

ADAPTABLE TEACHING RESOURCES



THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTMAS

A journey through advent
for churches & families

LESSON 2:

JOSEPH'S ADVENTURE

Matthew 1:18-25



faith  kids

The Adventure of Christmas

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes use the New International Version.

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'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)

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Joseph's Adventure

MATTHEW 1:18-25



Big Idea:

Jesus is God's son coming to save us from our sins.



Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who lovingly welcome the Saviour God has sent.



Preparation

Prepare your heart first. Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going?** and **Look at the Passage** to give you a better understanding of the passage and the **Big Idea**. Spend some time thinking through **Win my heart first** and **Questions for my heart** to see how this makes a difference to your life.

Prepare your lesson. Read the lesson plan for the age group you will be teaching. Use sections from a

different age group if they are better suited to your children. Keep the **Big Idea** in your mind to help you teach it clearly in every part of your lesson. Use the blank **Lesson Template** to plan the different sections. Collect/draw/print/make what you need.

Pray for the children in your group to grasp the **Big Idea** and to live it out in their lives. Remember that you have the Holy Spirit's help as you teach God's word!



Where are we going?

We're on an adventure to experience the first Christmas with the people who were there. First we met Mary - the mum-to-be of God's promised forever king. Next we meet the dad-to-be, Joseph. Except, there's a spanner in the works; Joseph knew Mary's baby wasn't his.

Joseph was a good and faithful man so he decided to quietly walk away from Mary to keep her from public disgrace. But God wanted Joseph to welcome this baby into his life with open arms. He sent an angel with a

message - Mary's baby is God's son coming to save! Joseph's life completely changed direction based on this news; he no longer walked away from Mary but took her home. Together they welcomed the baby who Joseph named Jesus because he believed what the angel said.

The news Joseph heard is for us too - God's Saviour has come for people like us. This Christmas, let's lovingly welcome Jesus, our Saviour, with open arms.



Look at the Passage

Back Story v18-19

Matthew's gospel starts like a catch-up reel of a TV program. He gives us the full story of God's family all the way from Abraham to Joseph - the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah (v16)!

Then v18 brings us back to the story of Mary's big news - a pregnancy and a plot twist, through the Holy Spirit! Joseph, a faithful and obedient man, was stuck. He wanted to do what was right according to God's law but he also wanted to protect Mary. He made the hard decision to quietly walk away. A divorce was necessary, despite only being engaged, because the arrangement included a legal binding contract that needed to be formally broken.

Big Story v20-23

Joseph has his strangest dream ever. He sees an angel who confirms that Mary's baby really was from the Holy Spirit. Not only was this baby going to be

king, he was also going to save his people from their sins. This unexpected baby was actually the long-awaited fulfilment of God's centuries-old promises, such as the one given to King Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14 (as quoted in v23). At this time, as so often throughout Old Testament history, God's people had rejected him and were facing his righteous judgement. But God, in his grace, promised them salvation instead of destruction. Now that salvation arrives in human form - Immanuel. God comes to his people to live with them and save them.

New Story v24-25

A new dawn, a new day, a new direction for Joseph. He trusted God's word. He set aside his own plans and reputation to welcome God's Saviour. How do we know Joseph really believed the message from the angel? He called the baby 'Jesus'. He recognised this child as the one who would save his people from their sins.



Win my heart first

Joseph faced a crushing disappointment - apparently Mary wasn't who he thought she was. Hearing that she was pregnant must have felt like being punched in the gut. But wonderfully, Joseph's fears were unfounded. What felt like bad news was actually the best news ever. God was doing exactly what Joseph - and all God's people - most needed.

Hearing that we need a Saviour is a punch in the gut to our self-righteousness. Who likes being told that they are in a mess of their own making that they are powerless to fix? The coming of this Saviour is good news. But it will only feel that way when we are

willing to admit that we are sinners. Only those in danger need a rescuer. Welcoming the baby Saviour cost Joseph and Mary their respectable reputation in society. Welcoming Jesus as our Saviour means letting go of the illusion of our own goodness and facing up to our sin. That might feel like bad news, but it opens the door to the best news ever.

Christmas is busy and it's easy to be preoccupied with the things that we must do. Welcoming Jesus as our Saviour means taking time to focus our attention away from ourselves and onto him, grateful for what he has done for us.



Questions for my heart

Welcoming his Saviour cost Joseph an easy life and a good public reputation. What does acknowledging

Jesus as your Saviour cost you? What makes it worth the cost?



All-Welcome Service

The table below outlines a plan to teach this lesson to the whole church gathering - adults and children, Christians and unbelieving guests together.

It includes short sections of engaging visual drama to tell the story, interactive discussions, songs and prayers. It is designed for use when children will be in for the whole service, rather than leaving for their own Sunday School groups.

There are also highlighted moments where brief 'mini-sermons' can be included if you want to add more.

Aim for each of these 'mini-sermon' slots to be 5 minutes or less. Be visually engaging and use short sentences to hold children's attention. Remember to address everyone (adults, children, guests etc.) so that they understand the passage and can see how it makes a difference to their daily lives.

If the children will be leaving for their own activities, you can instead use the script as a **Bible Story Idea** to introduce the Bible passage (either as a Kids Slot in the service or at the start of the Sunday School lesson). To do this, omit the sections highlighted in blue.



Helpers Needed

Volunteers to act as Joseph and the angel.



Props

Costumes for Joseph and the angel, a sparkly game show host outfit, table with the game show objects (toaster, blender, hairbrush, floor brush, paint brush, hole punch, highlighter, laminator - cover each object with a cloth/tea towel), sweets, a doll, a superhero cape and eye mask to put on the doll.



Make in advance

PowerPoint slide with the game name (What is it called? What does it do?), large sticky label with 'JESUS' written on it, a large piece of card with 'SIN' written on it, photocopy the worksheet for the congregation or make the following PowerPoint slides - Illustration (see Appendix) and 'Did You Spot It?' questions, 'Work It Out' questions, 'Live It Out' questions.



What to Say

Welcome! We're in for a treat this morning as we set off on a Christmas adventure to hear Joseph's story. But first, we are going to take part in an amazing family game show!

Welcome to... 'What is it called? What does it do?'

Applause please!

We're going to play in two teams - Team Joseph and Team Angel.

I am going to hand an object to your team captain who will display it enthusiastically. All you have to do is put your hand up and tell me... 'What is it called?'

And a very tricky follow up question... 'What does it do?'



What to Do

Put on the game show host outfit and get into character - cheesy, jazz hands, big personality game show host!

[Put up the PowerPoint slide of the game show name.]

Divide your congregation in half - have your actors lead their sides.

continued →



What to Say



What to Do

Here we go with object 1 for Team Joseph - hands up if you know the answers to...

- What is it called?
- What does it do?

Well done - it's a toaster and it makes toast!

Reveal the toaster and hand it to Joseph to display.

For each turn, take answers from the crowd and award points for participation/correct answers.

Now for Team Angel - here is your object...

- What is it called?
- What does it do?

Yes! It's a blender - and it blends things - amazing!

Reveal the blender and hand it to the angel to display.

It's time for a more exciting challenge - the multiple objects round! Team Joseph, you will be shown 3 objects from one of the following categories - stationery or brushes.

You got brushes! Can you answer the same questions for your 3 objects...

- What is it called?
- What does it do?

It's a hairbrush - it brushes hair. It's a floor brush - it brushes the floor. And finally it's a paintbrush - it brushes the paint. Truly amazing!

Reveal the brush objects and announce the category.

Joseph displays the objects.

Keep awarding points. Hand out sweets in this round.

Now Team Angel - you're left with everyone's favourite category - stationery!

Can you answer the same questions for your 3 objects...

- What is it called?
- What does it do?

It's a hole punch - it punches holes. It's a highlighter - it highlights and finally we have a laminator which laminates!

Reveal the stationery objects.

The angel displays the objects.

Keep awarding points and sweets.

You are very good at this game! Maybe you have spotted that the name of the object tells you what the object does.

In today's Bible passage, we'll hear that the name of a baby tells us what the baby will do. Listen carefully to find out the answers.

Read Matthew 1:18-21.

continued →



What to Say



What to Do

Get the congregation talking to one another using the 'Did You Spot It?' questions:

- What was Joseph planning to do when he heard Mary was pregnant?
- What was Joseph told to call the baby?
- What does the baby's name tell us he will do?



[PowerPoint slide of Illustration and 'Did You Spot It?' questions or use the worksheet.]

Wow! It sounds like Joseph was going through quite a stressful situation. We think getting ready for Christmas can be stressful but he had just found out that Mary, the woman he was going to marry, was having a baby. And Joseph knew he wasn't the dad.

Forget Christmas being cancelled - Joseph's wedding and future hopes just got cancelled.

Poor Joseph. He was frazzled and heartbroken as he went to bed.

Joseph looks sad, yawns and lies down.

But as he slept an angel visited him with a message from God!

Angel: 'Do not be afraid, the baby is God's baby. Call him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.'

Angel appears next to Joseph and speaks while Joseph stares in amazement.
Angel and Joseph leave the scene.

Did you notice that the angel answered the questions from the game? Let's play a bonus round - everyone can play!

Can you answer the 2 questions about the baby?

- What is it called?
- What does it do?

The baby will be called Jesus.
And he will save people.

Take answers and give out sweets.

Hold up a doll and stick the 'JESUS' label to it.

Put the superhero cape and eye mask on the doll.

Did you know the name Jesus means 'He saves'?

The clue to what he does is in his name. Just like a toaster toasts, a highlighter highlights and a blender blends - a saviour saves!

Let's do some actions to help us remember that Jesus saves...

What was he called? JESUS.

What will he do? SAVE.

Hold up some of the objects from the game.

Add actions for people to copy:

Jesus - point up.

Saves - superhero pose.

continued →



What to Say



What to Do

Jesus came to save us from sin.
Sin means living without God – living as if we’re in charge, as if we don’t need him. Sin is a big problem that we all have.
The bad news is that we can’t fix it ourselves. We need God to put it right. That’s why he sent Jesus.

The best news is that Jesus came to save us from a life without God. We need Jesus because only he can give us a life with God who loves us, forgives us, helps us and gives us peace!

Suggested sermon slot #1: Explain the Big Idea (Jesus is God’s son coming to save us from our sins).

Get people talking to one another using the ‘Work It Out’ questions:

- Do you think it was easy or hard for Joseph to welcome Jesus into his life? Why?
- Why do we need to be saved from our sin?



Let’s sing about Jesus who is the Super Saviour!

Song:

- Super Saviour by Colin Buchanan (Super Saviour album. Find the actions and lyrics in this [video](#))

Jesus is the Saviour who can save us from our sin.
He is a promised baby who is God with us.

Joseph’s life was changed – he married Mary and welcomed the baby with open arms.

Joseph: ‘I did what God said. I called him Jesus. I welcomed God’s Saviour.’

Suggested sermon slot #2: Apply the Big Idea. We want people to lovingly welcome Jesus – the Saviour God has sent.

Get people talking to one another using the ‘Live It Out’ questions:

- Do you agree that you need saving? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus is worth welcoming as your Saviour?



Joseph enters the scene.

Hand the ‘SIN’ sign to Joseph.

Hand the doll to Joseph and take away the ‘SIN’ sign.

[Powerpoint slide of ‘Work It Out’ questions or use the worksheet.]

Angel and Joseph join you to lead the actions.

Do the actions – point up and superhero pose.

Shake hands and congratulate Joseph who holds the doll like a baby.

Joseph holds the doll close.

[Powerpoint slide of the ‘Live It Out’ questions or use the worksheet.]

continued →



What to Say



What to Do

This Christmas we can stand with Joseph and hear the good news of the Saviour Jesus. We can either walk away or welcome him with open arms.

Joseph chose to come close and welcome the Saviour into his everyday life. He knew that God was with him and that God would save him. That changed everything for Joseph. God sent Jesus to do the same for us. Will you welcome Jesus as your Saviour this Christmas?

Joseph stands beside you while holding the doll. Act out walking away, then act out receiving the doll with open arms.

Pray to close.

Pray: Ask a family to lead the prayers.

Sing a family friendly song your congregation knows well or try:

- O Come all ye Faithful (Christmas carol)



Lesson Overview



Get Going



Teaching Time



Brain Break



Heart & Hands



Get Going

Focus the children's attention on the theme of the session using a game or activity. Light, not manic, so that the children can be calm afterwards, with their minds ready.



Teaching Time

Teach the key content of the lesson in an engaging way to clearly point to the **Big Idea**. If you have used the **Bible Story Idea** already, you may not need to cover the whole story again. If not, you can adapt it to use here with your group or tell the story in another way, perhaps using the suggestions below. Use a suitable Bible translation for your age group - we use the International Children's Bible which can be found online at www.biblegateway.com. However you do this **Teaching Time**, conclude with a simple explanation of the **Big Idea**.



Brain Break

A chance to rest the children's minds before **Heart and Hands**. Get children moving. Finish by linking the activity to the **Big Idea** so that this time serves the Bible story.



Heart & Hands

Small group discussion:

The vital chance for the children to reflect on the story, so that its truths impact their hearts. They do most of the talking, not the leader - ask multiple children the same question; give each child an opportunity to respond to what they have heard today. The questions will lead the children to see how their heads (thoughts), hearts (feelings) and hands (actions) are shaped by the Bible story through the work of the Spirit.



Get Going



Under 7's

What Do They Do?

You will need: an illustrated children's Bible, pictures (printed or in books) or toy figures whose name/job title tells you what they do e.g. Bob the Builder, Dora the Explorer, a firefighter or a teacher.

Go through the different characters. First ask if the

children know what the person is called and then ask what they do. Talk about how their name tells us what they do. Show a picture of Jesus from the illustrated Bible. Ask the children if they know that Jesus' name tells us what he will do. Can any of them guess what his name means?

Link: In today's story, we find out that Jesus' name tells us what he will do – he will save people from their sins.



Over 8's

The Clue is in the Name

You will need: objects that have a name that describes their function (e.g. pencil sharpener, highlighter, hole punch, glue stick, paintbrush, rubber) and a bag.

Put the items in the bag – ask the children to pull one out and tell you what it is called and what it does.

If the children need to burn off some energy then put the items on the other side of the room. One at a time, ask them to run to get the object you ask for, bring it back and tell you what it does.

Explain that each object has a name that tells you what it does. Can they think of any more objects like that?

Link: In Joseph's Christmas adventure, he is told what to call the baby. The baby's name tells us what he does – he saves.



Teaching Time



Under 7's

You will need: tea towels (enough for your whole group to wear one each on their head), a play figure wrapped in foil as an angel, a baby doll (dress it in a superhero outfit – a cape and a big 'J' on its chest – then wrap it up in a blanket so the outfit is hidden).

Meet Joseph

Explain that you are joining Joseph for his Christmas adventure. Hand out tea towels to wear.

Ask your group to act out how they think Joseph looked when the following things happened to him – e.g. did he look happy, sad or shocked?

- Joseph was going to marry Mary. *Happy and smiling.*
- Mary was having a baby – but it wasn't Joseph's baby. *Shocked.*
- Joseph was going to cancel the wedding. *Sad.*
- Joseph went to bed – he had a lot to think about. *Lie down and pretend to sleep.*

Meet the Angel

Bring out the angel play figure to 'wake up' the Josephs. Explain that an angel visited Joseph with a message. Read Matthew 1:20-21. Ask them how they think Joseph felt when he heard these things...

continued →

- He could marry Mary – she was telling the truth about the baby being God’s son. *Happy and smiling.*
- He was given a name for the baby – Jesus. *Confused – maybe he wanted to call him Joe Junior!*
- The baby’s name tells us what he will do – he will save his people! *Surprised/amazed.*

Meet the Baby

Hold up the doll in the blanket. Explain that the angel gave Joseph a special name for the baby.

- His name would be Jesus.
- ‘Jesus’ means ‘God saves’.
- Jesus came to save his people from their sin.
- Explain that Joseph did what the angel said. He

- married Mary and the baby was born.
- What do you think Joseph called the baby?

Let each little Joseph hold the baby and say what his name means. Then, unwrap the blanket to show the baby in the superhero outfit. Explain that God sent Jesus to save his people from their sin. Ask the children if they know what sin is and why it is a problem.

Sin is living without God. It’s when we say ‘No’ to God and do what we want instead. The bad news is that everyone has a sin problem. The best news is that God sent us his son Jesus to save us from our sin!

Finish by talking about how, like Joseph, we all need to welcome Jesus into our lives and trust him to save us.



You will need: an A5 sheet of card and pen for each child, a baby name book or a device for looking up name meanings (or find out the meanings for the names of the children in your group before the lesson), printouts of the passage and highlighters.

Get each child to fold their A5 sheet in half to make a landscape card and to write their name on the front. Talk about how names have meanings. Find the meaning for each child’s name so they can write theirs on their name card.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Hand out the printouts and highlighters and divide your group into 2 – one to highlight everything about Joseph and the other to highlight everything the Angel said.

Each group chooses a representative to be ‘in the hot seat’ and to answer the following:

- Joseph, what were you planning to do at the start?
- Angel, what did you tell Joseph about marrying Mary?
- Joseph, what were you told to call the baby?
- Angel, what does the baby’s name mean?

- Joseph, what did you do after the angel visited you?
- Angel, who is this baby? (They may need a hint! Look at v23!)

Explain that the name ‘Jesus’ means ‘God saves.’ His name tells us **why he came** and **what he will do**. He’s called ‘God saves’ – because he is God who came to save.

- Get the children to write ‘Jesus’ and what his name means on the back of their name card.

Use a name card to show them that Jesus (show Jesus’ name) came as a saviour for us too (turn the card to show the child’s name). Talk about why we need Jesus to save us from our sin. Can they explain what sin is?

- *Sin is living without God. It’s when we say ‘No’ to God and do what we want instead. The bad news is that everyone has a sin problem. The best news is that God steps into the world to save us from living without him. He gives us a way to be forgiven so we can have a relationship with him.*

Remind them that Joseph was going to walk away from Mary but in the end he welcomed the baby. He believed he was who the angel said – God who came to save. If we believe that too then we will also welcome Jesus into our lives.



Brain Break



Under 7's

& Over 8's



Dodgeball Rescue

You will need: lightweight balls (e.g. ball pit or foam balls).

Choose a 'rescuer' and 2 'throwers'. Get the rest of the children to line up on one side of the room. The 'throwers' stand half-way across the room, at

the edges - like in a game of dodgeball. When the children run from one side of the room to the other, the throwers roll balls back and forth to each other to get the runners out. If a child is hit, they must stand still and call out 'I need to be saved!' They can carry on running when the 'rescuer' has set them free.

 **Link:** We needed to be saved to keep playing the game. The angel told Joseph that baby Jesus would come to save people from their biggest problem - sin. That's why we all need Jesus to save us.



Heart and Hands



Under 7's

Craft time -

Make a Superhero Jesus Decoration

You will need: printouts of craft sheet A (1 sheet/4 children), 1 wooden peg for each child (use pegs with a metal spring mechanism), glue stick/double sided tape, scissors, string and coloured pens/crayons.

Prepare in advance: cut out the pieces on the craft sheet for younger children.

Step-by-step craft pictures can be found on page 16.

Give each child a superhero strip and a 'Jesus Saves' rectangle. They colour in the superheroes and draw themselves in both squares of the 'Jesus Saves' rectangle (Fig. 1).

Fold the strip and the rectangle on the dotted lines so they are double sided.

Attach the string to the peg - either feed string through the centre of the metal spring or if the string is too thick then place it inside the opened peg as far as it will go, close the peg and tie a knot so the string

is secure when the peg is opened. Tie the ends of the string to make a loop to hang the decoration (Fig. 2).

Place glue/double sided tape along both flat sides of the peg. Stick the superhero strip to the peg so that you squeeze the 'foot' ends together to make the 'hands' come apart. The children can squeeze the peg open and place the 'Jesus Saves' rectangle between the superhero's hands (Fig. 3). As they do this, talk about how Jesus is the ultimate superhero because he can save us from our sin. Use this craft time to reinforce the **Big Idea** of the lesson to get them ready for **Think Time**.

Think Time

Big Question: What was the baby called?

A follow up question: What did he come to do?

Prayer

Dear Father God, thank you for sending Jesus. Please help us to welcome him as the Saviour we need. Amen.

Say together: Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to save us. Amen.

continued →



Over 8's

These questions can mostly be found on the worksheet which has been designed to aid your discussion. If possible, enlarge the page to A3 so you can work on it together. Make sure each child can still answer the personal questions honestly for themselves (e.g. hand out Post-it notes for them to write/draw their answers to these questions).

Did you spot it?

- What was Joseph planning to do when he heard Mary was pregnant?
- What was Joseph told to call the baby?
- What does the baby's name tell us he will do?

Work it out

- Do you think it was easy or hard for Joseph to welcome Jesus into his life? Why?
- Why do we need to be saved from our sin?

Live it out

- Do you agree that you need saving? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus is worth welcoming as your Saviour?

Extra Stretch

- Joseph chose to stay, marry Mary and be Jesus' dad on earth. What can we learn from his response?
- The angel quoted the book of Isaiah that was

written about 700 years before Jesus was born. God had always planned to send his son to save his people. How does this encourage you, surprise you or challenge you?

Prayer

How should we respond to the news of the Saviour God sent to save us? What will thankfulness look like in our lives? What will welcoming Jesus (for the first time or every day) look like in your life? Pray about that.

Craft Time

Make a Superhero Jesus Decoration. Use the craft if you have time available after your discussion.

You will need: printouts of craft sheet B (1 sheet/4 children), 1 wooden dolly peg for each child, glue stick/double sided tape/glue dots, scissors, string and coloured pens.

Step-by-step craft pictures can be found below.

Give each child a superhero cape, J logo and shorts strip to colour in and cut out. Cut on the vertical line at the front of the shorts. Give them each a wooden dolly peg (Fig. 1).

Draw a face with a superhero mask on it onto the head of the peg. Colour in the body to be a superhero outfit. Use the adhesive to attach the cape, logo and shorts to the peg (Fig. 2).

Loop the string in a figure of 8 around the 'waist' and between the 'legs' of the superhero, then tie the knot at the back so it hangs horizontally. Tie the string ends to make a loop to hang the decoration (Fig. 3).



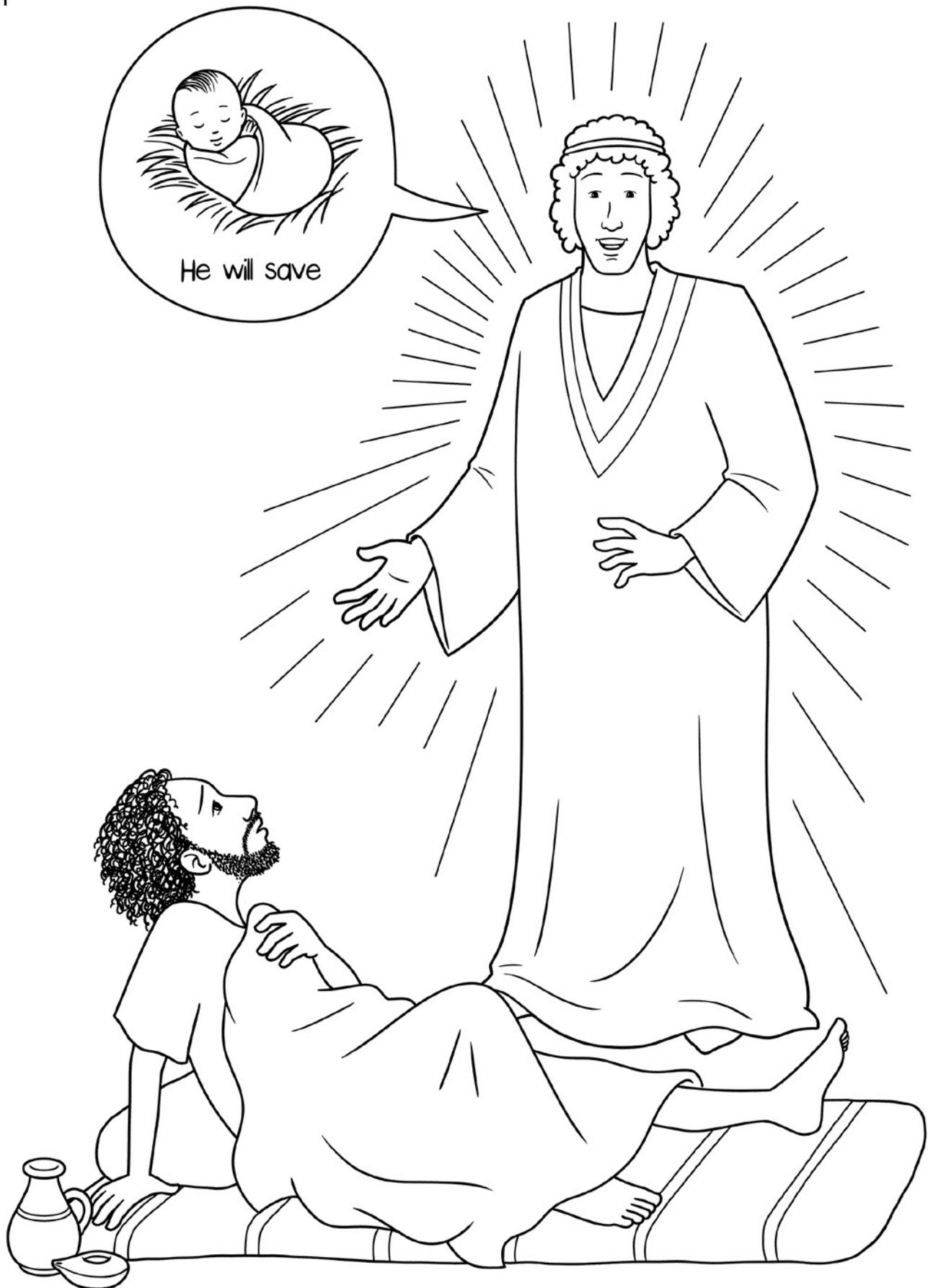
Fig. 1



Fig. 2

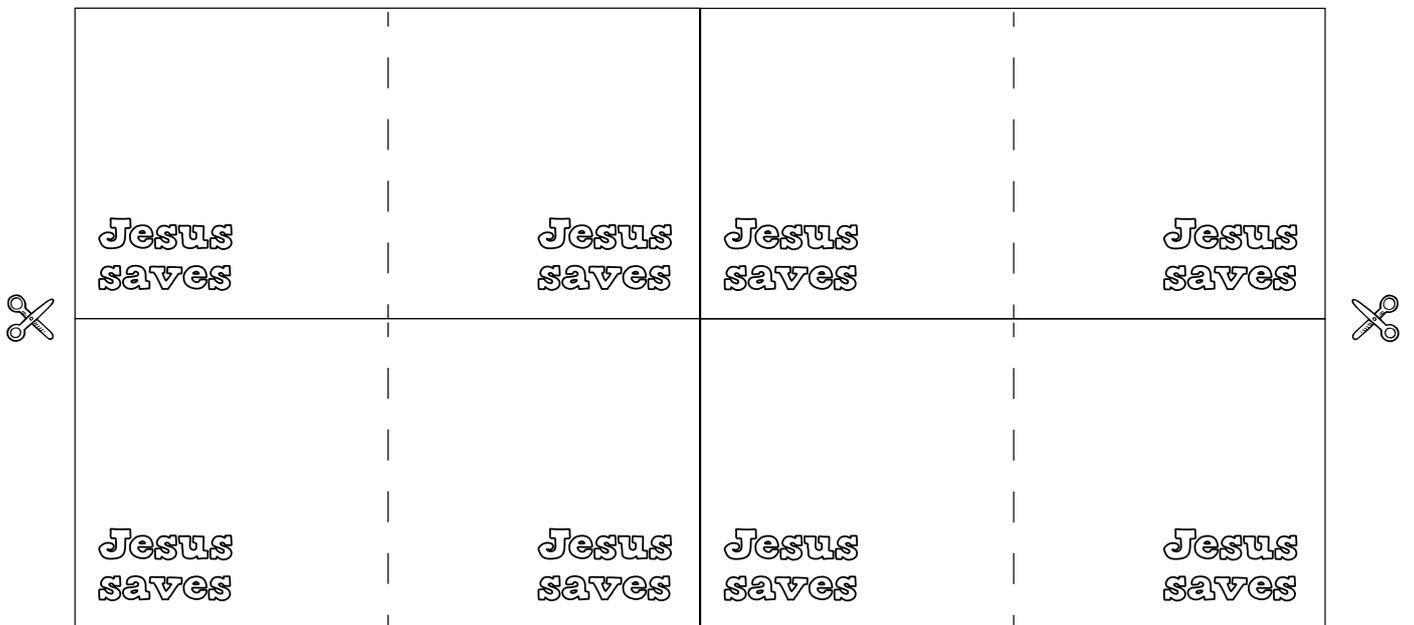
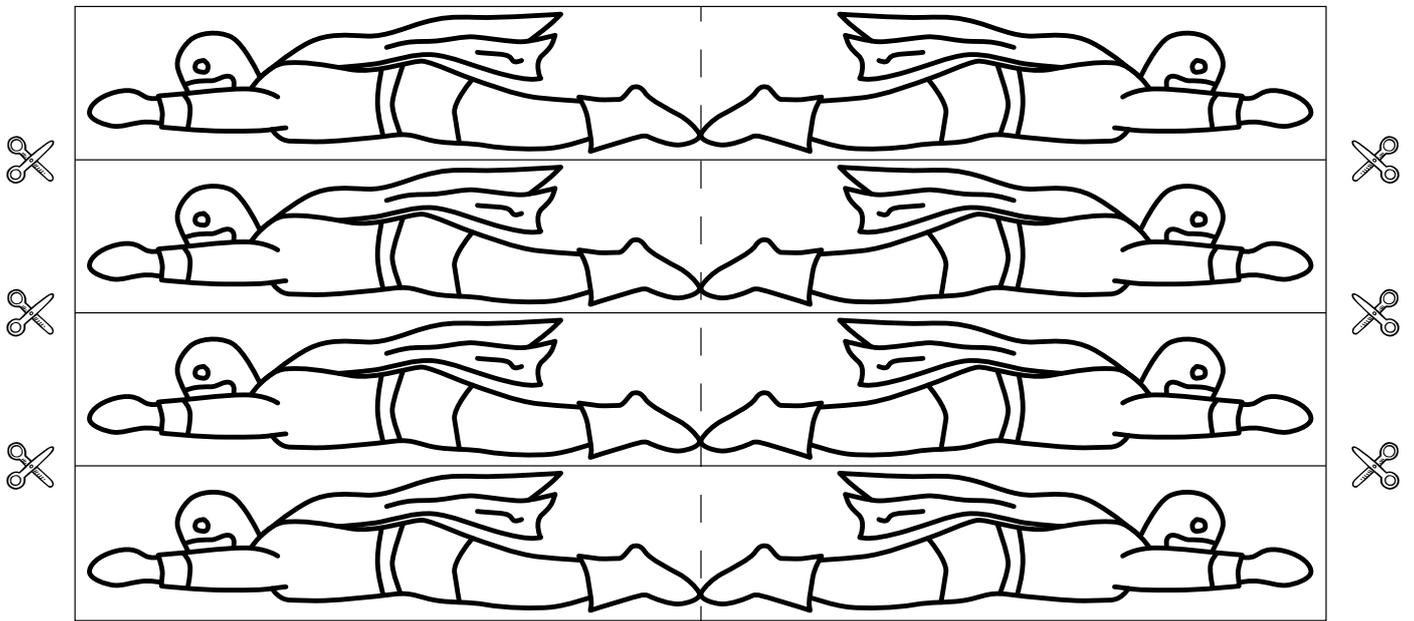


Fig. 3

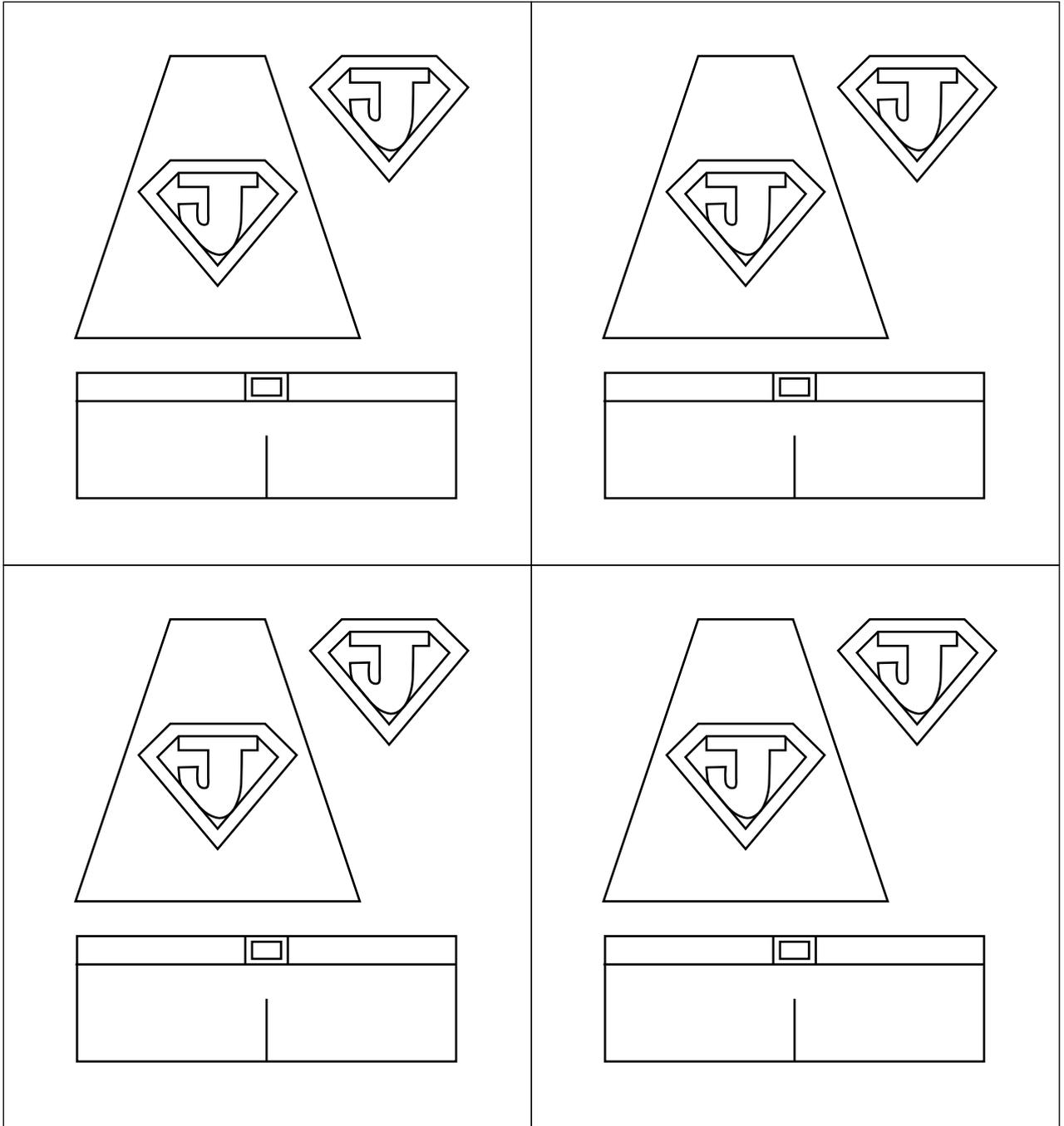


While Joseph thought about this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit."

A



B





Planning for Sunday

TEMPLATE



Big Idea & Aim

Passage:

Big Idea:

Aim:



Get Going

Introductory Idea:

➡ **Link:** What is the link between this activity and the **Big Idea**?



Teaching Time

Story with explanation:

➡ **Key Message:** What is the one idea that you want the children to understand? What's the aim?



Brain Break

Game:

➡ **Link:** What is the link between the game and the **Big Idea**?



Heart & Hands

Small Group Discussion
(applying the truth to their lives)

➡ **Live It Out.** Apply the point.



Did you Spot it? Remember the events.

Pray:



Work it Out. Understand the logic.

Linked activity (craft/game):



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