

Paperless Christmas

The Adventures of Mary and Joseph – The Road Movie

Episode 5: The birth of Jesus

Introduction

The following lesson outline offers you a way to work through the story in the video with your class group. There are a variety of possible activities. There are also links to other related videos and to further web resources and books available from Barnabas.

Preparation

Download the episode and any associated videos in advance (www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/) so that these are easily accessible to use on a whiteboard during the session. Print off a copy of the Bible story as well as the discussion starters and activity suggestions to be used with small groups.

Development

1. First Impressions – [The birth of Jesus](#)

Play this episode to the class. This tells the story of the birth of Jesus

Ask the class:

- What did you like best about this episode?
- What made you smile?
- What did you find surprising?
- What didn't seem to make sense?
- What would you say was happening in this episode?
- What was Mary thinking?
- What was Joseph thinking?
- Which part of this story made the biggest impression on you?

2. Group work - holding something beautiful

Hand out the following discussion starters to small groups.

- What is the most beautiful thing you can think of?
- Which colours, tastes or smells would be top of a beauty chart for you?
- Why do most people find newborn babies so beautiful?
- What beautiful characteristics beneath the surface make people attractive?
- What is your idea of perfection?
- What things spoil beauty? Think about this in relation to people, friendships and nature.

Allow ten minutes for this and then ask one child per group to report back on what they talked about and what ideas they came up with.

Play the video [Away in a Manger](#), which shows baby photos, as this carol is sung, followed by a down-to-earth punch-line!

3. The Story in the Bible

Read the Bible story for episode 5. You will find this below in the Contemporary English Version (CEV). There is also an easy-to-read retelling of this story in [The Barnabas Schools' Bible](#), story 195.

Isaiah 9:6-7

A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be **Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.**

His power will never end; peace will last for ever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The Lord All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.

Here is a [word search](#) based on this reading.

Talk about the Bible story:

- What is in the Bible story that is reflected in the video? What is in the video that is not in the Bible story? Does the video help you understand the Bible story better? Which parts of the Bible story do you find puzzling?
- I wonder what it felt like for Mary to hold a baby that had been promised to her by the angel? I wonder what it felt like for Joseph to see the baby but to know it wasn't his? I wonder whether it was obvious that there was something special about this baby?

4. A Carousel of Group Activities

- Look at some pictures of Mary holding baby Jesus. This famous image is known as 'The Madonna and child' – just type this into an Internet search engine. Which ones do you like best? What is beautiful about them?
- Collect together lots of examples of pictures of Mary holding baby Jesus from religious Christmas cards. Create a gallery from these, including suggested titles for each one and a few words saying what you like or don't like about each picture.
- Christians believe that Christmas was the moment that God decided to start all over again with his world. He chose a new 'Eve' to be a mother to the one who could show us all how to be truly human.

What was it about Mary, do you think, that qualified her for this amazing starring role?

- I wonder what sort of lullaby Mary would have sung to get baby Jesus to sleep? From a section of carols in a hymn book, search out the ones that focus on this peaceful moment in the Christmas story. Which ones do you like best and why? Can you compose a simple lullaby to sing baby Jesus to sleep?
- One image used in the Bible for 'new beginnings' is the desert blossoming into flower (see Isaiah 35:1-2). What other 'new start' pictures can you think of that are a way to describe the moment that Jesus is born (for example, turning over a new clean page in an exercise book, a candle being lit in a dark room, or the fresh smell of grass after a rainstorm)? Can you think of other poetic ways to describe this moment in the Christmas story?

There is a class activity in [Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#), published by Barnabas and based on a famous picture of the nativity: pages 117-8.

5. Classroom Drama Ideas

Play the video [Silent Night](#). Use this to introduce the following drama exercises:

- Create a [freeze-frame](#) of the Nativity based on any work of art that depicts this famous scene. Now bring this picture to life by deciding on movements and dialogue for all those 'on stage' (including the animals!) and working out an order in which everything happens.
- Develop an imaginary dialogue between two angels who have been looking on at this scene. Include curiosity, amazement and questions about what they see.

6. **A Christmas Carol**

The carol being played (in a jazzed-up version) as background music to the video [The birth of Jesus](#) is 'Silent Night'.

The story behind this carol and a simple play based on it are available in [Easy Ways to Christmas Plays Volume 2](#), published by Barnabas. Just the story is told in the colour book [Silent Night](#).

7. **Final reflection questions looking back on the session**

- Who is the purest person you know?
- What empty places would you like to see blossom with new life?
- Have you ever held a newborn baby? If so, what thoughts went through your mind?
- In the Christmas story, both Zechariah the priest and then the young girl Mary receive news about a baby. Zechariah ends up being struck dumb, whereas Mary bursts into song. Why do you think they reacted so differently?
- What is it that so many people find beautiful about the Christmas scene of Mary and her firstborn son?

8. **Further web links and useful Barnabas books**

- [Lesson outline on Mary the Mother of Jesus](#)
- [Assembly on Simplicity](#)

Useful Barnabas books

[Silent Night](#)

[Who's Hiding?](#)

[Countdown to Christmas with Timothy Bear](#)

[Joseph's Story of Christmas](#)

[Our Christmas Play](#)

[Emmanuel... assemblies for Christmas](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays 1](#)

[Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#)

[Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays Volume 2](#)

[Getting Ready for Christmas](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Puppets](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Cards & Crib](#)

[Christmas Make & Do](#)

[Have you seen Christmas?](#)

[The Road to Christmas Day](#)

[The Christmas Journey](#)

9. **Play Episode 5 again to finish off the lesson and as a taster to the next session**