

# SIMPLE CHRISTMAS: FAMILY ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE JESUS' BIRTH

BY KRISTI DELP



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First Edition

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# INTRODUCTION

The Christmas season can become a marathon of events. The media inundates us with sales, Santa, parades, and programs. We rush to shop and buy gifts for our children that will likely not be remembered in six months. In the hubbub we are left frazzled, and the celebration of Jesus' quiet birth is left in the wake. The true meaning of Christmas is lost and the focus of Jesus' birth becomes blurred.

The purpose of this book is to provide your family with activities that focus on Jesus. It is an invitation to slow down, play, paint, and pretend as your family explores the true meaning of Christmas. This eBook contains open-ended activities that connect to the Christmas story in the Bible, and then reminds us to think of others as Jesus did.

This book is not meant to further overwhelm or create stress. Not every activity needs to be completed. Nor does an activity need to be completed every day. Choose the ones that will be most enjoyable for your family. With each activity there are Connection Points to discuss or experience the story personally. Links to the internet are underlined and appear in blue.



# TIPS FOR YOUR HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE

## **1. Provide supervision at all times**

It is the grown-up's job to determine if an activity is age appropriate for the child. Every child's abilities and needs are different. The purpose of this book is to do activities with children to support their spiritual, emotional, and physical development.

## **2. Know your child.**

You are your child's first and best teacher! Lengthy devotions and scripts are not part of this book. There are connection prompts and questions. Our assumption is that you will take the concepts and tailor them to meet your child's needs, interests, and tweak them so that the activity will support their personal growth.

## **3. It is about the conversation not the craft.**

Arts and crafts may not be your thing. If not, remember it is about the connection and conversation you have with your child. If you want to focus on the scripture and connection points, that is fine.

## **4. Relax and enjoy the fun!**

These activities are designed to be open ended and child directed. Provide the materials, get your child started, then follow their lead. This means that the product will not be perfect. The colors may be weird and there may be globs of glue, but it is their project. Allow your children to be little. Join them where they are. Focus on the process. Enjoy the fun.

## **5. Don't stress over the mess.**

There was a time that I avoided doing messy activities with my girls because of the mess. However, I have learned a few tips to contain supplies and set boundaries.

Use a large baking sheet or a plastic serving tray from the dollar store as a work space. The raised edge will help keep materials contained.

Place a vinyl tablecloth on the floor or table to help with clean up. I use one that is 80

inches in length, then fold it in half with the vinyl side out. This keeps dirt and lint from sticking to the cloth back. It creates a play space with a natural boundary that contains materials and helps with clean up.

### **5. Let them help with set up and clean up.**

From the beginning, have your children help with clean up. It will likely be easier to do this yourself, but having them help teaches them to take responsibility for their projects and mess. It teaches them life skills and responsibility.

### **6. Glitter glue!**

Glitter glue is the secret weapon of all Christmas sparkles. Traditional glitter is fun, but in my opinion, it is the winter virus of crafting. Once it is in the house it is nearly impossible to contain and is difficult to clean-up. Glitter glue provides the sparkle, but is much easier to control. It can be squirted in streams, smudged with fingers, mixed in paint, or painted on with a brush.

# DEFINE YOUR CHRISTMAS

To help your family define what is important for the holiday season, complete the following questions for yourself. Then if your children are old enough, discuss with them what they enjoy and want to accomplish this season as well.

## **Questions for grown-ups:**

What is your favorite childhood Christmas memory?

What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

What is your favorite memory as a family?

What do you want the focus of your holiday season to be?

What do you like least about Christmas?

## **Sometimes you have to say “no” to the good to focus on the great.**

What are you going to say “no” to?

What are you going to say “yes” to?

## **Questions for the children:**

What is your favorite Christmas memory?

What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

What do you like least about Christmas?

What activities do you want to do?

## **As a family we will celebrate Christmas by:**

# A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse

## ISAIAH 11:1-3

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:1-10 is just one of many Old Testament prophecies that tell of Jesus' coming. As part of your child's biblical education it is important to connect the historical record of the Old Testament to the description of His birth in the New Testament.

The Jesse Tree has been used since Medieval times to follow the story and shadow of Jesus from creation in Genesis to His birth in the New Testament. In recent years it has been used as an Advent Calendar. Typically, an ornament that represents an Old Testament event with a connection to Christ is added daily. Ann Voskamp's book **Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas** is a family devotional guide that leads a family through this study.

The following activity is an opportunity for your family to reflect on your journey with Jesus, to discuss, and recognize His impact on each member of your family.

## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Our Family's Jesse Tree - 9



# OUR FAMILY'S JESSE TREE

*The purpose of creating your family's Jesse Tree is to reflect, identify, and record how Jesus has impacted your past and your daily life with your family.*



## MATERIALS

- Tree branches
- A container to hold the branches such as a coffee can, small bucket, or a large vase
- Rocks, sand, marbles, or another medium to weigh down the container
- Cardstock or scrapbooking paper that is the color of your choice
- Scissors or large scrapbooking punches with the shape or your choice
- A small hole punch
- Ribbon or string

Optional: Cookie cutters can be used as a pattern for the ornaments.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Place the weight into the container for stabilization.
2. Gather your tree branches, place them in the container.
3. Create paper ornaments by using the large hole punches.
4. Another option is to create ornaments by placing a cookie cutter onto cardstock. Trace around it with a pencil. Cut out the shape to make the ornament.
5. Use the small hole punch to make a hole in the paper ornament for the ribbon or string.
6. Thread the string or ribbon through the hole and tie a knot to make a hanger.
7. Write on the ornaments or draw pictures describing how Jesus has worked in the life of each family member, what they are grateful for, or how He cares for the family.

Options: Each family member may have their own ornament shape or color. This discussion could take place all at once and the tree can be completely decorated or ornaments can be added daily leading up to Christmas.

## CONNECTIONS

Questions to reflect on Jesus' impact on our daily life:

- ★ What are you thankful for?
- ★ How has Jesus protected you?
- ★ How has Jesus taken care of you?

# The Nativity

LUKE 2:4-7

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Block Nativity Set - 11

Tinsel Time Nativity - 12

# BLOCK NATIVITY SET

Even our littlest family members can learn about the story of Jesus' birth through block play. The block nativity is open-ended play that introduces the story to the youngest, while older children can use the pieces to reenact the story.



## MATERIALS

- Blocks
- [Nativity stickers](#)
- Foam brush
- Mod Podge or glue

## DIRECTIONS

1. Place the stickers on the blocks.
2. To secure the stickers, brush on two thin coats of Mod Podge.
3. Allow the Mod Podge to dry completely between coats. Add additional coats if needed to secure the edges of the stickers.
4. Play!

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ For younger children, introduce them to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
- ★ It is okay for the children to stack and build with the blocks in free play.
- ★ Children who are three years old and up can begin to retell the story.
- ★ How do you think you would feel if you were any one of the characters of this story?
- ★ How did God help each one of the characters get through their challenges and learn to trust Him?

## TINSEL TIME NATIVITY

Searching through tinsel to find the blocks and bells is just plain fun. It supports fine motor development and is an excellent sensory activity. Sensory play is relaxing. Choose ingredients that are safe and appropriate for your child. This is just one example of a sensory box.



### MATERIALS

Choose materials that are safe for your child.  
This box contains:

- 1 handful of silver tinsel
- Green crinkled gift bag paper
- Nativity Blocks - shown on page 11
- Rounded cocktail tongs
- Giant jingle bells
- Shallow tub or box

Options for the sensory box are: rice, beads, cotton balls, pompoms, pine cones, blocks, pasta, foam shapes, tongs, and scoops.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Place the nativity box and sensory materials into a tub.
2. Appetizer tongs are a fine motor component that makes the search more fun.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ While playing with your child talk about the characters of the story.
- ★ When a character is found discuss their role in the Christmas story.
- ★ Have your children search for Jesus, and the other characters and animals of the story.
- ★ Talk about the people in the story as you play.

# SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS

LUKE 2:8-10

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

What an unlikely pairing. God commissioned his beautiful and fierce heavenly hosts to share the news of His Son's birth with the lowly, smelly shepherds. Such a significant appointment demonstrated that Jesus was placed on earth for everyone.

## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Coffee Filter Sheep - 14

A Sweet Angel - 15

# COFFEE FILTER SHEEP

This activity can be a team project for younger and older children. Your littles may enjoy crumpling the coffee filters and tearing apart the cotton balls. Older children can cut out the face and add the eyes.



## MATERIALS

- Small white paper plate
- 5 or 6 coffee filters
- 8-10 large cotton balls
- White school glue
- Black construction paper
- 2 wiggly eyes
- Pencil or chalk

Option: To create a piece that will hang on the refrigerator, add a large, heavy duty magnet to the back with hot glue. It makes a cute gift!

## DIRECTIONS

1. Thoroughly crumple the coffee filters and tear apart the cotton balls. Set them aside.
2. Put a dollop of glue about the size of dime in the center of the paper plate and place a coffee filter on top of it. Continue to layer the glue and coffee filters so that the glue is in the center and the edges of the coffee filters are free and fluffy.
3. Glue the cotton to the edges of the top coffee filter.
4. Draw the sheep's face on the black construction paper and cut it out. It is basically one large oval with two flat ovals for ears.
5. Glue the sheep face on to the center coffee filters.
6. Fluff the cotton around the face.
7. Glue the wiggly eyes on to the face.
8. Let it dry completely.

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ Watch this [video of shepherds and their sheep](#).
- ★ What did the shepherds do to take care of the sheep?
- ★ How did the sheep respond to their shepherds?
- ★ Jesus is our good shepherd. How does He take care of us?
- ★ Visit a local farm or petting zoo to experience and interact with sheep. Talk to the children about what they see, smell, hear, and feel.



## A SWEET ANGEL

This delightful little angel is an easy and sparkling project. It is especially exciting for those who love glitter. The “Starry Night” artwork on page thirty-three makes a fun background for it.



### MATERIALS

- 1 small paper plate
- 1 1.5-inch paper circle
- Glue stick
- [Glitter glue](#)
- Markers
- Scissors
- Paint brush

### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut a triangle from the paper plate.
2. Turn the triangle around so the curved part is on the bottom. Use the gluestick to glue it approximately 1 inch below the center of the cut out to create the body of the angel.
3. Use the markers to draw a face and hair on paper circle.
4. Glue the circle above the point of the triangle to make the head of the angel.
5. Use glitter glue to decorate the angel. The glue can be painted on with a paint brush or squeezed out of the container to make designs on the wings and body as well as create a halo.
6. Set the angel aside to dry.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ How did the shepherds feel when they saw the angels? Why?
- ★ Pretend to be sheperds and angels and tell their story.
- ★ Use the Nativity Blocks on page 11 to retell this part of the nativity story.

# THE STAR

## MATTHEW 2:9, 10

9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

## NUMBERS 24:17

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.



## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Christmas Star Sensory Bottle - 17

Family Star Art - 18

The Star: An Art Bar - 19

Star Bright Candle Holders - 20



# CHRISTMAS STAR SENSORY BOTTLE

This sensory bottle is perfect for babies and toddlers. It provides an interactive sensory experience and is calming for all ages. Adding a magnetic wand adds a science component to the play. Keep them in the car for a screen free activity during holiday travel too.



## MATERIALS

- Clean, empty clear plastic water bottles, a Voss water bottle is shown
- 3 parts water (For example: 3/4 cup)
- 1 part baby oil (For example: 1/4 cup)
- [Star confetti](#) or the confetti of your choice
- Silver jingle bells
- Your favorite super glue.
- Funnel

Options are endless: glitter, water beads, sequins, and more. Use ingredients your child will enjoy!

## DIRECTIONS

1. Use the funnel to pour the confetti into bottle,
2. Add jingle bells, glitter, sequins, or the items of your choice.
3. Add the baby oil. (The amount of baby oil and water will vary depending on the size of the bottle.)
4. Top off the bottle with water.
5. Seal the lid with the glue of your choice.

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ What do you think the Magi talked about as they walked along following the star?
- ★ What are shining or glittery things that take our attention and distract us from celebrating and serving Jesus?

# FAMILY STAR ART

The objective of this activity is to spend time together and make a fun memory. In the process, you are creating the Christmas Star on canvas or paper. This is an open-ended, process art activity. Don't get caught up in exactly what a star should look like or what color it should be. Let your children lead the process. This star art also makes a great gift for grandparents too.



## MATERIALS

- Canvas, canvas panel or cardstock
- Painters tape
- Washable finger or tempera paint
- Glitter glue
- Paint brushes

Tip: Limiting the choice of paint colors will help prevent the colors from turning brown. We used blue and purple with a squirt of glitter glue for sparkle.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Draw a star and then tape it the painters tape. If you need [help with drawing a star, click here.](#)
2. Press the tape down on to the canvas making sure all of the edges are secure.
3. To create sparkling paint, squirt some glitter glue into the paint and stir.
4. Paint together! Have fun.
5. Let the paint dry completely.
6. Slowly pull the tape off of the canvas.
7. Enjoy!

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ How did the Magi use the star in the Christmas story?
- ★ Do you think they kept walking during cloudy nights?
- ★ How does God guide us in our daily life?

## THE STAR: AN ART BAR

Creating stars using a variety of materials is a fully open-ended activity. Consider the age and fine motor skills of your children to determine the materials. If they are older, they will be able to manage smaller pieces and a larger variety of materials.



### MATERIALS

Use any of the following combination of the following materials and art supplies:

- Various stars from the craft store: [wooden](#), paper, cardboard, cardstock
- Cardstock to make your own stars
- [Glitter glue](#), [sequins](#), [spangles](#)
- Markers
- Paint and paint brushes
- Glue or mod podge
- Hole punch, scissors
- String, yarn, ribbon, or large magnets
- Baby wipes

### DIRECTIONS

1. Place art supplies into accessible containers.
2. If needed, punch holes into the stars with the hole punch.
3. Create! Using glue or Mod Podge to decorate the stars with the art supplies.
4. Glue large magnets to the back if you want the stars to hang on the refrigerator.
5. If needed, string ribbon through the hole and tie to create a hanger for a tree or bunting.
6. Have wipes on hand to wipe sticky fingers in the process.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ Sometimes we call a special person in our lives a "star". What makes them a star?
- ★ Do you have a person that is a "star" in your life? Why do you "follow" them?
- ★ If you were going to name your ornament after someone or some special event in your life, what would you call it?

## STAR BRIGHT CANDLE HOLDERS

This is a super easy gift your child can make. Since the candle holders are made of glass this craft is more appropriate for older children.



### MATERIALS

- Votive candle holders
- Star stickers or stickers of choice, they can be metallic or colorful
- A small battery powered candle

### DIRECTIONS

1. Place stickers of your child's choice on the votive,
2. Put the candle in the holder.
3. Wipe away the fingerprints.
4. Wrap the gift.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ To help your child consider the point of view of others, discuss what stickers the person receiving the gift would enjoy.
- ★ Turn on the candle, turn off all of the lights, and notice how much light one small light can provide.
- ★ How can we help and encourage others so they see Jesus' light? Discuss how even one person can make a difference in the world.

# GIFTS FROM THE MAGI

## MATTHEW 2:9-11

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to baby Jesus. Gold is readily available and we usually have no difficulty envisioning what that gift may have looked like. It is more difficult to imagine how frankincense and myrrh were presented to Jesus. They were, and still are, expensive oils that could have been sold to support the family or used to care for baby Jesus.

Through the use of essential oils, we can experience frankincense and myrrh today. The oils used in the following activities were obtained from Young Living. If the cost of the oil is prohibitive, get together with friends and share a bottle as you will only need a few drops. Essential oils can also be purchased in smaller quantities at local health stores and apothecaries.

## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

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## MYRRH PLAY DOUGH

This play dough recipe is baby soft and smooth. The myrrh has a delicate woody aroma that is gentle and not overpowering. It is a wonderful way to experience myrrh.



### MATERIALS

- ❑ 1 cup of unscented hair conditioner (“Free and Clear” conditioner can be found at Walgreens.)
- ❑ 2 cups of cornstarch plus 1 extra cup (The amount of cornstarch needed varies from brand to brand.)
- ❑ Several drops of [myrrh essential oil](#)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Stir the drops of myrrh essential oil into the hair conditioner.
2. Sift 1 cup of cornstarch into the hair conditioner and stir.
3. Sift small amounts of additional cornstarch into the mixture until it is very thick.
4. Pour it onto a surface and complete the mixing process by kneading the dough.
5. If needed, add additional cornstarch in small amounts until the mixture forms into a ball.
6. Play and experience the delicate aroma of myrrh!
7. Store in an air tight container not a plastic bag.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ As the children play, help them notice the softness of the play dough and the scent of the oil.
- ★ The gifts the Magi brought were expensive. However, the Magi were wealthy and the items were easily accessible to them. They provided gifts that Jesus’ family would not have access to, but would be of great value to them.
- ★ What do you have easy access to, that Jesus needs, and could use to serve others?

# FRANKINCENSE DIFFUSER ORNAMENT

Frankincense can be found as an essential oil. It is extracted from the resin of olibanum trees. It promotes relaxation and tranquility, healthy skin, stress relief. Enjoy making and using this little diffuser ornament to experience the aroma of frankincense in your home.



## MATERIALS

- [Terra Cotta Clay by Crayola](#)
- Christmas cookie cutters
- Toothpick
- Objects that create texture such as a large stamp, a plastic or steel pot scrubber
- Decorative ribbon or string for hanging
- [Frankincense essential oil](#)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Manipulate the clay until it is softened then roll it out to approximately an 1/8 of an inch thick.
2. Cut the clay with the cookie cutter.
3. Add texture by gently pressing a stamp or pot scrubber into the surface of the clay.
4. Use the toothpick to make a hole in the ornament for the ribbon or string.
5. Follow the clay's directions for drying until it is completely dry.
6. Place ribbon or string for hanging into the hole and tie.
7. Add a drop or two of frankincense to the ornament.
8. Hang where your family will enjoy the aroma of frankincense.

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ Describe that frankincense could have been sold to support the family. It could have been used for the health needs of baby Jesus and the family.
- ★ What kind of stress do you think Joseph and Mary experienced?
- ★ What products do we use today to take care of our babies?
- ★ What are some of your favorite Christmas aromas?

## PART 1: A GIFT OF HOT CHOCOLATE

The magi shared gifts with Jesus. We can share a gift with those we love too. Hot chocolate mix makes a tasty treat and is a cozy drink to have after an evening of Christmas caroling. The recipe can be personalized to meet the unique tastes of your friends and family.

Depending on the age of your children, they can help with this project by measuring ingredients, filling the jars, and creating the lids. They can help decide who should be on the gift list.



### MATERIALS

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
  - 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch process
  - 2 1/2 cups nonfat dry milk powder
  - 3/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1 tsp vanilla
  - 6 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped fine
  - Wide mouth ball jars, lids, and rings
- Flavor options:
- Mint - replace the unsweetened chocolate with chopped Andes mints
  - Aztec - add an 1/8 teaspoon of cayenne pepper
  - Mexican - add 1 teaspoon of cinnamon

### DIRECTIONS

1. Sift the dry ingredients together.
2. Place all the ingredients into a food processor and pulse for 30 to 60 seconds.
3. Store in an air tight container for no more than 6 weeks.
4. To make one cup of hot chocolate place 2 heaping tablespoons into a cup, add hot water and stir.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ What flavors do we want to create and share with our friends?
- ★ Who do you want to give hot chocolate to? Why?
- ★ What is your favorite gift? Why?
- ★ What do you do when you receive a gift that you really don't like?



## PART 2: LET'S WRAP IT UP

Even a two year old can help make this cute packaging for the "Gift of Hot Chocolate."



### MATERIALS

- Wide mouth Ball jars with flats and rings
- Cardstock or paper
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Craft string or ribbon

### DIRECTIONS

1. Pour the hot chocolate mix into the jar.
2. Take a lid flat, place it on the paper and trace a circle on to the paper.
3. Cut out the circle.
4. Have your children decorate the circle by drawing pictures, writing words of encouragement, the name of the receiver, or a Christmas bible verse.
5. Place it on top of the flat and screw the ring into place to secure the flat and picture.
6. Use ribbon or string to add a tag with directions for a single serving and shelf life.
7. Give it to a friend or family member.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ How did God "wrap up" his best Christmas gift to us?
- ★ What Christmas symbol best represents Jesus to you?
- ★ What do you want the person to think about when they first see the jar?

# THE BEST CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS EVER

Use your Christmas and family photographs to make the best Christmas ornaments ever. :) These ornaments preserve memories and are delightful gifts too.



## MATERIALS

- Photographs of past Christmas events
- [Wooden tags](#), metal tags, cardboard labels, or other shapes that have pre-cut holes. All found at your local craft store.
- Mod Podge
- Ribbon, yarn, or string for hanging
- Paint (optional)

To make these ornaments we used a blank metal tag, a wooden [chalkboard tag](#), and then we painted a cardboard ornament white.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Decide if you want the tags to be natural or painted.
2. If painting, paint them the color of your choice and let them dry.
3. Cut the photos slightly smaller than the ornament so the ornament frames the photograph.
4. Use Mod Podge according to the directions to adhere the photo to the ornament.
5. Let the ornament dry.
6. Place a ribbon through the hole for hanging.

## CONNECTIONS

- ★ What is your favorite Christmas memory of our family?
- ★ Why is this Christmas memory special?
- ★ What special Christmas memory do you want to make this year?

# LESSONS FROM THE CANDY CANE

There are many stories about the history of the candy cane. One story tells that the candy cane first started as a candy stick created in Germany in 1670. A choirmaster became concerned that the children would struggle to sit still during the Christmas Crèche on Christmas Eve. He requested that a local candy maker make a sweet stick for them to have during the program. Documentation has been found that shows they were first used to celebrate Christmas in 1847. (Ref: [candyhistory.net](http://candyhistory.net))

Over the generations we have used the candy cane to teach children about Jesus birth. The hook reminds us of the shepherds who visited Jesus in the stable first. The white represents Jesus' purity and sinless life. The red stripe reminds us of His blood that was shed on the cross. We can turn the candy cane upside down to become the J in Jesus.

A wonderful children's board book that describes the candy cane is **J is for Jesus: The Sweetest Story Ever Told** by Crystal Bowman.

## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Simple Cereal Candy Cane - 28

Beaded Candy Cane - 28

Candy Cane Heart Ornament - 30

## SIMPLE CEREAL CANDY CANES

The next two candy cane crafts are perfect for keeping the kids busy when you have a few things to do. They support fine motor development. Math and language skills are encouraged as your child explores patterns, color, counting and sorting.



### MATERIALS

- The book: **J is for Jesus: The Sweetest Story Ever Told** by Crystal Bowman
- O shaped cereal – Cheerios, Fruit Loops, Apple Jacks
- Pipe cleaners (chenille stems)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Twist a small circle onto the end of the stem to keep the cereal from falling off.
2. Have your child string the cereal onto the stem leaving about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of stem open.
3. Twist the remaining portion of the stem to secure the cereal.
4. Curve the stem so that it shaped like a candy cane.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ The hook reminds us of the shepherds that visited Jesus in the stable.
- ★ Turn the the cane upside down and the J is for Jesus.
- ★ How did the shepherds use the “Shepherd’s Hook”?
- ★ Like the shepherds protected their sheep, how does Jesus protect us?

## BEADED CANDY CANES

Older children can let their creativity loose by using a variety of beads, colors, and patterns as they create these beaded canes. The candy canes can be hung on the tree, used in decorations, or as gift toppers.



### MATERIALS

- The book: **J is for Jesus: The Sweetest Story Ever Told** by Crystal Bowman
- Red, white, and clear pony beads or colors of your choice
- Pipe cleaners (chenille stems)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Twist a small circle onto the end of the stem to keep the beads from falling off.
2. Have your child string the beads onto the stem allowing about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of stem free.
3. Twist the remaining portion of the stem to secure the beads.
4. Hang them on the Christmas tree, give them away or use as a gift topper.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ The hook represents the shepherds that visited Jesus in the stable.
- ★ Turn the the cane upside down and the J is for Jesus.
- ★ How did the shepherds use the "Shepherd's Hook"?
- ★ How does Jesus protect us?

## HEART CANDY CANE ORNAMENTS

Candy cane heart ornaments are cheerful and fun! It requires using the oven and hot candy. Adult supervision and assistance is needed at all times since it requires the use of an oven and hot candy.



### MATERIALS

- Small candy canes
- Baking sheet
- Parchment paper or silicone baking mat
- Yarn, ribbon, or decorative string for hanging
- Baking gloves or oven mitts

### DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-heat oven to 275 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Have the children unwrap the candy.
3. Place parchment paper or a silicone baking mat onto a baking sheet.
4. Place the candy canes next to each other to form the shape of a heart. Be sure that the ends are touching.
5. Adults place the baking sheet into the oven for 3 to 4 minutes.
6. Adults remove the candy canes from the oven and allow them to cool completely.
7. Remove from the cooled candy from baking mat.
8. Have the children add ribbon or decorative string to make a hanger.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ What do you think is the “sweetest thing” about the Christmas story?
- ★ What about the Christmas story makes you think, “Wow. That is so good!?”

# CHRISTMAS CAROL CONNECTIONS

Christmas carols have been sung for centuries to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Teaching traditional carols to children is another medium to teach them about Jesus birth. Music activates another part of the cerebral cortex and memory. A memory of a song can last a lifetime. Let us teach our children about Jesus through song.



## ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION

Baby Jesus "Away in the Manger" - 32

A Starry "Silent Night" - 33

## BABY JESUS - "AWAY IN A MANGER"

"Away in the Manger" is one of the sweetest carols sung during the nativity scene of a children's Christmas program. [A video with lyrics and music can be found here.](#) We are making sweet baby Jesus in a manger.



### MATERIALS

- Brown paper lunch bag
- White newborn sock
- Baby washcloth
- Small disposable diaper or a natural color of felt (A 6x6 square of natural felt was used in the example.)
- Rubber band
- Fine line sharpie
- Scissors

### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the top off the lunch bag leaving the bottom about 4 inches deep.
2. On the remaining bottom of the sack, fold the top down to create a rim. The bottom of the bag is the manger.
3. Cut the top of the bag into narrow strips to make the hay for the manger. Place the strips into the manger.
4. Roll the diaper into a tight roll and wrap the rubber band around it to hold it in place. If you are using piece of felt or cloth, fold it so that is the width of the paper bag, roll it up and secure it with a rubber band. This is the baby's body.
5. Roll the top of the newborn sock down and place it on end of the diaper (baby) for a hat. (Jesus probably didn't have a hat, but we are taking some creative license.)
6. Use the baby washcloth as a blanket to swaddle the lower half of the diaper or baby's body.
7. With the sharpie draw two half circles to make simple sleeping eyes.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ Sing the song "Away in the Manger" and read Luke 2:4-7
- ★ Place the baby in the manger. Describe that the manger was a container for the animals food. Have the children consider the thought of putting a baby in a food trough for animals.



## A STARRY SILENT NIGHT

“Silent Night” was written in 1876 by Josef Mohr and Franz Gruber. It too is sung during Christmas pagents and when caroling. A video with the [lyrics and music for Silent Night can be found here.](#)



### MATERIALS

- White construction paper or other heavy paper
- Blue and purple paint
- Silver glitter glue
- Paint brushes
- Star confetti
- Paper plate

### DIRECTIONS

1. Squirt one part paint and one part glitter glue onto the paper plate.
2. Stir them together.
3. Generously paint the paper.
4. Sprinkle the star confetti onto the paint and press into the paint.
5. Allow the painting to dry.

### CONNECTIONS

- ★ Sing the song “Silent Night” and read Luke 2:8-15
- ★ Why do you think the Shepherds “quaked” at the sight of the angels?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kristi Delp is married to Doug, and has two daughters and two son-in-laws. She loves being Mimi to Ruby, Zeke, and Nora. She loves teaching children about life and Jesus in every day moments.

Kristi has a Master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education and has worked in the field of education serving families for 20 years as a developmental specialist and service coordinator. She currently works full time as a parent educator for Parents as Teachers. For fun she writes and creates the blog [Creative Connections for Kids](#).

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