

Know Your Nativity

By Lee Yates



Scripture, tradition and lots of made for TV holiday specials have shaped the way we celebrate Christmas and tell the story of Jesus' birth. How well do you know the real story? This activity dares us to ask, "What really happened?"

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Bible, nativity set and either paper and markers, or play-dough.



Activity Plan

1. Set up a nativity set in the center of a table or conversation space. Invite everyone to share what they know about the different characters and figures in the set. If this particular nativity set has a special history to the family, this is a good time for someone to share that story.
2. Work as a group to name other characters or creatures in the story of Jesus' birth that are not featured in your family nativity set (many sets do not have shepherds or even Joseph). Have someone make a place-holder for each character or creature you have listed. Do this by drawing them or making them out of play-dough. Enjoy the creative process and have some fun working together, even if the creations don't look as professional as your nativity set.
3. Once you have set the extra pieces in your nativity set, get your Bible read the following Scriptures passages out loud. Work together to make a list of all the characters and creatures listed in the story.
 - The Birth of Jesus, Luke 2:1-40
 - The Birth of Jesus, Matthew 1:18 – 2:23
4. Compare your new list of characters and creatures to the original nativity and your added pieces. Use the following questions to guide your conversation. If needed, go back and look at the Scripture passages again.
 - How did Mary and Joseph get to Bethlehem from Nazareth?
 - What characters or creatures shared their sleeping quarters?
 - Who came to greet the newborn baby on the first night?
 - Where did the Magi (or kings) greet the baby and who else did they see?
 - I wonder if the Magi saw the baby before his presentation in the Temple. What do you think?
 - I wonder how Magi from different countries and cultures knew about Jesus. What do you think?
 - Who do you think was the most uncomfortable on the first Christmas?
 - I wonder what other teenagers said about Mary back home.
 - Which character do you most identify with and why?
 - What most surprised you in this reflection on the Christmas story?
5. Ask someone to close the activity with a prayer of their own or read the one below.

God, as we look back and remember the story of the first Christmas, help us to remember that countless unnamed characters probably played a role. Help us to be characters in the Christmas story this year, even if our story isn't told. Help us to share Christ's light, even if we don't get our name in a book. May this nativity remind us of the Christmas story, of this time together as a family, and may it help us live out the story in each of our lives. Amen.

