

Rotation.org's @Home Advent Lessons: Jesus Is Born!

You will create DURABLE ornaments for your Christmas tree, ones that will last years and not fall apart, and that will be reminders of your family Advent devotion time together. Please do not skip this lesson just because it looks like a lot of supplies; all of the supplies that aren't already in your crafting closet are easily found at your favorite craft store or online. (Plus these ornaments make great a gift for friends and family that allows you to tell them the Story!)



Jesus Is Born!: Ornaments that tell the Story



Summary of the activity:

Everyone will create a durable string of three individual ornaments representing the key parts of the Jesus Is Born! story. Each ornament is quickly created after hearing and discussing a part of the story, and then all are strung together as a final step. In addition to reinforcing the story, the goal is to make Bible ornaments that can be displayed on the family Christmas tree (or given as gifts) that will evoke

and reinforce the story's meaning and memory for many years to come.

This project can be done as one lesson or divided into four mini-lesson devotion times.

Scriptures for the lesson:

[Matthew 1:18-25](#): the story of the angel's announcement to Joseph.

[Luke 2:1-7](#): the story of Mary and Joseph's journey to, and Jesus' birth in, Bethlehem.

For additional reading, see the [Bible Background](#) at Rotation.org.

What you need:

- Print or have available online the [Supplies List and Station Directions](#).
- Old-fashioned clothespins (7 for each ornament; the flat "craft" style are easiest to work with)
- "Wired twine" (brown twine wrapped around a wire; you'll use it to connect and hang the three ornaments)
- Bead wire (you will use a lot of this to firmly fasten the clothespins together)
- Wooden beads (to go on twine wire to separate the ornaments)
- White and brown felt (thick felt is best for the angel wings; thin felt is best for swaddling clothes and Joseph's blanket so that it wraps easily)



Close-up of material labels used in this project

- Googly eyes (4 per person; 0.19"/5mm fits best)
- Tacky glue (for the eyes and felt; sets up fast)
- Wooden stars (found precut, by the bag)
- Gray and yellow crayons to color the donkey and star (markers work too, but crayons are more vibrant)
- Pliers for twisting wire tightly
- Wire cutters
- Scissors to cut felt
- Craft stapler (to staple the twine wire on the back of your clothespin ornaments)

NOTE that the format of this lesson is that you will have four "mini-lessons" -one for each ornament and a fourth where the three ornaments will be connected together. In each mini-lesson, the leader will show a completed ornament picture, share the scripture lesson, and ask questions related to the ornament being made. You may choose to spread this entire lesson over several sessions, and make a different ornament each time and then have a fourth session where you wrap up the lesson and connect the three ornaments into one.

Start your lesson!

1) First ornament: The Angel Appears to Joseph in a Dream

Read the scripture: [Matthew 1:18-25](#).

Ask:

- Have you ever woken from a dream that felt real to you?
- How do you suppose Joseph knew that the angel's message was real and wasn't just a strange dream he had? (One of the reasons we pray, read scripture, and go to worship is so that we know God's voice. Joseph probably knew the angel's message was real and trustworthy because he practiced his faith and was ready.)



Begin making the Angel and Joseph ornament (see instructions on the [handout](#)).

Comments to offer as the ornament is being made:

- The word "angel" means "messenger." What are some of the other ways God sends messages to us? (Via people, scripture, experiences, and a sense of God's presence within us.)
- Can you block God's message from getting through to you? How?

2) Second ornament: The Journey to Bethlehem

Read the Scripture: [Luke 2:1-5](#)

Ask: What's the longest distance you have ever walked? Did you get tired? Grumpy?

Say: Joseph and Mary's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 60 miles. Joseph probably walked, and maybe Mary rode a donkey, though the Bible doesn't say.

How do you suppose Joseph and Mary felt when they were about three days into their journey?

What were they thinking about? Looking forward to? Dreading? Worried about?

Begin making the Donkey ornament (see instructions).

Comments to offer as the ornament is being made:

- In addition to needing to get to Bethlehem to be counted in the Roman census, Bethlehem was also the place where Israel's most famous King was born. Who was that? (David)
- We know that Jesus rode a donkey when he was grown up. Do you remember that story? What does the symbol of the donkey mean to us? (Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. It's a symbol of humility.)
- Right here in the middle of the Christmas story, we imagine that humble symbol once again. It's kind of strange that we celebrate his humble birth with extravagant lights, music, and parties, don't you think?



3) Third Ornament: The Birth of Jesus



Read the Scripture: [Luke 2:6-7](#).

Ask: I wonder what it feels like to give birth to a baby?

Say: Yes, it is painful, and they didn't give pain injections back then! In several places the Bible describes God's new world (salvation, the gift of new life) like a woman giving birth to a child. There's pain. There's wonder and amazement. And what starts out small will grow.

Knowing what you know about being pregnant and giving birth to a baby, do you think faith is something that's easy? Painless? Full-sized when it's born? Or needing to grow?

Begin making the Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus ornament (see [instructions](#)).

Comments to offer as the ornament is being made:

It's kind of funny that one of the few details that Luke tells us about Jesus' birth is to remind us that Jesus needed a swaddling cloth! Swaddling cloth made the baby feel snug and secure, and it also acted like a diaper. What does that tell you about the character of God, that God was willing to be remembered as a baby that needed to be swaddled and diapered?

4) Assembling the Ornaments and Adding the "Decree" Beads (Final reflection and closing.)

Read the Scripture: [Luke 2:1-3](#).

Ask: Luke obviously wants us to know that Jesus' birth REALLY happened, and WHERE it happened. Why is that so important to him?

Say: Some people think the stories in the Bible are made up. People in Luke's day believed in myths about gods. Luke wanted them to know that Jesus is real and true.

Ask: How do YOU know that the birth of Jesus is a real story, the actual coming of God into the world as a baby? (Add your own answer as you show them how to put on the beads described below.)

Begin describing what the beads mean, and show how to put them on the twine wire.

Say: Luke tells us that the Romans wanted to count all the people in Israel, probably so they could tax them and know how much money they could get out of Israel. To keep track of the count, Romans used a counting rack similar to an abacus. It held beads or small stones. They also probably wrote the name of each person they were counting in a book. Today as you add the “counting beads” in-between your ornaments, I want you to remember that God has you counted, and God has written YOUR name in his Book of Life. This is why he sent Jesus to us.... to tell us that God counts us as his own children.

Assemble the Ornaments onto the Wired Twine. (Attaching the ornaments to the twine wire with a light-duty craft-style stapler is the fastest way to finish the project assembly. Do not use “long” staples, or super-duty staples, as they may split the clothespins. Test your stapler on a clothespin first!)



Questions and comments to offer as the ornament is being strung:

- Does God remove you from his “count” when you make mistakes and sin? (no)
- How do YOU “travel to Bethlehem to be counted” every year? (Taking part in Advent and making the journey to Christmas is one way we say, “We are part of the baby’s family too!”)
- After Advent and Christmas, there’s still plenty more to do, just like the baby needs to grow. What things do we need to do in order to grow our “baby faith” after Christmas?

5) Make plans to hang or give the ornaments you made

If you made extra ornaments, think about whom you might give them to and how you will tell them the story of Jesus Is Born!

Pray that all who see the ornaments and hear the story will know why we celebrate Jesus’ birth and know that they are part of God’s family.

Adapted from [this lesson](#) by the Rotation.org Writing Team
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