

Dear Parents,

During this the month of December, we encourage you to set aside a few minutes for family devotions. You might make time for that at the end of a family meal, at bedtime, or at another time that works best for your family.

Use this brief devotion pattern to provide a daily structure for your family as your children complete the *Miracle in the Manger* Countdown-to-Christmas sticker scene. Repeat the pattern daily, changing the Bible verse you read to match the day listed.

For the prayer time mentioned below, you can choose to have a family member read the prayer all the way through or read it line by line and have the rest of the family echo the line.

## December Family Devotions

☐ Gather the family and begin with prayer:

**Dear God,  
We are so glad you sent Jesus to be our Savior.  
Help us live  
as your happy, forgiven children  
today and always.  
Amen.**

☐ Read a Bible verse (work together to find the verse in the Bible):

December 1: Isaiah 9:2–7  
December 2: Isaiah 49:1, 3  
December 3: 1 John 1:5  
December 4: Luke 1:5–23  
December 5: Romans 5:6–8  
December 6: Romans 5:10  
December 7: Luke 2:8–15  
December 8: Luke 1:26–38  
December 9: Matthew 1:21  
December 10: Galatians 4:4–6  
December 11: Matthew 14:14–21  
December 12: Luke 2:1–7  
December 13: Micah 5:2  
December 14: 1 John 4:7  
December 15: 1 John 5:1  
December 16: Mark 16:15–16  
December 17: Psalm 95:1–6  
December 18: Jeremiah 31:3  
December 19: Isaiah 1:18  
December 20: John 8:12  
December 21: Jeremiah 29:12–13  
December 22: Acts 13:23  
December 23: Ephesians 1:15–19a  
December 24: Titus 3:4–5  
December 25: Luke 2:1–20

☐ Find the sticker that matches the number of today and put it in the matching box.

☐ Complete the activity for the day.



## Week 1: A Stable

### Introduction

Let's play the "Opposite Game" today! I'll say a word, and then you say its opposite. If I say hot, you say cold. If I say big, what would you say? (*Little, small.*) What if I said daytime? (*Nighttime.*) If I said tall? (*Short.*) If I said on? (*Off.*)

Christmas is all about opposites. Listen, and I'll explain. See how many opposites you can hear.

### Getting to the Heart

When God first made the world, it was perfect. There was no sin, no pain, no tears. No one cried. No one got hurt or sick. No one died. But then Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Because they sinned, God's perfect world became imperfect. Now, God's happy world was sad. God's perfect world was imperfect.

God still loved the world he had made. He loved his sad, sinful world so very much that he made a happy, holy plan. God planned to send a Savior to rescue us from our sins. The Savior would be both a king and a servant. Here's what the Bible says about that: (*Read Isaiah 49:1 and 3 from your Bible.*)

A king is the opposite of a servant. A king lives in a palace—a wonderful, beautiful, comfortable place. A king has power. He rules over others. A servant's home is not always comfortable. A servant has no power. A servant doesn't rule others.

Jesus was born in a stable. Does a stable seem like a home for a king or for a servant? Really, a stable is a place for animals! Not even a lowly servant would usually stay in such an uncomfortable, humble place. Yet that's where our Savior, King Jesus, was born. Jesus will be a servant, God said, "in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:3).

Jesus, our Servant-King, was born that first Christmas night in a lowly manger. He never did anything wrong, but Jesus, our Servant-King, was punished for all of our sins on his cross. Jesus died in our place and came alive again. Now, God forgives our sins. He is our Friend—our Best Friend forever! When our life here on this earth ends, we will live with Jesus in heaven.

### Taking It Home

A *miracle* is something that only God can do. We're going to learn about a lot of miracles that happened when Jesus was born. This week when you place the stickers on your Countdown-to-Christmas card, you'll start to see the very beginning of a stable. As you complete the activities on the back of the card, remember the miracle of the Savior-King, Jesus, and thank him for all he has done for us.

#MIMXXDF



## Week 2: Mary

### Introduction

Are you getting ready for Christmas? What do you do to get ready?

Some families decorate their house or their yard. Some families put up a Christmas tree. Some families buy gifts or send Christmas cards. Getting ready for Christmas can be a lot of fun, but it can take a long time!

Today we will talk about someone else who needed to get ready. Baby Jesus' mother, Mary, needed to get ready for the very first Christmas.

### Getting to the Heart

*(Read today's Bible story—Luke 1:26–33—from a child-friendly version of the Bible. Or summarize the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary in your own words.)*

The Bible tells us about a Christmas miracle. And what a miracle it was! How surprised Mary must have been to hear the angel's message. People had been getting ready for the Savior to be born for a long, long, long, long time! Now—finally—it was about to happen! After years and years and years of waiting, the Savior was about to be born. Mary would be his mother.

The angel Gabriel told Mary all about this. It would be a miracle. (A miracle is something only God can do.) Mary didn't have a husband. What's more, Mary's little Baby would not be like any other baby. The angel told her, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32). This special Baby would be God's very own Son! That Baby would be God himself. Imagine that! Mary's Baby was a tiny human baby, and he was God, too, all at the same time. What a miracle—a Christmas miracle!

Jesus was God's Son, born to be our Savior.

Jesus, God's own Son, gave up his heavenly home to be born in a lowly stable. Jesus loved us that much! What a miracle!

Here's a little poem to help you remember that miracle:

*(Encourage the children to repeat the words after you and mimic your actions.)*

Little baby Jesus sleeping in the hay. *(Tilt your head to "sleep" on your hands.)*  
You're God's special Miracle, born on Christmas Day. *(Rock the "baby" in folded arms.)*

Continued

#MIMXXDF

## Taking It Home

Let's pray to thank Jesus for his love. I'll say the words first and you repeat them after me.

*(After each line of the prayer, pause while the children repeat your words.)*

**Dear Savior Jesus,  
thank you for coming  
on that first Christmas  
to be our Savior.  
Thank you for your love.  
We love you too, Jesus!  
Amen.**

#MIMXXDF



## Week 3: Joseph

### Introduction

Have you ever had a special dream, a dream you remembered when you woke up, a dream that made you feel happy and warm inside? The Bible tells us about a very special dream that God gave to Joseph. Listen, and I'll tell you all about this special dream.

### Getting to the Heart

*(Read Matthew 1:20–21 from your Bible.)*

Joseph was engaged to Mary. They were planning to become husband and wife. One night, while Joseph slept, an angel came to Joseph in a dream. The angel had some surprising news for Joseph, news of a miracle. The angel said, "Joseph, Mary is pregnant. She is going to have a baby. You are not the baby's father. Mary's baby is God's own Son, so don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. Mary's baby will be the Savior everyone has waited for. When the baby is born, name him Jesus."

God wanted to make sure that Joseph knew how special Mary's baby would be. The angel told him, "He shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Baby Jesus would be our Savior! God also wanted Joseph to know that everything would work out okay. "Don't be afraid," the angel said to Joseph.

I wonder if Joseph remembered the angel's words as the little family traveled the long road to Bethlehem. How do you think Joseph felt when he was told, "We have no room for you! The king ordered everyone to return to his hometown to be counted. Bethlehem is filled with people! No room! Go away!"

What must Joseph have thought when the only shelter he and Mary could find was a little stable? Was Joseph worried? Did he remember the angel's words, "Don't be afraid"?

God knew that his Son, Jesus, would be born in the stable. He knew Jesus' first cradle would be an animals' feed box—a manger. God knew the baby Savior's first visitors would be shepherds from the nearby fields. It was all part of God's plan—his Christmas miracle.

Let's repeat the poem we learned last week:

Little baby Jesus sleeping in the hay, *(Tilt your head to "sleep" on your hands.)*

You're God's special Miracle, born on Christmas Day. *(Rock the "baby" in folded arms.)*

*Continued*

#MIMXXDF

## **Taking It Home**

Let's thank our heavenly Father for sending Jesus, the Miracle in the manger, to save us. I will say the prayer and you repeat the words after me:

**Dear heavenly Father,  
we praise and thank you  
for sending Jesus.  
Help us to share  
the good news of salvation  
with everyone we meet.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.**

#MIMXXDF



## Week 4: Baby Jesus

### Introduction

Christmas is a time for gift giving, isn't it? How many days are left until we'll be opening gifts?

We've been talking about miracles. Can you tell me what a miracle is? Yes, a miracle is something only God can do.

### Getting to the Heart

This week, as you finish filling in the stickers on your card, you'll see God's special gift to us, that Miracle in the manger. Listen to God's Word:

*(Read Luke 2:6–7 from your Bible.)* The Miracle in the manger is Jesus!

Jesus is the greatest Christmas Miracle of all. Remember what we've learned about the miracle of God's love? Only God could love us enough to want to save us from our sins and death by sending Jesus to be born in a lowly stable. The miracle of God's love caused him to promise the Savior long, long, long ago, when Adam and Eve first disobeyed in the Garden of Eden. God's love for sinners was indeed a miracle—something only God could do!

We've also learned that Mary became the mother of Jesus. That was another miracle—something only God can do! Jesus humbled himself to grow inside Mary's womb. Mary's baby would grow up and face the same kind of troubles we face. But Jesus would not sin—not even one time! That's a miracle for sure!

Joseph is part of the Christmas miracle, too. An angel told Joseph in a dream about God's Christmas Miracle, Mary's baby—Jesus. God kept Joseph and Mary safe as they traveled the long road to Bethlehem. God helped Joseph find a safe place where Jesus could be born—the stable in Bethlehem. Jesus was born in that stable! The Bible tells us that when Jesus was born, Mary laid him in a manger. Jesus is the Christmas Miracle in the manger.

Only God could fix the problem of our sin. God did that by sending Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus grew up and died for us on the cross. Then another great miracle happened! Jesus rose from the dead. It's a miracle—it's something only God could do.

Now we can know for sure all our sins are forgiven. We can know for sure that Jesus loves us and will always love us. We can know for sure that we will live in heaven some day with our Savior, Jesus. We know for sure God wants us to share the Miracle in the manger with everyone around us!

*Continued*

#MIMXXDF

## **Taking It Home**

Let's thank Jesus for his love. I'll start the prayer, then you pray the words after me:

**Dear Jesus,  
you must really love us a lot!  
Thank you for all of the Christmas miracles,  
but most of all  
thanks for loving us enough  
to become our Savior.  
Help us share  
the good news of Christmas  
with other people.  
Amen.**

#MIMXXDF