

9 SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

to Use With Kids' Sunday School
to Prepare for Christmas

Presented by **children's**
ministry
MAGAZINE

We hurry and scurry at this time of year—anxiously preparing our homes with decorations, gifts, and yummy treats for the Christmas season. Kids make their gift lists, loosen their vocal chords for holiday musical performances, and wear their Sunday best for the annual family Christmas card photo. But with all the hustle and bustle, are our hearts prepared for Christmas?

In the mix of the fun and festivities, you can use these ideas to help kids and families prepare their hearts for the most anticipated event in history—the birth of the King.



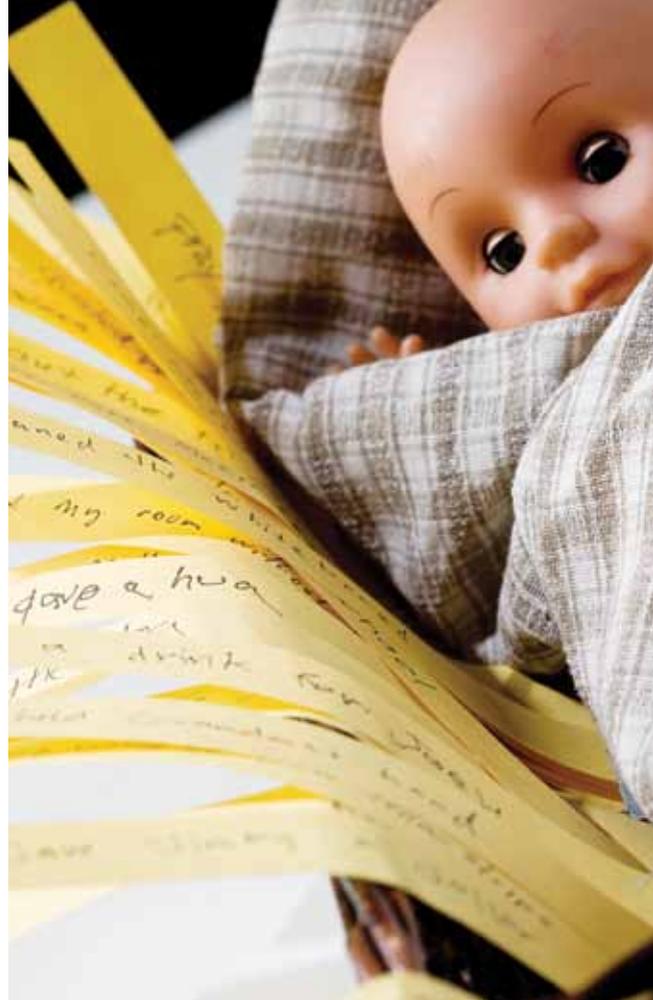
CHRISTMAS BLESSING TREE



Get Ready! Kids can each create and maintain a Christmas Blessing Tree to prepare their hearts for the blessing of Christmas.

Get Set! Each child will need 25 precut star shape stickers (search for “star shapes” at ace catalog.com), a resealable plastic bag, and a photocopy of a Christmas tree on 11x17-inch paper. See the Christmas tree template, on page 3.

Go! Have kids each count out 25 stars and place them in a resealable plastic bag to take home. Explain that on the first day of December, kids can each thank God for a blessing they’ve received and write or draw it on a star. For example, kids could thank God for a teacher who gives them extra help with math or the meals their mom provides for the family every day. When the star is finished, kids can place it on their tree. Encourage kids to do this every day to count down the days to Christmas. Tell kids to save the top tip of the tree to place the last star which will indicate it’s Christmas day, when we all receive the biggest blessing of all—Jesus!



BED OF KINDNESS

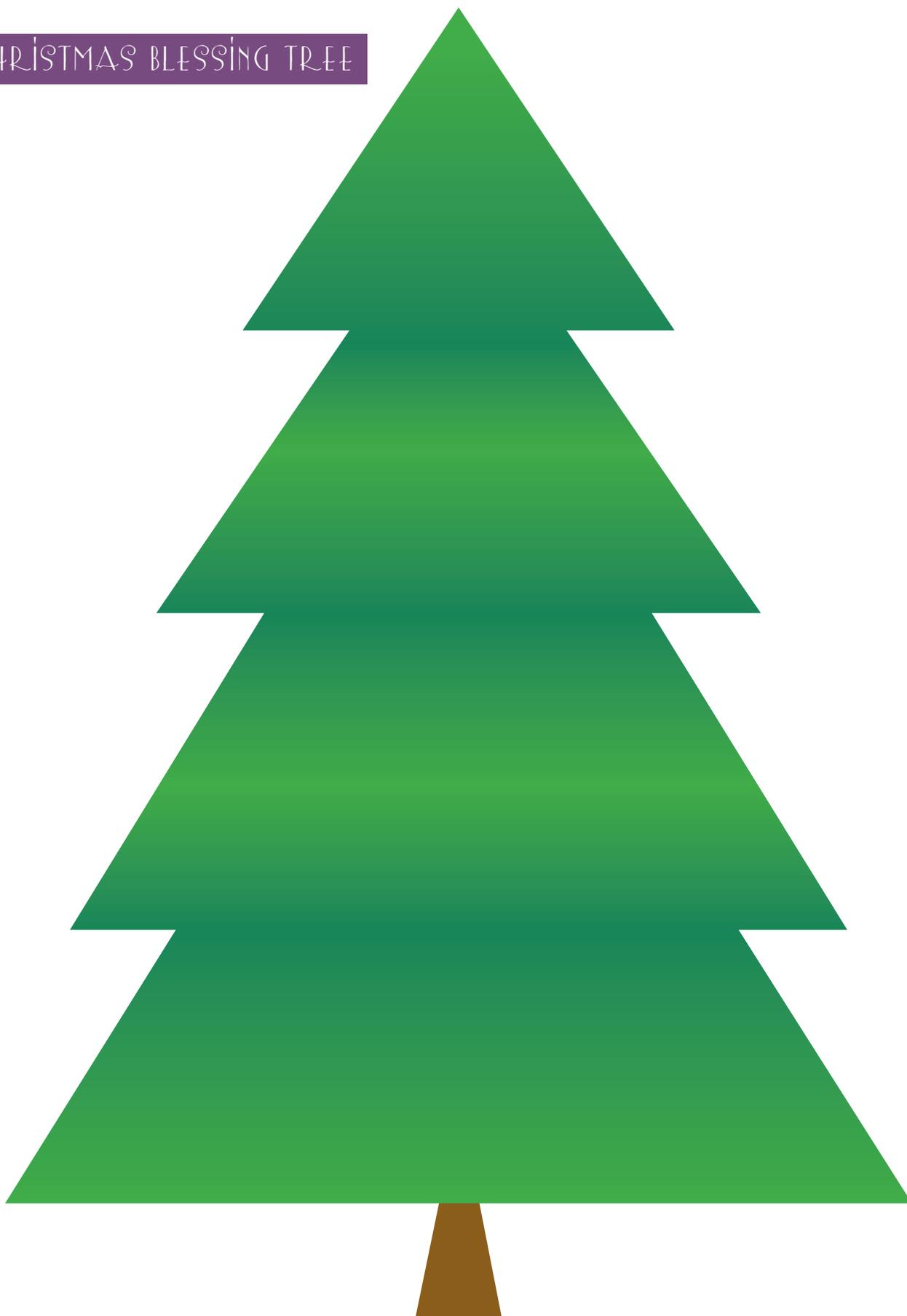
Get Ready! From Thanksgiving to Christmas, kids in your ministry can prepare a manger filled with kindness for baby Jesus on Christmas day.

Get Set! You’ll need yellow paper strips, markers, something to serve as a manger, and a doll wrapped in swaddling clothes. Announce to your kids that throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas, they’ll help prepare a soft bed of kindness for baby Jesus on Christmas day.

Go! As kids arrive each week, encourage them to write on yellow paper strips all the ways they’ve shown kindness to others during the week. Then have them place the “hay” strips in your manger. Read aloud Matthew 25:34-40 to remind kids that when they show kindness to others, they’re also showing kindness to Jesus.

On the Sunday nearest Christmas Eve or on Christmas Eve, lay the doll wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger to represent the baby Jesus’ arrival. Then gather children around the manger and thank God for all the kindness they’ve provided to others in preparation for Jesus’ birth.

CHRISTMAS BLESSING TREE





SNOWBALL WREATH TOSS

Get Ready! Kids will enjoy this challenging game to prepare them for the fun and joy of the holiday season.

Get Set! You'll need green pool noodles or a large artificial wreath, a hot glue gun, ping-pong balls, fishing line, blindfolds, and gift tags. Create a large Christmas wreath by forming a pool noodle into a circle and gluing the ends together. You can hang the wreath from the ceiling with fishing line, or you can have helpers hold the wreath during the game.

Go! Have kids take turns trying to toss "snowballs" (pingpong balls) through the wreath. Have kids see who can get the most snowballs through the wreath from farthest away, blindfolded, or throwing the balls over their shoulder backward. Afterward talk with kids about the preparations their families make for Christmas, such as decorating, baking, or shopping for gifts.

Say: **The game we just played was physically challenging—it can also be challenging for us to focus on preparing our hearts for Christmas.**

Give kids gift tags and have them write how they'll prepare for Christmas in three ways: giving, thanking, and celebrating.



CAROL~OKE

Get Ready! Help families prepare their hearts for Jesus' birth with this fun party after a night of caroling in the neighborhood.

Get Set! You'll need Christmas carol CDs and a karaoke machine. Create invitations for your church's Christmas events and Christmas Eve services for families to distribute to homes as they carol. You'll also need hot cocoa and cookies.

Go! After caroling, bring families back to church for hot cocoa and cookies and a fun night of crazy Christmas carol karaoke. Encourage families to sing together or solo. Also let kids form groups to sing their favorite carols on stage.

Afterward bring families together and talk about what it might've been like to hear the angels sing a heavenly chorus on that first Christmas. Then sing together "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Silent Night" before closing in prayer and asking God to prepare each person's heart for Christmas.





WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

Get Ready! Preschoolers will love this special celebration to prepare their hearts for welcoming baby Jesus into our world.

Get Set! Plan a special worship service the week before Christmas for preschoolers and their families. You could even do this during your Sunday morning preschool classes. Encourage children to come dressed as shepherds, animals, or angels. You'll also need an adult in an angel costume, star-shaped cookies, and a children's Bible.

Go! Kick off your service with a Christmas carol sing-a-long. Then invite preschoolers to parade across the stage so families can see all who were in attendance that first Christmas to welcome the newborn king. Then gather preschoolers up front and have your costumed adult read the Christmas story from Luke 2 in a children's Bible. Designate which children are angels, shepherds, and animals (even if they're not in costume). Tell kids to respond with the following when their part is mentioned:

- **Angels:** Say, "Hallelujah!"
- **Shepherds:** Say, "Welcome, baby Jesus!"
- **Animals:** Make their specific animal noise.

Close your celebration by reminding preschoolers and their families that just as they prepared costumes for the worship service, they can prepare their hearts through prayer to welcome Jesus this Christmas and throughout the year. Afterward bring everyone together for star-shaped cookies to celebrate Jesus' birth.



FILL THE STOCKING

Get Ready! Have kids play this fun game that'll provide a special treat for children at a homeless shelter and help kids discover that giving to others prepares their hearts for Jesus.

Get Set! You'll need each child to bring a Christmas stocking and a bag of individually wrapped candy. You'll also need a bowl and a spoon for each relay team.

Go! With this relay, play multiple rounds until all the Christmas stockings are full. Hang a stocking for each team at one end of the room, and have teams line up at the opposite end of the room behind a bowl filled with candy.

Tell kids that they'll take turns scooping up candy with the spoon and running down to place the candy in the stocking. If kids drop a piece, they need to pick it up and start back at the bowl. The first team to fill its stocking is the winner. After each round, take a photo of the winning team to place on your ministry's bulletin board. After all the stockings are full, have kids make Christmas notes or cards to go with the stockings that communicate the true meaning of Christmas—Jesus!





LIGHT OF THE WORLD



Get Ready! Use this devotion to help kids prepare their hearts for Jesus—the Light of the World.

Get Set! You'll need a flashlight, a storyteller, and a dark room. You'll also need a glow stick for each child (available at groupoutlet.com).

Go! Stand outside a dark room and ask kids: What adventurous things do you like to do?

Say: **We're going to take an adventurous walk in the dark. You need to find our storyteller who's seated in the room. Everyone shut your eyes and hold hands—let's go!** When all the kids enter the room, let them fumble in the darkness for a moment, and then say: **Stop. I think I can make this easier.** Turn on the flashlight and tell them to open their eyes. Shine the light around until they spot the storyteller.

After kids sit on the floor, have the storyteller ask: **What obstacles did you face when you entered the room? How did your task change when your leader turned on the flashlight? What would it be like to live in the dark all the time?**

Say: **At this time of year, neighborhoods and malls are aglow at night because of the many displays of Christmas lights. These lights remind me of the light that entered our world on that first Christmas.**

Read aloud John 1:1-9.

Ask: **How is not knowing Jesus like being in the dark? How does Jesus bring light into our world? How can you help others know that Jesus is the Light of the World this Christmas?**

Say: **When we focus on Jesus as our Light and share the good news of Christmas with our friends, families, and community, it helps us have a welcoming heart for the best gift of all—Jesus.**

As kids leave, give each of them a glow stick to find their way out of the darkened room and to remind them that Jesus is the Light at Christmas.



GIFTS FROM THE HEART

Get Ready! Your kids can help others prepare their hearts for Christmas, too. Gifts made from the heart are always special for people who work with and love kids, so have children create these crafts for their school teachers and coaches this Christmas. Remind kids that the greatest gift anyone can receive at Christmas is what the angels declared that first Christmas: *“Don’t be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!”* (Luke 2:10-11).



ANGEL ORNAMENT

Get Set! You'll need round lollipops, facial tissue, thin ribbon, gold chenille wires, aluminum foil, scissors, glue, and a permanent marker.

Go! As kids create their angels, have them share how the person who'll receive their gift is important to them.

Step 1: Wrap a facial tissue around the top of a round lollipop to form the angel's head. Then use a 4-inch piece of ribbon to tie a bow around the tissue at the base of the lollipop.

Step 2: Use a marker to draw a face for the angel on the tissue and cut a 6-inch piece of chenille wire to wrap around the angel's head for a halo.

Step 3: Cut a 10-inch piece of ribbon to hang the ornament. Then cut aluminum foil to form wings. Form a loop with the ribbon, place it underneath the wings, and glue the ribbon and wings to the backside of the lollipop.





GIFT BOXES

Get Set! You'll need scissors, markers or crayons, and copies of the box templates. Copy the gift box templates from pages 9-11.

Go! This is an easy cut-and-fold craft kids can do.

Step 1: Have kids cut out the box templates on the outside dark solid line. Help them cut the slot where the box tab will insert. Kids can have fun coloring the design.

Step 2: Help kids fold all the dotted grey lines inward so the design is on the outside of the box.

Step 3: Once all the folds are made, fold the box together, tucking the corners into the box and leaving the tab and slotted panels on the very top to close the box. Kids can then fill the boxes with candies or gift cards for someone special.

For an instructional video on how to fold the boxes, go to

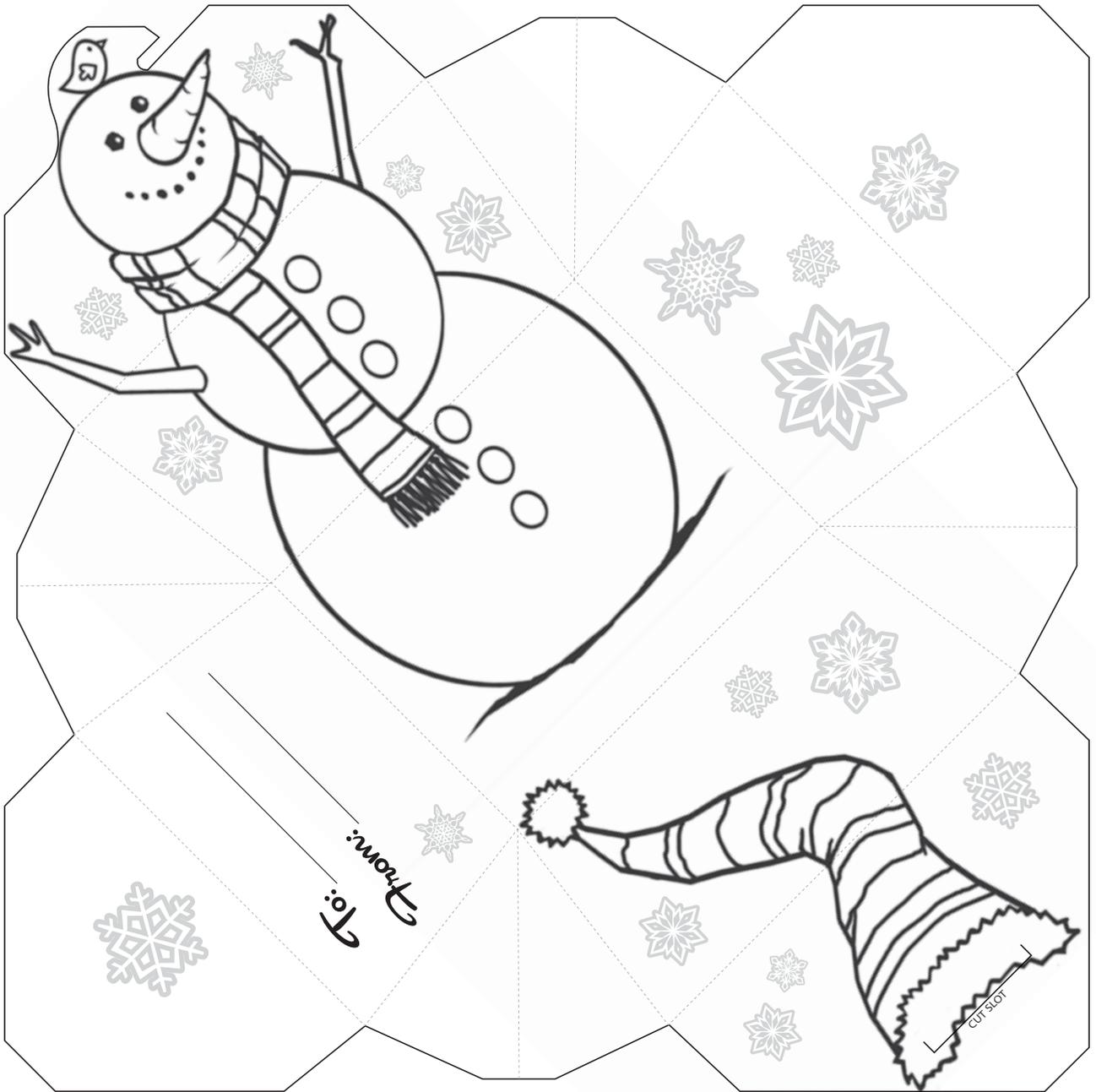
www.childrensministry.com/fold-boxes



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