

The Shepherds and Angels

The focus of this lesson is on the shepherds and angels and why God choose to make this special announcement in this particular way to these particular people.

Start the lesson by reading **Luke 2:1-20**. Have the children follow along in their own bibles if they are able.

Start a dialogue about shepherds. Ask questions and allow students to answer.

- **What is the job of a shepherd?**
 - *A person who tends, herds, feeds, or guards herds of sheep. (Discuss what this would look like: moving sheep from field to field to allow them to eat fresh grass, guiding them, finding sheep that wander off, bringing them in close at night to protect them, keeping watch at night.)*
- **What simple tool do shepherds use to help guide and protect their sheep?**
 - *A shepherd's crook – this strong multi-purpose stick can be used for balance, examining dangerous undergrowth and for defense against attack by predators.*
- **Shepherd kept their sheep out in pastures in the wilderness. What animals do you think the shepherds needed to protect their sheep from?**
 - *Wolves, panthers, hyenas, lions (also robbers that might come and try and steal their sheep)*
- **Can you think of any other shepherds in the Old Testament?**
 - *Abel, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, Joseph, David, Abraham (Interesting to note: the first six are all types of Christ and Abraham is a type of God the Father.)*
- **Do you think shepherding was a job that needed a lot of education? Or was it a simple job that didn't require much skill?**
 - *Shepherding was an easy job because it was so simple. A shepherd did not need to be educated or have any kind of schooling to learn the skill of shepherding. Children often helped in the field because they could easily do this job.*
- **Even though shepherds did not have to have much education, do you think that they could still study what the scriptures and prophets said about the coming of God's son?**
 - *Yes!! They didn't need to be a religious leader or spend time in a special school to know what God had promised the people of Israel. They were waiting and watching for their Savior, just as God had promised!*
- **Can you think of one more person in the Bible that called himself a shepherd, the "good shepherd"?**
 - *Jesus! John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Now move on to questions about angels...

- **What was a main job of angels?**
 - *They were messengers of God. When an angel delivered God's message it was just like hearing God speak directly to you!*
- **So, if you saw and heard an angel speaking to you – do you think it would be something very important?**
 - *Yes!*
- **Let's think about what timeframe this message was delivered. Was the passage of scripture we just read from the Old Testament or the New Testament?**
 - *New. Luke is one of the books at the beginning of the New Testament.*
- **Do you know what is the last book of the Old Testament?**
 - *The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi. He was the last messenger of the Lord that God sent to his people in the Old Testament times.*
- **After delivering his message to Israel through Malachi, God did not speak to his people for a long time. Can you guess how many years went by before God spoke to his people again?**
 - *400 years! The angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and Mary and then angels appeared to a group of shepherds right after Jesus was born. This is the first time that people on earth had seen an angel and heard a message from God in 400 years!*
- **So, when the angels appeared to the shepherds do you think it was a BIG deal?**
 - *Yes!*
- **Not only did the angels appear...but what else does verse 9 from our passage say?**
 - *"and the glory of the Lord shone around them" This is the same glory that was with Adam and Eve in the garden, the same glory that passed by Moses while he was in the cleft of rock, the same glory that came into the tabernacle and led the children of Israel in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and the same glory that filled the temple that Solomon built. After the glory left the temple it didn't come back to earth until the angels came to the shepherds. So, the shepherds saw the angels AND the glory of the Lord...this was a very big deal!*
- **Why do you think the angels told the shepherds not to be afraid? Would you be afraid if you saw an angel surrounded by the glory of the Lord?**
 - *Shepherds were used to looking at the dark night sky full of stars...it would be quite different to all of a sudden see angels and the glory of the Lord. I would imagine the angels and glory lit up the sky so much they might have had to shield their eyes because of the brightness of God's glory.*

- **What was the message that the angels brought?**
 - *Read Luke 2:10-14*
- **Did the shepherds understand the message? How do you know?**
 - *Yes! We know they understood because the announcement was made that in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, had been born. The shepherds could of said, "Oh that's nice" and stayed in their field like any other normal night. But they knew this was such an important announcement, something that they had been waiting for - the promise of God's Son coming to earth! Read what the shepherd did: Luke 2:15-20.*

In conclusion, God choose to make this great, monumental announcement to lowly shepherds. He chose to send angels and His glory to a quiet field in the wilderness after 400 years of not sending any messages to his people. The announcement that God's son had been born was a very exciting and long awaited announcement for those people who believed God and His promises. This is why the shepherds went with "haste" to find the baby born the Son of God. After visiting Jesus, they returned to their field and shared this good news with others. The Bible says they returned to their fields "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen". What an exciting time this must have been!

Shepherds in the Field Craft

Supplies:

- Green Plates
- Green Crinkle Cut Paper for "grass"
- Shepherd/Sheep/Angel template
- Glue Stick and White School Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Toilet paper tubes (4 per child – with one tube cut in half for each sheep)

Glue grass around the rim of the plate. (The center should not have grass so the figures can stand on a flat surface.)

Color shepherd, sheep and angel.

Cut out each figure and glue around toilet paper tubes. (Angel can be glue toward the top of a tube, so it will appear to be in the air.)

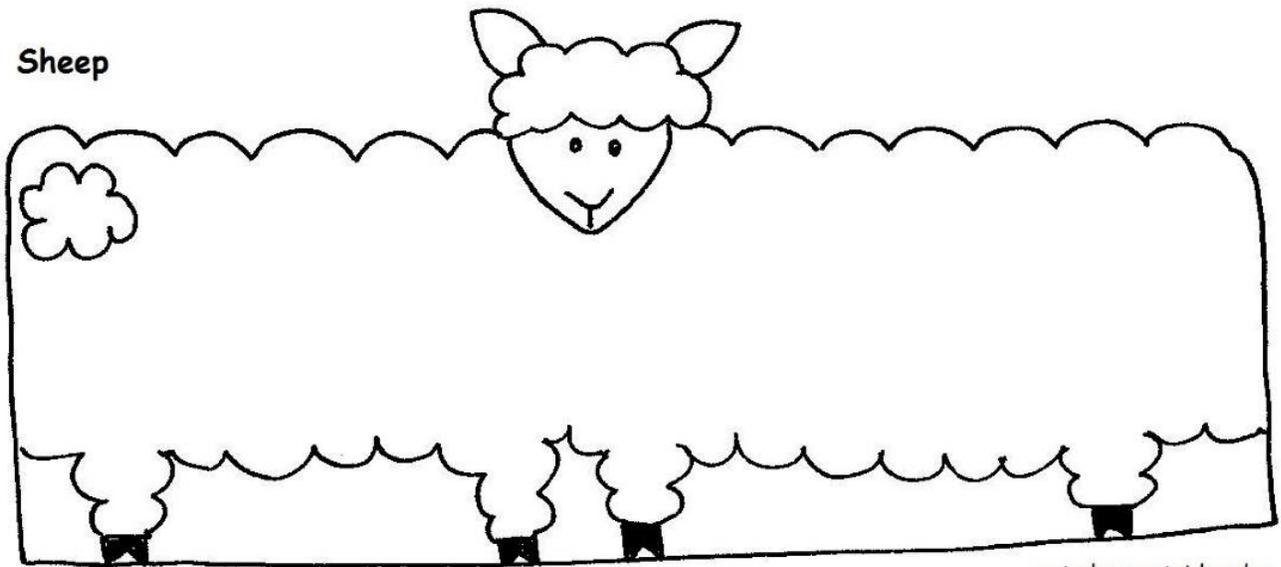
Place figures on plate to create the scene.



Angel

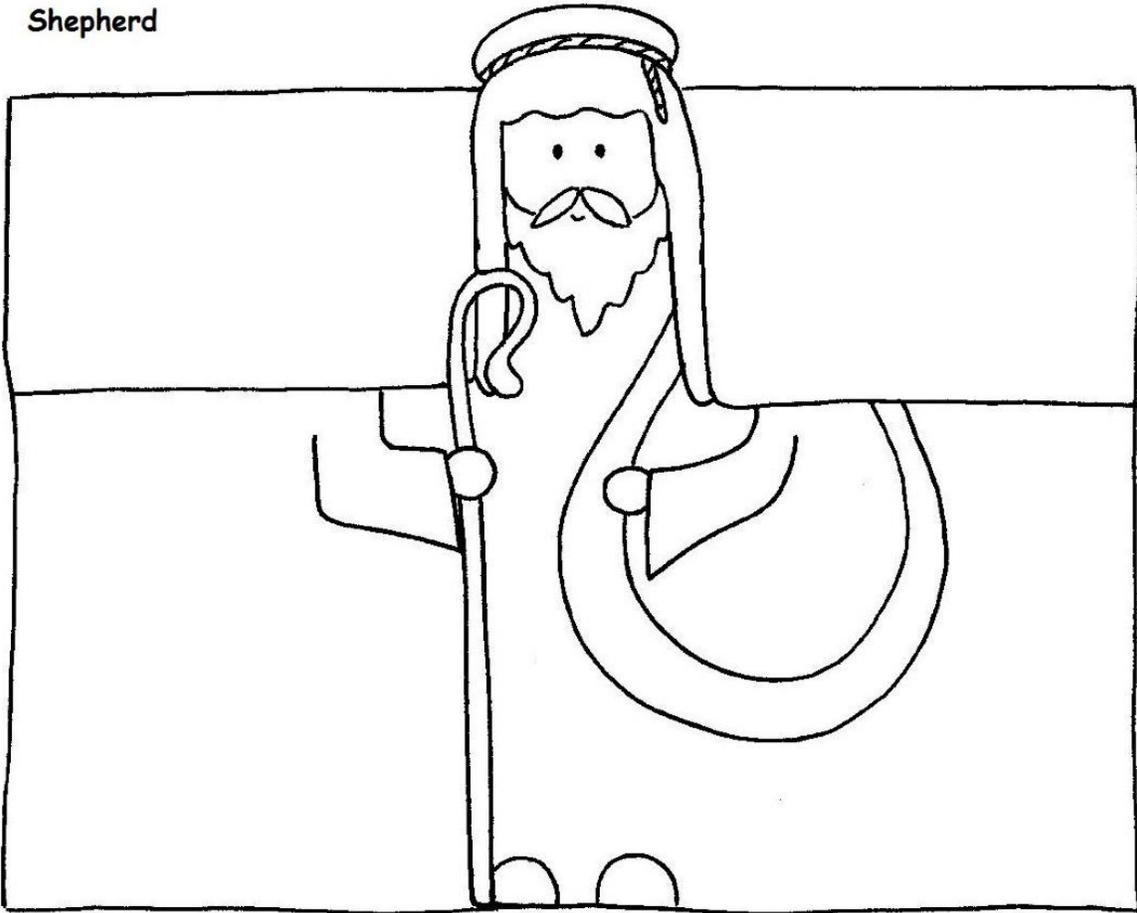


Sheep



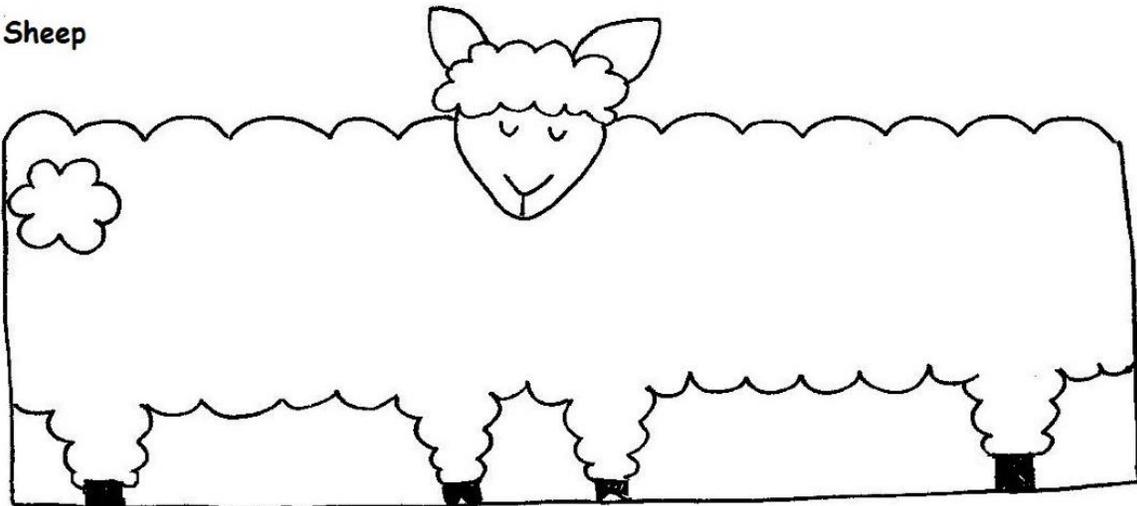
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Shepherd



cut along outside edge

Sheep



Cut TP Tube to this height



cut along outside edge

Joy To all People

Christmas Teaching Part 2

The focus of this lesson is to communicate why the message that the angels brought to the shepherds would bring "good tidings of great joy which will be to all people".

Start the lesson by asking everyone to open their bibles to **Luke 2:8-14**. Play the "Joy for all People" song provided and instruct everyone to follow along in his or her bible as the song plays. (Song: <https://seedsfamilyworship.bandcamp.com/track/joy-luke-2-8-14> or download off iTunes.)

After the song is over, reread what the angel said in verses 10-14:

10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!"

Begin a dialogue about the angel's announcement...

- **Do you remember from last week's lesson why the angel said to not be afraid?**
 - *The angels appeared in the dark night sky with the glory of the Lord shining all around them. Shepherds were used to looking at the dark night sky full of stars...it would be quite different to all of a sudden seeing angels and the glory of the Lord. I would imagine the angels and glory lit up the sky so much so they might have had to shield their eyes because of the brightness of God's glory.*
- **What kind of news did the angel speak about? Was it sad news, happy news, exciting news? Look back at the verse and see what it says.**
 - *"Good tidings of great JOY which will be to all people"*
- **What exactly was this news that was said to bring great JOY?**
 - *An announcement that a Savior has been born, who is Christ the Lord*
- **When did the angel say the Savior was born?**
 - *This day*

Before the angels came to the shepherds, scripture says an angel visited Mary to tell her about this baby that would be born to her. Let's go back into Luke chapter 1 and

see what the angel said when he spoke to Mary about this Savior. **Read Luke 1:30-33** and have the students read along in their own bibles.

Luke 1:30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

The angel told Mary that she would have a Son and name Him Jesus. The angel explained that Jesus would be the One who will sit on David's throne. He will reign as King forever and His kingdom will have no end!

Why do you think the angel is talking about David's throne? Does anyone remember the promise that God made to David back in the Old Testament? We can find this promise in **2 Samuel 7:12-16**:

12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15 "But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." "

Way back in the Old Testament, God promised David that from his own family line God's Son would be born. God promised that He would establish his Son's kingdom and that He would reign forever and ever. So, around 1,000 years (that's a long time!) after making this promise to David, an angel appears to Mary and then to the shepherds announcing that the Savior, the One promised to David, has been born!

- **Back to our scripture in Luke chapter 2 -- where does the angel tell the shepherds the Savior has been born?**
 - *The city of David! (Also known as Bethlehem) God promised David that His Son would be born from his family line and now the angels are announcing the Savior is born in the city of David – the very same city where David was born!*

- **Do you think the Jewish people at this time had read the scriptures and had been taught about God's promise to David? Do you think they were watching and waiting for this Savior to be sent to earth?**
 - *Yes!! They were waiting and expecting God to send His Son.*

- **God was fulfilling a promise that He made to His people. God, the Creator of the universe, loves His people so much that He would send His Son to earth to complete His promise. When the news spread of Jesus' birth, how do you think the Jewish people might of felt?**
 - *They were full of JOY! God sending His Son to earth was such exciting news! This was the very thing they were waiting for – and they had waited a long time for it!*

How should we feel when we study the scriptures about Jesus' birth? Stop and think for a minute about God sending His Son to earth. Does this make you feel happy, excited and joyful, just like the angels?

- **Why should we feel JOY when we learn about the first coming of Jesus?**
 - *We know that God created man to rule over the earth. Because Adam and the Woman disobeyed God, mankind lost this position of rulership. We also know God has a perfect plan that was created before the foundation of the world.*

God sent His Son as Savior to the earth. We can be full of JOY when we study this because we know Jesus, our Savior, was born a baby, grew up and died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' sacrifice gets us a step closer to His second coming and the future day when we will rule and reign with Christ over all the earth.

We can find JOY in Jesus' birth because we know God keeps His promises and one day Jesus will return to gather all the faithful Christians in order to rule with him in His kingdom.

This Christmas season, when we read about Jesus' birth, let's remember why His birth is so important and why we should find JOY in it!

"Joy" Craft

Supplies:

- White Foam Board
- Colored Tissue Paper cut into squares
- Mod Podge Glue
- Small Paintbrushes



Before class, cut out three large letters ("J", "O", and "Y") from the foam board.

Have students use paintbrushes to apply glue on the foam board letters in sections. Then place the tissue paper squares on top of glue. Over lap and layer the tissue paper to create a stained glass look. Let dry completely. Then apply a layer of Mod Podge glue over each individual letter.

A Sign to You
Christmas Teaching Part 3

The focus of this lesson is to help gain understanding regarding the 'sign' of the "Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger", which was given to the shepherds by the angels.

To review, read aloud the scriptures used in the two previous lessons: **Luke 2:8-12.**

Today we are going to focus on verse 12. Write this on the board and read it out loud together.

Luke 2:12 "And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

Begin a dialogue about this particular verse:

Let's look at the first part of this verse – "And this will be a sign to you" (Underline this part on the board.)

- **What do you think the word 'sign' means in this verse?** (Circle the word 'sign' on the board)
 - *We know that a sign in scripture points to something that is yet to come. This is something that hasn't happened yet, but will happen in the future.*
 - **Can you think of an example of a sign that God gave in the Old Testament having to do with Noah? A rainbow – to promise to never flood the earth again.**

Let's read what the next part of the verse says. *"You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."* (Circle 'wrapped in swaddling cloths' and also circle 'lying in a manger'.)

This is the sign. (Draw two arrows from the word sign to two circled phrases.)

So, we need to figure out how this part of the verse points to something that is yet to come.

- **First, do you remember what language the New Testament was originally written in?**
 - *Greek. Sometimes when we look up the original translation it gives us clues on how to understand words in the Bible better.*
- **If we were to look up the phrase, 'wrapped in swaddling cloths', the Greek translation is to wrap with strips. Which comes from a base word that means to rend or to tear.**

- **Remember, a sign points to something that is yet to come. Think about Jesus' life on earth. Can you think of anything in Jesus' life that 'to wrap with strips' or 'to rend or to tear' would point us to?** (Think about the very end of His life.)
 - *Jesus' death and burial*
- **What happened to Jesus' body as He died?**
 - *It was nailed to a cross. His body was broken and torn.*
 - **John 19:34** *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.*
- **After Jesus was taken off the cross, what happened to His body?**
 - *It was wrapped with strips of linen and then put into a tomb.*
 - **John 19:40** *Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.*

So, the fact that Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths, not only tells us how Jesus looked when He was first born, but gives us a sign that points to His future sacrificial death. It points to His body being torn on the cross and then His burial when His body was wrapped in strips of linen. (How neat is that!)

- **Let's look at the last part of this verse: 'lying in a manger'. Does anyone know what a manger was used for?**
 - *A manger is a feeding trough for animals. It was a place to put animal feed (like hay) in so that the animals could eat out of it.*
- **Was this a normal place to lay a baby?**
 - *No! (Would you put a baby in a dog's food bowl?! A dog bowl is used to hold his food – just as a manger is used to hold animals' food.)*
- **Remember, the angel said that this is a sign, pointing to something yet future. What does a feeding trough point us to in Jesus' life? Did Jesus ever speak of himself as a certain kind of food?**
 - *Jesus calls Himself the 'bread of life' and 'living bread'.*
 - *Open your bibles to John chapter 6. Let's read these verses: **John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51-55** (Help explain what the verses are talking about.)*

Jesus was born and laid in a place that provided food. He then grew up preaching and teaching the truths of God and referred to Himself as the 'Bread of Life'. From Jesus' first moments on earth, as Mary laid Him in a manger, everything was pointing to Jesus being the Living Bread, the Bread of Heaven, to those who believe in Him and His message.

We can find one more very interesting item in the Christmas story that points to Jesus' death and burial...

- **Does anyone remember what gifts the Wise Men brought to Jesus?**
 - *Gold, frankincense and myrrh. All three are highly valued, expensive gifts. But besides seeing them just as nice gifts for Jesus, they too point us to a future time in Jesus' life.*

These gifts all point to something yet future – they point to Jesus' death and burial:

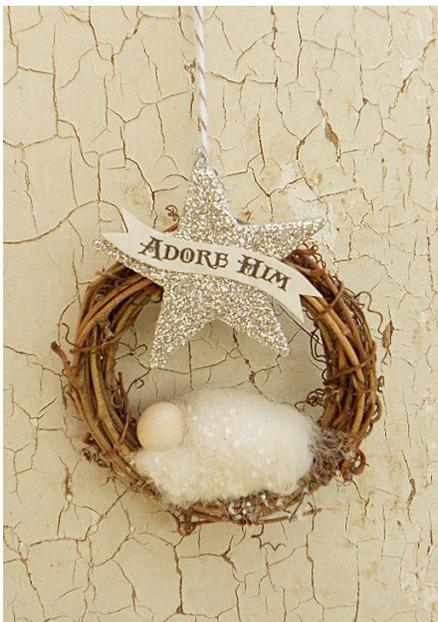
Gold: Gold was a precious metal and that was worth a lot of money. A gift of gold was considered worthy of a king. Gold signifies Jesus' kingship and deity. A baby born in a barn and placed in a feeding trough got gifts worthy of a king! The wise men must of known what the scriptures said about God's promise to send His Son, the One who would have an everlasting throne! ***Read Isaiah 9:6-7, an Old Testament scripture that speaks of this.***

Frankincense: This was a spice that was placed on the shewbread in the tabernacle and temple. The shewbread would have been eaten by the priests as it was most Holy. So – a spice put on bread...remember how Jesus is the 'Bread of Life'?

Myrrh: This was an oil that was used together with frankincense to be placed on the dead for burial. This is what was used in the verse from John we just looked at: ***John 19:40*** *Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.*

Isn't it amazing that all these details from Jesus' birth are all pointing to Him growing up and fulfilling God's plans and purposes? Jesus' birth, death and resurrection all happened so that we can have an inheritance and rule and reign with Him one day in the kingdom to come! We can see and know that God has a specific plan set in place from the very beginning! ***Read and explain Isaiah 46:9-10 to close.***

Baby Jesus Ornament Craft



Supplies:

- Small vine wreath
- Wooden "boy"
- White gauze fabric
- Foam glitter star
- Baker's twine
- "Adore Him" banner
- Hot glue gun, school glue

Thread baker's twine through wreath and knot to make a loop.

Have children glue the banner on the star with school glue.

Next, let children wrap "baby Jesus" with the gauze and secure with hot glue.

Using the hot glue gun, glue wrapped baby and star onto wreath.

ADORE HIM

ADORE HIM