

- Host a Mom's Day Out or other community event. Use the devotions to tell the story of God's gifts through the birth of Jesus to all the children who attend. Then give each family a kit and their own set of devotions to take home.

However you choose to use this Celebrate the Gift of Jesus Activity Kit, we pray that it will draw many individuals and families closer to their Savior, Jesus, during the Advent-Christmas season.

May our Lord continue to empower all the work you do for his people!



**Expanding the Impact of Your
Gifts of Encouragement**

Family Devotions to Accompany the Celebrate the Gift of Jesus Activity Kit

Enclosed are four FREE reproducible devotions, written to accompany the Celebrate the Gift of Jesus Activity Kit. Each of the four present stickers that come with the kit has its own devotional outline. A set of ornament stickers is included, as well. Encourage children to use those at home as they retell the devotion from the day. You may make as many copies of the devotions as you would like for use in your own organization or congregation.

Here are some ways to use them . . .

- Give one devotion each week in Sunday school, as part of worship time in your Christian day school, as part of devotions for midweek school, or during the Sunday morning children's sermon.
- Give a kit and all four devotions to your families during a family activity time four weeks before Christmas. Encourage them to use one devotion each week as they prepare to celebrate Christmas.

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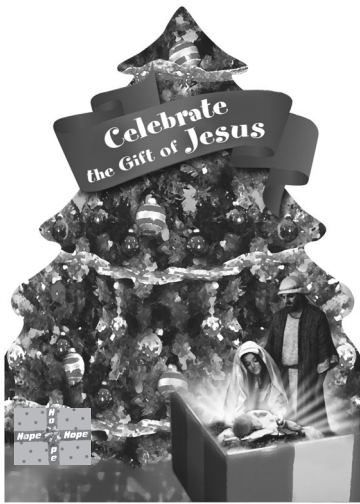
 www.CTAinc.com
 1-800-999-1874



Devotion 1

Celebrate the Gift of Jesus

*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9:15*



Hoping through Time

Getting Started

Write these Scripture references on seven construction-paper footprints: Genesis 2:15–17; Genesis 12:2–3; Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Luke 1:30–31; Luke 2:1–5; Luke 2:6–7. If you are working with young children, you might want to display a picture of the Bible story from which each verse is taken.

Tape the footprints around the room so they lead to your Christmas nativity set or a picture of the baby Jesus. Have a piece of construction paper ready for each child. If you use an Advent wreath, light the first candle at the beginning of the devotion. If not, use a Christmas candle.

If time will be short, make one construction-paper footprint for each child to use in “Taking It Home.”

Introduction

(Teach the children to sing these words to the tune “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”)

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.
God has promised His own Son,
Bringing hope for everyone.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.**

I’m going to light this candle to remind us of the hope that Jesus brings at Christmas. As I light the candle I will say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” You will reply, “And bring us hope.” Then we will sing the song “One Small Baby.” *(Do this. Then continue with the devotional comments below.)*

Today we’re going to take a trip to the place where Jesus was born. But we won’t start in Nazareth with Joseph and Mary. We will travel back—all the way back to when time began. *(Walk with the children to the first footprint and ask a child to read Genesis 2:15–17.)*

God gave Adam and Eve a wonderful home in which to live. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God. They ate from the fruit God had forbidden. They brought sin into God’s perfect world. But God didn’t leave Adam and Eve—and us—lost in sin. He gave us hope. He promised that one day He would send His own Son, Jesus, to crush Satan’s trickery, to destroy sin’s power forever.



Devotion 1 Continued

Throughout Old Testament times, God reminded His people of this hope. He promised again and again to send a Savior to rescue us. (Walk to the second footprint. Read Genesis 12:2–3.) God promised that all the earth would be blessed through Abraham’s family. Abraham would have more children in his family than stars in the sky and, one day, one of Abraham’s great-, great-, great-, great-grandchildren would be God’s Son, God’s promised Savior, our Lord Jesus.

God’s people hoped and hoped and hoped and hoped and hoped! They hoped for 2,000 years that baby Jesus would soon be born. God used His servants, the prophets, to tell people to keep hoping! (*Walk to the third footprint and have someone read Isaiah 7:14.*) God even told the prophets where baby Jesus would be born. (*Walk to the fourth footprint; have someone read Micah 5:2.*)

When it was almost time for the last steps in the journey, God used His angels to keep our hopes up. (*Walk to the fifth footprint; have someone read Luke 1:30–31.*) When the time was right, God even used the Roman emperor to carry out His plan to give us hope. (*Walk to the sixth footprint; have someone read Luke 2:1–5.*)

Getting to the Heart

Mary and Joseph walked with tired steps to Bethlehem. (*Walk to the footprint at your manger scene; read Luke 2:6–7.*) The journey of hope that had begun thousands of years earlier with a snake in a garden finally ended at a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. But the journey really didn’t end there. Our hope grows and grows as we walk with Jesus to the cross, where He gave His life in our place for our sin. We walk from there to a new garden—the garden where Jesus rose from the dead on the first Easter. There we see Jesus alive! We have great hope, knowing He has beaten sin, death, and the devil for good! Our hope grows and grows as we follow Jesus to the top of a hill where He tells us He will be with us always, even as He goes to heaven to prepare a place for us, a home for us, there.

Taking It Home

Think about the hope Jesus gives you. Trace your shoe and make a footprint of your own. On it, write (or draw) some of the ways God helps you put your hope in Him each day. Put your footprint beside the manger and ask God to bless your journey today.

Then put the Hope present sticker on your Christmas tree. Whenever you sing your song, remember that Jesus gives you the sure hope of life with Him now and life with Him forever in heaven. You can sing the song again at home and let someone in your family decorate your tree with the Hope ornament sticker.

(*If time will permit, sing stanza one of “One Small Baby” one more time.*)



Prayer

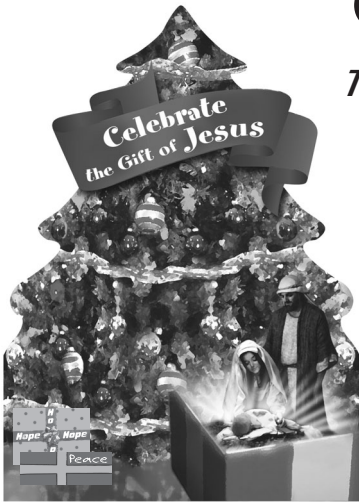
***Dear God, thank You for loving me enough to send Jesus to be my Savior.
Help me always to put my hope in Him, even when I have to wait a long, long time.
In Jesus’ name. Amen.***



Celebrate the Gift of Jesus

*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9:15*

Devotion 2



Peace You Can See

Getting Started

Display your Christmas nativity set.

Introduction

(Lead the children in singing stanza one of “One Small Baby” [tune: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”] from last time and teach the words for stanza two:)

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.
God has promised His own Son,
Bringing hope for everyone.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.
Sin brought fighting, pain, and fears;
Christ will wipe away our tears.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.**

I am going to light the first **and** second candles on our Advent wreath (*or, light the Christmas candle again today*) to remind us of the hope **and** the peace Jesus brings at Christmas. As I light the candle, I will say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” You will reply, “And bring us peace.” Then we will sing the song “One Small Baby.” (*Do this. Then continue with the devotional comments below.*)

Do you sometimes pretend—or do you remember when you used to pretend—that your favorite stuffed animals, action figures, or dolls are real? I’ve noticed how much you like to look at the figures in our nativity set. It’s fun to arrange them as you tell the story, isn’t it? About 700 years ago, a man in Italy was the first person to think of acting out the Christmas story with real people.



Devotion 2
Continued

Getting to the Heart

This man had to spend some time in jail because of his wild ways. He told God he was sorry and promised to serve and obey God all the rest of his life. When he got out of jail, he became a monk. God forgave him and filled his heart with peace. Today that man, St. Francis, is remembered all around the world for his love of animals and his idea to act out the Christmas story.

Francis asked his friend John Velita to help him put on a live pageant on Christmas Eve. John provided hay, a manger, an ox, and a donkey. Costumed people stood in place. Then Francis came with other monks and townspeople carrying candles and torches. The wonder and peace of Bethlehem filled the night!

In that little town long ago, people understood in a special way what God tells us in His Word, “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23 NIV). Jesus is “God with us.” God loves us so much that He sent His Son to be born on earth as a real baby. Jesus suffered all the pain and hurt that we feel. And He died in our place to take the punishment for our sins.

After St. Francis started them, Christmas pageants began to be reenacted all around the world. Still today, Christians in many places follow this custom. Artisans began to make small figures like the ones here. (*Point to them.*)

Taking It Home

When you look at our manger scene today, remember that baby Jesus is not a doll. His life is not a pretend story. Jesus was born as a real baby—God became one of us! He lived with us to experience all the troubles and problems we experience.

When you are worried or sad, you can talk to Jesus about it. When you’ve been fighting or when people you love are fighting, Jesus cares for you! When you are afraid, Jesus knows all about it. When He was growing up, He sometimes cried, too! He was sometimes sad. He felt bad when people He loved were fighting. He wants to help you with your sadness and your scary feelings. He will wipe away your tears. He will hold you in His arms and fill your heart with peace.

Today we have added the second verse of our song. Now, you can add the Peace present sticker to your Christmas tree. Whenever you sing this song, remember that Jesus helps you when you are sad or afraid. His love brings you peace. Sing the song again at home as you add the Peace ornament sticker to your tree.

(If time will permit, sing both stanzas of “One Small Baby” one more time.)



Prayer

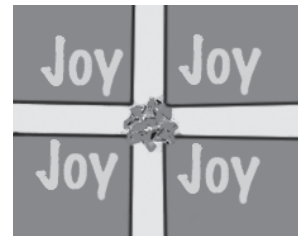
***Dear Jesus, thank You so much for becoming real—just like me.
Thank You for holding me close to You when I’m sad, hurting, or scared.
Give me Your peace each day. In Your name, Jesus. Amen.***

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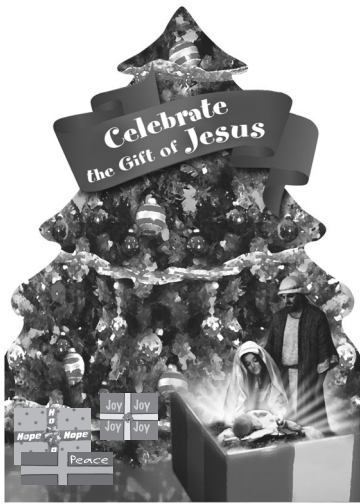
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Devotion 3

Celebrate the Gift of Jesus

*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9:15*



Stamped and Ready

Getting Started

You will need a signed Christmas card with a Christmas message, an envelope already addressed to a friend and showing your return address, a stamp, a large postage stamp outline drawn on poster board, and markers. The children will help you design the stamp during the devotion time, so leave the inside blank for now.

Introduction

(Lead the children in singing stanza one of “One Small Baby” [tune: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”] from last time and teach the words for stanza three:)

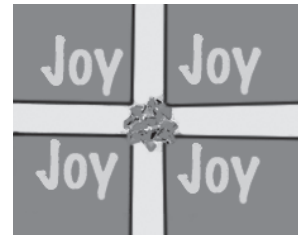
**One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.
God has promised His own Son,
Bringing hope for everyone.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us joy on Christmas Day.
God sends us this baby boy,
Saving us for endless joy.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us joy on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.
Sin brought fighting, pain, and fears;
Christ will wipe away our tears.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.**

*I am going to light the first, second, **and** third candles on our Advent wreath today (or, light our Christmas candle again today) to remind us of the hope and the peace **and** the joy Jesus brought to earth on the first Christmas. As I light the candle, I will say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” You will reply, “And bring us joy.” Then we will sing the song “One Small Baby.” (Do this. Then continue with the devotional comments below.)*

I’ve been working on my Christmas cards. I send them to lots and lots of people. Do you like to send and receive Christmas cards? Cards are one of the tools I use to tell my friends and family about Jesus’ birthday. This card is almost ready to go. I’ve written a little note inside and signed it. I’ll seal it in this envelope with the address and my return address. But look! There’s something missing! Can you tell me what that might be? (Let the children respond.)



Devotion 3 **Continued**

Getting to the Heart

This card won't go anywhere without a stamp. The Good News that Jesus is born will sit right here until I put a stamp on it and mail it. God's Word makes it clear that we are not to sit around and keep the Good News of Jesus' birth to ourselves. After Jesus had completed the work He was born to do—after He had lived a perfect life for us and died to pay the punishment for our sins—He told His disciples, and us, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Stamps had not yet been invented when the shepherds listened to the angels' joyful news and ran to Bethlehem to find their Savior. The Bible says, "When they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child" (Luke 2:17). Such joy was too wonderful to keep to themselves. It burst from the hearts, and they ran through the sleepy streets of Bethlehem shouting that baby Jesus was born!

Taking It Home

Let's use this big stamp to share our joy about Jesus' birth. What should we tell people?

(Let the children take turns writing or dictating messages. Or let them suggest pictures that could go inside the stamp to finish it. They will probably suggest words like: Jesus is born! Jesus is my best Christmas present. Jesus brings me joy! Pictures may include the shepherds kneeling at the manger, Jesus dying on the cross, or Jesus rising from the dead. Then continue:)

I am going to put a real stamp on my real Christmas card so I can share the joyful news of Jesus' birth. You can put the Joy present sticker on your Christmas tree. Let it remind you that you are a living stamp—you can't hold still! You can't just sit around! Your joy carries you to everyone you know, telling everyone the Good News that Jesus was born to die and rise for us. Tell that Good News to someone at home and let that person decorate your tree with the Joy ornament sticker.

(If time will permit, sing all three stanzas of "One Small Baby" one more time.)



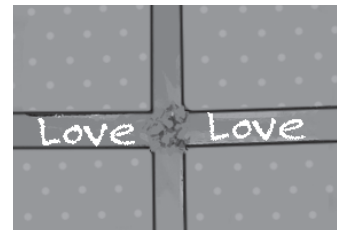
Prayer

***Dear Jesus, thank You for being my very best Christmas present.
My heart almost pops with joy when I think how much You love me.
Help me share that Good News with everyone. In Your name, Jesus. Amen.***

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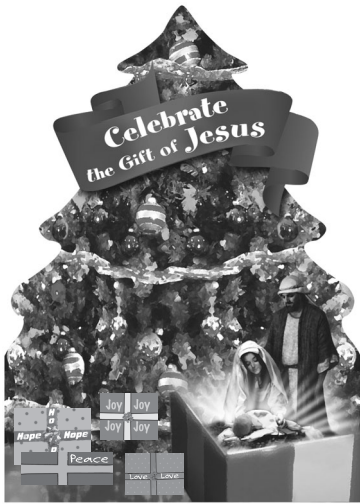
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Devotion 4

Celebrate the Gift of Jesus

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9:15



What Does Love Feel Like?

Getting Started

You'll need three Christmas stockings, the baby Jesus from your nativity set, a heart-shaped cookie cutter, and a small cross. Place each of the items in a stocking ahead of time so the children won't know what is in the stockings.

Introduction

(Lead the children in singing stanza one of "One Small Baby" [tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"] from last time and teach the words for stanza four:)

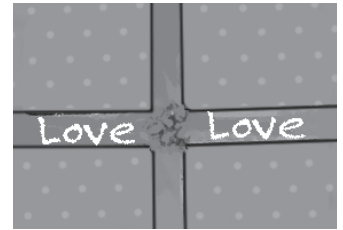
**One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.
God has promised His own Son,
Bringing hope for everyone.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us hope on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us joy on Christmas Day.
God sends us this baby boy,
Saving us for endless joy.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us joy on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.
Sin brought fighting, pain, and fears;
Christ will wipe away our tears.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us peace on Christmas Day.**

**One small baby in the hay
Brings us love on Christmas Day.
Arms will stretch to grab a cross,
Saving us from all our loss.
One small baby in the hay
Brings us love on Christmas Day.**

I am going to light the first, second, third, **and** fourth candles on our Advent wreath today (*or, light our Christmas candle again today*) to remind us of the hope and the peace and the joy **and** the love Jesus brought to earth on the first Christmas. As I light the candles, I will say, "Come, Lord Jesus." You will reply, "And bring us love." Then we will sing the song "One Small Baby." (*Do this. Then continue with the devotional comments below.*)



Devotion 4 Continued

Have you ever tried to guess what was inside a present by shaking the box or trying to feel the shape of the gift? We are getting ready to celebrate the best Christmas present ever! Let's see if we can guess what it is. *(Ask a child to reach into the toe of the Christmas stocking with the baby Jesus in it and guess what's inside. Then pull the baby Jesus figure out and identify it.)*

Getting to the Heart

What makes baby Jesus the best present ever? Without Jesus, there would be no Christmas trees, no candy canes, and no other Christmas presents. But why did Jesus come?

(Pass around the heart-shaped cookie cutter in its stocking.) Here is one part of the answer. Can you guess what it is? *(Let each child reach into the Christmas stocking and guess. When all have had a turn, show the heart.)* God gave us Christmas because He loves us so much. God made a perfect world for us. But when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they brought sin into the world. It was no longer perfect. You and I sin, too, just like Adam and Eve. But God loved us so much, He didn't want us to live in a ruined world forever. Love is the reason God let His Son leave the heavenly home to sleep as a little baby in a box of poky hay.

(Pass around the cross in its stocking.) For years and years, God promised to send a Savior. Then, at just the right time, God sent Jesus to be born on earth. As the years went by, baby Jesus grew up. He did good, kind things for people. He taught people about God and God's love. But Jesus did more!

(Ask the children to reach into the stocking and see if they can identify this clue about God's love. Don't let anyone guess until everyone has had an opportunity to feel it.) When it was time for Jesus to be born, God sent his angel to talk to Joseph. The angel said, "[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21 NIV).

Taking It Home

Jesus came to earth to live and die for us. On the cross He suffered the punishment for our sins. Then He rose from the dead to give us eternal life with him. No wonder Christmas feels so good—it's the time God shows us His great love by giving us the gift of His own Son, Jesus.

Today you will put the Love present sticker on your Christmas tree. You can also decorate your tree with the Love ornament sticker. Every time you look at your tree, you can thank Jesus for the hope, peace, joy, and love He brought at Christmas. It will be impossible to think of words good enough to thank Him. That's why the Bible says, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Prayer

***Dear Jesus, thank You for hope, for peace, for joy, and for love!
Your love is indescribable!
We love You, too, Jesus! Amen.***



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