

WEEK FOUR

CELEBRATING THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

BIG IDEA

God became human as a

BABY BORN IN A STABLE

PREP: (Kids can help!)

- Buy a packet of heart-shaped lollies (or any treat or gift representing 'love') and wrap it with layers of plain paper (e.g. brown paper or newspaper – using enough layers for everyone to play 'Pass the parcel').

Make sure the outside layer is brown paper and tie it with string.

- Find scissors and clear tape (or a glue stick).
- Cut out nativity set from Appendix (or children can do it during the reading).

WHAT GOES IN THE BOX?

- Brown paper package
- Scissors and clear tape (or a glue stick)
- Nativity set from Appendix



INTRO

- Ask everyone to go get a favourite gift they have been given (or picture one in their minds).
- Share who gave you this gift and why it is one of your favourites.

OUT OF THE BOX

- Take out the package wrapped in plain brown paper tied up with string.

Do you know the song from the musical 'The Sound of Music' where Maria sings to the children about her favourite things? One of them is 'brown paper packages tied up with string.'

We usually prefer parcels to be wrapped in pretty paper and ribbons, don't we?

Might we imagine that it's not such a good gift if the wrapping is not as attractive? Would you ever not bother to open it? It would be a shame to miss out on something special.

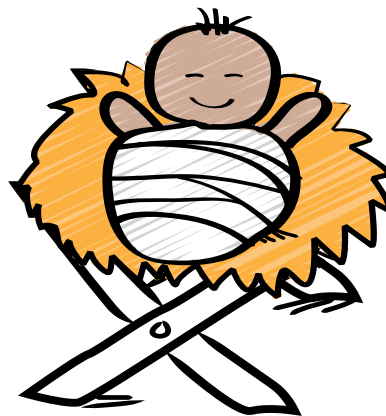
- Let everyone hold the package, imagine something they really like inside it, and share what they think it could be.

They can suggest something imaginary or something real (e.g. a tiny purple dragon or a favourite computer game).

When Jesus was born it was like God giving a parcel wrapped in brown paper.

READ

- Pass out the paper nativity set with scissors and tape (or glue stick) to construct it during the reading.



“About that time everyone had to travel to his own hometown to be counted. So Joseph went from Nazareth up to Bethlehem, David’s town, for the census. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger because there were no other rooms available.

There were shepherders camping in the neighbourhood. Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody: A Saviour has just been born in David’s town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”

At once the angel was joined by a huge angel choir singing God’s praises.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told! ”

Luke 2: 1-20

My First Message – © Eugene Peterson, NavPress, 2007

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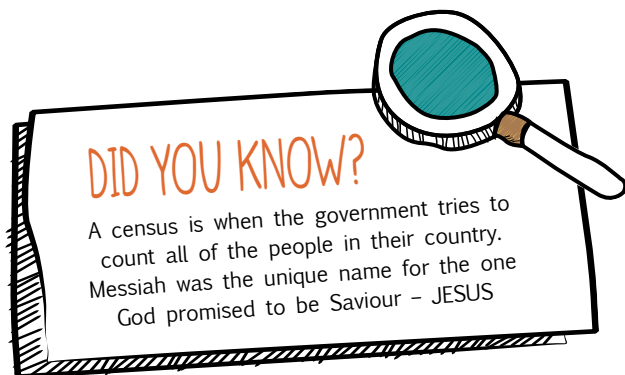
EXPLORE

- What was God's gift in the Christmas story that you just read?
- What was so unexpected about the gift's packaging?

(God's gift was baby Jesus. No one expected the Son of God to be born to a poor couple, in a dirty stable!)

- What made this gift in ordinary packaging so special?

Even though He was just a baby in a humble family, we would soon find out that Jesus brought with him all of God's love, goodness and kindness... enough for everyone in the whole world!



GAME

Pass the Parcel

- Everyone sit in a circle, put on the music and begin passing the brown paper package around until the music stops. The person holding it when the music stops unwraps a layer, until the last layer when the person gets the gift!
- Talk together about how wonderful God's gift of love is.

ACTIVITY

- Find a special place to set up your nativity set cut from the Appendix.

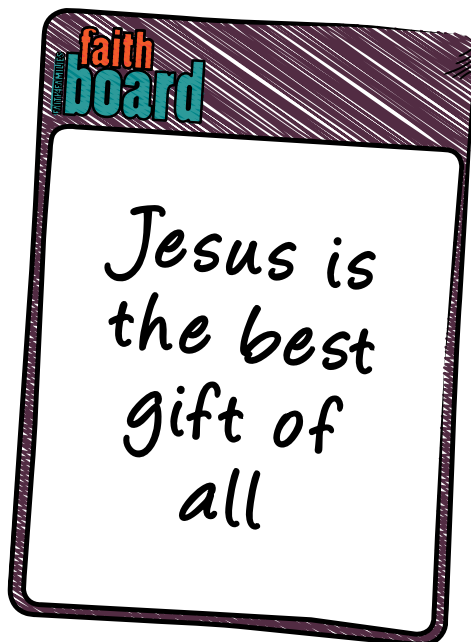
PRAY

- Gather around the nativity set and thank God for the amazing gift of Jesus.

LIVE

- Read a favourite Christmas storybook together around the tree one while the children are in their pyjamas.

“ IT CAME WITHOUT RIBBONS. IT CAME WITHOUT TAGS.
IT CAME WITHOUT PACKAGES, BOXES OR BAGS.
AND HE PUZZLED AND PUZZLED 'TILL HIS PUZZLER WAS SORE.
THEN THE GRINCH THOUGHT OF SOMETHING HE HADN'T BEFORE.
'WHAT IF CHRISTMAS,' HE THOUGHT, 'DOESN'T COME FROM A STORE?
WHAT IF CHRISTMAS, PERHAPS, MEANS A LITTLE BIT MORE?' ”
- DR SEUSS -



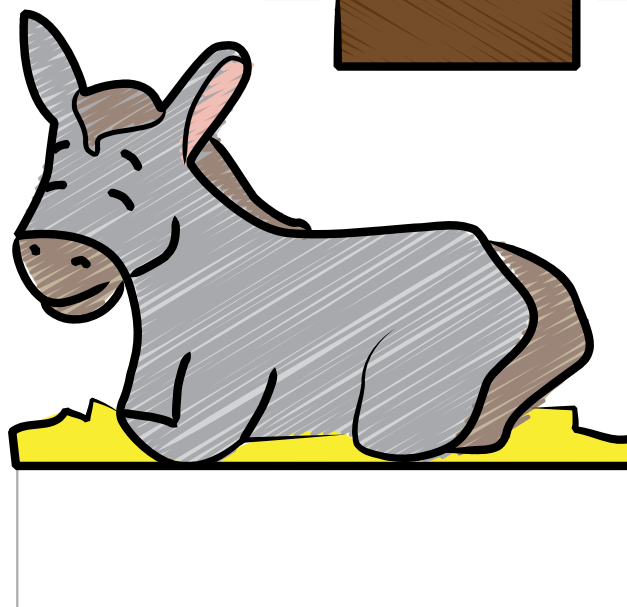
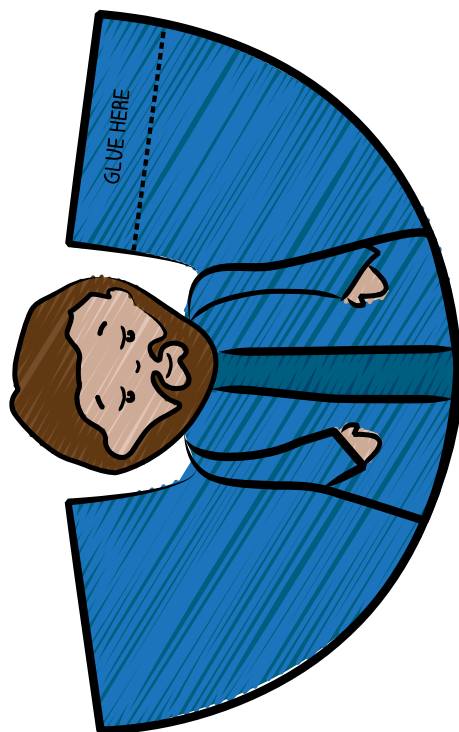
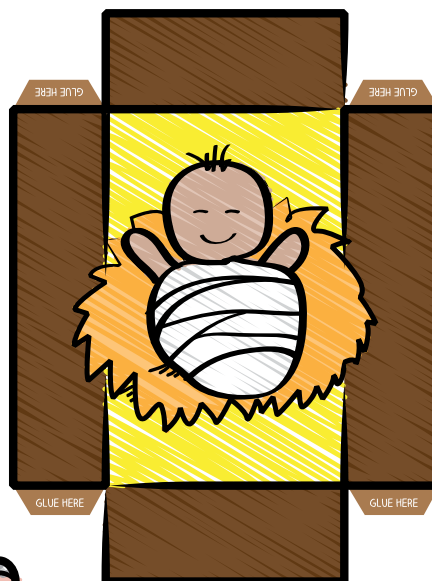
OTHER IDEAS

- Create a family pageant where everyone in the family dresses up as a character in the Christmas story (use sheets for angels, tea towels for shepherds, a dressing gown for Joseph and a sheet for Mary). You can involve cousins, grandparents or neighbours. Act out the story of Jesus' birth. Take some photos to use in next year's Christmas cards.
- As a family, choose a charitable activity you can do together over the Christmas holiday. You will be passing on the gift of God's love.
- Attend your church's Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service as a family so it becomes a valued family tradition.
- Gather the family to watch the movie "The Sound of Music" or the two-minute video clip of "My Favourite Things." (<http://youtube/E3aBB-J9vhg>)

**CHECK OUT WHAT YOU
NEED FOR NEXT WEEK...**



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NATIVITY SCENE CONTINUES NEXT PAGE...

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