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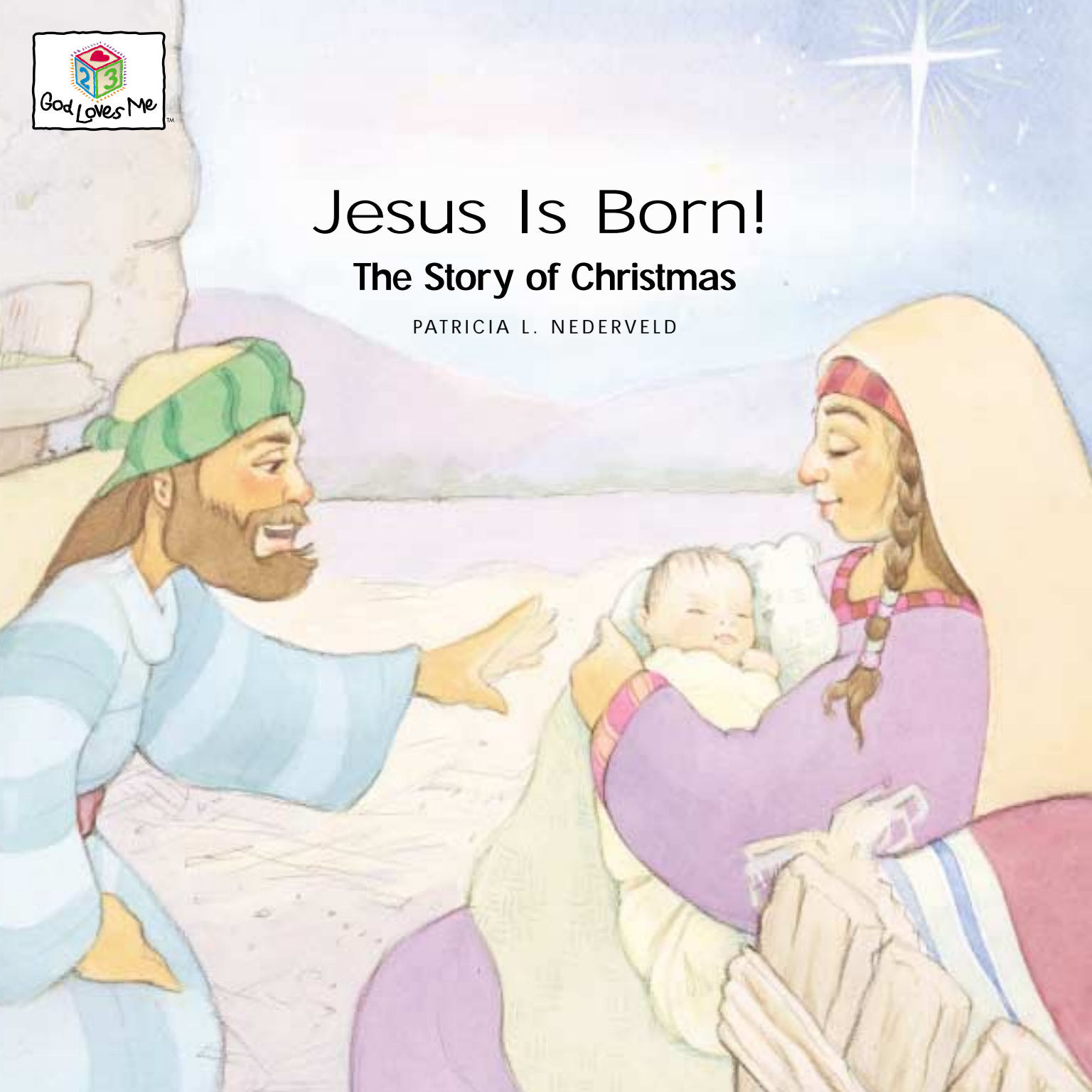
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Jesus Is Born!

The Story of Christmas

PATRICIA L. NEDERVELD



We are grateful to the following team of authors for their contributions to *God Loves Me*, a Bible story program for young children. This Bible story, one of a series of fifty-two, was written by Patricia L. Nederveld, managing editor for CRC Publications. Suggestions for using this book were developed by Jesslyn DeBoer, a freelance author from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Yvonne Van Ee, an early childhood educator, served as project consultant and wrote *God Loves Me*, the program guide that accompanies this series of Bible storybooks.

Nederveld has served as a consultant to Title I early childhood programs in Colorado. She has extensive experience as a writer, teacher, and consultant for federally funded preschool, kindergarten, and early childhood programs in Colorado, Texas, Michigan, Florida, Missouri, and Washington, using the *High/Scope* Education Research Foundation curriculum. In addition to writing the *Bible Footprints* church curriculum for four- and five-year-olds, Nederveld edited the revised *Threes* curriculum and the first edition of preschool through second grade materials for the *LiFE* curriculum, all published by CRC Publications.

DeBoer has served as a church preschool leader and as coauthor of the preschool-kindergarten materials for the *LiFE* curriculum published by CRC Publications. She has also written K-6 science and health curriculum for Christian Schools International, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and inspirational gift books for Zondervan Publishing House.

Van Ee is a professor and early childhood program advisor in the Education Department at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has served as curriculum author and consultant for Christian Schools International and wrote the original *Story Hour* organization manual and curriculum materials for fours and fives.

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Includes follow-up activities.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY CATHY ANN JOHNSON



CRC Publications
Grand Rapids, Michigan

This is a story
from God's
book, the Bible.

It's for say name(s) of
your child(ren).
It's for me too!

Luke 2:1-7









“We must go to Bethlehem,” said Joseph to Mary one day. So they packed their things and began to walk to that city far away.





The trip was long, Mary grew tired—her baby was on its way. But when they got to Bethlehem they found no place to stay.

The innkeeper looked at Joseph and slowly shook his head. Then he stopped and thought again as he pointed to a shed.









“**T**here’s a place that’s warm and dry,
you could stay there instead.”
So the tired pair settled there
and spread out some hay for a bed.

Mary's little
one—
God's
own Son—was
born in the shed
that night!
She wrapped her
child in clean,
warm cloths and
held him, oh, so
tight.









Joseph filled the manger bed with hay so dry and light. And the thankful pair bowed their heads in prayer to God for that special night.

It was Christmas
night when Jesus
came to be born
for me, for you!
So I'll give thanks
for Jesus—I hope
you'll thank God
too!









I wonder if you'd
like to say thank
you to God for
sending baby
Jesus . . .

*Dear God, thank
you for sending
baby Jesus! We're
glad you love us so
much. Amen.*

Suggestions for Follow-up

Opening

Little ones enjoy the excitement of the holiday season, but, like adults, they can be overstimulated by all the decorations and activities. Set a quiet tone as you welcome the children. Give gentle hugs, and whisper how precious each child is.

Bring a collection of baby pictures for your opening time. Talk about babies, and remind your little ones that each of them was once a baby. Admire the babies' eyes, hands, toes. . . . Emphasize that babies are very precious—to mommies and daddies and brothers and sisters—and to God! Baby Jesus was precious to God too—Jesus is God's own Son!

Learning Through Play

Learning through play is the best way! The following activity suggestions are meant to help you provide props and experiences that will invite the children to play their way into the Scripture story and its simple truth. Try to provide plenty of time for the children to choose their own activities and to play individually. Use group activities sparingly—little ones learn most comfortably with a minimum of structure.

1. Provide materials for constructing a manger. Supply cutouts of the figure of baby Jesus (Pattern I, Patterns Section, *God Loves Me* program guide), half sheets of brown or gray construction paper, glue sticks, a supply of tan paper torn into thin strips to represent straw or hay, and small squares of white flannel. Show the children how to dab glue all over the background paper and stick on the straw to

form a bed. Help them glue the figure of baby Jesus on the straw and add the flannel blanket. Talk about how different Jesus' bed was from the beds they had when they were babies. Jesus, God's precious Son, was born in a barn on a bed of straw.

2. Bring a new baby doll for the children to play with. Involve them in welcoming this new baby to their family. Remember that this can be a very difficult task for a young child. Talk about feelings and about the things a new baby needs. You might want to have tiny diapers and undershirts, booties, and bottles for your mommies and daddies to use. Remind your little ones that baby Jesus needed these things too—Mary and Joseph took good care of their precious baby, God's Son.
3. Invite the children to retell the story with the song "Mary Had a Baby" (Songs Section, *God Loves Me* program guide).

*Mary had a baby, yes, Lord!
Mary had a baby, yes, my Lord!
Mary had a baby, yes, Lord!
The little child of Bethlehem was born for us.*

*What did she name him? . . .
She named the baby Jesus . . .
Where was he born? . . .
Born in a manger . . .*

—African-American spiritual

Sing the first stanza together several times. Ask the children the questions in the second and

fourth stanzas and prompt them to answer with the words in the third and fifth stanzas. Once the children know some of the words, add hand claps, bells, or maracas on the “yes, Lord!”

4. Encourage children to build barns and animal sheds with shoe boxes and blocks. Add toy animals and people. Older children might like to build the town of Bethlehem. Help children imagine how tired Mary and Joseph were after their long journey. Move two people figures through the streets as though looking for a place to sleep. Talk about how Mary must have felt to lay her precious baby in the hay with animals all around. Praise God that Jesus came!
5. Provide a simple, inexpensive crèche for your children to use to reenact the Christmas story. (Simple patterns for wooden figures or a flannelboard scene are included in the *God Loves Me* program guide—see Pattern J, Patterns Section.) Show the children how to carefully move the figures around. You may need to encourage your little ones to take turns and to share the figures. Point out the stable and manger, the animals, Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus, God’s own Son. Express your own wonder and thanks that Jesus came for you and for your little ones.
6. Place Christmas bells in several places around the room. Pick up a bell in one spot in the room, and invite children to find and ring the bells with this action rhyme:

Bells are ringing, bells are ringing. (jingle, jingle, jingle)
Christmas bells, Christmas bells. (jingle, jingle, jingle)
It is Jesus’ birthday, it is Jesus’ birthday. (clap, clap, clap)
Ring bells, ring. Ring bells, ring. (jingle, jingle, jingle)

—Adapted from *Little Ones Sing Praise*, © 1985, Concordia Publishing House. Used with permission.

Closing

Gather your little ones around you for a few minutes of quiet time. Touch each child and say, “I wonder, [name], if you know that Jesus is God’s gift to you . . .” Use the prayer on page 21 to thank God for the baby Jesus. Place a miniature sticky bow on each child’s hand as they leave, and remind them that God loves them very much.

At Home

You’ve probably noticed that little ones can hardly resist touching the baby Jesus figure in a nativity scene. Help your child make a nativity set from Play-Doh.

Encourage your child to shape the figures and retell the Christmas story as you work together. Let your child label the figures—it’s not important that the figures be accurate representations. After the figures have dried for a few days, help your little one paint them with tiny sponge brushes or large artist brushes. Display the crèche where your little one can share the story with visitors and family members.

Old Testament Stories

Blue and Green and Purple Too! *The Story of God's Colorful World*

It's a Noisy Place! *The Story of the First Creatures*

Adam and Eve *The Story of the First Man and Woman*

Take Good Care of My World! *The Story of Adam and Eve in the Garden*

A Very Sad Day *The Story of Adam and Eve's Disobedience*

A Rainy, Rainy Day *The Story of Noah*

Count the Stars! *The Story of God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah*

A Girl Named Rebekah *The Story of God's Answer to Abraham*

Two Coats for Joseph *The Story of Young Joseph*

Plenty to Eat *The Story of Joseph and His Brothers*

Safe in a Basket *The Story of Baby Moses*

I'll Do It! *The Story of Moses and the Burning Bush*

Safe at Last! *The Story of Moses and the Red Sea*

What Is It? *The Story of Manna in the Desert*

A Tall Wall *The Story of Jericho*

A Baby for Hannah *The Story of an Answered Prayer*

Samuel! Samuel! *The Story of God's Call to Samuel*

Lions and Bears! *The Story of David the Shepherd Boy*

David and the Giant *The Story of David and Goliath*

A Little Jar of Oil *The Story of Elisha and the Widow*

One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven! *The Story of Elisha and Naaman*

A Big Fish Story *The Story of Jonah*

Lions, Lions! *The Story of Daniel*

New Testament Stories

Jesus Is Born! *The Story of Christmas*

Good News! *The Story of the Shepherds*

An Amazing Star! *The Story of the Wise Men*

Waiting, Waiting, Waiting! *The Story of Simeon and Anna*

Who Is This Child? *The Story of Jesus in the Temple*

Follow Me! *The Story of Jesus and His Twelve Helpers*

The Greatest Gift *The Story of Jesus and the Woman at the Well*

A Father's Wish *The Story of Jesus and a Little Boy*

Just Believe! *The Story of Jesus and a Little Girl*

Get Up and Walk! *The Story of Jesus and a Man Who Couldn't Walk*

A Little Lunch *The Story of Jesus and a Hungry Crowd*

A Scary Storm *The Story of Jesus and a Stormy Sea*

Thank You, Jesus! *The Story of Jesus and One Thankful Man*

A Wonderful Sigh! *The Story of Jesus and a Man Who Couldn't See*

A Better Thing to Do *The Story of Jesus and Mary and Martha*

A Lost Lamb *The Story of the Good Shepherd*

Come to Me! *The Story of Jesus and the Children*

Have a Great Day! *The Story of Jesus and Zacchaeus*

I Love You, Jesus! *The Story of Mary's Gift to Jesus*

Hosanna! *The Story of Palm Sunday*

The Best Day Ever! *The Story of Easter*

Goodbye—for Now *The Story of Jesus' Return to Heaven*

A Prayer for Peter *The Story of Peter in Prison*

Sad Day, Happy Day! *The Story of Peter ad Dorcas*

A New Friend *The Story of Paul's Conversion*

Over the Wall *The Story of Paul's Escape in a Basket*

A Song in the Night *The Story of Paul and Silas in Prison*

A Ride in the Night *The Story of Paul's Escape on Horseback*

The Shipwreck *The Story of Paul's Rescue at Sea*

Holiday Stories

Selected stories from the New Testament to help you celebrate the Christian year

Jesus Is Born! *The Story of Christmas*

Good News! *The Story of the Shepherds*

An Amazing Star! *The Story of the Wise Men*

Hosanna! *The Story of Palm Sunday*

The Best Day Ever! *The Story of Easter*

Goodbye—for Now *The Story of Jesus' Return to Heaven*

These fifty-two books are the heart of *God Loves Me*, a Bible story program designed for young children. Individual books (or the entire set) and the accompanying program guide *God Loves Me* are available from CRC Publications (1-800-333-8300).