

A Blessed Christmas: A Unit Study Approach To Studying The Symbols of Christmas

Edited and Adapted with permission
by Kathryn M. Martinez
November 2002

Originally written by Karen Caroe
1998





Acknowledgements



First and foremost, this unit would not be possible without the original hard work of Karen Caroe, the author of “A Blessed Christmas.” Although I’ve expanded on her daily themes, this is in no way meant to detract from her original unit and purpose. I truly appreciate her permission to expand on her original work.

I’d also like to acknowledge the various websites and books, many of which are noted throughout this unit, that provided ideas for expanding each day’s theme.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I’d like to thank all four of my children for inspiring me, giving their opinions, and playing guinea pig for most of the activities and worksheets in this book.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Please Note: Each family may make the number of copies they need of each section in this unit for educational and devotional purposes; however, this unit was given freely and is not to be re-sold in any format or fashion.

Biblical verses quoted in this unit are from the New International Version.



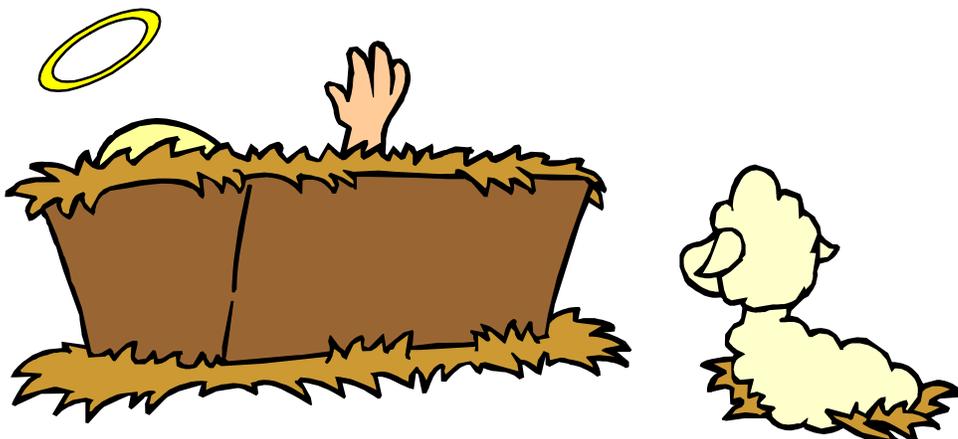
A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of using Karen Caroe's unit study "A Blessed Christmas" as our daily devotional during our December lessons.

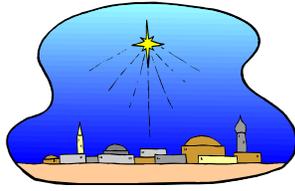
It was wonderful and very enjoyable for all of us. It also worked with teaching multiple ages at the same time. The only "problem" we ran into was that the kids wanted more on each day's theme.

To deal with this, I began expanding on Ms. Caroe's outline. I added crafts, recipes, worksheets, puzzles, games, homemade gift ideas, etc. that pertained to each daily theme.

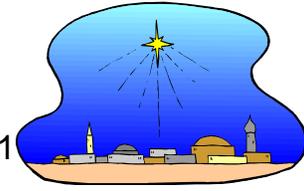
There is not a practical way to do everything I've gathered for each day's lesson. Just pick and choose, basing your choices on your time, interests, and age of the child(ren) participating.

Above all, have fun while celebrating the true meaning of the Christmas season.





How to Use this Unit¹



Every year we do a unit study about Christmas. This is one of the many we have done. This unit study is about the symbols of Christmas. Every Christmas symbol ought to point to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our entire focus for this season is on Christ, His character, our service to Him, and our opportunity to spread His light to others.

The symbols and activities that are shared each day are the ones that we use, the scripture we study, and the activities we do. You don't have to do them in any particular order. I change them around to accommodate our schedules, each Sunday of Advent, etc.

You could also arrange to study a particular symbol to fit a piece of literature you are reading, a play you attend, a fieldtrip that must be scheduled on a certain day, or a family activity or party.

It is my sincere prayer that this unit study will minister to your family in a special way this year. Perhaps giving you new ideas for traditions or allowing you to see the symbols of Christmas in a new light. I pray you will all have a blessed and spirit-filled Christmas. God Bless You!

Additional hints for using this unit:

I've arranged the format of this unit to make it as easy as possible to print out while still having it be pleasing to the eye. If you have a color printer but do not wish to use your color toner on printing all of the color pictures, I suggest –

- ♣ Print out only the pages you intend to use; or,
- ♣ Set your color printer to only print in gray scale (see your printer's owner manual for specifics on how to do this); or,
- ♣ Make one color copy, then make additional copies in black and white on a copy machine.

Since there are so many activities that can be done for each symbol, I suggest you first go through this whole unit and note the ones that you are most likely to do and not try and do absolutely every activity.

¹ Words that appear in **red** are from Ms. Caroe's original introduction to "A Blessed Christmas."



Day One: The Advent Wreath

The circle of the wreath reminds us of God's eternal love for us. The four candles on the wreath are for each Sunday before Christmas. The center candle is for Christ and is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The lighting of the candles each week causes the light to grow brighter as the birth of Christ approaches.

Bible Verse: Luke 2:19

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Advent is celebrated by Christians all over the world. It officially starts on the feast day of Saint Andrew which is on the Sunday nearest November 30 and goes until Christmas day. During this celebration an advent calendar is used to keep track of the days and a special wreath with candles on it is used to celebrate the four Sundays of the holiday season. Each Sunday a candle is lit and prayers are said.

To discuss: Discuss the need for a quieter, slower season to think about the truths of God's word. Decide – as a family – how you can slow down, focus on Christ, and not get overwhelmed with the “hustle and bustle” of the season.

Craft: Make an Advent Wreath out of greenery – real or artificial. The green reminds us that Christ lives forever and comes to give us that opportunity for eternal life.

Additional Crafts:

Materials needed for each wreath:

- One wire hanger
- One small candy cane for each day of Advent
- 72" of green felt cut 6" wide (For a class of ten children, you'll need 2 yards of 60" wide green felt.)
- One piece of 14" red yarn or ribbon for each day
- One activity for each day of Advent
- Scissors

1. Leaving the hook and neck of a hanger intact, bend the rest to form a circle. Set the hanger aside.
2. Mark the middle of the felt strip every three inches (23 marks). On each side of the markings, approximately one-half inch apart, cut a tiny slit.
3. Very close to each end edge, put on more slits totaling twenty-five pairs of slits down the middle of the felt.
4. Tie the felt to the hanger with the yarn pieces by beginning at one end of the felt and tying it to the neck of the hanger. Insert a string of yarn from the front through one slit, around the hanger, and up through the back of the second slit. Tie a double knot and leave the ends free (these free ends will eventually be used to make a bow). Evenly gather the felt between each tie. Repeat until all 25 pairs of slits are tied to the hanger. Tie the days in excess of 25 on the neck.
5. Copy the activities suggested in this article or write your own. Have the children cut each activity and fold it to fit the candy cane.
6. Place a candy cane and folded activity over each knot. Tie a bow around them.
7. Have the students take their wreaths home and hang them in a prominent place—on the fireplace, on a doorknob, on the closet door. Each day untie an activity, and retie the bow. The cane serves as a reward for completing the activity.

Advent Activities

There are twenty-eight activities included here. You may have to omit or add one or two depending on the actual number of days of Advent in a particular year. Starting at the top and moving clockwise, add the activities to the candy canes. Tie days 26, 27 and / or 28 on the neck. Be sure to save the last activity for December 25th.

1. The First Sunday of Advent: At mealtime, tell everyone about your Advent wreath and how it will help you show love and be more like Christ this Christmas season.
 2. Ask a family member to read Luke 1:26—31 & 38 from the Bible with you. Find out what the Angel of the Lord told Mary the mother of Christ.
 3. Write a note to your teacher today thanking him or her for teaching you.
 4. Which of the Ten Commandments is the most important? Read Mark 12:30—31. Find ways to show love for others at school today.
 5. Make a list of all the important people in your life. Choose one and write him or her a note explaining how much he or she means to you.
 6. Set the dinner table without being asked.
 7. Say a special prayer today for all those you love. Pray for each one by name.
 8. Keep peace in your family; do not fight or argue with anyone today.
 9. Say a prayer for peace between the leaders of all the countries of the world. Also, pray for the hungry.
 10. Tell a member of your family (a brother or sister if possible) that you will make his or her bed today.
 11. Ask your father to read Matthew 5:3—10 with you, the Beatitudes. Talk about their meanings.
 12. Read Matthew 7:12, the Golden Rule. What can you do to practice the Golden Rule at School today?
 13. Write a letter to a friend or relative who is far away. In the letter, tell how much you miss him or her. Mail it today.
 14. Write a note to your mother and say how much you love and appreciate her.
 15. Say a prayer for the priest of your parish. Give him a hug and thank him for his service throughout the year.
 16. Write a note to your father and tell him how much you love and appreciate him.
 17. Read Mark 12:41—44. Ask your family to name gifts that don't cost money but that make them happy.
 18. Help with the dishes tonight without being asked.
 19. Ask a member of your family to read Luke 2:1—7 with you. Where was Christ born?
 20. Ask a member of your family to read Luke 2:8—14 with you. Who heard about the birth of Christ from an angel?
 21. Read Luke 2:15—20. Where did the shepherds go?
 22. Ask a member of your family to read Luke 2:25—33 with you.
 23. Ask your father what you might do for him and then cheerfully do it.
 24. Ask a member of your family to read Matthew 2:1-7 with you.
 25. Read Matthew 2:9—11. What gifts did the visitors from the East bring? Use a dictionary to find out more about the gifts.
 26. Remember that everyone is an important part of your family. Let someone else choose what TV programs you'll watch or games you'll play today.
 27. List all the ways you can help on Christmas Day to make the day easier for the person who prepares the Christmas dinner. Put the list where you will find it on Christmas and remember to do all it says.
 28. On December 25th, remember to thank Jesus for all the things you received for his birthday.
- Merry Christmas! May your class realize that some gifts do not cost money and are even more fun to give and receive than purchased gifts.

Additional Advent Customs:

The Good Deed Manger

Another custom, which originated in France but spread to many other countries, is the practice of having the little children prepare a soft bedding in the manger by using wisps of straw as tokens of their Advent prayers and good works. Every day the child is allowed to put in the crib one token (piece of straw) for each act of virtue or love performed in preparation for Christmas. Thus the figure of the Baby Jesus will find on Christmas Day an ample supply of tender straw to soften the hardness of the manger's boards.

Christmas Letters

An old Catholic custom is the writing of "Christmas Letters" by the children. These letters, addressed to the Child Jesus (NOT Santa Claus) are written or dictated by the little ones some time before Christmas. They contain their wishes concerning Christmas presents, petitions for various intentions, and a promise of sincere effort to please Our Lord in preparation for Christmas. When they go to bed, the children put their letters on the windowsill, from where "angels" take them during the night to bring them to the Child Jesus in heaven. This charming custom helps the parents to impress on the minds of their little ones the importance of a sincere spiritual preparation and at the same time great confidence in God who is concerned with our temporal and spiritual needs. Parents who favor this custom will

often be deeply touched when they discover that some of their children put more stress on spiritual graces than on material gifts even on an occasion like this. It can also alert parents to the need for more guidance and direction toward this goal.

Recipe:

Cookie Advent Calendar

A fun way for children to count down the days until Christmas is with a cookie Advent Calendar. A cookie for each of the first 24 days of December is attached to a long ribbon. The top of the ribbon holds an extra special cookie to be eaten on Christmas day.

You'll need:

- 1 1/2 yards of red grosgrain ribbon - at least 2 inches wide.
- 7 yards of red 1/8 inch satin ribbon
- 3 1/2 yards of green 1/8 inch satin ribbon
- 3 1/2 yards of white 1/8 inch satin ribbon red thread small holiday gift card

Construction:

1. fold the top of the grosgrain ribbon under 1/2 inch and then 1 inch more. Fold the bottom of ribbon under 1/2 inch and then another 1/2 inch. Stitch ends in place.
2. Cut a 23 inch length from each of the red and green satin ribbons. Run ribbons through hem at top of grosgrain ribbon. Tie in a bow, and use to hand calendar.
3. To make tie for large cookie, cut a 13 inch length from each of the red and white satin ribbons. Place ribbons together and fold in half to find center. Hand sew to the center of grosgrain ribbon 3 inches from top of calendar.
4. For smaller cookie ties, cut remaining satin ribbon into 9 inch lengths. use 2 ribbons of contrasting colors for each cookie tie. Measure 9 inches from top of calendar and sew the center of the first small cookie tie 1/2 inch from the edge of the wide ribbon. Sew second cookie tie alongside first tie, 1/2 inch from the edge of the opposite side of wide ribbon. Measure 3 inches below the first row of cookie ties, and sew on two more cookie ties, alternating ribbon colors. Repeat until you have 12 rows with 2 cookie ties on each row.
5. Wrap 24 (2 inch) cookies and 1 (5 inch) cookie in plastic wrap. Tie the large cookie to the cookie tie at the top of the calendar. Tie small cookies onto the calendar using the ribbons sewed in place. Trim ribbons after tying bows. If cookies are numbered with icing, start with cookie marked 1 at the bottom.
6. Sew the center of one ribbon to the top left corner of the calendar. Punch a hole in a holiday card, insert ribbon, and tie to the calendar. Use for writing a message.

Variations:

- *you can use burlap and yarn instead of ribbons
- *you can make all of the cookies gingerbread people with the number on their tummies

- *vary the colors of ribbon according to your household decorations --
- *make one for each of your children and hang them on their bedroom doors...or make for college students to take back to their dorm rooms after thanksgiving

Service Project:

Find out if your local university or college has some students that are unable to return home for the holidays. Surprise them a private package for each week of the advent season or make them an advent wreath or calendar. One gift might be a phone calling card so that they can call their family on Christmas.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

DLTK has a entire coloring book you can print out for advent at <http://www.dltk-bible.com/advent/> with 24 different coloring pages.

'Twas the Beginning of Advent

by Todd Jenkins

'Twas the beginning of Advent and all through the Church
 Our hope was all dying-- we'd given up on the search.
 It wasn't so much that Christ wasn't invited,
 But after 2,000 plus years we were no longer excited.
 Oh, we knew what was coming-- no doubt about that.
 And that was the trouble-- it was all "old hat."
 November brought the first of an unending series of pains
 With carefully orchestrated advertising campaigns.
 There were gadgets and dolls and all sorts of toys.
 Enough to seduce even the most devout girls and boys.
 Unfortunately, it seemed, no one was completely exempt
 From this seasonal virus that did all of us tempt.
 The priests and prophets and certainly the kings
 Were all so consumed with the desire for "things!"
 It was rare, if at all, that you'd hear of the reason
 For the origin of this whole holy-day season.
 A baby, it seems, once had been born
 In the mid-east somewhere on that first holy-day morn.
 But what does that mean for folks like us,
 Who've lost ourselves in the hoopla and fuss?
 Can we re-learn the art of wondering and waiting,
 Of hoping and praying, and anticipating?
 Can we let go of all the things and the stuff?
 Can we open our hands and our hearts long enough?
 Can we open our eyes and open our ears?
 Can we find him again after all of these years?
 Will this year be different from all the rest?
 Will we be able to offer him all of our best?
 So many questions, unanswered thus far,
 As wise men seeking the home of the star.
 Where do we begin-- how do we start
 To make for the child a place in our heart?
 Perhaps we begin by letting go
 Of our limits on hope, and of the stuff that we know.

Let go of the shopping, of the chaos and fuss,
 Let go of the searching, let Christmas find us.
 We open our hearts, our hands and our eyes,
 To see the king coming in our own neighbors' cries.
 We look without seeking what we think we've earned,
 But rather we're looking for relationships spurned.
 With him he brings wholeness and newness of life
 For brother and sister, for husband and wife.
 The Christ-child comes not by our skill,
 But rather he comes by his own Father's will.
 We can't make him come with parties and bright trees,
 But only by getting down on our knees.
 He'll come if we wait amidst our affliction,
 Coming in spite of, not by our restriction.
 His coming will happen-- of this there's no doubt.
 The question is whether we'll be in or out.
 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."
 Do you have the courage to peer through the lock?
 A basket on your porch, a child in your reach.
 A baby to love, to feed and to teach.
 He'll grow in wisdom as God's only Son.
 How far will we follow this radical one?
 He'll lead us to challenge the way that things are.
 He'll lead us to follow a single bright star.
 But that will come later if we're still around.
 The question for now: Is the child to be found?
 Can we block out commercials, the hype and the malls?
 Can we find solitude in our holy halls?
 Can we keep alert, keep hope, stay awake?
 Can we receive the child for ours and God's sake?
 From on high with the caroling host as he sees us,
 He yearns to read on our lips the prayer: Come Lord Jesus!
 As Advent begins all these questions make plea.
 The only true answer: We will see, we will see.



Day Two: Bells

Bells are wonderful because they sound so joyful. In times past, churches were forbidden to ring bells to call people to worship. This is true in some countries even today.

Bible Verse: Psalm 100

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD , all the earth. ² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. ³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Discuss: Discuss whether or not you ring the joyful news of Christ. or are you a noisy gong.

There are many activities to do with bells. My children like to tie them onto ribbon and string them on the tree. We also like to make necklaces with them and sew them into the hem of our Christmas dresses. Collect all the bells in your house and see if you can "play" a song with them. Additional activities are listed below.

Do: Learn the song "Carol of the Bells". Lyrics available at <http://www.angelfire.com/ca2/cmascorner/Cbell.html>

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ArtChristmas3DPaperBellOrnamentIdea23.htm>

http://www.sculpey.com/projects_seasonal.htm

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/blchrisbellcr1.htm>

<http://www.crafttown.com/xmascrochet/pat8.htm>

http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/_xorn-other.html

<http://www.childfun.com/christmas/bells.shtml>

<http://www.homeschoolzone.com/pp/crafts/xmasnapkinrings.htm>

<http://www.mothers-home.com/activities/xmascrafts.htm>

Suggested Reading and Online Lessons:

<http://www.howarddavidjohnson.com/lesson.htm>

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ArtChristmas3DPaperBellOrnamentIdea23.htm>

<http://www.eduplace.com/tview/tviews/p/polarexpress.html>

Recipe:

Cherry Bell Cookies

Ingredients

- 3 cups all purpose flour

- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon instant coffee
- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 1 1/4 cups packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 unbeaten egg
- 1 tablespoon cream
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 3 tablespoons cherry juice
- 1 1/2 cups chopped nuts
- 60 maraschino cherries cut in half

Directions: Sift together 3 cups flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon ginger and 1/2 teaspoon instant coffee. Put aside. Cream 1 cup butter. Add 1 1/4 cups brown sugar and cream well. Blend in corn syrup, egg and cream. Add dry ingredients and mix well. Roll out dough, 1/3 at a time on floured board to 1/8" thickness. Cut cookies into 2 1/2" rounds. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.

To Make Filling: Combine 1/3 cup brown sugar, 1 tablespoon butter, and 3 tablespoons cherry juice. Stir in 1 1/2 cups chopped nuts. Place 1/2 teaspoon filling in center of each round. Shape into a bell by folding sides of dough to meet over the filling using patella to fold over sides. Make top of bell narrower than at the clapper end. Place 1/2 of a maraschino cherry (cut side down) at open end of each bell for clapper. Bake at 350 F for 12 to 15 minutes.

Additional Recipes:

Bell Cookies - <http://www.romwell.com/books/cooking/BellCookies.htm>

Cookie Bell Pull - <http://chefmom.com/articles/holidaycharm.htm>

Hanging Bell Cookie - <http://www.sugarcraft.com/catalog/cooky/hangcooky.htm>

Service Project:

Take part in a community bell-ringing project. Or, learn to play the bells, the xylophone, or similar instrument and play for a group of under privileged children or retirement home.

Printables and Coloring Sheets:

<http://www.lessonplansearch.com/cgi-bin/jump.cgi?ID=410>

<http://www.lessonplansearch.com/cgi-bin/jump.cgi?ID=412>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/christmasprints/>

<http://www.holidays.net/christmas/chpix06.htm>

Additional URLs and Ideas:

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/games/xmas.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/7134/Christmas/chrgames.htm>

<http://hometown.aol.com/SantiKlaus/KidsPartiesXmas/HolidayFunPg6.html>

<http://www.12days.com/>

<http://www.billybear4kids.com/holidays/christmas/games.htm>

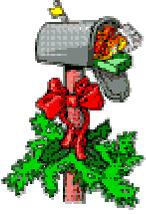
<http://members.aol.com/mshum/page/Christmasgames.html>

<http://freechristmasgames.com/>

<http://www.santalady.com/xmasgames.html>

<http://www.teacherhelp.org/chris.htm>

<http://just4kidsmagazine.com/santalesson.html>



Day Three: Christmas Cards

We enjoy getting Christmas cards; looking at the pictures and reading the sentiments. We also like to send cards that state clearly our belief about the preciousness of Christmas.

Bible: Luke 2:13-14

*¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

Discuss the possibility of these verses being the first "Christmas card greeting." Are our Christmas greetings patterned after this one? Should they be?

Make homemade Christmas cards for your family and friends and send them. Also, each time you gather around the Advent Wreath – daily or weekly – read the cards you have received and pray for the sender and their family.

Do: Study the history of Christmas cards. When were they first used? What were they used for?

Do: Learn all the verses to the Christmas carol "Joy to the World." You may wish to have the children write the verses out using their neatest handwriting and then decorate the edges of the page with an appropriate Christmas border or other art.

Additional Crafts:

http://crafts.fiskars.com/projects/craft_project.html?proj=joy_card

http://crafts.fiskars.com/projects/craft_project.html?proj=noel_card

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/cardbox1.html>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/cardtree.html>

<http://www.craftown.com/xmas/craft10.htm>

Suggested Reading and Online Lessons:

<http://nkasd.wiu.k12.pa.us/vhs/xmascard1.htm>

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson041.shtml

<http://www.edhelper.com/cat144.htm>

<http://teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-3840.html>

<http://homepage.tinet.ie/~sipmfl/lesxmass.htm>

http://www.developingteachers.com/tips/xmasplan_01.htm

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/lessons/christmas.htm>

<http://www.genkienglish.net/Christmas.htm>

<http://www.preschooleducation.com/bbchristmas.shtml>

Recipe:

Giant Christmas Card Cookies

makes: 10 large cookies

1-1/2 c. butter or margarine
2 c. brown sugar
1 egg
4 c. all-purpose flour
2 t. cinnamon
1 t. ground nutmeg

1/2 t. ground cloves
1/4 t. baking soda
colored sugar or crushed sugar cubes,
optional
decorator icing
red cinnamon candies

Beat butter or margarine on medium speed for 30 seconds. Add brown sugar and beat until fluffy. Add egg and beat well. Stir together flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and baking soda. With mixer on low speed gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating well. Cover and chill in refrigerator about 2 hours or until firm enough to roll out. Preheat oven to 350° F. For each cookie, roll 3/4 cup of the chilled dough about 1/4 inch thick directly onto an ungreased cookie sheet. (Keep remaining dough refrigerated.) Using floured cardboard patterns and a table knife cut out desired shapes. Remove excess dough. Sprinkle cookies with colored sugar or crushed sugar cubes, if using. If you want to tie a ribbon on your cookie card, make a small hole in the top of the cookie. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are browner than centers. Let cool on cookie sheets 8 minutes. With a pancake turner lift cookies onto a cooling rack to finish cooling. Decorate cookies with decorator icing and red cinnamon candies. If desired, run a ribbon through the hole and tie a bow. Store cookies in airtight container up to 2 days

Service Project:

With your family or a group of friends, make homemade Christmas cards to give out to the homebound or to people living in a retirement home.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

http://www.planetpals.com/MYO_xmascard.html

<http://www.elvesrus.com/cards.asp>

http://www.ecards4free.com/kids_christmas.htm

http://www.janbrett.com/activities_pages.htm



Day Four: St. Nicholas

Look up in encyclopedia. This is NOT Santa Claus. According to Karen Caroe, “Our children do not believe in Santa Claus and we have never pretended he was real. We do however teach them about the true Nicholas of Myra (Turkey) who loved God and gave to others without expecting anything in return. His example of giving should characterize our lives all year.”

Bible: Philippians 2:1-11

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Discuss: What should be our attitude toward others and how can we--as a family--show forth that attitude at Christmas? Be specific. Make a plan and do it.

Do: Exchange names in your family. Keep it a secret. Do nice things for that person throughout the season. (Make their bed. Take on a chore. Leave them a note, etc.)

Who Was the Real Saint Nicholas? by Catherine Fournier

<http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19981101/SAINTS/nicholas.htm>

The character of Santa Claus is copied from the life of a real person, a saint named Saint Nicholas. The name 'Saint Nicholas' even sounds like 'San-ta claus,' especially in the Dutch language. The Dutch veneration of 'Sinter Klaus' was brought to North America with the Dutch settlers and eventually became the story of Santa Claus that everyone knows.

Saint Nicholas, like St. Wenceslaus and St. Lucy, was a saint. He was the bishop of a city named Myra in Turkey in the early part of the fourth century. His feast day is December 6th because he died on December 6 or 7 in the middle of the fourth century. Feast days celebrate the entry of the saint's soul into Heaven.

The most famous story told about St. Nicholas has to do with three young sisters who were very poor. Their parents were so poor that they did not have enough money for the daughters to get married. Every young girl needed money to pay for the wedding and to set up house for themselves.

Nicholas heard about this family and wanted to help them, but he did not want anyone to know that he was the one who was helping them.

The story is told in a few different ways. In one version, he climbed up on their roof three nights in a row and threw gold coins down their chimney so that they would land in the girls' stockings, which had been hung by the fire to dry. After two of his daughters had been able to marry because of the money mysteriously appearing in their stockings, the father was determined to find out who was helping them, so he hid behind the chimney the next night. Along came Bishop Nicholas with another bag of money.

When he was discovered, he asked the father not to tell anyone else, but the father wanted everyone to know what a good and generous man the Bishop Nicholas was, so he told everyone he knew. That is how we have the story and the tradition of stocking full of gifts today.

Additional Crafts:

Draw a picture of what you believe the *real* Saint Nicholas looked like. Use this drawing to compare what the fictionalized version of Santa Claus is supposed to look like.

Suggested Reading:

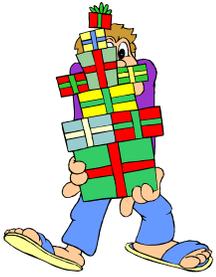
Find further readings about the real St. Nicholas. You might find these in the history of Christmas books, the encyclopedia, biographies of saints, etc.

You can see likenesses of the real St. Nicholas at

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7175/stnich-icons4.html>

Service Project:

Choose a family, widow, shut-in, etc and secretly give them a small gift "from someone who loves you" each week of advent. (Fruit, poinsettia, hand-made ornament, card--etc.) Then go and visit them on the 4th Sunday or Christmas Eve/Day.



Day Five: Gifts

God sent His son and that's the greatest gift of all. Gifts also represent the significant gifts of the Magi. If they don't show our love for our family or friend, then they shouldn't be given.

Bible: Matthew 2:10-11

¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Discuss: The wise men worshipped Christ BEFORE giving gifts to him. We need to be sure worship comes before the shopping and giving of gifts. How can this be done?

Do: Watch a video or listen to a radio drama or read "The Gift of the Magi."

Additional Crafts:

This is the perfect opportunity to make homemade gifts. There are many homemade and edible gift directions available at the <http://www.easyfunschool.com/IndexHomeEc.html> Other homemade gift directions can be found at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/IndexChristmas.html>

Suggested Reading:

The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry

Recipe:

There are also lots of "Gifts and a Jar" and other "master mixes" that you can package prettily and give. Check out all of the recipes available at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/GiftsJar.pdf>

Service Project:

Wrap a box and put a slit in the top. Have family members decide how they can add \$ to the box during the season. At the end of Epiphany (Jan. 6) or at Christmas--give the box to the church or a mission.

Printables and Coloring Sheets:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/nchgiftcolor.htm>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/christmasprints/>

<http://www.kidsturncentral.com/coloring/xsantaelf1.htm>

<http://www.christmas-activities.com/coloring/gifttime.html>

<http://worksheets.teach-nology.com/misc/christmas/color/2/>

<http://www.lilycreek.com/kidart/view/colorpages/cmgifttags.html>

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/hohotext.html>

<http://www.make-stuff.com/hollidays/christmas.html>



Day Six: Ornaments

The very first tree ornaments were a display of God's provision to his people such as apples, cookies, etc. There were also candles to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

Bible: Read James 1:17

¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Discuss: What good gifts God has given you.

Do: Make ornaments that represent God's blessings. Or, make a small Christmas notebook that shows pictures of what God has given you, or make a Christmas banner that displays God's blessings to you

Do: Learn about the history and origins of ornaments and Christmas trees. Use http://acornacademy.hypermart.net/unitstudy/christmas_symbols_02.htm to help.

Additional Crafts:

http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/_xorn-other.html

http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/_xorn-ball.html

<http://www.crafty-online.com/christmas-ornament.html>

http://de.essortment.com/christmasornam_rblt.htm

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/treeornaments/>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/blgrinchmaxorn.htm>

<http://craftforkids.about.com/cs/treeornaments/>

<http://www.gigglemagazine.com/crafts/babysock.htm>

<http://www.essortment.com/in/Crafts.Holiday/>

Cinnamon Ornaments: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1283.html>

Citrus and Star Ornaments: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1910.html>

Clay Ornaments: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1345.html>

Edible Decorations: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1270.html>

Suggested Reading:

VeggieTales: The Star of Christmas

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

The Blue Angel Ornament by Richard H. Schneider

Recipe:

Flaming Ornaments Christmas Tree Cake

1 – 9" x 13" sheet cake (ready made or purchased)
1 cake board to display cake
scissors
green cake frosting

cake knife for spreading frosting
small amount of red and blue frosting
sugar cubes
small bottle of peppermint extract
thin ribbon

Place the sheet cake onto the cake board. Place a simple Christmas tree pattern on top of your cake and carefully cut away the surrounding cake. Be careful not to damage the large cut-away pieces because you are going to use them later.

Carefully frost the cake with the green frosting. Arrange the sugar cubes on the surface of the cake to look like ornaments on a tree. Cut leftover cake into small square and rectangular shapes "boxes" and frost them with the red and blue frosting. Tie each one up with a ribbon or pipe a "ribbon" of frosting on each one to look like presents. Arrange the edible "presents" around the bottom of the cake.

For the special effect: Saturate each sugar cube with a few drops of the peppermint extract just prior to igniting. Turn off lights and with a match, ignite the extract on each "ornament" moving quickly from cube to cube. Each "ornament" will burn with a pretty blue flame for about a minute.

Service Project:

Make some homemade, or purchase inexpensive, Christmas ornaments and donate to a children's home or women's shelter.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/ncolorchorn1.htm>

http://www.santaletter.com/games_and_activities/pages/ornament.html

<http://www.youthonline.ca/coloringcorner/color/xchristmasbulb.htm>

<http://www.youthonline.ca/coloringcorner/color/xchristmasbulb2.htm>

<http://www.night.net/christmas/f-colorsheets.html-ssi>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/christmasprints/>



Day Seven: Christmas Tree

Christmas trees symbolize that our God is eternal and we have eternal life through His Son when we put our trust in him.

Bible: Luke 2:52; II Peter 3:17-18

¹⁷Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Discuss: How do we "grow" as Jesus did?

Do: Put up your Christmas tree but enjoy it for a day or so before you put ornaments on it. Reflect upon its meaning. Then, plan what ornaments will show forth your faith and add to the tree throughout the season.

Do: Learn to sing "O Christmas Tree" in German, also known as O, Tannenbaum.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/felttree.html>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/tree1.html>

<http://www.homeschoolzone.com/pp/crafts/xmas-treecraft.htm>

<http://www.craftown.com/xmas/craft6.htm>

<http://www.craftown.com/xmas/craft25.htm>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/bladventfelttree.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/christmas/craft.htm>

http://www.amazingmoms.com/htm/christmas_crafts_1.htm

<http://schools.sbe.saskatoon.sk.ca/Victo/eclub/rctcraft.html>

Suggested Reading:

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

Recipe:

Decorated Tree Cookies

This rolled cookie dough recipe can be doubled, and it can be refrigerated for up to three days. To freeze wrap in plastic wrap and place in a zip closure freezer bag. Defrost in the refrigerator 24 hours. Be creative and use several of the decorating ideas below.

1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

1 cup soft margarine or butter

1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 egg, slightly beaten
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
[Decorating stuff](#)

1. In a large bowl, beat powdered sugar and margarine with an electric mixer on medium speed, or mix with a spoon, until smooth.
2. Break egg into a small bowl and beat slightly with a fork.
3. Add egg to sugar mixture and stir in vanilla extract.
4. Stir in flour, baking soda, and cream of tartar.
5. For best results, cover the dough and refrigerate for about two hours.
6. Preheat oven to 375°F.
7. Lightly flour counter or use a dough board. Place half of dough on surface and form a ball. Rub some flour on the rolling pin and roll dough to about 1/8 inch thickness.
8. Using a Christmas tree cutter cut out several cookies. Place about 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. If using egg yolk paint, decorate before baking.
9. Bake 7 to 8 minutes or until lightly brown. Cool completely before using frosting or glaze to decorate or it will melt.

Christmas Tree Breakfast Bread: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1742.html>

Popcorn Christmas Tree: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1905.html>

Service Project:

Decorate a living tree outside, after gaining permission of the tree's owner of course, with edibles for animals. You could string popcorn, use pieces of fruit for "ornaments", hang corncobs for squirrels, etc.

Another idea is to decorate some mini Christmas trees and share them with home-bound individuals, a homeless shelter, a women's shelter, or children's home.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/bladventprttree.htm>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/nchtrecolor.htm>

http://www.janbrett.com/hedgie_trims_the_christmas_tree.htm

<http://www.personality-creations.com/xmas/CCB.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/9087/christmas/ctree.html>

<http://www.theholidayzone.com/christmas/ctree.html>

<http://www.growley.com/christmas/color/c-tree.html>

http://www.free-greetingcards.co.uk/Christmas_Fun.htm

<http://www.free-greetingcards.co.uk/christmastree2.htm>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/xmas/print.html>

<http://www.night.net/christmas/f-colorsheets.html-ssi>

<http://www.gracedpro.com/Christmas/OnlineColor/Tree.htm>

<http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/christmas1.htm>

<http://www.webtol.com/tolxmas/xmas15.html>

You may also wish to do the following mini literature unit on “The Night Tree” by Eve Bunting

Night Tree – A Mini Unit

Deep in a moonlit forest a family has a special tree. They return to this tree every year to decorate it for all the forest creatures and to rekindle the Christmas spirit in their own way.

Night Tree

by Eve Bunting

Pre-Activities:

1. Find pictures of coniferous and deciduous trees. Check out books on trees and pinecones.
2. Research the history of Christmas trees. One way to do this is to use www.google.com and use the words “Christmas tree history” in the search engine.
3. Take a field trip to a local Christmas tree farm, if possible. If there are not Christmas tree farms in your area, find out where the trees sold are coming from.

During and After the Book Activities:

1. Discuss the family and their traditions and compare them to your own family and your family’s Christmas traditions.
2. List all the animals found in the book. Have you ever seen these animals outside of a picture book or television show? If so, where?
3. Make a [bird feeder](#) and record what kinds of birds come to eat and at what time of day.
4. Find a tree on your property. Decorate it with strings of popcorn, dried fruits, and apple pieces. You may also be able to string it with stale bread. Scatter nuts and bread crumbs under the tree. Check everyday to see what is missing. Look for animal tracks to help you discover which animals might have visited the tree. Keep a record of your findings.



Day Eight: Candles

Our home glows with light during this time of the year to remind us that Jesus came as the Light of the World.

Bible: Matthew 5:14-16; John 8:12

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Discuss: How we can let others know that Jesus is the Light of the World. How can we show that light?

Do: Gather up different light sources and show how they work. What is brightest, most convenient, etc. (This is a home-school project.) Go into bathroom or dark closet. Show how a single little light clears out the darkness. Refer back to John 1.

Do: For homeschool, make some molded candles or rolled beeswax candles as gifts.

Additional Crafts:

http://www.first-school.ws/t/craft/xmas_candlexmasc.html

http://www.first-school.ws/t/craft/xmas_candlexmasb.html

<http://www.make-stuff.com/kids/>

http://www.first-school.ws/theme/h_wholidays.htm

http://www.frugalcrafts.com/craft_projects/Group_Crafts/ewcandle.html

<http://www.bigeyedowl.co.uk/FavouriteCraftIdeas.htm>

Recipe:

Christmas Candle

- 1 pineapple slice
- 1/2 banana
- 2 maraschino cherries
- 1 candy mint leaf
- 1 leaf of lettuce

Place lettuce on plate. Put pineapple slice on lettuce. Put the cut end of the banana in hole of pineapple. Top with cherry. Place mint leaf on side with another cherry.

Service Project:

Plan some kind of 'outreach' for the season. Either taking the light to others or inviting them into your home.

You may also wish to share some special Christmas gifts by giving flashlights to people in homeless shelters. Along with the flashlights and extra batteries, you could include a special note sharing the true light of the world.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://www.free-greetingcards.co.uk/candle.htm>

http://www.free-greetingcards.co.uk/Christmas_Fun.htm

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/ncolorhcandle.htm>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/christmasprints/>

http://www.first-school.ws/theme/h_wholedays.htm

<http://www.ivyjoy.com/coloring/christmas/>

<http://www.make-stuff.com/kids/coloring.html>



Day Nine: Wreaths

We keep at least one wreath up in our home all year. The circle of the wreath is eternal. No beginning or end. That is the same as God's love for us.

Bible: John 3:16

¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^[1] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Discuss: What things in your home are made with a circle. Find what qualities of God can be symbolized by a circle.

Do: (Preschool) Use the circle to teach shapes, the numeral zero, practicing writing the "o" letter and learn it's sounds.

Do: Make a wreath to hang in your home. Give a wreath to someone.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.craftown.com/xmas/craft28.htm>

http://ia.essortment.com/christmaswreat_rvcn.htm

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/hdwreath.html>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/blxmaswrth1.htm>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/blpinecwreath.htm>

http://www.make-stuff.com/recycling/cd_wreath.html

<http://www.first-school.ws/activities/bible/advent1.htm>

<http://pinksunrise.com/craft/rosswreath.htm>

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/mhollywreath.html>

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/mbeaverwreath.html>

<http://www.childfun.com/christmas/wreath.shtml>

Recipe:

PRETZEL WREATH

2 Squares Vanilla Flavor Almond Bark

10 oz. Bag Mini Pretzels

Red and Green Sugar Sprinkles

Red and Green Ribbon

Microwave almond bark approximately 30 seconds. Stir and return to microwave for 20 more seconds. Dip top of pretzel in melted almond bark. Form circle by attaching pretzels. Repeat and stagger top layer. Refrigerate for one hour. Thread ribbon through holes and complete the project by placing a bow at the top.

Popcorn Wreath: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1771.html>

Service Project:

Collect limbs that are cast off by a Christmas tree lot and make them into wreaths. Donate these wreaths to home-bound individuals.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/ncolorchwreath.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Canal/4383/wreath.html>

http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19991201/FRIDGE/wreath_image.htm

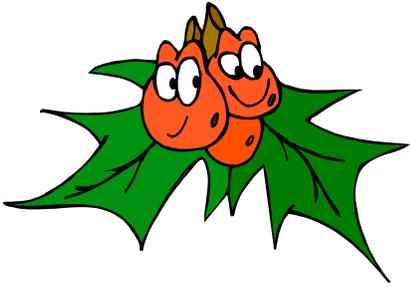
<http://www.christmas-activities.com/coloring/wreath.html>

<http://www.christmas-land.net/coloringpagesnmazes.htm>

<http://www.howtouniverse.com/Santa/Colpages/colorpg008.htm>

<http://rupert.goulburn.net.au/~wendy/xmas/color6.html>

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/hohotext.html>



Day Ten: Holly

The holly leaves represent the crown of thorns that Christ wore. The berries represent his blood and the evergreen color is for eternal life. This is the "completion" of the Christmas story.

Bible: II Corinthians 8:9; Hebrews 12:2

II Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Discuss: Everything Jesus went through because of his love for us.

Do: Place some holly around your nativity scene to remind you of the "whole" story.

Do: Learn to sing the Christmas song "The Holly and the Ivy." You can use <http://www.christmas-carols.net/carols/holly-ivy.html> to aid you in this, if desired.

Additional Crafts:

http://crafts.fiskars.com/projects/craft_project.html?proj=hollyday

http://crafts.fiskars.com/projects/craft_project.html?proj=ornaments

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/mpaperholly.html>

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/mhollywreath.html>

<http://www.crafttown.com/xmas/craft15.htm>

http://www.frugalcrafts.com/craft_projects/Group_Crafts/ewcandle.html

Recipe:

Make this great recipe: 1 stick of butter, melted in a large pot with some marshmallows--kind of like making Krispie Treats. Add A LOT of green food coloring. When you have a nice green color, remove from heat and stir in about 6 cups of corn flakes. They need to be all covered with the green mixture. Put them out in "clumps" on wax paper and stick a red hot in the middle of each clump. Let them cool. Store in fridge in airtight container. Use to decorate your holiday plate or add to goodie boxes. You will not believe how many compliments you will get on this. If possible, place a little note with them telling about the holly symbol for Christmas.

Service Project:

Many home-bound individuals rarely get a chance to get outside and gather greenery for the holidays. While gathering your own greenery, also get some extra to share with folks less able to get out and about.

Printables and Coloring Sheets:

<http://www.christmas-activities.com/coloring/holly.html>

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/>

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/hohotext.html>

http://www.santaletter.com/games_and_activities/pages/holly.html

<http://www.first-school.ws/t/pattern/holly2.htm>

<http://www.first-school.ws/t/pattern/holly1.htm>

<http://www.nunesonline.com/disholchrisc.html>



Day Eleven: Poinsettia

The poinsettia has a lovely history. It was first called "The Flower of the Holy Night" because a Mexican legend tells of a little boy who had nothing to give the baby Jesus. As he prayed, a flower grew at his feet. He quickly picked it and gave it to Jesus. We have the name today because of a man named Poinsett--the American ambassador to Mexico--who is given credit for introducing it to the US.

Bible: Matthew 6:28-30

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Discuss: How has God shown his loving care through the beauty of creation.

Do: See how many scriptures you can find that refer to Jesus as a flower.

Do: For homeschool, spend a couple of days finding out how Christmas is celebrated among Christians in Mexico. Learn to say, "Feliz Navidad."

Study Christmas in Mexico with the mini unit at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1917.html>

Do: Learn how to care for the poinsettia. Include a "How to Take Care of Me" card when giving a poinsettia as a gift.

December 12th is Poinsettia Day: A favorite Christmas plant, the poinsettia was introduced to the United States by Dr. Joel Poinsett. and the plant is named for him here. Dr. Poinsett's died on this date in 1851.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.first-school.ws/activities/crafts/holiday/poinsettia.htm>

<http://www.first-school.ws/t/craft/poinsettiains.html>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/poinsettia.html>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/poinset.html>

<http://www.craftown.com/xmas/xmas6.htm>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/christmas/poinsettia/>

<http://anacleta.homestead.com/nochebuena.html>

<http://www.fastq.com/~jbpratt/education/theme/flower.html>

<http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/christmas.html>

<http://members.aol.com/funology1/christmas.htm>

<http://www.mexico-info.com/leadstories/chron/poinsettia.htm>

Recipe:

Poinsettia Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 teaspoons orange zest
- 4 teaspoons orange juice
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup red candied cherries

Directions

- 1 In a large mixing bowl, beat butter until softened. Beat in honey. Add egg yolk, orange peel and orange juice and mix well.
- 2 In a separate bowl, stir together the flour, baking soda, nutmeg and salt. Add flour mixture to the butter mixture and beat until well mixed. Cover and chill at least 3 hours.
- 3 Preheat oven to 325 degree F.
- 4 Separate egg and slightly beat egg white. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in egg white and then in the nuts. Place 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
- 5 Cut each cherry into 6-8 wedges. Place 4 or 5 wedges atop each ball so that it looks like a flower; press lightly. Bake for 15-18 minutes. Remove and cool on rack.

Service Project:

Get a poinsettia for your home or give one to a shut in to enjoy.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/poinsettia.html>

<http://www.first-school.ws/activities/crafts/holiday/poinsettia.htm>

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/alphaletter/p.htm>

<http://www.blockcentral.com/poinsettia.shtml>

<http://www.geocities.com/sarge366/>

http://www.bronners.com/bcw/home.nsf/Public/Christmas_Coloring_Fun.htm

<http://www.webtol.com/tolxmas/xmas6.html>



Day Twelve: Shepherd's Staff

We call it a candy cane. But truly it is a shepherd's staff. The colors symbolize the blood and purity of Christ. Another option would be if you could find the ones that also have green in them, that represents eternal life.

Bible: Psalm 23:1-5

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Discuss: Jesus as our shepherd

Do: Hang candy canes on your tree. We do this every year and we never call them 'candy canes' anymore. When people come to visit, we ask them to take a shepherd's staff off of our tree. Then we tell them why we call it that and what the colors mean. It is a beautiful, non-offensive way, to share your faith with others.

Additional Crafts:

Use Peppermint Playdough at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1409.html> to make candy canes with your little ones.

Peppermint Candy Picture Frames: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1872.html>

Science Fun -- Candy Canes: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1838.html>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/mousecc.html>

http://www.make-stuff.com/holidays/candy_heart.html

<http://www.crafttown.com/xmas/craft49.htm>

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/cutpaste/craft/canecard/>

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/season/craft/yarncane/>

Candy Cane Story Christmas Stable

You'll need:

wooden sticks, tacky glue, wooden stars, wooden hearts, wooden ovals, string, printout of poem, mini wooden sticks, red and white pipe cleaners, red and white foam sheets, paint and paint brushes

Directions: Glue the 4 large craft sticks together to make a square. Glue the printout of the story (see below) to the back of the large square. Use 3 mini craft sticks to make a triangle and glue together and attach to the top of the stable.

Next, glue mini craft sticks together to make 2 X's. Place them next to each other and glue 2 mini sticks vertically overlapping the two X's. This makes the manger. Glue the manger to the bottom of the stable.

Twist the red and white pipe cleaners together to make a candy cane and glue to the side of the stable. Cut out berries and holly leaves out of the foam sheets and glue to the center of the candy cane.

Paint (or color with markers) the wooden oval white and draw a small head and face at the top, this makes the Baby Jesus. Glue the baby Jesus to the manger.

Paint the wooden star yellow, and the wooden heart red (you can also color them with markers). Let dry. Glue these on the top of the stable as shown.

Attach a string to the star to hang and enjoy!!

-----Story-----

Many years ago a candy maker wanted to make a candy that would symbolize the true meaning of Christmas - Jesus.

The hard candy was shaped like a "J"e to represent that Jesus is our rock of all ages. The candy was made white to stand for the pureness of Jesus. The red represents the blood that Jesus shed to save us from our sins.

So the next time you see a candy cane take a minute to remember the real meaning of Christmas!

Suggested Reading:

Legend of the Candy Cane: <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1266.html>

Recipe:

Candy Cane Cookies

- 1/3 c. finely crushed peppermint candy
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. shortening
- 1/2 c. butter or margarine, softened
- 1 c. sifted powdered sugar
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1 t. almond extract
- 2 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. red food coloring

Combine candy and 1/3 c. sugar in a small mixing bowl, mixing well. Set aside. Cream shortening and butter in a large mixing bowl; gradually add 1 c. sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add egg; beat well. Stir in flavorings. Add flour and salt; mix well. Divide dough in half; tint half of dough with food coloring. Shape tinted and plain dough by teaspoonfuls into 4 1/2" rolls on a lightly floured surface. Place a tinted and plain roll side by side; carefully twist together. Curve one end down to resemble a cane. Repeat procedure with remaining dough. Place cookies on ungreased cookie sheets; bake at 375 degrees for 9 minutes or just until edges begin to brown. Remove cookies from cookie sheets while warm; immediately coat with reserved candy mixture. Cool completely on wire racks. Yield: about 4 dozen cookies.

Service Project:

Give out candy canes with the "Story of the Candy Cane" attached.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible_themes_n_-_p.html

<http://www.littleshepherd.org/familyactivities.htm>

<http://www.cartooncritters.com/bible12.htm>



Day Thirteen: "X-mas"

I grew up being told that this was the way to take Christ out of Christmas but actually that is not correct. It is part of the Chi-Rho cross which is the ancient Christian symbol formed by the Greek letters X (Chi) and P (Rho). These are the first 2 letters of Christ's name in Greek. X-MAS really means "celebration of Christ."

Bible: Luke 1:30-33

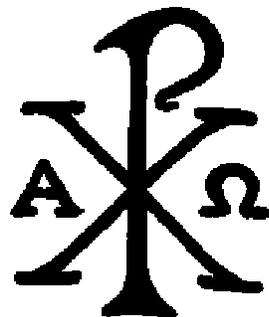
³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

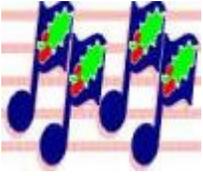
Discuss: Why would people want to take Christ out of Christmas? How can our family be sure to keep Christ in all the celebrations?

Do: For home school -- Learn to write the Greek Alphabet. Look in a Greek New Testament. See if you can copy a short verse. Learn to say the Greek Alphabet. Why was the New Testament written in Greek? Also, check out how Christians in Greece celebrate Christmas. You may wish to check the URL <http://people.msoe.edu/~tritt/greek.html> for finding examples of the Greek alphabet.

Service Project: Remind people that "Xmas" is not taking the Christ out of Christmas. Explain the true meaning of the Xmas word showing the Greek letters.

Crafts: Use this graphic as a template to make a Chi-Rho cross out of poster board. Cut it out, spread with glue, sprinkle with glitter. It can be used as an ornament for a Christmas tree, wreath, Jesse Tree, or as a package topper.





Day Fourteen: Christmas Carols

Most carols are were poems that were later put to music. A carol is a song that tells of Jesus' birth. "O Holy Night" is a carol. "Jingle Bells" is not a carol--it is a song.

Bible: Psalm 33:1-3

¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD , you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. ²Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. ³Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Discuss: What does God think about the praises of his children? What other verses tell us to praise and how to praise?

Do: Learn all the verses to a new Christmas Carol or an old favorite.

Game Idea: Break into teams and play "Charades" with the titles of Christmas Carols.

Do: Make up your own Christmas Carol.

Do: Write a poem that could be used as a Christmas Carol.

Additional Crafts:

Guess the Christmas Carol: <http://www.users.sccoast.net/tecteach/carol/>
<http://members.aol.com/funology1/christmas.htm>

Service Project:

Go caroling at retirement homes, hospitals, and at the homes of shut-ins.



Day Fifteen: Christmas Carolers

Legend has it that the first American carolers were a group of Huron Indians who gathered around a manger scene to sing songs. Later, groups of carolers would sing at homes which had a candle in the window.

Bible: Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:16

Ephesians 5:19 **Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Colossians 3:16 **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**

Discuss: How do these verses apply to celebration of the Advent?

Additional Lesson Ideas:

<http://www.lesstutor.com/jm5.html>

Additional Crafts:

http://wy.essortment.com/woodenchristmas_rcgy.htm

http://family.go.com/crafts/season/craft/famf_craft_xmaschoir/

Christmas Music Online:

<http://www.noelnoelnoel.com/html/music.html>

<http://songsofpraise.org/christmas.htm>

<http://deckernet.com/shed/xmasmidi.htm>

<http://www.acebiz.com/xmasmidi/xmasmidi.htm>

<http://members.aol.com/davexmas98/>

<http://user.icx.net/%7Epbaldwin/cmas/carols.html>

Recipe:

Wassail

1 gallon apple cider

2/3 cups sugar

2 teaspoons whole allspice

2 teaspoons whole cloves

2 three inch cinnamon sticks

2 oranges, studded with cloves

Directions: Heat all ingredients except oranges in a Dutch oven, to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, strain. Pour into a small punch bowl or large pitcher and add oranges. Serve hot. Serves approximately 32.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://www.12days.com/library/coloringbook/caroler.htm>



Day Sixteen: Star

God proclaimed his truth in creation by lighting up the heavens with a star that announced the birth of Christ the King.

Bible: Look up scriptures that show other ways God has revealed himself through creation.

Do: For homeschool, study stars. What are they? What are some of the constellations?

Do: Make star ornament(s) for your tree.

Do: Make cookies shaped like stars.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/star.html>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/christmas/3dstar/>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/stars/3dstar2/>

<http://www.first-school.ws/activities/nrhymes/twinkle.htm>

http://www.first-school.ws/theme/h_wholedays.htm

Recipe:

Christmas Star Pastries

1 lb rolled out puff pastry

10 oz plum jam

1 egg yolk

icing sugar

1. Divide the rolled out puff pastry dough into equal squares (about 8cmx8cm).
2. Put a spoonful of plum jam in the middle of the squares.
3. Cut about 3–4 cm from each corner toward the middle.
4. Turn every other strip into the middle.
5. Make sure that the strips are fixed so that they do not detach while in the oven.
6. Brush star pastries with egg yolk.
7. Bake for 8-12 minutes in very hot oven until they are golden brown in colour.
8. Decorate stars with icing sugar.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://www.christiananswers.net/kids clr-indx.html>

<http://www.quilt.com/ColoringBook/ChristmasStar1/ChristmasStar1.html>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/color/ncolorchstar.htm>

http://www.santaletter.com/games_and_activities/pages/star.html

<http://www.preschooleducation.com/br228.shtml>

<http://www.cherbearsden.com/kidsdevos/devo18s.html>

Learn the following Christmas Song:

Do You Hear What I Hear? <http://www.christmas-carols.net/carols/do-you-hear.html>



Day Seventeen: Manger Scene

Supposedly St. Francis of Assisi had such a desire to have been present at the birth of Christ, that he re-created the scene.

Bible: Luke 2:6-7

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Discuss: Where were you born? What were the surroundings? How do they compare to those of Jesus? What would you think about Jesus if he had been born in a palace? Why was he born in a stable?

Do: Begin making your own nativity scene. Make it as a banner or as a set. There are many patterns, cutouts, etc. available

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.first-school.ws/activities/bible/nativity1.htm>

http://www.first-school.ws/t/craft/xmas_nativity2c.htm

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/wreath-nativity.html>

<http://vbsstuff.com/information/nativityornament.htm>

Make your own nativity set by making them out of any of the homemade clays found at

<http://www.easyfunschool.com/IndexArt.html>

Recipe:

Gingerbread Nativity Scene --

http://magazines.ivillage.com/victoria/entertain/tradition/articles/0,13011,413711_405060,00.html

Service Project:

Take part in a "live" nativity scene for your church and/or community. This is where real individuals and animals re-enact the stable scene where Christ was born.

The tradition of Nativity Scenes: <http://italian.about.com/library/weekly/aa120899a.htm>

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19971201/FRIDGE/FRIDGE2.HTM>

<http://free-coloring-pages.com/pages/nativity.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Farm/7094/nativity.html>

<http://coloringpages.net/pages/znativity.html>

http://www.kinderart.com/kindercolor/nativity_scene.htm



Day Eighteen: Angels

God's messengers were the first to announce the birth of the Christ child. Also, at this time of the year especially, be open to hospitality for you never know when you may "entertain angels unawares."

Bible: Hebrews 13:1-2

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Discuss: How do we serve God by practicing hospitality? Who in the Bible "entertained" angels?

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/angels.html>

<http://westwood.fortunecity.com/ghost/818/crafts1.htm>

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/angels.html>

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/paper-angels.html>

<http://craftycollege.com/webofangels/>

http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/_angel.html

http://www.freekidscrafts.com/angel_crafts.htm

<http://www.crafttown.com/angels/angels1.htm>

http://www.garlandsgifts.com/mgarland/assets/product_images/1angelcrafts.html

<http://www.angelfire.com/nm/soap/angelcrafts.html>

<http://craftsforkids.about.com/cs/makingangels/>

<http://www.mssscrafts.com/crafts/angel.htm>

Additional Lesson Ideas:

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/LACompareTwoSpecificChristmasThemedBooksIdea25.htm>

<http://www.mssscrafts.com/miscellaneous/christmas.htm>

http://209.15.142.32/cat144_morel.htm

<http://www.kinderart.com/seasons/dec8.shtml>

<http://www.teacherhelp.org/chris.htm>

<http://www.trbc.org/sermons/20001210.html>

<http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/15768/83634>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/lesscar.htm>

<http://www.encounterchristianity.co.uk/lesson/inw3.htm>

<http://www.missionarlington.org/Curriculum/LOC/2001/LOC120901.pdf>

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/00-2/lp2263.shtml

Recipe:

Christmas Angel Cookies

Ingredients

1/2 c Shortening
1/2 c Cream cheese, softened
1 c Light brown sugar, firmly packed
1/2 c Granulated sugar
2 Eggs
3 c Flour

1/2 ts Baking soda
1/2 ts Salt
1 tb Vanilla
2 c Candied fruit, mixed
2 c Broken pecans or almonds

Instructions

The cream cheese gives these cookies a smooth texture, while the fruits sparkle and sweeten the flavor. Nice for using the candied fruits that didn't make it into the fruit cake. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, cream shortening and cream cheese until smooth and fluffy. Add sugars and eggs, mixing well. In a separate bowl, sift flour, baking soda and salt together. Add flour mixture to egg and sugar mixture; add vanilla. Mix well. Add candied fruit and nuts. Drop by rounded spoonfuls onto lightly oiled cookie sheet and bake at 350° for about 10-12 minutes. The cookies will be just browned at the edges. Hint: You may have to mix candied fruit and nuts in with your hands; a little shortening on your fingers will keep the mixture from sticking. Yield: 3 dozen.

Service Project:

Decide as a family how you will be God's messengers at Christmas. Make a plan to help others who aren't as fortunate as you are.

You may have the opportunity to participate in the prison ministry known as the "Angel Tree."

Printables and Coloring Pages:

<http://dreamworkdesigns.com/recipes/largerc-angel.html>

<http://dreamworkdesigns.com/recipes/angel2.html>

<http://www.razzledazzlerecipes.com/artistcafe/kitrecard.htm>

<http://www.thefamily.com/recipes/recipecard2.html>

<http://cheddarbay.com/recipecardchristmas.html>

<http://www.coloring.ws/angels.htm>

<http://www.coloring.ws/angels2.htm>

http://www.first-school.ws/t/cp_bible/angelshepherds_luke2t.html

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/xmas/color/wtvindex.htm>

<http://www.night.net/christmas/f-colorsheets.html-ssi>

<http://www.free-greetingcards.co.uk/angel.htm>

<http://abcbabysit.com/directory/holidays/christmas/>

<http://www.myhome.org/hoho/hohotext.html>



Day Nineteen: Baby in the Manger

The Christ child. Our purpose for celebrating.

Bible: Luke 2:7; 11-12

⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Discuss: Why did God decide to put His son in a feed trough?

Do: Make a poster or banner with the different names of Jesus. For this you may find the "Names of Jesus" unit study at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1679.html>

Do: Write and design a "birth announcement" for the baby Jesus.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.kinderart.com/seasons/manger.shtml>

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/7134/Christmas/chrmanager.htm>

<http://www.crafttown.com/xmas/xmas7.htm>

<http://www.familylife.com/adornaments/crafts.html>

http://vtvt.essortment.com/christmasorname_rczw.htm

<http://www.christiancrafters.com/manger.html>

Suggested Reading:

Read the complete story of Christ's birth as it appears in the Bible. While the version found in the King James Version of the Bible is the most traditional and well known, reading the story from other versions of the Bible (e.g., New International Version) could also prove helpful.

Recipe:

Edible Manger -- http://www.saintjohnonline.com/centennialsschool/gn_craftdec.html

Service Project:

Tell the Christmas story to younger children using a manger and doll as a prop.

Printables and Coloring Pages:

You could use some of the printables and coloring sheets listed under the day you study the Nativity.



Day Twenty: Mary

The mother of Jesus.

Bible: Luke 1:26-38, 46-56

²⁶In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[1] the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing is impossible with God." ³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

⁴⁶And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me--holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." ⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Discuss the qualities of Mary you believe she had that caused God to choose her to be the Mother of His Son.

Do: Put Mary in your nativity scene.

Additional Crafts:

Try and replicate a masterpiece of art that show the "Madonna and Child."

Make a Biblical costume of what you believe that Mary would have worn.

Service Project:

Gather baby clothes to donate to a foundling or children's home, or to a women's shelter.



Day Twenty-One: Joseph

The earthly father of Jesus.

Bible: Matthew 1:18-2:23

Matthew 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us." ²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel. ⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." ⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. ¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." ¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." ²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

Discuss: Why God thought Joseph would be a good husband and father.

Discuss: What characteristics do good fathers have? What place do fathers hold in the home? Why was it important that Jesus have an earthly father?

Discuss: How do children suffer if they do not have a father or father-figure in their lives?

Do: Add Joseph to the nativity scene.

Additional Crafts:

Joseph was a carpenter by trade. Make wooden Christmas ornaments or decorations OR build a table scene out of wood OR make a homemade wooden Christmas gift.

Suggested Reading:

The country music artist, Trisha Yearwood, sings a song entitled "It Wasn't His Child." This song tries to tell the story from Joseph's point of view.

Service Project:

Learn about the programs where men can participate as "big brothers" or "surrogate fathers" for boys that have no father in their lives.



Day 22: Shepherds

The first to "hear" of the birth.

Bible: Psalm 68:10; Psalm 74:21b; James 2:5

Psalm 68:10 Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.

Psalm 74:21b may the poor and needy praise your name.

James 2:5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Discuss: The 2 "classes" of visitors that came to see Jesus. What can we learn from each group?

Do: Make shepherds to add to your nativity. Lean a shepherd's staff against the stable to remind you of this symbol.

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/mabel.htm>

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/alphabtp4.htm>

<http://www.msscrafs.com/oldtestament/davidshepherd.htm>

http://www.dltk-bible.com/shepherd_rhyme.htm

Suggested Reading:

Read up on how shepherds take care of their sheep. What do they have to do? Is it a lot of responsibility?

Recipe:

You could use any recipe that uses lamb as an ingredient or you could make the following recipe for Shepherd's Pie. <http://www.christianwomentoday.com/recipes/ccsheppie.html>

Service Project:

Learn to take care of younger children. You may want to use the mini unit on baby-sitting available at <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1079.html>

Printables and Coloring Pages:

http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible_themes_n_-_p.html

http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible_themes_o_-_p.html

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/alphabtp4.htm>

<http://www.coloring.ws/david.htm>



Day 23: Lambs

Symbolic because we picture them as being with the Shepherds who came to see Jesus. Jesus is the Lamb of God and he came to redeem his lambs (us).

Bible: Luke 2:8, 15-16; John 1:29; John 10:14-15

Luke 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

Luke 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- *¹⁵* just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Discuss: What are the qualities of sheep?

Do: Add sheep to your manger.

Do: Make some sheep ornaments for your tree.

Do: Bake some cut-out sheep cookies.

Do: For homeschool, find out more about sheep and shepherding. Where in the world is that still done today? What are some wool products?

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mlamb.htm>

http://www.dltk-kids.com/rhymes/bo-peep/little_lamb_craft.htm

<http://craftsforkids.about.com/library/projects/blhplamb.htm>

<http://www.recipegoldmine.com/childseason/childseason17.html>

<http://familycrafts.about.com/library/projects/blqtiplamb.htm>

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/animals/lambs.htm>

<http://families-first.com/kids/ross7.htm>

<http://www.kidsdomain.com/craft/lamb.html>

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/ys/CRAFTS/lamb.htm>

<http://crafterscommunity.net/index.php/259>

<http://www.homeschoolzone.com/pp/bible.htm>

Suggested Reading:

Read books on the life cycle and care of sheep.

Printables and Coloring Sheets:

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/animals/farm/lamb.htm>

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/lambs.htm>

<http://www.ecoloringpages.com/alphabet-l.html>

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/poems.htm>

<http://www.zionchurchnorwood.org/color4.html>



Day 24: Wise Men

These were men who studied the stars and prophecies looking for signs of God's promised Savior. The gifts they brought were prophetic of Christ's life on earth.

Bible: Proverbs 9:10, 16:16; James 1:5

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 16:16 How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Discuss: What is the opposite of wisdom? How can we grow wise? as parents. as children. Decide what areas of life you can work on to help you grow wiser.

Do: Make replicas of the gifts brought to Jesus. Put them on your tree. Find out why each gift was significant.

Do: Learn to sing the Christmas carol "We Three Kings". You can use <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/hym/w/e/wethree.htm> to assist you, if necessary. Another song to learn is "In the Bleak Midwinter" at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/hym/i/n/intbleak.htm>

Discuss: What makes a particular gift precious? Do you put special thought into each gift you give?

Additional Crafts:

<http://www.msscrafs.com/newtestament/wisemen.htm>

<http://www.craftcreations.co.uk/Projects23/ThreeWiseMen.pdf>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/epi4art.html>

<http://www.first-school.ws/theme/bible.htm>

Suggested Reading and Lesson Ideas:

"Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry

<http://www.personality-creations.com/stories/wise.html>

<http://www.webedelic.com/church/goldt.htm>

http://www.newchurchvineyard.org/2001Dec/SundaySchool/OakPres_AdorationOfWiseMen.pdf

http://www.edupatterns.com/lesson_29.htm

<http://home.att.net/~jackthompson/page611.htm>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/epi1mles.htm>

<http://jesusisthelight.net/BIRTH-1.htm>

<http://www.angelfire.com/ms/spiritual/lesson3.html>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/epi4art.html>

Recipe:

Crown Jewel Dessert

Children will love making this elegant, yet super easy dessert to share with family and friends. Its also easy to adjust the sugar content of this to allow for special dietary needs or sensitivities

Ingredients:

- 1 package (4 serving size) strawberry gelatin dessert (e.g. Jell-O brand gelatin)
- 1 package (4 serving size) lime gelatin dessert (e.g. Jell-O gelatin)
- 1 package (4 serving size) strawberry-kiwi gelatin dessert (e.g., Jell-O gelatin)
- 3 cups of boiling water
- 1 1/2 cups cold water
- 1 package "bakery style" lady finger cookies (4.4 oz. size)
- 2 cups thawed whipped topping (e.g. Cool Whip is one brand)

Directions:

1. Prepare each package of gelatin desserts separately using package directions, reducing cold water to 1/2 cup for each. Pour each into an eight inch square pan. Chill the strawberry gelatin and the lime gelatin until set, approximately one hour. Chill the strawberry-kiwi gelatin until slightly thickened.
2. Next, trim length of one end of each lady finger to fit pan. Line the side of a 9-inch spring form pan.
3. Fold whipped topping into slightly thickened strawberry-kiwi gelatin.
4. Cut the strawberry gelatin and lime gelatin into one-inch cubes. Gently fold these cubes into the whipped topping mixture, being careful not to break the cubes up too much.
5. Carefully spoon the final mixture into the lady finger lined spring form pan. Chill until firm. This will take about 4 hours, or you can let it set overnight.

Service Project:

Take part in delivering food baskets and gifts to less fortunate families and/or shut ins.

Wrap a box in pretty paper and cut a slit in the top of it. Write "Happy Birthday Jesus" on a card and glue it to the top. As the holiday season progresses, drop change and money in the box. At the end of the holiday season, open the box and discuss the best way to 'spend' the money for Jesus. You might donate it to a church or God-honoring charity, buy some things for a needy family, or purchase something for the children's wing at the hospital.

Printables and Coloring Sheets:

- http://www.first-school.ws/t/cp_bible/3wise_matthew2.htm
- <http://www.mssscrafts.com/newtestament/wisemen.htm>
- <http://www.silk.net/RelEd/lessonplans4.htm>
- <http://www.coth.org/coloring.htm>
- <http://www.jesusandkidz.com/ColoringPages.htm>
- <http://www.pacma.org/ccma/color8.htm>

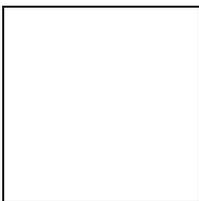


Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

We, in our family, work very hard to maintain a “ritual” of traditions. Some are from the way my dear husband and I were raised, some we began with our own children. I believe in these volatile times that the focus of Satan’s battles is the breakdown of the family. Traditions serve to strengthen and solidify the ties of children to their parents and to the past generations. They also prepare the ground for strong relationships when your children have children. We must not weaken our greatest defense in the spiritual battles around us – the family. We ALWAYS keep a few of the traditions every year. Sometimes, we try something new. We don’t know if it will become a tradition until the next year. I encourage you to celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with traditions that have been or will continue to be in your family for years to come. God was the first to establish “traditions” for His people, Israel, because He knew the strength in teaching His ways to our children and our children’s children. – Karen Caroe

I’ll give you a for instance from my own family that is distinctly our own. My father was in the military and there were some Christmases we were unable to be together as a family; because of this we always treated family time at Christmas with a lot of importance. We always put the Christmas tree up as a family. One Christmas when I was a child, my mother made sloppy joes as a quick dinner so that we could continue decorating the tree. We had all eaten, except for my mother, and were in a boisterous mood ... even our small dog. My mother took a break and went to eat her sandwich but it wasn’t to be found anywhere. Suddenly our dog, was spotted licking her lips and looking quite as happy as the rest of us. It was just so funny and added lots of happiness and humor to an already wonderful family evening. From that night forward we have had sloppy joes on the evening we decorate our Christmas tree. It brings back all sorts of memories and I’m now sharing those memories with my own children. – Kathy Martinez

So you see, a tradition doesn’t necessarily have to make sense for anyone else but your own family. They can even have quite a bit of humor to them. The point is that the tradition reinforces one of the main themes of the holiday ... family togetherness.



The Traditional 12 Days of Christmas

Traditionally, Christmas celebrations didn’t begin until a couple of days before Christmas and they continued until the Epiphany (January 6). The 12 Days of Christmas begin on December 26. Many families do not even open gifts until the Epiphany.

Here are some suggestions from activities we have done.

- 1) Each night focus on a different Christmas Carol. Ending with We Three Kings. See if you can find a carol book that will give you information about the origin and history of the carols. (If you like this idea, e-mail MomCaroe@aol.com, and I will give you some places to start looking)
- 2) On the 1st night (Dec.26) give 1 small gift to someone. The next night give 2 gifts to the same person or 1 gift to 2 different people. Continue this through 12 nights. (Tree ornaments, homemade cookies, candies, tracts, gift booklets, bookmarks, etc.)
- 3) Have a 12th night party and give small gifts to your guests.
- 4) Each night, move the wisemen of your nativity set closer and closer to the manger. (We all know they didn't come to the manger but it's the idea that they progressed toward the Christ Child)

CONCLUSION

It is Karen Caroe and Kathy Martinez's sincere prayer that this unit study will minister to your family in a special way this year. Perhaps giving you new ideas for traditions or allowing you to see the symbols of Christmas in a new light. I pray you all have a blessed and spirit-filled Christmas.