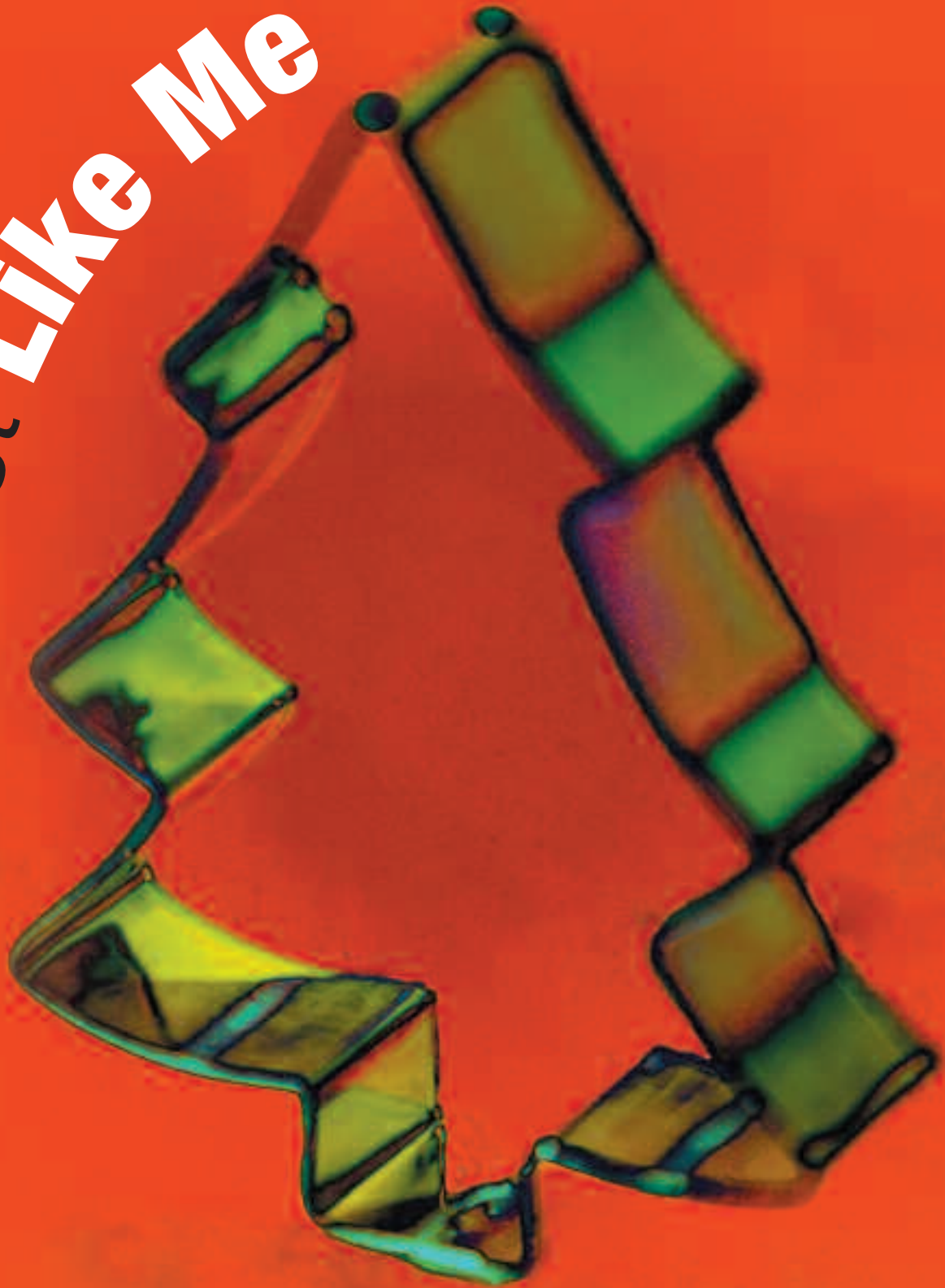


# Just Like Me



- Large and Small Group Sessions for Kindergarten-Grade 3 and Grades 4-8
- Dramas
- Songs and CD
- Complete Christmas Program
- Crafts, Games, and Other Photocopiable Resources

**LEADER'S GUIDE K-8 CHRISTMAS BOOK 3**

# **Just Like Me**



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Any questions or comments about this unit?  
We'd love to hear from you:

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*Walk With Me* curriculum has been developed by Faith Alive Christian Resources in cooperation with the Children's Ministry Office of the Reformed Church in America and with Presbyterians for Renewal.

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*Walk With Me*

Grades K-8

Christmas Book 3: Just Like Me

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### Ways to Get Others Involved

You'll need the talents of many people in your congregation to make these two sessions come alive for your children. What a wonderful opportunity to involve adults and teens who usually don't take part in the teaching ministry of the church! Consider using volunteers in some of the following ways:

- *Drama Team:* You'll want to find actors to play the roles in the dramas. Your middle school kids could take these roles. Or you could invite adults and older teens to prepare and present one or both of the dramas.
- *Set Person(s):* Whether you want a very simple set with a few props for the dramas or a more elaborate backdrop and set, you will probably want to find one or more people who have artistic gifts to plan and prepare these for you. If you plan to use any kind of lighting, you'll want to find a volunteer to manage that too.
- *Costume Gatherer(s):* Simple costumes will add a lot to the drama presentation. Look for a volunteer who'd be willing to work with others or alone to plan and prepare what the actors will wear.
- *Musicians:* Whether you plan to present a Christmas program to the church and community or just to enjoy songs together as part of your opening worship on these two Sundays, you'll want to find someone with musical gifts to teach songs and lead the singing and someone to play the accompaniment.
- *Materials Gatherers:* Look for people who are willing to do photocopying and gather any materials you might need to provide teachers in the small groups as they work on specific projects during these two weeks.
- *Program Planners:* If you plan to have the children present a program for the church and community, you'll want to appoint a committee several months ahead of time—people who will make some of the content decisions, schedule rehearsals, and attend to all of the details.



# How to Use This Book

“For to us a child is born.” —Isaiah 9:6a

Christmas is a busy time of year, with lots of singing, decorating, and celebrating. Sometimes all that busyness makes us forget that the birth of Jesus was first announced to some very ordinary people. This day, which we celebrate with glitter and tinsel, was first celebrated in quite a different way. Jesus’ first nursery was a smelly stable, and his crib was a feedbox. This extraordinary king of Kings first came to people who were remarkable only in their ordinariness.

The goal of this book is to teach children about Jesus, who came to earth for us. We pray that leaders, children, and all who participate in these sessions and in the Christmas program will come to know Jesus. To help meet this goal, the sessions have one main focus—Jesus came to earth for ordinary people just like you and me.

This book offers a variety of ideas and options for large group sessions, small group sessions, and a Christmas program. Use the ideas and options that work best with your church school. Ideally, the large group session would take about 15-20 minutes; then the children would break into their small groups for 30-40 minutes. You may also need to schedule an extra practice time or two if your church is planning on presenting the Christmas program.

Finding time to do everything in this book may be difficult, so please choose what you think your group will be able to handle. You will need one copy of this book for each of your leaders. As the purchaser of this book, you are granted permission to photocopy the dramas and the patterns and activities on the reproducible pages.

## Getting Started

Because these materials suggest a different format and approach than the regular *Walk With Me* units, you’ll want to spend some extra time planning and preparing to teach these sessions. Although we realize that each church situation is unique, you may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

- In the early fall, appoint a small committee to read through this book and decide which of the many suggestions would work best for your church.
- After the committee makes its recommendations, recruit actors, song leaders, accompanists, and teachers as necessary.
- Recruit volunteers to gather materials for these special sessions. Give them plenty of time for this task (a month or two) since they will likely want to ask the congregation to save and/or gather some of the items.
- Schedule rehearsals for the drama team (see box, p. 5).
- If you’re planning a Christmas program, schedule a final rehearsal that includes drama, singing, recitation, and so on.

## Large Group Sessions and Easter Program

The large group session materials in this book contain the drama for each week and a list of songs to learn as a whole group. All the songs are included on the CD that comes with this book. Each drama takes about eight minutes and requires five to seven actors. Costumes and sets may be as simple or as elaborate as you like. (See suggestions on pages 10-11 and 36.)

You’ll probably want to choose either middle schoolers or a team of adults or older teens to play the roles in these dramas. Either way, be sure to schedule ample rehearsal time.

The dramas and songs can be used not only for the large group session but also for a Christmas program. You'll find a sample program along with ideas for organizing and producing it on pages 73-74.

*Note:* You'll notice that we've also included an extra drama about the wise men (see p. 57). This drama can be used with the older group, and you can use it as part of your Christmas program.

### Small Group Sessions

Small group sessions will give you the opportunity to help apply the story to the children's lives. Each small group session opens with a Hello step designed to catch the children's interest and get them thinking about the lesson's theme.

Next comes the Know step (telling the story). If the children have already heard the story in the large group session, you'll want to use this time to review the story with them. If you did not participate in the large group session, use either the drama or another interesting way to present the story to the children (see sessions for suggestions).

The Grow step will help children understand what the story means for their lives, and the Show step will guide them to respond to what they learned in this session.

The small group session includes many options for activities and crafts that leaders (or the committee you appointed earlier) should carefully consider well ahead of teaching these materials. Once you've decided which crafts and activities to use, you may want to appoint two or more volunteers (possibly parents of children in the group) who will spend the time needed to gather materials, cut out patterns, and assemble all the items you'll need.

Above all, we hope you'll enjoy planning these Christmas sessions. We trust that you and your congregation will see Christ this Christmas. Jesus came to earth for you and me!

### Scheduling Rehearsals

1. Let cast members know rehearsal times when you ask them to participate. Stress that agreeing to participate means making a commitment to come to all practices.
2. Schedule two to four rehearsals.
3. If you are having actors memorize lines, request that they do so by the first rehearsal.
4. Build community at rehearsals. Pray, practice, and enjoy a snack together.
5. If you are presenting the dramas as part of a Christmas program, use your final rehearsal to go through the entire program, including music, recitations, and so on.

## Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Children Learn

How do young people learn? The answer to that question can be almost as varied as the kids in your group. Some learn best through words. Others through music. Still others through nature or through movement.

Sessions in the *Walk With Me* curriculum try to respect the many ways kids learn. *Walk With Me* sessions include a wide range of activities that speak to kids with the following types of intelligence (based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences). Within each session, the icons below highlight the learning styles represented by each activity. As you teach, you'll begin to get a sense for how the kids in your group learn best. Young people who are



### Word Smart

learn best through verbal activities (listening, reading, or speaking), including discussions, worksheets, writing, reading, storytelling, and word games.



### Music Smart

learn best through sound, music, and rhythm—playing musical instruments, writing their own songs and raps, listening to recordings, singing, and so on.



### Number Smart

learn best by exploring patterns and relationships through activities such as problem solving, logical puzzles or games, making charts and graphs, or putting things in sequence.



### People Smart

learn best through doing things with others, cooperating and working in small or large groups, role playing, conversations, brainstorming, and other interactive exercises.



### Picture Smart

learn best by visualizing concepts. These kids enjoy viewing maps, slides, pictures, videos, and diagrams; making jigsaw puzzles; and expressing their ideas with shape, color, and design.



### Self Smart

learn best by working independently through such things as writing in a journal, meditating, reading, and reflecting.



### Body Smart

learn best by using their bodies, acting things out, using puppets, moving—anything hands-on.



### Earth Smart

learn best through activities connected to living things and natural phenomena, through nature walks, examining plants and animals, nature experiments, and activities that focus on ecology.

—The ideas on this page are based on material from the following resources: *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong, © 2000, and a chart prepared by Donald L. Griggs, Livermore, California.



# Born for You and Me

## Scripture

Luke 2:6-20

## Memory Challenge

Isaiah 9:6a

## Focus

Jesus was born for ordinary people like you and me.

## WORDSEARCH

### Think About It

The Christmas story is told differently by Matthew and Luke. Matthew doesn't mention the manger, the trip to Bethlehem, or the shepherds. In fact, except for Matthew's account of the magi, only Luke relates the Christmas story as we know it.

Why would Luke alone choose to include this information? It's unlikely that he was the only one to have access to it. Probably it's because each gospel writer emphasizes different aspects of Jesus' ministry. Luke pays special attention to historical detail and presents his gospel in a way that would appeal to both Greeks and Jews alike. Luke also emphasizes the role of women, shows a special interest in the poor, and stresses the family circle. Jesus' ministry in this gospel often includes men, women, and children and often occurs in homes. A key verse for this gospel is Luke 19:10: "The son of man came to seek and to save what was lost."

### Pray About It

Pray that Luke's glad news will connect with your kids so that each will realize that Jesus came into this world for him or her personally.

Luke wants to make his gospel all-inclusive. So he includes the Christmas story. He especially wants us to see that all people—men and women, rich and poor, Jew and Greek—are included in the salvation offered by Jesus. That's why Luke adds the parts of Jesus' life in which women play a central role. That's why he includes the birth of Jesus and Mary's relationship with her cousin Elizabeth. And that's why he includes the shepherds: Jesus came to bring salvation also to the poor and lowly.

Luke wants to emphasize the remarkable dual nature of the event. On the one hand we have a miraculous virgin birth. On the other, this miracle takes place in a filthy stable. We have the glory and majesty of an angel choir lighting up the heavens. But it's witnessed only by some poor, seedy shepherds in a pasture. That irony wasn't lost on Luke. He deliberately leaves the standouts—the magi—out of the Christmas story.

Like Luke, we focus on the ordinariness of those involved in the Christmas story in this lesson. His contrast of the everyday with the extraordinary helps us to see Christ's dual nature. Christ is fully God, who deserves the loyalty, service, and homage of the rich and famous (like the magi). But he's also fully human, born of a teenage girl in circumstances that were hardly king-like. Christ came to earth for regular folks too.

Luke's good news is that this remarkable birth was for people like us, regardless of who we are. We may feel just plain ordinary. Even on days when we accomplish something that stands out, we're soon back to the

### Tell About It

Your kids are too young to have you dwell on all the mysteries of Jesus' dual nature as God and human being. Just teach them that Jesus is God, who became a human being to save us.



mundane chores of cutting the grass or doing the laundry. At times like that it's comforting to realize that the Lord of the universe loves us so much that he wanted to be like us in every way, sin excepted.

## Planning the Session

Today you have the opportunity to present the story of Jesus' birth to all the children in your church school—from kindergarten through eighth grade. What a thrill! Jesus came into this world about two thousand years ago, and yet this story still lives today. Jesus' birth was announced to the shepherds by angels. Today we can announce his birth to people like you and me. Use the outline and suggestions that follow to help you plan and schedule the 15-20 minutes you have together. You'll need to decide which suggestions would work most effectively for your group.

A possible schedule for your session might look like this:

- Singing (5-10 minutes)
- Litany (2 minutes) "For to Us a Child Is Born"
- Drama (8 minutes) "Breakfast with Shepherds"

If you are planning to present a Christmas program, you may want to use the large group session each week (in addition to other rehearsals as needed) to help the children prepare. You'll find suggestions for program planning on pages 73-74.

The suggestions in this large group session assume that you'll be telling the story of Jesus' birth to children and young teens and preparing them to respond to it in their small groups.

## Singing

You may want to ask someone with musical gifts to teach new songs and lead the singing during these two weeks. Be sure to share the tips in the box "Introducing a New Song" with that person.

Christmas is the time of year we want to sing the Christmas carols we know and love. It's also a great time to learn some new songs. We've selected the following songs for their ties to the themes of the drama and the Christmas story. Feel free to add any traditional Christmas carols that your children especially enjoy singing.

*Note:* If you are planning to use these songs as part of a Christmas program, you will probably want to start teaching them to the group in early fall so that they know them well by the time you present the program in December.

- "Come on, Ring Those Bells" (p. 59; CD, track 1)
- "Song of Christmas Morn" (p. 61; CD, track 2)
- "Rock the Baby" (p. 62; CD, track 3)
- "Mary Had a Baby" (p. 64; CD, track 4)
- "Glory to God in the Highest" (p. 65; CD, track 5)
- "O Shepherds, Wake Up" (p. 66; CD, track 6)

You may also wish to include these favorites: "Away in a Manger," "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Angels We Have Heard on High."



## Introducing a New Song

The way you introduce a new song is crucial. Of course, you'll want to know it well yourself. But you'll also want to take time to think through how you'll introduce it to your group. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- Many kids learn mostly by rote and repetition. Listen to the CD or play the tune and encourage kids to join in on a line or a phrase at a time. You may want to start by teaching them a phrase that repeats often.
- Make up motions that go along with simple words (*step, Jesus*) to help them remember the words.
- Be enthusiastic! Model your love of singing instead of being concerned about your performance.

—Sherry Merz, *Walk With Me* music editor

## Litany: For to Us a Child Is Born

For the litany “For to Us a Child Is Born” (reproducible page 75), you'll need two adults or older students as readers. Give the readers a copy of the litany in advance so they can practice reading their parts aloud.

Kids are asked to repeat the line “For to us a child is born.” A third adult could help the children know when to say their line—and how loudly. Help children understand that we can be loud and enthusiastic without yelling or being irreverent. The point is to express how happy we are that Jesus came to earth for all of us!

## Drama

Rehearsing and presenting a drama can be a fun and rewarding experience—both for the actors and for the people who view the drama. For this week's drama, “Breakfast with Shepherds,” you will need seven actors. You'll want to find a team of actors, either teens or adults, and begin working with them early. This could be a wonderful gift for your middle school group to offer to the younger children. (See “Scheduling Rehearsals,” p. 5.) You'll also want to begin thinking about costumes and props—consider asking someone to help you gather the things you will need.

### Costumes

Plan early for costumes, but remember that they don't have to be fancy. The following suggestions are only that—suggestions. Use what you have available and what you can find to create your own scene. Here are some general principles to remember:

- Use a variety of fabrics with different textures to create interest.
- Since this drama includes shepherds and the proprietor (innkeeper), keep the colors in earth tones—brown, tan, moss green, rust, taupe, and so on.

Here are some specific suggestions to help you begin gathering costumes for this drama:

- Shepherds should be dressed simply. You can do this easily by cutting a 12" x 4' (30 cm x 1.5 m) rectangle of fabric and hanging it over the actor's shoulder. If you would like a more elaborate costume, patterns for Israelite clothing are available at your local fabric store.
- Have the proprietor wear a basic Israelite costume with an apron around his waist (you could use a BBQ apron). Since the drama is humorous, the contrast of twenty-first century items with clothing from biblical times is a fun alternative.
- Wait staff should also wear aprons.

### Props

As with costumes, you can do as much or as little with props as you'd like. If you have a talented artist or designer, you may want to create a backdrop of the inn and/or use

special lighting. In most cases, though, the following simple props are all you need for an effective presentation:

- shepherd staffs
- table with four or five chairs (or two benches the length of the table)
- note pad for the server to take the food order
- restaurant sign: *Bagel King—Over 37 Sold*
- chalkboard menu listing “Eggs Bethlehem”

## Sound

One of the most important parts of the play is being able to hear the actors. Portable microphones can pick up actors’ voices and allow actors to move freely. Giving each actor his or her own microphone is also acceptable. Because holding microphones can often be noisy, it is best if the microphone is on a stand. The most important thing, though, is that the actors can be understood.

## Small Groups

After the drama, children will meet in small groups. If your regular leaders are present for these two weeks, it would probably work best to have children meet with their groups as usual or to combine several groups together. Note that we have only included two session plans—one for children in kindergarten-grade 3 and another for children in grades 4-8. Each leader will need to adapt the plan to the needs of his or her children.



Small Group Session: Kindergarten-Grade 3

# Born for You and Me

## Scripture

Luke 2:6-20

## Memory Challenge

Isaiah 9:6a

## Focus

Jesus was born for ordinary people like you and me.



# HELLO

Sheep



Body Smart

Picture Smart

### Goal

Welcome the children and get ready to hear about Jesus' birth.

### Time

10 minutes

### Materials

See individual games

To welcome the children and get them quickly involved in your group, you may want to begin the session with a game. Consider one of the following:

## Guess the Animal

### Materials

- Fur pieces or cotton balls, one per child

Give each child a piece of fur or a cotton ball and encourage kids to touch and play with it. As they gather at a table or on the floor ask, "What animal might feel like this?"

Instead of having kids respond in words, invite them to take turns acting out the animal they are thinking of. How does the animal move? What sounds does the animal make?

As each child mimes the animal he or she has chosen, have the rest of the group guess which animal it is. Some animals the children might act out are kitten, dog, rabbit, and so on. If no one chooses "sheep," act out that role yourself. After each mime, ask the children who takes care of that animal.

Explain that in today's story they heard (or will hear) about some soft animals—sheep—and about the people who took care of them—shepherds. They weren't famous or important people. They were just ordinary people who spent most of their time sitting on hills and out in fields taking care of soft, fluffy sheep. But something amazing happened to those shepherds.

Ask the children to put their fur or cotton ball in their pockets or in a special place in the room to play with later.

## Tape the Tail on the Sheep

### Materials

- Outline of sheep, minus tail (reproducible pages 77-78)
- Sheep’s tails (reproducible page 79), one per child
- Blindfolds
- Masking tape

Gather kids at one end of the room, opposite the sheep picture you’ve taped to your wall. Give the first child a sheep’s tail with a piece of masking tape on one side. Blindfold the child and start him in the direction of the sheep. Tell him to try to put the tail on the sheep. Repeat with each child in the group.

After the fun, explain that in today’s story they heard (or will hear) about some soft animals—sheep—and about the people who took care of them—shepherds. They weren’t famous or important people. They were just ordinary people who spent most of their time sitting on hills and out in fields taking care of soft, fluffy sheep. But something amazing happened to those shepherds.

## Story Figures Picture Smart

### Time

5 minutes

### Materials

- Story figures (reproducible pages 81-83), copied and cut out
- Markers or crayons
- Story bag (lunch bag, decorated with a few Christmas symbols)

Before the session, copy and cut out enough figures for your group. Create a story bag from a paper lunch bag by decorating it with stars and/or other Christmas symbols.

As the children arrive, give each of them one of the story figures you have copied and cut out and ask them to help you get ready to tell today’s story by coloring their figure.

As the children work, take the opportunity to individually welcome each of them and talk to them about the figure they are coloring. Make sure they have some idea of who the figure represents and how it fits into the Christmas story.

When they are finished coloring, ask them to place the figures in your story bag.



This option will take less time than the “Sheep” step above. It will also save you some prep time!



It’s important that each child have at least one story figure. If your group is large, photocopy extra sheep, angels, and shepherds. If your group is small, ask children to color more than one figure.

Option to step 1



# 2

# KNOW

## Jesus Is Born

Picture Smart

Body Smart

### Goal

Tell what part Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds played in Jesus' birth.

### Time

10 minutes

### Materials

- Paper bag
- Story figures (reproducible pages 81-83) one set, cut out, colored, and placed in a paper bag

*Note:* Make sure you have enough pictures for each child to be able to select one; if necessary, make duplicates of angels, shepherds, and sheep. If you choose the option to step 1, the children will color your figures.

Show the children the paper bag and explain that it holds a wonderful story. One at a time, invite kids to reach into the bag, take out a picture, and identify it. If able, the child can tell others what part this figure picture played in the story. (If you use the option to step 1, you'll also want to identify the child who colored and prepared the figure! That child may help identify the figure if needed.)

As each new figure emerges, ask the group, **Do we have all the pictures that we need to tell the Christmas story?**

When all the pictures have been selected and identified, place them on the floor or wall to make one large picture of the nativity scene. Invite the children to tell the story as you place the pictures.

If you've decided to have the children make a set of story figures in step 4, mention that now. Explain that they'll be making their very own set of figures to tell the Christmas story to their families and friends at home.



If the children in your group did not see today's drama or if they don't know the Christmas story well, you may want to tell the story while the children place the pictures. See story on reproducible page 85.

Option to step 2

option option option option opt

## Read a Nativity Book

AA Word Smart

Picture Smart

### Time

5-15 minutes

### Materials

- Picture book

Read the nativity story from a picture book. There are a number of excellent books available. Here are some suggestions:

- *The First Christmas* by Tomie dePaola. (C.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984.) This is a festive pop-up book.
- *The Stable Where Jesus Was Born* by Rhonda Gowler Green; illustrated by Susan Gaber. (Athenaeum Books, 1999.) This story presents the Christmas story in rhyme and is excellent for young children.



This is a good option to consider if the children did not see the drama in today's opening session or are not very familiar with the Christmas story.





to take turns using tape or poster putty to attach their picture to the poster. For each child say: **For to (name) a child is born.** Close by gathering around the poster and offering a brief prayer of thanks to God for sending this very special baby for all people—including each child in your group.

## 4 SHOW

### Celebrate and Tell

#### Goal

Celebrate that Jesus was born for me.

#### Time

20-25 minutes

#### Materials

See individual projects

Once we know the joy of Jesus' birth, we want to celebrate. Make this celebration part of your session today. Music, food, and decorations will add to the festivities. Choose one or more of the activities below to help the children celebrate that Jesus was born for them.

## Two-Week Project Idea

### Wooden Manger Scene



Picture Smart



People Smart



Number Smart

#### Time

15 minutes each week

#### Materials

- Cove molding
- Wooden jumbo craft sticks (tongue depressors)
- Wooden craft sticks (popsicle sticks), rounded ends cut off
- Wooden clothespins (the kind without the spring)
- Tacky glue or carpenter's glue
- ¼" dowel
- ¼" plywood or masonite

If you have a number of volunteers to help you, you may want to have your children each make a wooden manger scene. You'll need volunteers to prepare the pieces before the session and to be there to work with younger children, who may find the assembly of these manger scenes quite challenging.

You may want to ask a class of middle school kids to work with younger children on this project. That would be a great gift for older kids to give to your young students!

This activity requires preparation with power tools before class. When the project is finished, however, each child will have a very nice wooden manger scene.



If you don't have the resources for this project or if it seems too complicated, check out the Story Figures project below. It too will provide the children with visuals they can use to tell the story to others.

## Instructions for Preparation Before Class

The following parts will be needed for each child:

- Base: 4" x 4" (10 cm x 10 cm) square cut from the plywood or masonite; drill  $\frac{1}{4}$ " holes  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (2 cm) from each side in three of the four corners
- Three roof supports cut from  $\frac{1}{4}$ " dowel: 3", 3", and 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (7.5 cm, 7.5 cm, and 7 cm)
- People: Three wooden clothespins with the bottoms cut off; tops should measure 1", 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ ", and 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (2.5 cm, 4 cm, and 4.5 cm)
- Manger: One piece of cove molding cut to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (4 cm); two jumbo craft stick pieces cut to 1" (2.5 cm)
- Roof: Jumbo craft sticks cut into sections: two 4", one 5" (two 10 cm, one 12.5 cm)
- Slats: Four (regular) craft sticks cut to about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (9 cm)

*Note:* These cuts don't have to be perfect. It is supposed to look rustic.



Remember that this is a two-week project. These instructions are for the entire project. Try to complete about half of the project this week and allow time for the remaining work next week.

1. Glue the two 1" (2.5 cm) long pieces of wood to the ends of the cove molding. The curved part of the molding holds the baby. Glue the baby (smallest clothespin) into the manger. Set manger aside to dry.
2. Place dowels in the holes in the plywood square. The 3" (7.5 cm) dowels should be in the outside holes and the 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (7 cm) dowel in the middle hole. If necessary, glue the dowels in place. (*Note:* It can be very hard to get the dowel in the hole, and this will frustrate the children. You may well want to do this for them before class.)



3. Place one of the 4" (10 cm) roof sections on the top of one of the 3" (7.5 cm) dowels and the 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (7 cm) dowel. Glue in place.
4. Place the other 4" (10 cm) section on the top of the other 3" (7.5 cm) dowel and the 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (7 cm) dowel, overlapping the other roof section. Glue in place.

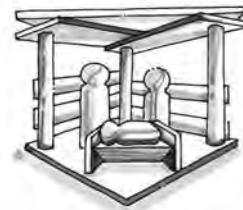




- Place the 5" (12.5 cm) roof section between the 3" (7.5 cm) dowels, overlapping the others, forming a triangular "roof." Glue in place.
- Glue the smaller craft stick slats to the dowels to form the sides of the stable, two on each side.



- Glue Mary (medium sized clothespin) and Joseph (largest clothespin) onto the base near the corner.
- Glue the baby and the manger in front of Mary and Joseph.



## One-Week Project Ideas

### Story Figures Picture Smart Word Smart

<b>Time</b>
5 minutes
<b>Materials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Story figures (reproducible pages 81-83) one set per child</li> <li>■ Scissors</li> <li>■ Markers or crayons</li> <li>■ Lunch bags (sometimes sold in red and green around Christmas!), one per child</li> <li>■ Christmas stickers</li> <li>■ Story Page: "Good News!" (reproducible page 85), one per child</li> </ul>

Tell the children they are each going to make a set of story figures to keep, just like the ones you used earlier in your session.

Distribute the pages of figures to the children and set out markers and scissors. Encourage the children to color their figures (if they wish) and cut them out.

Then distribute lunch bags. Show the children your story bag (see step 2), and invite them to make their own. Provide markers and/or stickers so kids can decorate their bags if they wish.

Have the children put their finished figures in the bags and distribute a copy of “Good News!” to each of them to put in their bags. Encourage the children to use the story figures at home to tell their families how Jesus was born for ordinary people like us.



If you're working with young children, you may want to cut the figures out for them ahead of time.

## Baby Jesus Card

### Time

10-15 minutes

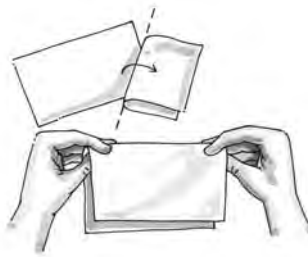
### Materials

- Half sheet of paper (8½ x 5), one per child
- Stamp pads (washable)
- Wet wipes
- Markers, crayons, and/or pencils
- Christmas stars or stickers

Before class you may want to make a sample card so you can use it to show the children as you explain the steps.

Gather the children around a table and say something like this: **Today we are going to make a card to remember why Jesus was born—for you and me!**

Give each child a half sheet of paper and show them how to fold it in half.



If you are working with very young children, you may want to fold the cards for them before your session.

Then set out the stamp pads and show children how to make a fist and ink the outside bottom of the fist.



The fist print should be placed on the front of the card. The shape looks like a tiny footprint (minus the toes).



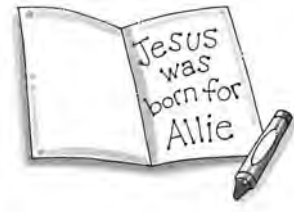


Next, ink one finger and, using that finger, make the toes.



Once the front is finished, have the children open the cards. Depending on the age of your group, either ask the children to write the message or write it for them (with the help of volunteers!) Each card might say this:  
**Jesus was born as a baby for (name of child).**

**tip** You may want to give children some scrap paper to practice on before they try stamping their cards.



If there is enough time, encourage the child to add other decorations to the cards as he or she wishes.

## Shepherd Staff Ornament

Picture Smart Number Smart

<b>Time</b>
15 minutes
<b>Materials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White pipe cleaners, cut into 6" (15 cm) and 3" (7.5) lengths, one of each length per child</li> <li>16 white faceted (8mm) beads and 6 clear faceted (8mm) beads per child (available in craft stores)</li> </ul>

Before you meet with the children, cut the pipe cleaners. Young children do not have the strength to cut the wire.

- Distribute the beads and pipe cleaners. Place sixteen white beads on the long (6", or 15 cm) section. The beads should cover the entire length.
- Bend the pipe cleaner into a shepherd's staff—it will look a lot like a candy cane.

**tip** Hand out paper plates for kids to keep their supplies together.





- Take the shorter length of pipe cleaner and place the middle of the short length on the straight part of the longer length between the fifth and sixth beads. Wrap it once around the other pipe cleaner.
- Add three clear beads to each side of the shorter pipe cleaner to finish the ornament.



## Clothespin Sheep Picture Smart

### Time

15 minutes

### Materials

- Clothespin sheep pattern (reproducible page 89) copied onto white or beige heavy paper or cardstock, one per child
- Wooden clothespins, spring type, two per child
- Cotton balls
- Glue

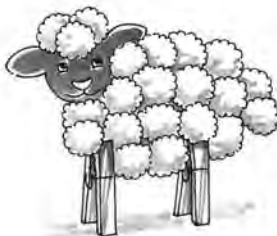
- Distribute the sheep pattern and have kids cut it out. (The youngest children will have difficulty with this. You will either need to help them or have the pieces cut out before class begins.)
- Color the head of the sheep on both sides with a black marker.



- Glue cotton balls to the sheep.



- Attach two clothespins to each sheep for the legs.





## Luke 2 with Motions AA Word Smart ↑ Body Smart

### Time

5-10 minutes

### Materials

- “Luke 2 with Motions” (reproducible pages 87-88), one copy for leader and each adult or teen volunteer helper

If your children learn well through movement, try teaching them some motions to accompany a reading of Luke 2. As you (or a volunteer) read the verses from the Bible passage, a volunteer helper should do the motions and have the children imitate them.



If you have time, read through the passage again, letting the children do the motions *with* your leader this time, instead of echoing the motions.

This activity can be easily adjusted to fit the knowledge and abilities of any group in one of the following ways:

- Select just a small part of the passage for the children to learn (for example, Luke 2:6-7).
- Make it simpler. Eliminate some of the motions.

If you plan to present a Christmas program for the congregation and/or community, you may want to include this reading with the children doing the motions as part of the program.

## Sheep Ornaments 👁 Picture Smart

### Time

15 minutes

### Materials

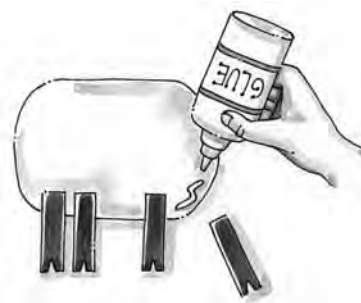
- Sheep ornament patterns (reproducible page 90)
- White or beige fleece fabric
- Black or brown felt
- Red or yellow ribbon
- Tacky glue

If you choose this project, you'll need to cut all the fabric pieces using the patterns on page 90 ahead of time. You may want to enlist the help of a volunteer or two in preparing for this craft—and ask them to be there to help small children as you move through the steps of creating the ornament!

For each child, you'll need two body pieces and one head piece from the fleece fabric. You'll also need four legs and a head piece cut from felt, as well as 8" (20 cm) of ribbon for a hanger and 5" (12.5 cm) of ribbon for a small bow.

Walk the children carefully through the following procedure:

- Take one body piece and glue four legs to the wrong (non-fuzzy) side of the fabric. The legs should hang past the fabric and hang evenly.



- Glue the ends of the ribbon for the hanger to the body. The ribbon should extend above the body (opposite the legs).



- Glue the wrong sides of the body pieces together.



- Glue the small fleece head piece between the two ears of the felt head piece.



- Glue the head piece to the top left side of the sheep body.
- Tie the short piece of ribbon into a bow and add the bow under the head.





## Song Pictures Music Smart Picture Smart

### Time

15 minutes

### Materials

- Song: “Mary Had a Baby” (p. 64, CD track 4)
- Paper
- Markers or crayons

Here is a chance to combine the visual art with music. Ask the children to draw pictures for stanzas 1, 3, and 5 of the song “Mary Had a Baby.” For example, they could draw a picture of Mary for stanza 1, a picture of a baby for stanza 3, and so on. Stanzas 2 and 4 don’t lend themselves to pictures well, but other verses can be added to the song as follows:

*Verse 1: Mary had a baby . . .*

*Verse 3: His name is Jesus . . .*

*Verse 5: Born in a manger . . .*

*Angels sang his praises . . .*

*Shepherds came to see him . . .*

*A bright star was shining . . .*

*He came to earth for me . . .*

You may want to divide your group into smaller groups and assign one or more stanzas to each of them. When the pictures are complete, sing the song together, asking the children to hold up the pictures that illustrate that stanza.

(If the children sing this song for a worship service or Christmas program, these pictures could also be scanned and shown on a projection screen as the children sing the song.)

## Shepherd’s Midnight Snack

As you spend time celebrating the birth of Jesus together, consider adding some food to your festivities. The following recipe is often referred to as Puppy Chow, but for this session consider calling it Sheep Snack or Shepherd’s Midnight Snack!

### Shepherd’s Midnight Snack

6 cups Crispix cereal

½ cup peanut butter

½ cup margarine

12 oz (340 g) chocolate chips

2 cups powdered sugar

Melt peanut butter, margarine, and chocolate chips together in the microwave or on the stove. Stir into cereal.

Put powdered sugar in a paper sack.

Put cereal mixture in and shake until well coated.



Small Group Session: Grades 4-8

# Born for You and Me

## Scripture

Luke 2:6-20

## Memory Challenge

Isaiah 9:6a

## Focus

Jesus was born for ordinary people like you and me.



# HELLO

AA Word Smart

People Smart

## What Were You Thinking?

### Goal

Welcome the children and get ready to hear about Jesus' birth.

### Time

5 minutes

### Materials

- Paper
- Pens or pencils

To welcome the group and grab their interest, play a few rounds of What Were You Thinking?—with a shepherd focus. Here's how it works:

- Tell the group that you are going to ask some questions, and that they will be writing down their responses to the questions.
- But here's the catch. They need to try to write down the ideas, words, or phrases that **they think others in the group will write down**. Explain that later, as you review the answers, each player will get one point for each "match" of her answer with another classmate's (if she matches three others, she gets three points, and so on).
- Use questions such as the following (or come up with your own):
  - What are three things you'd like about being a shepherd?
  - List five words that describe shepherds.
  - What are three qualities of "ordinary people"?
  - List four words that describe angels.
- When everyone has written down their responses, give each person in the group a chance to read at least one response in each category. Have others raise their hands if they wrote down the same response.
- Ask kids to tally their "matches" to find out who had the most matches.

Option to  
step 1

option  
option  
option

## Ordinary People Pictures Picture Smart

### Time

5-10 minutes

### Materials

- Newsprint
- Markers

As group members arrive, divide them into small groups and give each group a piece of newsprint and some markers. Challenge them to quickly (they have just a few minutes)

draw a picture of an “ordinary” person their age. On their drawing they should also include some words that describe their person: watches TV an hour a day, has ten dollars in his wallet, spends thirty hours a week in school, and so on.

After all the groups have finished their drawing, have groups take turns introducing their ordinary person.

Make the transition to today’s story by explaining that the miraculous, amazing birth of Jesus was first announced to some very ordinary people too.

## 2 KNOW

### Story Review

<b>Goal</b>
Tell what part Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds played in Jesus’ birth.
<b>Time</b>
10 minutes
<b>Materials</b>
See individual activities

If your group saw the drama in a large group session, select one of the following ways of reviewing and entering into the story together:

#### Frozen Frames Body Smart

<b>Materials</b>
None needed

Divide the class into small groups. Challenge each group to choose a scene from the story, perhaps a part that shows the reactions of the shepherds to the angels or of Joseph or Mary to the visit of the shepherds. Then they should form a tableau (frozen picture) of the scene they’ve chosen. Others should guess what’s being presented.

#### I-Witness Show Picture Smart Self Smart

<b>Materials</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Microphone (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Video camera, VCR, and TV (optional)

Divide the group into three smaller groups and assign each of them one of the following roles: Shepherds, Joseph, Mary. Explain that you will give each group a few minutes to talk about what their character saw, felt, and thought on that first Christmas. An interviewer from the famous I-Witness news program will be coming to interview them, so they need to be ready to tell the audience all about what they experienced.

You may want to give the groups a few questions to think about:

- What did you see that night?
- How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think God chose you to be part of the first Christmas?

After a few minutes, you—or a volunteer—can be the interviewer. Dramatically introduce the *I-Witness* show. You might want to use a slogan such as, **We talk to the people who really know what they’re talking about** or **For people who want the whole truth, not the watered-down version.**

Then interview each of the groups. Use questions that probe their reactions and feelings about the events of that night. Also get at their “ordinariness.” God’s angels appeared to



shepherds in a field, not to a king in a palace. Jesus was born to a simple peasant girl, not to a princess. The man who served as Jesus' earthly father was a carpenter, not a ruler or a rich and influential person.



For extra fun, have a volunteer join your group today and videotape the interviews.

### Illustrate the Story Verse by Verse



#### Materials

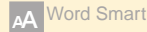
- Newsprint
- Markers

Divide the verses of Luke 2:6-20 among group members. Challenge them to illustrate each verse or pair of verses on newsprint. When the illustrations are finished, read through the passage together, asking group members to display their art at the appropriate time in the reading.

Option to  
step 2

option  
option  
option

## Drama: Breakfast with Shepherds



#### Time

10 minutes

#### Materials

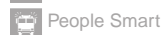
- Drama: "Breakfast with Shepherds" (pp. 53-54), one copy per student

If you do not have a large group session before you meet together as a small group, consider reading through the drama together today. (Make copies from pp. 53-54.) Ask for volunteers to read the various roles; then walk and read your way through the skit or have kids read it as reader's theater. Be sure to give cast members a few minutes to read through their parts before beginning the drama.



## GROW

"For to Us" Litany



#### Goal

Feel that Jesus came for us too.

#### Time

5 minutes

#### Materials

- Litany: "For to Us a Child Is Born" (reproducible page 75), one per child

Your large group leader may have introduced the litany "For to Us a Child Is Born." If so, your group members will be familiar with it. Distribute copies of the litany to each group member. Ask for volunteers to read the Leader 1 and Leader 2 parts. The rest of the group should read the "people" lines. Encourage kids to pay attention to the stage directions—saying the refrain softly at first and then louder and louder.

Give group members a few minutes to check out their parts. Then read the litany together. After the reading, comment how amazing it is that Jesus, the Son of God, was born as a baby for ordinary people like the shepherds and ordinary people like you and me.

# 4

# SHOW

Celebrate and Tell

## Goal

Celebrate that Jesus was born for me.

## Time

25 minutes

## Materials

See individual projects




Once we know the joy of Jesus' birth, we want to celebrate. Make this celebration part of your session today. Music, food, and decorations will add to the festivities.

During this part of your session, you'll want to choose one or more of the activities below to help members of your group celebrate that Jesus was born for them.

Another option would be to have your group (especially middle schoolers) help out in one of the classrooms of younger children, working one-on-one with a child who is creating a manger scene.

## Two-Week Project Idea

### Wooden Manger Scene

 Picture Smart  People Smart  Number Smart

## Time

15 minutes each week

## Materials

- Cove molding
- Wooden jumbo craft sticks (tongue depressors)
- Wooden craft sticks (popsicle sticks), rounded ends cut off
- Wooden clothespins (the kind without the spring)
- Tacky glue or carpenter's glue
- ¼" dowel
- ¼" plywood or masonite

If you choose this project, students will make their own manger scenes to take home, reminding them of Jesus' birth. Explain that they will have time to start the project today and complete it next week.

This activity requires preparation with power tools before class. When the project is finished, however, each child will have a very nice wooden manger scene.



If you are working with middle school kids, you may want to have them help a group of younger children make these manger scenes!

### Instructions for Preparation Before Class

The following parts will be needed for each child:

- Base: 4" x 4" (10 cm x 10 cm) square cut from the plywood or masonite; drill ¼" holes ¾" (2 cm) from each side in three of the four corners
- Three roof supports cut from ¼" dowel: 3", 3", and 2¾" (7.5 cm, 7.5 cm, and 7 cm)
- People: Three wooden clothespins with the bottoms cut off; tops should measure 1", 1½", and 1¾" (2.5 cm, 4 cm, and 4.5 cm)
- Manger: One piece of cove molding cut to 1½" (4 cm); two jumbo craft stick pieces cut to 1" (2.5 cm)

- Roof: Jumbo craft sticks cut into sections: two 4", one 5" (two 10 cm, one 12.5 cm)
- Slats: Four (regular) craft sticks cut to about 3½" (9 cm)

*Note:* These cuts don't have to be perfect. It is supposed to look rustic.



Remember that this is a two-week project. These instructions are for the entire project. Try to complete about half of the project this week and allow time for the remaining work next week.

1. Glue the two 1" (2.5 cm) long pieces of wood to the ends of the cove molding. The curved part of the molding holds the baby. Glue the baby (smallest clothespin) into the manger. Set manger aside to dry.
2. Place dowels in the holes in the plywood square. The 3" (7.5 cm) dowels should be in the outside holes and the 2¾" (7 cm) dowel in the middle hole. If necessary, glue the dowels in place. (*Note:* It can be very hard to get the dowel in the hole, and this will frustrate the children. You may well want to do this for them before class.)



3. Place one of the 4" (10 cm) roof sections on the top of one of the 3" (7.5 cm) dowels and the 2¾" (7 cm) dowel. Glue in place.



4. Place the other 4" (10 cm) section on the top of the other 3" (7.5 cm) dowel and the 2¾" (7 cm) dowel, overlapping the other roof section. Glue in place.



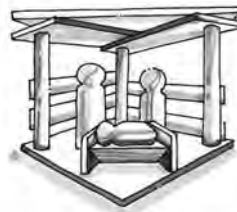
- Place the 5" (12.5 cm) roof section between the 3" (7.5 cm) dowels, overlapping the others, forming a triangular "roof." Glue in place.



- Glue the smaller craft stick slats to the dowels to form the sides of the stable, two on each side.



- Glue Mary (medium sized clothespin) and Joseph (largest clothespin) onto the base near the corner.
- Glue the baby and the manger in front of Mary and Joseph.



## One-Week Project Ideas

### Christmas Now People Smart Body Smart

#### Time

15 minutes

#### Materials

None needed

Challenge the group to think about how and where Christmas would happen if Jesus was born in our world today. Divide into two or more groups and challenge each group to come up with a skit that shows the following:



- where Jesus would be born.
- what types of people would be his parents.
- who the angels would appear to.
- how the news media might present the birth (would they present it at all?).
- other details they'd like to add.

Give the groups between five and ten minutes to prepare. Then invite each group to present their drama to the others. Celebrate together our amazing God who was born in a lowly place to ordinary people like you and me.

## Shepherd's Midnight Snack

As you spend time celebrating the birth of Jesus together, consider adding some food to your festivities. The following recipe is often referred to as Puppy Chow but for this session, consider calling it Sheep Snack or Shepherd's Midnight Snack!

### Shepherd's Midnight Snack

- 6 cups Crispix cereal
- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup margarine
- 12 oz (340 g) chocolate chips
- 2 cups powdered sugar



If you're working with older kids and have access to a stove or microwave, you may want to let them make their own Shepherd's Snack!

Melt peanut butter, margarine, and chocolate chips together in the microwave or on the stove. Stir into cereal.

Put powdered sugar in a paper sack.

Put cereal mixture in and shake until well coated.

## Role Play People Smart

### Time

15 minutes

### Materials

None needed

A role play is like a drama without a script. Give the students a character and a situation and then have them improvise what the characters say and do based on what they know about the story. The idea is to get the children to think about what these characters really might have said and done. If this is done with the proper introduction, it can help them think about the thoughts and feelings of the characters in the stories.

If your class is large enough, split the students into groups of four or five. Assign each group a different scene and each student a different role. Each group should work on the following tasks:

- Discuss who the characters are, how they are feeling, and what they will do in their scene.
- Decide how their scene starts and ends.
- Do a quick run-through of the scene before presenting to the rest of the class.

After each group has had a chance to plan their scene, have them present each one in turn to the entire group. The students may be very self-conscious about the scene they just did, so be especially sensitive to their feelings in your discussion of the scene. Enjoy the role plays and then talk about the particular characters, deciding whether the motivation that the actors gave their character matches what we thought they would be like. Did the role plays seem realistic for the time and the culture in which the scene was to have taken place?

Here are three scenes you can assign for the role plays:

*Scene 1:* Students play the role of staff and additional patrons in the restaurant that was featured in the drama they saw earlier. They discuss what they heard after the shepherds left.

*Scene 2:* Students play the role of modern-day kids on a camping trip—while sitting around a campfire they are visited by angels.

*Scene 3:* Students play the role of the parents of the shepherds, who hear the news of what the shepherds did and saw on that first Christmas night.

Of course you should feel free to create additional scenes of your own.



You may want to create “role play cards” for the students. Each 3 x 5 card should list the things that each group has to do (the three bulleted points above), along with the particular scene that their group has to perform as well as the character that you are asking this person to play.

After the dramas, celebrate together with snacks (See *Shepherds’ Midnight Snack*, p. 32) and music (your Christmas CD will work well).