



## Using a Nativity Scene to Focus on the Lord's Birth

Putting up a nativity scene in your home can help you focus on the true meaning of Christmas. Some families take care to make sure that this is the first Christmas decoration they set up in the home, perhaps waiting to add the baby Lord to the scene on Christmas morning. Other families wait until Christmas Eve to carefully set up the representation, adding the figures while reading the Christmas story. When there are younger children in a household, it is wonderful to have a sturdy representation that they can manipulate (with reverence) such as wooden figures, a flannel board set, *etc.*

### How One Family Uses a Nativity Scene to Focus on the Lord's Birth at Christmas

On the day of Christmas Eve, Mary and Joseph are at the stable (with the manger empty) and the shepherds and sheep are in the fields. After attending church on Christmas Eve and eating dinner together, the family returns to the nativity scene. In the darkened room, the family sees baby Jesus in the manger with a small light in the stable, and they read aloud the story of the Lord's birth from chapter 2 of the gospel of Luke:

- While reading the story, first one angel appears to the shepherds, and then the host of angels.
- At this point in the story the family lights many candles.
- The children turn the shepherds to face the angels, and they sing "The First Noel."
- The children move the shepherds to the stable and everyone sings, "O Come Little Children."
- As the shepherds and sheep gather around Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, they sing "Silent Night."
- Then the family quietly carries the candles up the stairs, and the children go to bed by the light of the candles. (The children have hung their stockings earlier in the day.)

Though the parents have further preparations to make for Christmas morning, they relish this peaceful tradition which gives them an opportunity to focus on the beauty and glory of the events of the Christmas story.

On Christmas morning, the family reads an illustrated version of the Christmas nativity. Then they go downstairs to the representation and sing several songs, including "Joy to the World" and "Happy Birthday" (to the baby Lord). The children help move the shepherds to spread the good tidings and then return to their fields. Then the family moves on to opening stockings, eating a special Christmas breakfast, and opening gifts.

(Note: This family brings the wise men to the Christmas representation several days later. You could start them on their journey when the angel appears to the shepherds, putting them across the room from the nativity scene and then slowly moving them closer.)