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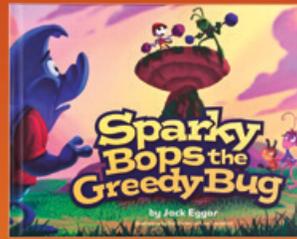
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Thankfulness — Matthew 5:16



Obedience — Ephesians 6:1



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Clearing Up Christmas Confusion

This time of year, everybody's telling children about the birth of Jesus Christ. Parents talk about it at home. Children's leaders teach it at church. Christmas carols, nativity scenes, pageants, and movies all proclaim the good news.

But most of us mix facts with fiction! We tell children many details that aren't in the Bible and even contradict what it teaches.

AS YOU SHARE THE CHRISTMAS STORY WITH YOUR CHILD THIS YEAR, TRY TO AVOID THESE COMMON CONFUSIONS.

Confusion 1: Jesus was born on December 25th.

We don't know the exact date of Christ's birth. Many scholars say that late

December would have been too cold and rainy for the pasturing of flocks by night (Luke 2:8). Bethlehem shepherds normally kept their flocks in the fields from spring to late autumn. Also, winter would be an unusual time to call a census, since it would make the required travel more difficult (Luke 2:1-3).

Confusion 2: Jesus was born in a stable because the innkeeper turned Mary and Joseph away.

The Bible mentions nothing about a stable or an innkeeper. In fact, the word that most Bibles translate as *inn* (Luke 2:7) can also mean "guest chamber" (as it is translated in Luke 22:11). Some suggest that Mary and Joseph planned to lodge in an upstairs

guest room of a relative's house. But since it was already crowded with family members, they stayed in the lower level of the house, where the animals and manger were kept at night. Additionally, Christians in the second century claimed that Jesus was born in a cave, which was used as a stable.

Confusion 3: The shepherds and the three kings visited Jesus on the night of His birth.

The shepherds met baby Jesus that night – but they didn't meet up with any kings! The Bible DOES say that wise men (*magi*) – not kings! – visited Christ at a house, when He was likely a child of 1 or 2 years old (Matthew 2:7-11, 16). And although the wise men offered three gifts, we're not sure how many wise men offered them. There may have been three or 20!

These confusions about Christ's birth remind us to always compare what we hear to the Scriptures. With your child, read the true account from the Bible (Matthew 1:18-2:12; Luke 2:1-20), talk about common confusions and present accurate pictures of Christ's birth in your home. But amidst all the details, don't forget to tell the most important part!

The heart of Christmas is summed up in the angel's words to the shepherds: *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).*

Jesus came to earth to save us from sin. That's the GOOD NEWS. That's the message children need to hear loud and clear this time of year.

As They Grow: Developmental Insights

Three-year-olds are constantly on the move. Large muscles for running, jumping, and climbing develop rapidly, but small hand and finger muscles lag behind. As your child grows, help him practice small muscle control by working with small blocks, paints, crayons, and scissors. A Christmas handcraft (like the one described below) provides a perfect opportunity!

Family Time Ideas

In *Parent Pause*, we encourage families to regularly set at least a half hour aside for a focused time of fun and spiritual learning. During this time, the whole family comes together to read God's Word, work on Awana® club handbooks, and experience other creative, meaningful activities.



This month, add some creativity to handbook time. For example, pretend your outstretched arm is a volume control. Ask your child to watch you for the volume level as she recites her handbook verse. Raise your arm so she will speak louder or lower your arm so she will speak softer. Repeat the verse several times at various volumes.

Children also enjoy the "popcorn" game. Sit together on the floor. Say the first few words of your child's verse and then stop to let him "pop" up to say the next word of the verse. As your child sits back down, say the next word or two of the verse and let him pop up again to finish the verse.

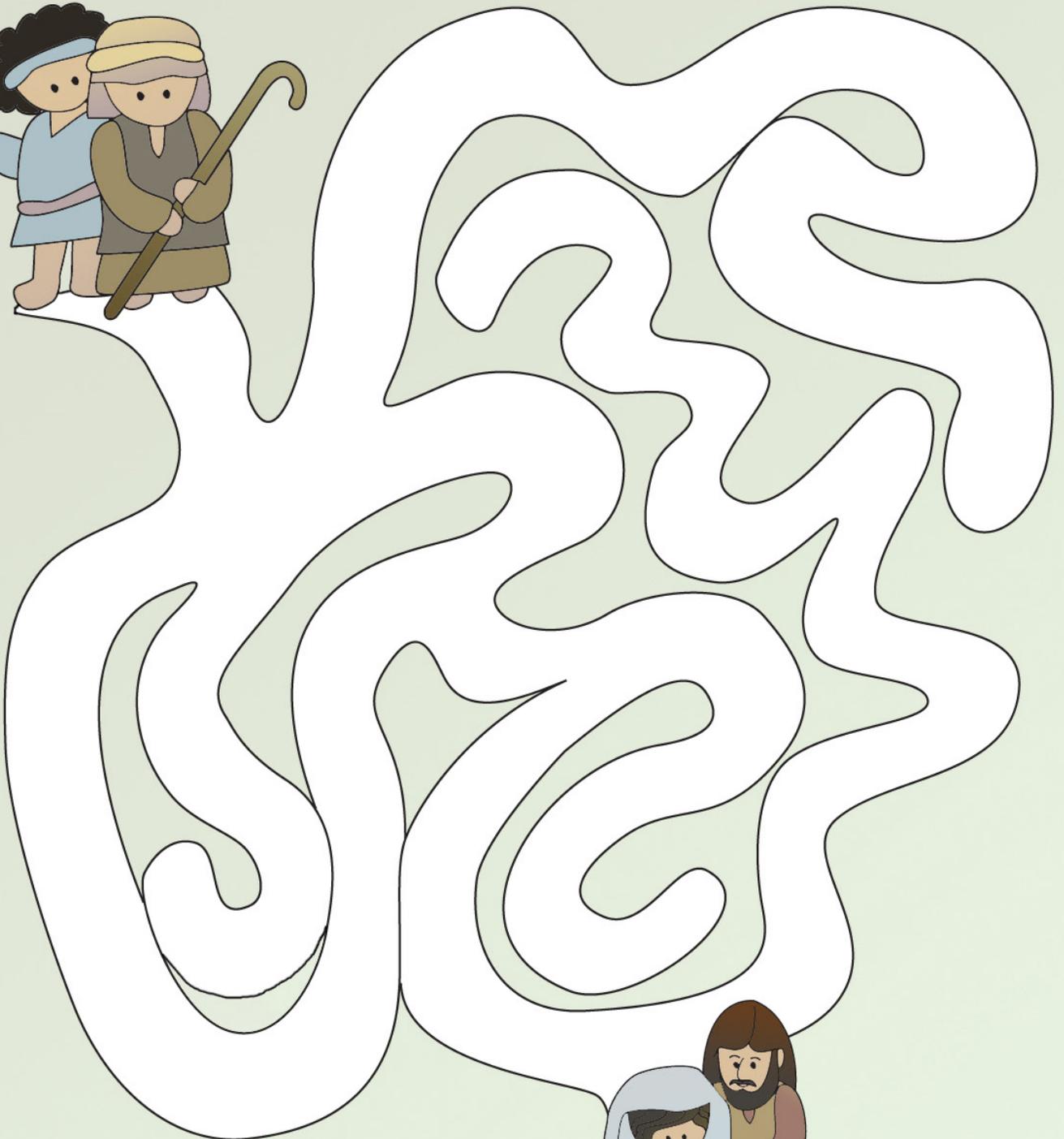


Tin Foil Ornaments

Enjoy an inexpensive yet rewarding handcraft with your child this season! Gather Christmas cookie cutters and cardboard from empty cereal boxes. Help your child trace the cookie-cutter shapes onto the cardboard and cut them out. Cover each shape carefully with shiny tin foil, punch a small hole in the top, and then thread a piece of string, wire, or ribbon through the hole and tie or twist the ends together.

Your child can decorate the ornaments with glitter, beads, buttons, confetti, stickers, and other items you have on hand. Hang them on the tree and watch them sparkle!

Hi, Cubbies! Can you help the shepherds find their way to baby Jesus?
Draw a line from the shepherds to baby Jesus to complete the maze.



Parents: Read Luke 2:8-20 from your Bible or a reliable children's Bible. Talk with your child about how the shepherds might have felt on their way to see Jesus. Ask: What did the shepherds do after they saw Jesus? What would you have done?

Parents: What were your favorite Christmas traditions when YOU were a child? What were your spouse's favorite traditions? Which traditions would you like to introduce to your own family?

Traditions help families to bond. They promote positive feelings and expectations, along with a sense of order and routine. Children appreciate the security that traditions bring.

Don't miss an opportunity to start Christmas traditions while your child is young. Let these ideas spark holiday rituals to enjoy with your Puggle® for many years to come.



Drive around your neighborhood or city, looking at holiday lights and decorations.



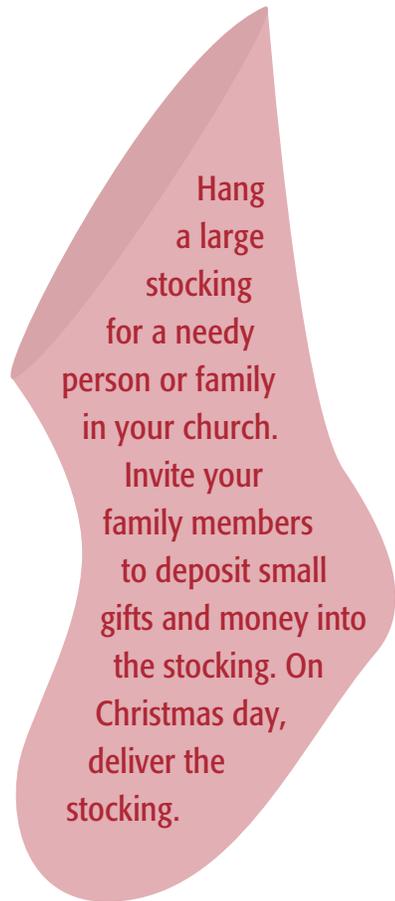
Honor Jesus by setting a place for Him at your Christmas dinner table. Place a golden paper crown or a candle on His plate.



Purchase a Christmas tree or a Christmas wreath together as a family and sip hot chocolate afterwards.



As you trim the tree or bake cookies, share Christmas memories from your childhood or your parents' or grandparents' childhood. Share the family history behind special decorations.



Hang a large stocking for a needy person or family in your church. Invite your family members to deposit small gifts and money into the stocking. On Christmas day, deliver the stocking.

