**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# Jesus’ birth

### MEETING AIM

To hear the story of the birth of Jesus. To think about how Joseph and Mary might have worried but knew they could trust God.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 2:1-17

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This story will be familiar to many of the children, but they hear it as though for the first time every school year! Explain that we can hear Bible stories again and again, and there is always something new to discover every time. Note, there’s no mention of the donkey or stable, which don’t appear in the biblical account.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children by name and share any refreshments you have brought. Begin by talking about all the things the children can think of that are made of wood. Remind them what a carpenter is and talk about Joseph and the sort of furniture, buildings and farming tools he would have made.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** at least three lollipop sticks per child

Before the session, hide the lollipop sticks around your meeting space. Make some obvious and others less so, to give the children a challenge.

Invite the children to find as many hidden wooden lollipop sticks as they can. Explain that you will use them later. Enjoy searching for the sticks, but don’t turn it into too much of a competition.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a nativity set, crib scene or manger, or a photo of one; straw or yellow wool; a wooden hammer, a mallet and any other wooden tools you can find; a doll; a piece of cloth

Let the children handle the animals and figures in the nativity scene. Draw attention to the manger and talk about how animals are fed and watered. Then tell this story:

Do you remember from last week, that Joseph had been told by God to marry Mary and look after her son, Jesus, as a foster father? But before the baby was born, the Roman authorities ordered everyone, including Joseph, to go back to the town where their family came from. This meant that Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, around 150km away. That was a long way away. He couldn’t leave Mary on her own. She would have to come with him.

Joseph packed up his tools. *Show the children the tools and talk about them.* He never went anywhere without them because he never knew when he might be asked to make a chair, or a doorframe or a spade. Mary packed up her clothes and cloths for the baby and food for the journey. *Act out packing a bag.* Off they went.

Mary got tired very quickly because her baby was due very soon. She and Joseph had to walk for several days. By the time they were close to Bethlehem, she knew her baby would be born very, very soon. Joseph knocked on the door of one place where they might stay. *Knock! Knock! Knock!* “There’s no room here! Go away!”

Joseph knocked on the door of another place where they might stay. *Knock! Knock! Knock!* “There’s no room here! Go away!”

Mary knew the baby was coming very, very, very soon! Joseph knocked on the door of yet another place where they might stay. *Knock! Knock! Knock!* “We’ve got some room where the animals are sleeping inside. It’s warm and safe!”

So, Mary lay down on the straw with the animals close by. And that was where she had her baby. She wrapped Jesus in the cloths she had brought with her. *Wrap up the doll.* Joseph looked around to see where it was safe to put the baby. He didn’t want the baby to lie on the ground in case an animal trod on him. He didn’t want the baby to be cold. He looked at the wooden manger (or feeding trough) where the food for the animals was kept. They put baby Jesus in the manger. This was the safest place for him.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, ensuring everyone has the chance to contribute:

* It was a really big thing for Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem just before their baby was born. If you’d been Joseph, I wonder what would have made you most worried? Forgetting some of your tools? Not finding somewhere to stay? Not finding a safe place to put the baby? Something else?
* The angel had told Mary she was going to have this special baby boy. Mary thought for a bit and then accepted what God wanted her to do. Do you think she still worried a lot? I wonder why she was able to trust God!

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** lollipop sticks from ‘Play’ (three per child); glue; yellow wool; pieces of card 6cm x 3cm (enough for two per child); hole punch; thread

Show the children how to cross two sticks at one end and stick them together. Lay the third stick across the ends of the first two sticks to make a manger shape and stick together. Stick a piece of card on either side of the wide end of the manger and stuff small lengths of yellow wool (hay) in the gap between the card. Punch a hole in the card and push thread through to hang the manger on a tree. You could decorate the ‘manger’ to make it a more ‘glittery’ tree decoration.

As you work, chat about the story and what God might be doing in it. Have the children learned anything new today?

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** song words and Advent ring instructions from NexGenPro

Light the second candle on the Advent ring and remind children about the story behind the first one. Is there anything the children are sad or worried about, something big or scary? Pray for them, reminding them that God is with us, just as he was with Mary and Joseph. Sing the first three verses of the song.

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