

- 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 Joy for the World 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 Joy for the World Activity Kit

Enclosed are four FREE reproducible devotions, written to accompany the Joy for the World Activity Kit. Each of the four pictures on the kit has its own devotional outline. 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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## Good News of Great Joy for the World

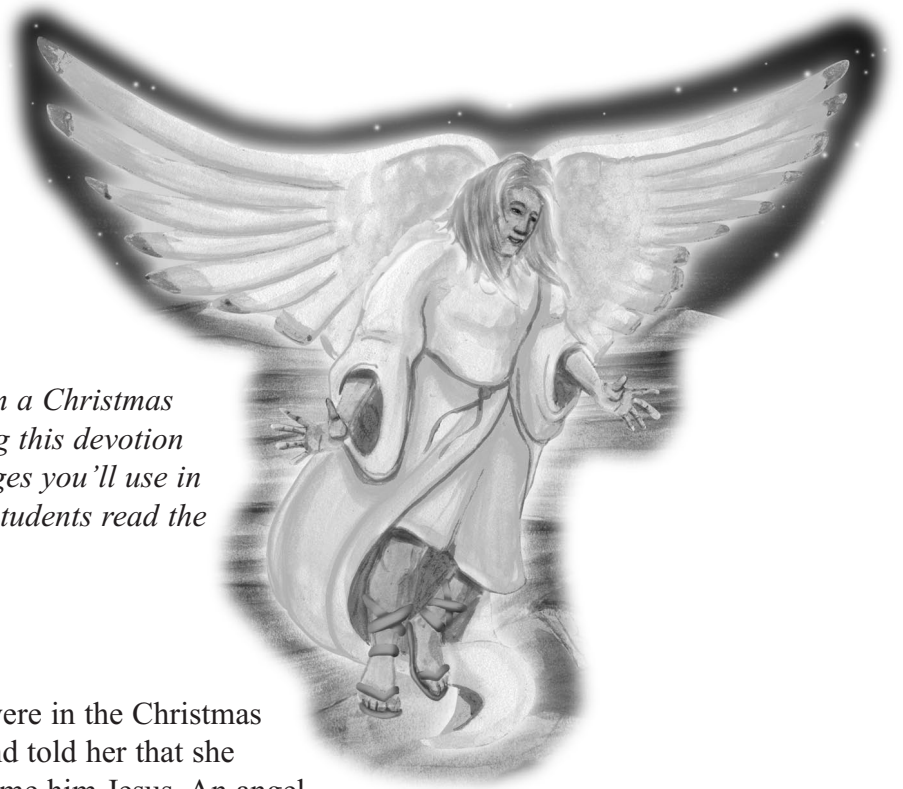
*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,  
which shall be to all people.*

*(Luke 2:10)*

### DEVOTION 1

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# As Busy as Angels



### GETTING STARTED

Use flannelgraph figures or pictures from a Christmas book or Christmas cards when presenting this devotion to young children. Mark the Bible passages you'll use in "Getting to the Heart," and have older students read the Bible passages with you.

### INTRODUCTION

Have you noticed how busy the angels were in the Christmas story? The angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she would have a Son and that she should name him Jesus. An angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary for his wife. An angel told the shepherds where to find baby Jesus, and then a sky full of angels praised God for the victory and peace Jesus would bring us.

### GETTING TO THE HEART

Angels are God's messengers. Let's take a close look at the messages the angels brought to God's people. *(Read Luke 1:26–31 to the children.)* Gabriel told Mary to name her baby Jesus. *Jesus* means "Savior." When you were born, your mom and dad might have wondered what you would be when you grew up. You might be a doctor or a teacher or a scientist. Jesus was the only baby born just so he could die to save us. God sent Jesus so he could grow up and live a perfect life for us and then die on the cross for us to pay the price for our sins.

An angel gave Joseph the same message. *(Read Matthew 1:21.)* Joseph walked with Mary to the town of Bethlehem, the city where his relatives had lived. There, in a stable, baby Jesus was born.

## Devotion 1

Outside of Bethlehem, sleepy shepherds were watching over their sheep. Suddenly a bright light startled them awake. God sent them an angel messenger, too. (*Read Luke 2:10–12.*) Then the sky was filled with angels, praising God for sending his Son.

### TAKING IT HOME

Today God wants you to be his messenger. I am going to show you the picture behind the first panel of your Christmas activity card. This picture shows the angel who brought great news to the shepherds. Share the angel's message with your family and friends. Tell them that Christmas is baby Jesus' birthday. Jesus was born to be our Savior—that's Good News that everyone needs to hear.

*(Give the card to the children and discuss the first picture with them. Help them find the hidden flap with this week's Bible trivia question, titled "Do You Know the Story?")* Here is a trivia question for you and your family to solve: Which other baby, besides Jesus, was foretold by the angel Gabriel? You can look in the Gospel of Luke to find the answer. Then solve the puzzle on the other hidden flap to see if you were right.

God's angels are still busy today. They will be watching over you and keeping you safe while you take over their job of being messengers. Tell everyone you know the Good News that baby Jesus is born to be your Savior.



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The Bible quotation is from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

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## Good News of Great Joy for the World

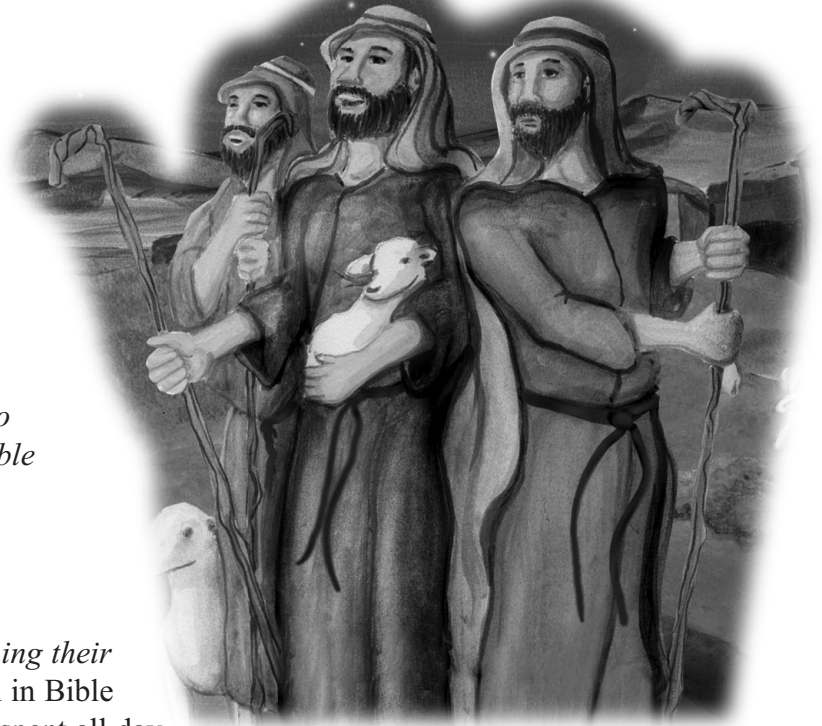
*When they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*

*(Luke 2:17)*

### DEVOTION 2

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# You Can Trust a Shepherd



#### GETTING STARTED

Mark the Bible passage you'll use in "Getting to the Heart," and have older students read the Bible passage with you.

#### INTRODUCTION

(Show the children a picture of shepherds watching their sheep.) Shepherds didn't have a good reputation in Bible times. They were rough, smelly men who often spent all day and night in the hills with their sheep. Shepherds weren't allowed to be witnesses in a courtroom. People thought they were poor, dishonest men who wouldn't tell the truth.

#### GETTING TO THE HEART

How interesting that God chose poor, smelly shepherds to be the first witnesses to see his newborn Son. A bright light woke the shepherds while they were dozing lazily, keeping watch over their sheep. They sat up, shaking with fear, but God's angel told them not to be afraid. God had sent his own Son, Jesus, to be born on earth as a baby so he could be our Savior. The angel told the shepherds they could find the baby lying in a manger in Bethlehem. Then the shepherds got to hear the loudest, most beautiful victory song ever heard on earth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

The shepherds ran to Bethlehem and found baby Jesus just as the angels had said. They fell on their knees and worshiped their Savior. Then these smelly, scruffy men that nobody had trusted before became the world's first missionaries. They ran through the streets of Bethlehem telling everybody what they had seen and heard! God's Word tells us they got it just right, too!

*(Read Luke 2:17 to the children.)*

## Devotion 2

### TAKING IT HOME

*(Show the second panel on the children's activity cards.)* Look at the shepherds in the picture. Today God gives you the shepherds' job. It's your turn to be a missionary and tell your family that baby Jesus was born to be your Savior.

Who found the answer to last week's trivia question? *(Let children respond.)* That's right. Gabriel told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would have a baby and they should name him John (Luke 1:13). Let's read today's trivia question: The shepherds stayed out in the fields all night with their sheep so nothing could hurt them. When Jesus became an adult, why did he call himself the Good Shepherd? You can look in the Gospel of John with your family to find the answer. Then solve the puzzle on the other hidden flap to see if you were right.

Your Good Shepherd will be taking good care of you while you work as his missionary this week.



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## Good News of Great Joy for the World

*Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

*(Matthew 2:2)*

### DEVOTION 3

# Clearly Seeing the King

#### GETTING STARTED

*For the introduction, find a picture from a Christmas book or Christmas card that shows three Wise Men worshipping at the manger. Mark the Bible passage you'll use in the introduction, and have older students read the Bible passage with you.*



#### INTRODUCTION

*(Read Matthew 2:1–12 to your class. Then show the children your picture of the Wise Men.)* This picture shows two things that are tradition, but not actually stated in the Bible. Can you tell what these two things are? *(Let children respond. Help them identify the traditions if necessary.)* That's right. The Bible doesn't tell us how many Wise Men there were. There might have been two, ten, or even a hundred. And the Wise Men weren't able to visit Jesus, Mary, and Joseph while they were still in the stable.

#### GETTING TO THE HEART

By the time the Wise Men had gone to Jerusalem to see King Herod and then followed the star to Bethlehem, most of the city's visitors had signed the king's census book and gone home. Joseph was able to find a little house for Mary and Jesus to live in. And Jesus wasn't a tiny baby anymore. He had been growing while the Wise Men traveled.

We call the time when the Wise Men visited Jesus "Epiphany." *Epiphany* means "to show clearly." The Wise Men didn't live in Bethlehem. They lived far away in another land, but they had learned about God's Old Testament promises and knew that Jesus had been born to be their King and Savior. They traveled from far away to bring gifts for their King and to worship this child who came to be their Savior.

## Devotion 3

### TAKING IT HOME

We live far away from Bethlehem, too. The Wise Men remind us that God sent his Son to die on the cross and win forgiveness and eternal life for us and for people all over the world. (*Open the third picture of the children's Joy for the World card.*) When you show this picture to your family, tell them that you want to be a missionary and tell everyone in the world about Jesus. How can you do that? (*Help the children share ideas—praying for missionaries around the world, supporting mission work through Sunday school and church offerings, “adopting” a child in another country through a Christian organization, etc.*)

Who found the answer to last week's trivia question? That's right. In John 10:11 Jesus says he calls himself the Good Shepherd because the Good Shepherd gives up his life for his sheep. Let's look at this week's question: God's Word doesn't tell how many Wise Men there were. How do you think the legend that there were three Wise Men might have gotten started? Read Matthew 2 carefully to find the answer. Then solve the puzzle on the other hidden flap to see if you were right.

God's Word shows clearly that Jesus was born to be your Savior! Just like the Wise Men, we can share this Good News with people everywhere we go!



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# Good News of Great Joy for the World

*Salt of the earth.*

*(Matthew 5:13)*

## DEVOTION 4

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# It's Time to Be Salt

### GETTING STARTED

*(Have a salt shaker ready to show the children. Give each child a small cardboard salt shaker or packet of salt from a fast-food restaurant to take home.)*

### INTRODUCTION

*(Hold up your salt shaker.)* Salt was a necessity of life in Bible times. Not only was it used to make food taste better, but it also was used to preserve foods and keep them from spoiling. Jesus tells us we are the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13).

### GETTING TO THE HEART

Jesus works through us to make his world a better place. He uses us to preserve and pass on the Good News that he was born on Christmas so that he could live a perfect life for us and then die to pay for all our sins and win us eternal life. He uses us to show other people how Christians act. We flavor all of our relationships with his love and forgiveness.

Here at church we are surrounded by salty Christians. Our pastors and teachers and friends talk with us about Jesus' love every time we get together. We know each other and find it easy to be kind and to forgive each other. But Jesus asks us to take his kind of salt into the rest of the world.

As you enjoy your Christmas vacation, play with neighbors, and visit relatives, remember that you are the salt of the earth. I'm going to give each of you a little salt shaker/packet today. Ask your parents if you can add a little salt from your shaker to some food they are cooking for Christmas dinner, or to some popcorn. As you do, ask Jesus to help you plan some ways to be the salt of the earth. You might think of asking some friends to join your family as you read the Christmas story from the Bible. You



## Devotion 4

might bring a neighbor to church with you. You might think of a project to take some Christmas cookies to someone who is lonely or to go Christmas caroling at a hospital. You might pray for the extra “salt” you need to be kind to your brothers and sisters.

### TAKING IT HOME

Who found the answer to last week’s trivia question? Let children respond. That’s right. Many people probably think there were three Wise Men because Matthew 2:11 tells us the Wise Men brought Jesus three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*(Open the fourth picture of the children’s Joy for the World card.)* Let’s look at this week’s picture. It reminds us that it’s our turn to be missionaries to the world. When you open all of the Joy for the World pictures, you will have a beautiful Christmas picture to share with everyone who comes to your home.

Let’s find this week’s trivia question—What important job did Jesus give you before he went to heaven to prepare a home for you there? *(If necessary, help the children read Matthew 28:19 to find the answer: Go and make disciples of all nations. Review the ways you brainstormed to share the Good News of salvation in Jesus with people close to you and around the world.)*

*(Hand out the salt shakers.)* Here is your salt to take home. Without salt, the food that we eat would taste flat and uninteresting. Without Jesus’ kind of salt, our world would be a sad, hateful place. You are the salt of the earth. Spice up everyone around you by sharing Jesus’ love and the Good News that he was born to be your Savior. Tell them the Good News of great joy for the world!



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