

Bible background

Luke 2:8-20.

Aim of lesson

To show that God wants everyone to know and be glad that his Son has been born.

Preparation required

Get to know the rhyme well. Place a copy where you can see the rhyme and the children at the same time.

Prepare your activity sheet picture of Bethlehem. Young infants will need the doors on the activity sheets cut out for them. You may prefer to do this before class.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Tell the class that you are going to tell them about something that happened on the night Jesus was born. Ask them to join in by doing all the actions you do. Teach them the rhyme.
2. Ask questions about what they have learnt from the rhyme e.g. 'Can you remember what the shepherds were doing?' Use this opportunity to fill out the story with questions such as 'How do you think the shepherds felt when they saw the angel?' Mention that the baby would be found in a manger and explain what a manger is.
3. You may like to go through the rhyme again to see who can remember it.
4. Show the children your picture of Bethlehem. Ask them if they can see where the shepherds had been caring for their sheep, and where the shepherds would run into the town. Ask in which place they think the shepherds will find the baby - in the rich man's house/palace, in the inn or in the stable. Allow the children to open the doors and see if they are right. Teach that God could have chosen a palace for his Son to be born in, but God does not think being rich is at all important.
5. Ask the children to colour their own picture of Bethlehem, taping the appropriate pictures behind each of the three doors.

Alternative activities

1. As a group, or individually, make a collage picture of the scene on the hillside. Use a black background if possible. Pre-cut shapes for younger children.
2. Role play: Dress up and act out the story or if you have limited space, make a model on the table with modelling clay, toy sheep and play figures.
3. If you have a sand tray, use damp sand to sculpt a hillside add a twig fire and a sheep fold made of pebbles or sticks. With sand, blocks or Lego, build some houses to represent Bethlehem and re-tell the story using toy sheep and play figures.

Now something harder

If your children find this exercise difficult you could provide them with initial letters or a list of the words to match up.

Relevance to the children's lives

Ask the children why they think God wanted the shepherds to know that his Son had been born. Bring out that he wanted them to know and be happy as he himself was happy that his Son had been born, and that he wants us to know and be happy.

Prayer

Ask what prayer they think the shepherds might have said after seeing the baby Jesus.

Verse

'The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news.'" Luke 2:10.

Rhyme

This is the hillside

This is a rhyme in the style of 'The House That Jack Built' in that it builds up adding a line at a time. It also has hand actions which continue as the rhyme builds up, though only the new action is given for each verse below.

Actions

- v.1 This is the hillside that's not very steep (*touch fingertips forming a hill*)
- v.2 These are the shepherds who are minding their sheep (*hold up fingers*)
Out on the hillside that's not very steep.
- v.3 This is the light that shone very bright (*both hands, fingers spread wide*)
Over the shepherds who are minding their sheep
Out on the hillside that's not very steep.
- v.4 This is the angel who came in the night (*hold up index finger*)
Surrounded by light that shone very bright
Over the shepherds who are minding their sheep
Out on the hillside that's not very steep.
- v.5 This is the place where the baby lay (*cradle arms*)
Said the angel who came in the night
Surrounded by light that shone very bright
Over the shepherds who are minding their sheep
Out on the hillside that's not very steep.
- v.6 This is how they ran all the way (*run with fingers*)
To see the place where the baby lay,
Told by the angel who came in the night
Surrounded by light that shone very bright
Over the shepherds who are minding their sheep
Out on the hillside that's not very steep.