

“’Twas the Night Before: The Christmas Story for Kids”

by
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What In this one-act, children's Christmas Eve play, the story of Jesus' birth is told. As the storyteller narrates in rhyme, Joseph, Mary, the Innkeeper, and a Shepherd share their stories.

Themes: Christmas, Kids Ministry, Jesus' Birth, Christmas Eve

Who	Storyteller	Innkeeper
	Mary	Angel
	Gabriel	Melchoir
	Joseph	Balthasar
	Shepherd	Gaspar

When Biblical times

Wear (Props) Rocking chair
Book
Bench
Bowl
Spoon
Baby doll wrapped in blanket
Shepherd's hook
Small box
Small bottle
Jar
Biblical costumes for all except Storyteller

Why Luke 1:35, Matthew 1: 18-24, Luke 2: 9-14, Luke 2: 1-20, Matthew 2: 1-12

How This skit is easy to perform, with no special lighting or sound effects. A bench is center stage. A chair, stool, or rocking chair can be off to one side for the Storyteller to sit on, although this is not necessary.

Time Approximately 20 minutes

At start of scene, Storyteller enters and sits in rocking chair.

Storyteller: What a beautiful day for a story. And what better story to tell than the greatest story ever told—the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. *(To audience)* Would you like to hear about the day our Savior and Lord Jesus was born? *(Waits for audience, then opens book)* Then let's begin. *(Starts to read, dramatically)* 'Twas the night before—
(Stops and looks up at audience)
Now I know what you're thinking—that's not the right story! But I assure you it is. Just listen.

Starts to read again, dramatically.

'Twas the night before Sabbath and in old Nazareth,
A girl named Mary had a visitor she didn't expect.
His name was Gabriel. He was an angel sent from God.
And when Mary saw him, she thought it was quite odd.
What did God want with her, only a young girl?
Let's hear Gabriel's message and watch God's plan unfurl.

Lights down on Storyteller and up on center stage where Mary sits on a stool or bench, stirring contents of a bowl.

Mary: I hope Joseph will like this lamb stew I made for him. He's coming to dine with my family tonight and I want him to know what a good wife I will make for him. And as my mother always says, the quickest way to a man's heart is through his stomach!

Lights flash. Gabriel enters. Mary is startled and drops bowl and spoon.

Mary: Who are you? Where did you come from?

Gabriel: Mary of Nazareth. It is I, the angel Gabriel, come to deliver God's message to you.

Mary: What could God possibly want with me?

Gabriel: You are favored by the Lord. The Lord is with you.

Mary: But I am only a young girl.

Gabriel: Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. *(Sits next to Mary)* You will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son and name him Jesus. He will be a great man and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. Your son will be the king of Jacob's people forever and his kingdom will never end.

Mary: But how can this be?

Gabriel: The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy child developing inside you will be called the Son of God.

Mary: This doesn't seem possible!

Gabriel: Elizabeth, your relative, is six months pregnant with a son in her old age. People said she couldn't have a child. But nothing is impossible for God.

Mary: Very well. I am the Lord's servant. Let everything you said happen to me.

*Lights dim on scene and come up on **Storyteller**.*

Storyteller: *(reading)* Now Mary was ready to do the Lord's will. But there was one little problem that bothered her still. What of her husband, Joseph the carpenter? When she told him of the baby, would he even want her? Well Joseph was angry. How could this be? This was so unexpected from his sweet bride, Mary. He would end their marriage—that's just what he'd do! But then Gabriel came and told Joseph God's plan too.

*Lights down on **Storyteller** and up on center stage where **Joseph** paces back and forth.*

Joseph: I can't believe what Mary told me! How can she be pregnant? And she wants me trust that the baby is the Son of God? Why, that's preposterous! She must think I am a fool. *(Sits on bench)* And to think we were just betrothed! *(Lays down on bench)* I cannot worry about this anymore tonight. I'll go to sleep and in the morning, I will go to the high priests and tell them that I would like to quietly end my marriage to Mary.

***Joseph** closes his eyes as if sleeping. Lights flash. **Gabriel** enters and crosses to stand above sleeping **Joseph**.*

Gabriel: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. *(Exits)*

Joseph: *(sits up)* What Mary said was true! An angel did visit her to tell her of God's plan and now the same angel has visited me. I will do as God wishes and take Mary as my wife tomorrow. And when the time

comes, and she gives birth to a son, I will raise him and help him to become the man God wants him to be.

*Lights dim on scene and come up on **Storyteller**.*

Storyteller: *(reading)* So the two were married, and as happy as can be. They planned a home with room for a baby. Spring changed to summer and then become autumn. Mary and Joseph were anxious for the baby they'd been given. Mary's tummy was growing—it was as big as could be! And then Caesar Augustus issued a decree. There was to be a census taken all over the land. Now Mary and Joseph must go to Bethlehem.

*Lights down on **Storyteller** and up on center stage where **Joseph** stands with his arm around **Mary**, who is now pregnant. They speak directly to the audience.*

Joseph: I'm not going to lie—I was not very happy about having to travel all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Mary so close to giving birth. But what else could we do? Bethlehem is the town of David, and because I belong to the house and line of David, we had better go there and register.

Mary: It was not a pleasant journey, let me tell you. It took us five days to travel ninety miles across treacherous terrain on the back of a donkey.

Joseph: *(looking at **Mary**)* Speak for yourself. I had to walk the entire way!

Mary: That may be true. But which one of us is pregnant with the son of God?

Joseph: *(shrugging his shoulders)* You've got me there.

Mary: *(with a smile)* Exactly.

*Lights dim on scene and come up on **Storyteller**.*

Storyteller: *(reading)* Mary and Joseph arrived after many days And they looked and looked for somewhere they could stay. There were so many people! From near and from far. They came to be counted by the registrar. So Mary and Joseph knocked on each and every door The answer always the same as the one before. "There's no room at the inn!" the innkeepers cried. Mary said, "I just want to birth my baby inside." One innkeeper took pity on our travelers two. She said "I have an idea. I know what you can do."

Lights down on Storyteller and up on center stage where Innkeeper stands.

Innkeeper: Alright. So, here's the thing. I am having an absolutely record-breaking weekend here in Bethlehem. All of my rooms are sold! Can you believe it? I know a lot of people were upset when Caesar Augustus decreed that a census must be taken, but I, for one, was excited! I mean, Bethlehem is a pretty bustling place. In our marketplace, we have not one but *two* fig merchants. Can you believe it! *Two fig merchants!* Even Samaria doesn't have two fig merchants. *(Starts to stroll back and forth a little)* But even though it's a bustling place, Bethlehem isn't known as much of a *tourist destination*, if you know what I mean. For one thing, it's pretty warm here most of the time. Winter is pretty warm. Spring is...well...hot. Fall? Hot. Summer...let's put it this way—it's so hot and dry that our camels start to look like plain old horses! *(Waits for laugh. Optional rimshot sound effect)* For you non animal lovers, that was a joke. I was trying to say that it's so hot that camels don't even have enough water to store in their humps, so their backs are as flat as horses. Get it?

Waits for laugh. Optional rimshot sound effect, then waves it off.

Anyway, we don't get too many travelers through Bethlehem so us innkeepers were very excited for the influx of travelers headed our way. Only, we had no idea just how many there would be! You've got to remember—we don't have phones. We don't have the internet. We had *no idea* how many people would be coming to be counted for the census. *(Thoughtfully)* Come to think of it, that's probably why Caesar wanted to have a census in the first place. In any case, when Mary and Joseph showed up at my door, I was all booked up. Can you believe it! But I'm a smart businesswoman so I wasn't about to turn away a paying customer! No siree-bob! I may not have had any more room *inside* my inn, but I knew I had just the place for that pregnant gal to give birth to her little bundle of joy. *(Looks at the audience)* Do you know the place I'm talking about? *(Waits for answers)* That's right! The stable out back! *(Crosses her arms)* Now I know what some of you are thinking. “How could you let the mother of our Lord, Jesus Christ, give birth to him in a smelly old stable”.

Walking closer to audience.

Well I will have you know I keep a very clean stable, and I'm known throughout Bethlehem for having the nicest sheep, horses and cows around. And of course, you have to remember that I didn't *know* that Mary was going to give birth to *the* Jesus Christ! To me, Mary and Joseph were just another couple of paying customers. *(Crosses back to center stage)* So I took them out back, gave them

some nice clean hay and some linen I had laying around and wished them a good night. And I guess the rest was...as they say...history. *(Holds up her hands and smiles)* Can you believe it?

*Lights dim on scene and come up on **Storyteller**.*

Storyteller: *(reading)* So as night crept in on the stable so warm,
Mary's firstborn child, a son, was born.
In swaddling clothes she wrapped him tight
To keep him warm in the cold, dark night.
She laid him in a manger to use as his bed.
Warm straw was a pillow that cradled his head.
And what did she call him, a name we know so well?
Why of course, Jesus Christ—Immanuel.

*Lights down on **Storyteller** and up on center stage where **Mary** stands, holding a baby wrapped in a blanket.*

Mary: What a miracle! To think that I am holding the son of God in my arms. *(Looking down at the baby)* But when I look at him, I just see my son. My son who I will love and protect and nurture so that he can grow into the man that God needs him to be. *(Looks up at audience)*
What an awesome responsibility God has given me. I'm not going to lie—it's a little scary. Am I going to be a good mom? Will I make the right decisions? Will he grow up to be everything he's supposed to be? But I know God will be by my side every step of the way and I thank him for giving me this most special gift—the gift of my son, Jesus.

*Lights dim on scene and come up on **Storyteller**.*

Storyteller: Nearby in the fields, a shepherd tended to his sheep.
It was getting pretty late. He was falling asleep!
Then out of the darkness a great noise was heard.
A chorus of angels his sleep did disturb!
They brought him a message from heaven above.
The birth of a savior, joyous tidings, and love.

*Lights down on **Storyteller** and up center where **Shepherd** stands, leaning against staff, asleep.*

Shepherd: *(talking in his sleep, dreamily)* And then the next sheep ran ooovvver to the garden gate and up, up, up he jumped and landed on the other side. *(Pauses)* And that's one thousand, two hundred and sixty-three sheep. *(Snores)* And then the next sheep ran ooovvver to the garden gate and up, up, up he jumped and landed

on the other side. *(Sighs and smiles)* Good job little sheep-y. Your shepherd is proud of you. *(Pauses)* And that's one thousand, two hundred and sixty—

Angel enters. Lights brighten.

Angel: *(interrupting)* Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

Shepherd: *(startled awake, not seeing Angel at first)* Hey! Not nice. You've gone and messed up my sheep counting. *(Turns and sees Angel, jumps back, yelling)* Ah! Who are you? Where did you come from?

Angel: Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Shepherd: That's great, but you do realize it's not nice to just sneak up on people like that, don't you?

Angel: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Shepherd: Wow. Okay, well that's worth interrupting my sleep then. Go on.

Angel: This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Shepherd: But how will I know where to find him?

Angel: God will guide you.

Shepherd: Yes, he will.

Shepherd clasps his hands in prayer and closes his eyes. As he does, the Angel exits, and lights dim. Shepherd opens his eyes.

Shepherd: Now what did you say your name was? *(Looks to where Angel was. She is gone)* People are always coming and going so quickly these days. And she didn't even give me her name. *(Shakes his head)* Oh well. Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.

Lights dim on scene and come up on Storyteller.

Storyteller: *(reading)* So the Shepherd set off to see the Messiah. He trusted in God, so he'd know where to find him. His journey was—

Shepherd enters, interrupting.

Shepherd: *(to Storyteller)* I'm sorry. I know you're trying to tell a story here and you've got this really cool rhyming thing going.

Storyteller: Thank you.

Shepherd: *(with a little bow)* You're welcome. *(Straightening up)* But I just have to say this—it's not nice to wake someone up when they're sleeping! Am I right? I mean, we've all been there, right? It's better to wake up nice and slowly—stretch out a little, see what the day has in store for you. But when you are startled out of sleep—I mean, can you blame me for being a little confused? There I was, tending to my flock and out of nowhere an *Angel of the Lord* just shows up in the field! To speak to *me*? I think we can all understand my surprise! If I had it to do all over again, I would've been much more impressive, I assure you, but what can you do? The Lord works in mysterious ways, I suppose. *(Starts to exit, then stops and turns back to Storyteller)* But it was pretty cool that I had a personal invitation from God himself to meet his newborn son. Am I right?

Storyteller: You certainly are.

Shepherd: That's what I thought. *(Exits)*

Storyteller: *(to audience)* Sorry about that, guys. *(Flips through book)* Now, where was I? *(Finds page)* Ah yes. Here I am. *(Reads)*

His journey was long, but when he arrived.
The most wondrous sight awaited his eyes.
The Christ child in the manger did lay
Surrounded by animals, asleep in the hay.
The shepherd knelt down and began to pray
And gave thanks to God for this miraculous day.
Now in the East a bright star proclaimed the good news
So three wise men set out to find this King of the Jews.

Lights down on Storyteller and up on center stage where Balthasar, Melchoir and Gaspar enter. They each carry a small box or bottle. Melchoir carries a map.

Balthasar: What a bright star! I have never seen such a sight. No one but God himself could have put such a star in the sky.

Gaspar: Herod will be so pleased when we reach our destination and send word of the Christ child.

Melchoir: Are we there yet?

Balthasar: Of course, we're not there yet! We've just begun our journey.

Melchoir: Do you guys realize how far away Bethlehem is?

Balthasar: Whatever do you mean, Melchoir?

Melchoir: *(opens up a map)* Check out this map. You see this spot right here?

Gaspar: Yes.

Melchoir: That's where we are right now.

Balthasar: Okay.

Melchoir: And do you see this spot waaaaayyyy over here?

Gaspar: Yes.

Melchoir: That's where we're going.

Balthasar: So?

Melchoir: So, our feet are going to be *very* sore when we get there!

Gaspar: We have camels, Melchoir.

Melchoir: Well then, the *camels'* feet are going to be very sore!

Balthasar: I'm afraid I don't see the problem, Melchoir.

Gaspar: This is the one true king we are talking about. I would travel any distance to see him and to honor him.

Balthasar: I agree. No matter how far away, or how long it takes us to get here, I will offer my gifts and praises to the new king.

Melchoir: I guess you're right.

Balthasar: Does everyone have the special offerings they brought from their land?

Gaspar: Yes. I have gold. *(Holds up box)*

Balthasar: I have frankincense. *(Holds up bottle)*

Melchoir: And I have myrrh.

Balthasar: Very good.

They begin to exit.

Melchoir: Well I guess we better be on our way, otherwise this kid is going to be five years old before we lay eyes on him.

Balthasar: *(turning to Gaspar)* Will he ever stop complaining?

Gaspar: *(looking up to the sky)* God willing.

Melchoir: Are we there yet?

Lights dim on scene and come up on Storyteller.

Storyteller: *(reading)* Many months later, the wise men arrived.
Their journey was long, but their spirits revived
At the sight of this mother and her sweet baby boy
They finally felt peace, understanding, and joy.
They gave him their gifts, then fell down in praise
Then returned to their homes, traveling a different way.

Stands as lights also up on scene where Mary sits on bench, holding baby doll. Joseph stands behind her with his hand on her shoulder. Shepherd stands on the other side of Mary. Wise Men stand outside of scene, on stage right while Gabriel and Angel stand outside of scene, stage left. All look at baby.

Storyteller: *(reading)* 'Twas the night before Christmas, the birth of our Lord
The most wonderous story that's ever been told.
When a group of God's chosen came from all over the land
To a praise the little Christ child in old Bethlehem.

Crossing to stand next to Nativity scene.

Now this is our end. Or is it the beginning?
Of a story that teaches our reason for living.
On this special day of holiday cheer
Take a moment to remember why we've all gathered here.
It's not about presents, it's not about trees
It's not about ribbons, it's not about wreaths.
It's about the most precious gift that God gave us that night.
The gift of his son, to make the world right.

Crossing to center stage.

So, thanks for listening to all I had to say
About what happened that night which is now Christmas Day.
Now one last thing before they turn out the lights...

All: Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

Storyteller closes book. Lights dim. End of scene.