jesus Is Born (Finger Rhyme)

One little baby—asleep on the hay. *(Hold up one finger, and then lay your head on your hands.)*

Two loving parents keep watch while they pray. *(Hold up two fingers, and then fold your hands.)*

Three wise men traveled on camels to find *(hold up three fingers, and then shield eyes with hand as if searching)*

One little baby—your Jesus and mine. *(Hold up one finger, and then point to yourself.)*



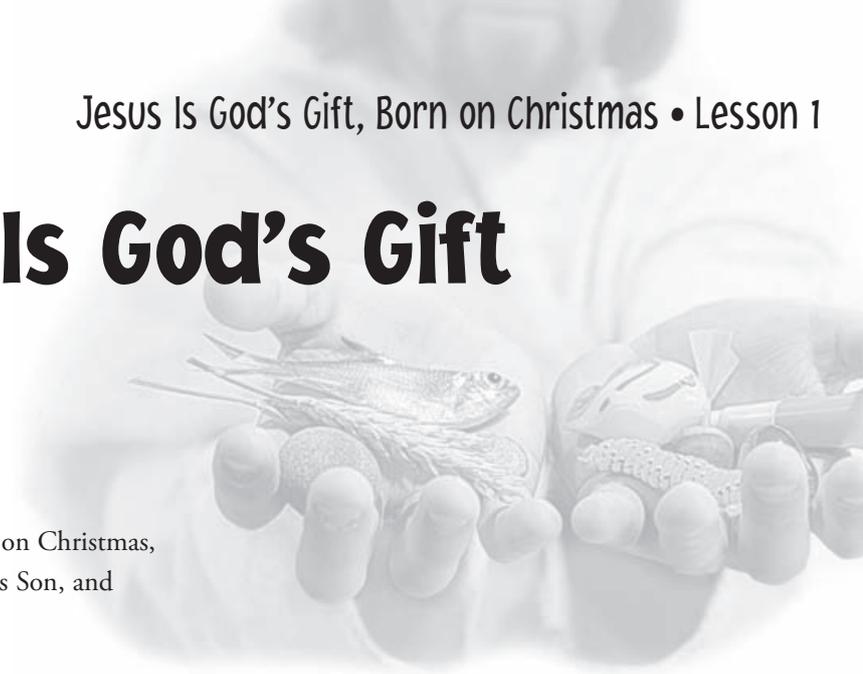
Jesus Is God's Gift

Bible Verse

Jesus is God's gift (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- understand that Jesus was born on Christmas,
 - realize that baby Jesus was God's Son, and
 - learn that God gave Jesus to us.



Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- **Jesus is God's gift, born on Christmas.**

**Matthew
1:18–2:11**



The custom that we now have of giving gifts to one another at Christmas originated from the Magi bringing gifts to Jesus. Unfortunately, the giving of gifts has become so commercialized and Santa-ized that few people other than Christians probably even know that there's any connection between Christmas gifts and Jesus.

Your toddlers are beginning to understand gifts and to get excited about Christmas. They know what fun it is to open presents and to have birthday parties. This is a great time for them to begin seeing Christmas as Jesus' birthday, the day God gave us the greatest gift ever!

Prayer

- Read Romans 6:23.
- How did Jesus bring us the gift of eternal life?
- What impact has God's greatest gift had in your life?
- Pray: God, thank you for the wonderful gift you gave us in your Son, Jesus. Help me to share that gift with the children I teach by...

Before the Lesson

- Collect items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed in the chart on the next page.
- 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
Arrival Activities Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Welcome Time —Receive a warm welcome from the teacher and Cuddles the Lamb.	Name tags (p. 8), scissors, marker, tape or safety pins, CD player	
	Option 1: Wrapped in Love —Make cute “babies” and wrap them in colorful “blankets.”	Baby-in-a-blanket pattern (p. 23), crayons, scissors, stickers	
	Option 2: In a Stable —Play in a pretend stable, and learn that Jesus slept in a manger.	Blanket, small box, newspaper, stuffed animals	
	Pick-Up Time —Sing a song as they help clean up the room.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Bible Song —Sing a song about the Bible.	Bible, CD player	
	Jesus Is God’s Gift —Interact with sensory StoryBoard figures as they hear the Christmas story from Matthew 1:18–2:11.	CD player	
	Jesus Is Born (Finger Rhyme) —Learn an action rhyme about Jesus’ birth.		
Bible Activities	Discovering Gifts —Pass a huggable bear around the circle, and remember that Jesus loves them.	Shoe box and lid, wrapping paper, scissors, tape	
	Interactive Bible Bulletin Board —Review the Bible Point with Cuddles the Lamb as they create a bulletin board together.	Nativity patterns (pp. 22-23), scissors, tape, evergreen branch, light blue paper	
	Sing It Out —Recite an action rhyme about Jesus’ birth.		
	Bible Craft —Make miniature mangers with pretend babies to tuck in.	Paper cups, wooden ice-cream spoons, tissue paper, crayons, scissors, tissues	
	Bible Game —Sing a song, and pretend to be a baby “asleep in the hay.”	CD player, spoon babies from Bible Craft	
 Closing	Animals in the Manger —Say a prayer, and have a snack.	Animal crackers, napkins, apple juice, paper cups	

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

Arrival Activities

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: name tags (p. 8), scissors, marker, tape or safety pins, CD player



- Play “Jesus Is God’s Gift” (adapted from Isaiah 9:6a) (track 6) from the CD as children are arriving.
- Use Cuddles the Lamb to help you greet each child by name and with a warm smile.
- Tape or pin a name tag to each child’s clothing.
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► Jesus is God’s gift.**
- Place Cuddles out of sight so the children won’t be distracted by him during the next activity.

Option 1: Wrapped in Love

SUPPLIES: baby-in-a-blanket pattern (p. 23), crayons, scissors, stickers

Before class, photocopy the baby-in-a-blanket pattern. Cut out a paper baby for each child in class.

Set out paper babies, crayons, and tiny dot or star stickers. As children arrive, invite each of them to make a “baby in a blanket.” Let toddlers scribble-color the paper babies and blankets. Then help each child fold the corners of the “blanket” across the “baby.” (Do not tape the folded blanket in place.) Let children use stickers to decorate the baby blankets.

Invite children to fold and unfold the paper blankets and “tuck their babies in bed.” Make comments such as “We love babies and want them to be snuggly and warm” and “Jesus was born on Christmas.” Mention that Jesus is God’s Son. Tell children that they’ll hear a story about the night baby Jesus was born and that ► Jesus is God’s gift.

Option 2: In a Stable

SUPPLIES: blanket, small box, newspaper, stuffed animals

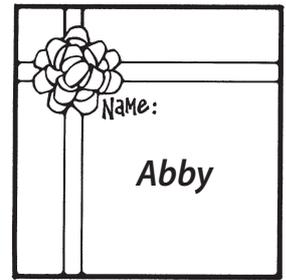
Drape a blanket over a table or a few chairs to create a “stable.” Scatter a few stuffed animals around the stable. Provide a small box filled with crumpled newspaper “hay” for a “manger.” Encourage children to make believe they’re animals such as donkeys, sheep, or cows, and let them pretend to eat hay from the manger. Explain that a manger is where animals eat and that when Jesus was born, he slept in a manger. Point out that even though Jesus was born in a stable and slept in a manger, ► Jesus is God’s gift.

Pick-Up Time

SUPPLIES: CD player



As Arrival Activities draw to a close, gently mention that it will soon be time to clean up. Encourage children to help you pick up things in the room as you lead them in singing “Let’s Pick Up All Our Things” (track 2). Use the CD and sing the song to the tune of “Looby Loo.”



The Lesson at a Glance chart gives you a quick overview of the lesson and lists the supplies you’ll need for each activity. Most of the supplies are items you may already have in your home or classroom. Simplify your preparation by choosing which Arrival Activities and For Extra Time activities (found at the end of the lesson) you’ll use.



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 pick up all our things.
Let's pick up all our things.
Let's pick up all our things
And put them all away.

Everyone here can help.
Everyone here can help.
Everyone here can help.
Let's put it all away.

Let's pick up all our things.
Let's pick up all our things.
Let's pick up all our things.
It's time to stop our play.

Bible Story Time

■ Bible Song

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player

BIBLE VERSE



track 3

Say: **Who is God's gift to us? ► Jesus is God's gift. How do we know that? The Bible tells us. The Bible is God's special book. The Bible tells us about God. Let's learn a song about the Bible.** Using the CD, lead children in singing "God's Special Book" (track 3) to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."



This is God's special book.
Yes, it's God's book you see!
I learn about all God has done
And his love for me!
(Repeat.)
Bible!

teacher tips

Safety is essential when working with young children. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission suggests craft supplies and toys should be no smaller than a 50-cent piece (to avoid choking). Make sure electrical outlets are covered, electrical cords are hidden, and all chemicals are out of reach of the children.



■ Bible Story: Jesus Is God's Gift

SUPPLIES: CD player



track 4



Before class begins, prepare your StoryBoard figures by following the assembly instructions included in the Learning Lab. The purpose of the StoryBoard figures is to provide an interactive, sensory learning opportunity for your toddlers and 2s. Please attach the StoryBoard figures' sensory items securely so the children can touch them without danger of pulling the items off or putting them into their mouths.

Before this activity, add a bit of straw from Sensory Packet 1 to the StoryBoard manger.

Panel 1



Place the StoryBoard figures and the star behind you. Cue the CD player to track 4 and set it beside you. Say: **We're going to hear a Bible story about a very special birthday, and we'll learn that ► Jesus is God's gift.** Set the figures of Mary, Joseph, and the donkey on the floor. **A long time ago, there was a man named Joseph and a woman named**

Mary. Can you say "hello"? Pause. **They were excited because Mary was going to have a special baby! Mary rode on the donkey while Joseph walked beside them. They wanted to find a place for the baby to be born. Let's pet the nice donkey. We can touch Mary's pretty hair and Joseph's belt, too.**

Ask: • **What is Mary's hair like?** (Long; soft; brown.)

- **What is Joseph's belt like?** (Rough.)
- **How does the donkey feel?** (Soft; nice.)

Set out the stable. Say: **Mary and Joseph came to a town called Bethlehem. But there was no room to stay in. No room at all!** Say the following action rhyme, and then encourage children to slowly repeat the rhyme with you a few times.

No room, no room, where could they stay? (*Shake your head and finger.*)

In a little stable filled with animals and hay! (*Make a "roof" over your head with your arms.*)

Mary and Joseph stayed in the stable and waited for the special baby to be born. What animals were in the stable? Let's listen! Use the CD and listen to the "Animal Sounds" (track 4). Pause the CD after each sound, and encourage children to identify the animal and then imitate its sound. Stop the CD player after the sheep sounds.

Set the manger by the stable. Say: **The animals ate hay from the manger. See the hay inside?** Let children peek in the manger. **While the animals ate, Mary and Joseph waited for a special gift from God. Do you know who that gift was? Close your eyes, and we'll find out!**

Panel 2



While children's eyes are closed, lay the figure of baby Jesus in the manger. Say: **One...two...three...open your eyes. What do you see? The special baby! Jesus was the special baby who was born! Let's clap to show how glad we are that ► Jesus is God's gift!** Lead children in clapping. **You can hold the pretend baby very carefully and say, "I love you, Jesus."** Help each

toddler hold the figure of baby Jesus and lead him or her in saying, "I love you, Jesus."

When everyone has had a turn, lay the figure of baby Jesus in the manger. Set the shepherd and the sheep a little ways from the story area. Say: **Out in the fields, shepherds watched their flocks of sheep. We can touch the shepherd's staff and pet the sheep.** Invite children to each pet the sheep and touch the wooden staff.

Suddenly, angels appeared. Set the angel next to the shepherd. **An angel said that Jesus had been born and that ► Jesus is God's gift! Let's be like angels and tell someone that Jesus is born.** Hand the StoryBoard angel to a child; then help him or her pass the angel to someone and say, "Jesus is born."



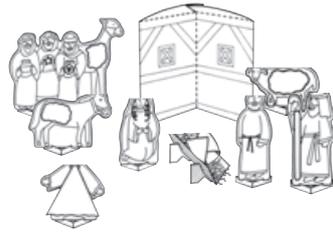
Try one or more of the following techniques if children in your class experience separation anxiety.

- Allow the child to bring a security object from home.
- Invite one of the parents to help in the classroom for a couple of weeks.
- Have parents tell the child matter-of-factly when they will return and then leave promptly.
- Have one of the adult helpers pick up the child and get him or her involved immediately in one of the Arrival Activities.



After everyone has told about Jesus' birth, say: **Then the shepherds came to see baby Jesus.** Set the sheep, shepherd, and angel by the stable. **It was a special birthday party, wasn't it? Who else came?**

Panel 3



Place the figure of the wise men to one side of the stable. Say: **Look! Three wise men heard the good news about Jesus' birthday. They love Jesus and want to see him, but how do they find Jesus? Look!** Hold the star over the stable. **They're following a bright star to find Jesus. They're also riding on camels. We can pat the camel.** Let children pat the figure of the camel.

Camels are bumpy to ride. Let's go for a pretend camel ride. Have children sit in a line, one behind the other with their legs on either side of the person in front. Sway back and forth and "bounce" up and down as you say: **Bounce, bounce, up and down! We're on a camel ride! Up and down, back and forth, bumpity, bumpity, bump! Whoa, camel, let's stop.** Have children return to their places. **That was fun!**

Ask: • **What are the wise men carrying?** (Presents; gifts.)

Say: **It's Jesus' birthday, and the wise men are bringing gifts. Let's see the gifts.** Let the children scratch and sniff the spice sticker and then touch the pretty packages in the wise men's hands.



Important: Put the StoryBoard away and out of reach of children.



BIBLE POINT ►



Say: **The wise men are bringing spices and gold and special gifts to Jesus because they love him. And God gave us a special gift because he loves us. ► Jesus is God's gift. Jesus was a special baby because Jesus is God's Son. If we believe this, we will live in heaven someday with Jesus. Isn't that a wonderful gift? Let's learn a rhyme about our special baby Jesus.**

■ *Jesus Is Born (Finger Rhyme)*

SUPPLIES: none

Gather children in a circle, and lead them in the following action rhyme. Say the rhyme slowly, and then encourage children to follow along. Slowly repeat the rhyme two more times.

One little baby—asleep on the hay. *(Hold up one finger, and then lay your head on your hands.)*

Two loving parents keep watch while they pray. *(Hold up two fingers, and then fold your hands.)*

Three wise men traveled on camels to find *(hold up three fingers, and then shield eyes with hand as if searching)*

One little baby—your Jesus and mine. *(Hold up one finger, and then point to yourself.)*

Say: **What a nice poem about baby Jesus! We've been learning that ► Jesus is God's gift and that he was born on Christmas. Let's find out more!**



BIBLE POINT ►

Bible Activities

■ Discovering Gifts

SUPPLIES: shoe box and lid, wrapping paper, scissors, tape



Before class, wrap the shoe box in wrapping paper, wrapping the lid separately so it can easily be removed. Place the *toy bear* into the wrapped shoe box. Place the wrapped lid on top of the box.

Sit in a circle with the class. Hold the box in front of you.

Say: **Opening presents is fun!**

Ask: • **Can you think of a present that you enjoyed**

opening? (My teddy bear; a new doll house; my tricycle.) Allow time for each child to share.

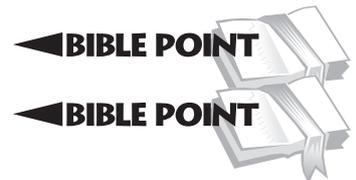
• **Why do people give each other presents?** (Because they love each other; because they want to share; because it's fun.)

• **Why do you think God gave us Jesus?** (Because he loves us; because Jesus is special; to help us.)

Say: ► ***Jesus is God's gift* to us, and we celebrate his birth at Christmastime! Let's pass around this box and pretend we are opening a gift from God. When we open the present, we can remember that ► *Jesus is God's gift*.**

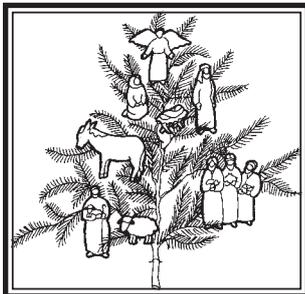
Pass the box to the child on your right, and allow him or her to open the box, take out the *toy bear*, and give the bear a hug. Tell the children that hugging the bear can remind us that Jesus loves us and that we love Jesus. Then the child should replace the bear and the lid and pass the box to another child. Lead the class in saying ► ***“Jesus is God's gift”*** every time the box is opened. Pass the box around the circle to allow each child to open it.

After each child has had a turn, say: **That was fun to open a present! It's good to remember that ► *Jesus is God's gift*. Let's put a pretty Christmas tree on our bulletin board to remind us that at Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birthday.**



■ Interactive Bible Bulletin Board

SUPPLIES: Nativity patterns (pp. 22-23), scissors, tape, evergreen branch, light blue paper



Before class, photocopy the Nativity patterns. Cut out a figure for each child in class. If you have a large class, cut out extra shepherds, angels, and sheep. Cover the bulletin board with light blue paper. Attach an evergreen branch to the center of the bulletin board or cut a large, green construction paper triangle for a tree.

During this module you'll be creating a Christmas tree and decorating it with special ornaments and gifts.



Bring out Cuddles the Lamb. When you've finished with the script, put Cuddles away, out of sight of the children.

Cuddles: Hi, boys and girls! Say...*(looking at the tree on the bulletin board)* what's a tree doing on the bulletin board?

Teacher: We're going to make it a special tree, Cuddles. We've been learning that ► Jesus is God's gift. And we've been learning that Jesus was born on Christmas. In fact, Jesus is the reason we have Christmas!

Cuddles: You mean Christmas is Jesus' birthday?

Teacher: That's right, Cuddles. And we're going to make a special Christmas tree to remind us that ► Jesus is God's gift. Would you like to help us?

Cuddles: Oh, yes! I like Christmas trees, and I like helping—and I *love* Jesus!

Have Cuddles hand each child a paper Nativity figure. Help children tape their figures to the branches of the bulletin board tree. Each time a child places a figure, lead him or her in saying the Bible Point; then have Cuddles give each child a warm hug. When all the figures have been "hung" on the tree, continue.

Teacher: My, what a special tree! Look at the all the pictures from our Bible story. Let's see if you can find them.

Have children find and point to the following story pictures on the tree:

- Mary and Joseph,
- the donkey,
- the angel,
- the shepherd and the sheep,
- the manger and baby Jesus, and
- the wise men.

Teacher: You found all the pictures from our story. Now let's say our story rhyme once more to remind us that ► Jesus is God's gift.

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■ Sing It Out

SUPPLIES: none

Lead children in the following action rhyme. Slowly repeat the rhyme two times.

One little baby—asleep on the hay. (*Hold up one finger, and then lay your head on your hands.*)

Two loving parents keep watch while they pray. (*Hold up two fingers, and then fold your hands.*)

Three wise men traveled on camels to find (*hold up three fingers, and then shield eyes with hand as if searching*)

One little baby—your Jesus and mine. (*Hold up one finger, and then point to yourself.*)

Say: **We know that ► Jesus is God's gift. God gave us Jesus because he loves us. Let's make little mangers like the one baby Jesus slept in.**



■ Bible Craft

SUPPLIES: paper cups, wooden ice-cream spoons, tissues, tissue paper, crayons, scissors

Before class, cut paper cups in half, retaining the bottom portions. Be sure you have a cup for each child.

Set out crayons, tissues, and tissue paper. Distribute the cup halves, and invite children to scribble-color their “mangers.” Let children stuff small wads of crumpled tissue paper or tufts of Easter grass into their mangers. Then hand each child a wooden ice-cream spoon. Let children wrap their spoon “babies” in tissue blankets and then lay their babies in the mangers. As they work, ask children questions such as “How would it feel to lie on hay?” and “Would a stable be a nice place to be born? Why or why not?”

Encourage children to “rock their babies” and “put them to bed” in the mangers. Say: **Our pretend babies look sleepy. Let's sing them a nice lullaby.** Whisper: **Maybe we can even sing our pretend babies to sleep!** Have toddlers use their babies to do the motions that accompany the song in the following game activity.



■ Bible Game

SUPPLIES: CD player, spoon babies from Bible Craft



Using the CD, lead children in singing “Away in a Manger” (track 5). Encourage children to use their spoon babies to do the motions in parentheses. On the repeat, let children pretend they are the babies “asleep on the hay.”



Away in a manger (*rock your baby*),

No crib for a bed (*shake your head*),

The little Lord Jesus (*cover your heart with your hands*)

Laid down his sweet head (*lay your baby in the manger*);

The stars in the sky (*raise your hands and “twinkle” your fingers*)

Looked down where he lay (*shield your eyes and look downward*),

The little Lord Jesus (*cover your heart with your hands*),

Asleep on the hay. (*Put your finger to your lips.*)

(Repeat.)

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

Whisper: I think our pretend babies are sound asleep. Let's leave them here and tiptoe to the snack table. We'll have a delicious snack to remind us that ► Jesus is God's gift.



BIBLE POINT ►



Closing

■ *Animals in the Manger*

SUPPLIES: animal crackers, napkins, apple juice, paper cups

Help children wash their hands. When children are gathered at your snack table, ask:

- **Who is our special gift from God?** (Jesus.)

Say: **Jesus is a very special gift. Jesus loves us and cares for us, and he is always with us. That's a fine present! Let's say a prayer and tell God thank you for Jesus. Fold your hands.** Pray: **Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. We love Jesus, and we love you. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Hand each child a few animal crackers on a napkin and a paper cup half-filled with apple juice. As they enjoy their treats, encourage children to tell about the animals that were in the stable when Jesus was born. Remind children that ► Jesus is God's gift and that we celebrate Christmas to remember Jesus' birthday.

Have children take home their mangers and their paper babies from Option 1.



BIBLE POINT ►



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Parent Page" handout (p. 10) for this module, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this module'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.

■ *Nativity Play*

Provide a shoe box, blocks, and a Nativity set for children to play with. Allow the children to arrange the figures of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, and the animals around the shoe box “stable” and retell the story of Jesus’ birth. You may wish to photocopy the Nativity patterns on pages 22 and 23 onto stiff paper, and then tape them to index cards that have been folded in half to make stands for the figures. Encourage children to ask questions about Jesus’ special birthday.

■ *Away in a Manger*

Without using the *CD*, lead children in singing “Away in a Manger.” Encourage children to do the motions in parentheses.



SING

Away in a manger (*rock your baby*),
No crib for a bed (*shake your head*),
The little Lord Jesus (*cover your heart with your hands*)
Laid down his sweet head (*lay your baby in the manger*);
The stars in the sky (*raise your hands and “twinkle” your fingers*)
Looked down where he lay (*shield your eyes and look downward*),
The little Lord Jesus (*cover your heart with your hands*),
Asleep on the hay. (*Put your finger to your lips.*)
(Repeat.)

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

Patterns

Cut loosely around the pattern instead of cutting exactly on the outlines.



Patterns

Cut loosely around each pattern instead of cutting exactly on the outlines.



