



Introduction

This is part of a series of ideas for four sessions that you can use with Foundation in preparation for Christmas.

Preparation

You will need a copy of [My First Bible](#) or similar retelling to read to the children.

Setting up a focus table

- A coloured cloth: this could be purple or you could have a colour associated with Christmas, for example green.
- A clear bowl, water and four floating candles for the reflection; if this table is left out, use an unbreakable bowl.
- A nativity set. It is better if this is unbreakable so that the children can be free to touch the figures. For this part of the story, you will need the figures of Mary, Joseph and a donkey.
- Pictures with different styles of artwork that depict different stages of the Christmas story. Old Christmas cards can be very helpful.

Development

1. The story

Getting ready

Prepare a storybag (a simple drawstring bag). In it, put a fold-up bag, the donkey from the nativity set and some straw. Also place in the bag the figures of Mary and Joseph from the nativity set. Begin by bringing out the bag.

I wonder what our story will be today. Is there something in here that will give us some clues?

Bring out the following items one at a time, talking about each one, and then place them on the focus table. Build up a playful sense of mystery.

- The fold-up bag: talk about how you could use this if you were going away somewhere. What might you put in it? Talk about what they would want to take if they were going away.
- The donkey: why might someone need a donkey? Explain that a long time ago, there were no cars or trains or planes. When people went away, they had to walk or ride a donkey.
- Some straw: Where might we find some straw? Who uses straw? What do people use straw for?

So - a bag, a donkey and some straw. I wonder how these are part of our story.

Telling the story

Begin by telling the children that this story comes from the Bible. See [My First Bible](#), pages 138-141: 'The journey to Bethlehem' and 'No room at the Inn'.

When you have told the story, replace the story items on the table with the figures of Mary, Joseph and the donkey.

Talking together about the story

I wonder...

... what you like about the story.

... how Mary and Joseph felt when they were travelling.

... how they felt when they had to sleep with the animals.

... if something special is going to happen here.

2. Songs and rhymes

'The song of the donkey' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 38, to the tune 'Baa, baa black sheep'.

'The song of the innkeepers' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 39, to the tune 'Hokey, cokey'.

'The song of the Roman soldiers' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 44, to the tune 'The grand old duke of York'.

'The song of the innkeepers' in [Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#), page 45, to the tune 'Sing a song of sixpence'.

3. A time of reflection

Many churches light a series of candles during Advent. This is an adaptation of that tradition that you could use in your group.

Set up the bowl with the water and the four floating candles. Encourage the children to be still and quiet as you get ready. When everyone is ready, light two of the candles.

A possible prayer: *Dear God, thank you for keeping Mary and Joseph safe on their journey. Thank you that there was somewhere warm and dry for them to stay in Bethlehem. Amen*

Leave a moment of quiet before blowing out the candles and moving on to the next part of the session.

(Safety note: Be particularly careful when using lighted candles when young children are present. Never leave children unattended near candles that are lit or have recently been lit.)

4. A craft activity

Make a group picture of the journey to Bethlehem

Preparation: Create a roadway on the wall in your classroom. You could do this by cutting out a road shape from large pieces of paper, which you then place together on the wall, or you could join A3 pieces of paper together and draw on the roadway. At one end of the roadway draw or paint the



house in Bethlehem where Mary and Joseph finally stayed. Stick on pictures of Mary and Joseph (for example, from old Christmas cards or clipart). The roadway needs to be wide enough to take children's feet side by side.

Making footprints

The messy option: This needn't be as daunting as it sounds. Cover the floor area with protective cloths or paper. Put some ready-mix paint on to trays or large paper plates. Then place thin washing-up sponge squares on the paint and allow the sponge to absorb some of the paint. You will also need paper on which to make the footprints, and a bowl of warm water and paper towels.

Set up a sequence so that children step on to the paint, then on to the paper then into the bowl of water to have their feet washed. Involve classroom assistants or parent helpers to support the children so they don't slip. Some children may not like this so have the alternative ready. When the footprints are dry, cut them out and stick them on the roadway as if going towards Bethlehem.

The less messy option: Ask children to take off their shoes and socks, and then ask adults to draw around the children's feet. Cut them out and stick on to the roadway.

Write the names of the children on their footprints.