



Nativity Set Activities

By Karen Whiting



Little figurines of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus fascinate children. This year use the crèche to help focus on the meaning of Christmas. Make a special event of setting up a nativity set. Read about the birth of Jesus from a child's Bible. Include a child set that is not breakable for children to handle and use in play. If there is a play set, chat about the story each time your children play with the set. Try some of these activities to make the most of your nativity set:



- Talk about each figure while chatting about the story.
- Discuss the place to set it up and how to care for the set. Add lights.
- Add one figure each day to focus on that animal or person. Chat about why that creature or individual is part of the set. Make the sounds of any animals and discuss how those animals help people.
- Use the figures to act out the story or have children lift up each appropriate piece as you retell the story.
- Instead of putting all the figures in the set at the beginning of advent, move them toward the set throughout the weeks. This helps children understand Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem and that the other people came there after the birth of Jesus.
- Place Jesus in a little box and giftwrap him. This helps children understand God sent Jesus to us as a special promised gift. You can read Psalm 127:3 that every child is a gift from God and also talk about the gift of life. Then when you open the gift to place Jesus in the crèche read John 3:16 and how God the Father gave us Jesus.
- Rejoice over the nativity set and sing songs around it, such as *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, *Joy to the World*, *Away in a Manger*, *We Three Kings*, and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*.
- Celebrate Jesus' birthday with a party and display the nativity set on the table.
- Think of activities to match each figure.
 - Joseph was a carpenter so make a small wooden cross.
 - Mary was mom who cooked and cleaned for Jesus as he grew. Help your mom with cooking and cleaning.
 - Jesus was a baby. Buy a baby toy to give to a toy drive.
 - Look at the woolly sheep and find items made from wool. Give clothes you've outgrown to the poor.
 - Cows give us milk so make milkshakes or enjoy a glass of milk.
 - Donkeys help carry people so let mom or dad give donkey rides.
 - Shepherds guide the sheep with their staffs. Pass out candy canes as reminders of shepherds.
 - Angels spread the news of the birth of Jesus. Go and tell others about the reason for Christmas.
 - Wise men brought gifts for Jesus. Be wise and think of ways to give gifts of love to Jesus. This might be with helping neighbors, being kind to strangers, or doing extra chores for money to give at church.