

Away in a Manger

by Cara Jakab

Teaching Goals

Jesus is the way to heaven.

Materials

Luke 2:1-21, Matthew 2:1-9 The stories of Jesus' birth and the visiting Wise Men.

Scriptures

- Container to serve as a manger.
- Small baby doll or figurine to represent Jesus.
- Piece of wrapping paper.
- Christmas ad from a newspaper, mail or magazine.
- Christmas lights.
- Map or picture of family.

- I. Play theme song.
- II. Pray.
- III. Review last lesson.
- IV. Lesson and discussion:

Words that are written in bold are when you, the parent, are speaking. Feel free to use your own words. Summarize the Christmas story or invite older children to read Luke 2:1-21 and Matthew 2:1-9. Put the baby and container in the middle of your family. **The baby in the container represents baby Jesus.**

ACTIVITY #1:

I'm going to read the words to a popular Christmas song. Another option is to sing the song as a family.

*Away in a manger,
No crib for a bed.
The little Lord Jesus,
Lay down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky
Look down where he lay.
The little lord Jesus
Asleep in the hay.*

What do you think the phrase, "away in a manger" means? *Listen to their answers. The manger was located away from other people. The manger was not a normal place for a baby. Jesus was born in a place for animals. Jesus was born in Bethlehem away from his home town of Nazareth. Jesus is God's son who came from heaven and was born on earth.* As each child gives an appropriate answer ask them to move the baby Jesus and set him down three paces from the family. With each correct answer, the baby Jesus will move farther and farther away.

We need to get Jesus back here with us! Who can name someone from the Christmas story who knew Jesus was the promised Son of God? *Listen to answers. Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Angels, Wise Men, God, Elizabeth (Mary's cousin), Simeon and Anna (prophet).* With each correct answer invite them to move baby Jesus three steps closer until he is back in the middle of the family.

ACTIVITY #2:

During Christmas we do things to push Jesus away. Jesus was away in a manger and sometimes he is away from Christmas. Let's talk about ways we push Jesus away from Christmas.

Presents. How can presents push Jesus away at Christmas time? *Listen to answers. Jealousy over what others receive. Greed over wanting more and more presents.* Put the piece of wrapping paper over baby Jesus.

Advertising. How can TV commercials, store displays, magazine and newspaper ads push Jesus away at Christmas time? *Listen to answers. The focus is on buying for ourselves without ever thinking about Jesus. They replace the word “Christmas” with the word “holiday”. Commercials make us want more and more stuff, when we’re supposed to celebrate Jesus’ birth. (With older children you might put a value on the top three gifts they are requesting. Then compare that to how much the family gives to food baskets, Angel Tree, Operation Christmas child, etc.) Put a Christmas add from the newspaper, mail or magazine over Jesus.*

Christmas lights. How can the decorations, lights and Santa Claus push Jesus away at Christmas? *Listen to answers. Santa Clause has replaced Jesus. Put a string of Christmas lights over the baby Jesus.*
Family. How could family push Jesus away at Christmastime? *Listen to answers. Complaining, arguing as we travel to see relatives. We’re more eager to see relatives than Jesus. Put a map or picture of family members over the baby Jesus.*

We need to uncover Jesus so he is close to us and visible during the Christmas season. How can we use each of these items to emphasize Jesus at Christmas?

Family. *Listen to answers. Read the Christmas story, listen to Christmas songs and/or watch Christmas DVDs while traveling. Play “Christmas Story” charades with family members. Talk about how Jesus was involved in your life during the past year. Remove the map or picture.*

Santa Claus and decorations. *Listen to answers. Drive around the neighborhood looking for manger scenes and stars. How can some Christmas decorations remind us of Jesus? Lights represent Jesus as “light of the world”, evergreen tree represents eternal life... Brainstorm ideas on how to include Santa Clause in the fun without ignoring Jesus. Remove the Christmas lights.*

Holiday Sale advertisement. *Listen to answers. Toys are usually not as cool as they appear in the ads. Being aware and being thoughtful about what we see will keep us from being fooled about the real meaning of the ad and the real meaning of Christmas. Try to think more about giving than getting. Remove the advertisement.*

Let’s work hard to eliminate the distractions of the holiday so we can see Jesus this Christmas.

V. Memorize: *Jesus is the Reason for the season.*

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VI. **Close in prayer.**

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