

A NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM!

Type: Christmas Skit for Youth

Length: 15 minutes (without optional Christmas Carols.)

Characters: Mary Mother of the baby JESUS
Joseph Mary's husband and protector
Innkeeper Innkeeper in Bethlehem
3 Shepherds Three shepherds who saw the angels in Bethlehem
3 Wise Men Three wise men who traveled to Bethlehem

Description: The actors tell the story of Baby JESUS' birth in Bethlehem from the point of view of the characters they portray. They are obvious about being actors and playing their parts. They introduce themselves to the audience and finish putting on their costumes before doing their parts. In general they pose the question "What would it have been like if you had been there on that Night in Bethlehem? What would you have seen or heard?" Then they try to answer those questions.

Setting: Ancient Israel.

Costumes: Should resemble costumes from ancient Israel. (Robes, large pieces of fabric tied at waist, sandals or bare feet, and pieces of fabric for head coverings.) Mary may have a pillow for part of the play in order to appear to be expecting a baby. Shepherds may have shepherd's crook. Kings may have crowns and gifts.

Lights: Lights and spotlights on stage.

Sound: Microphones to pick up conversations at CENTERSTAGE, STAGE LEFT and STAGE RIGHT. Consider individual microphones for main characters: Check MARY, JOSEPH, and INNKEEPER.

Optional: Middle Eastern Music to play over speakers as sound cues.

Props: Manger
Gifts (representing gold, frankincense, and myrrh)
Baby Doll (to represent Baby Jesus)

Optional: Sawhorse, hammer, saw and/or tool belt for Joseph

Slides: You may wish to project slides of the various scripture verses. In the script, all of the Bible Verses quoted are underlined.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: During the skit, groups of actors are positioned in a rough circle onstage. (*Think of it like a clock face, when looking down at the stage from above.*) As the scenes change the groups move in a clockwise fashion, bringing one group after another to the front of the stage to speak to the audience. (*For Example: In Scene #1, MARY is at 6 o'clock, the KINGS are at 9, the SHEPHERDS are at 12, the INNKEEPER is at 2 o'clock, and JOSEPH is at 4.*)

This works well and keeps everyone onstage for most of the skit. However, if a choir is to be onstage in between scenes, then you may have to alter this and allow the characters to come and go offstage as necessary. *Please use your own discretion to meet your staging needs!*

A Night in Bethlehem!

[STAGE IS EMPTY EXCEPT FOR A SAWHORSE AT STAGE LEFT.]

[HOUSE LIGHTS DOWN. SPOTLIGHT on Mary, other LIGHTS are LOW.]

[MARY ENTERS from STAGE RIGHT and crosses to CENTER FRONT. She is in costume, but carries a portion of her costume with her, as if she is putting on the finishing touches. She addresses the audience at first as herself and then gradually “puts on” the character of Mary.]

SCENE #1 - INTRODUCTION

MARY

Good evening everyone and welcome to “A Night in Bethlehem!” My name is (first name). And I’m a ___ grader here at _____ (church name). In tonight’s production, I play the part of The Virgin Mary. This is my costume, and it’s supposed to be like what people wore about 2000 years ago in a country called Israel.

Israel is on the other side of the world. And that’s where the baby Jesus was born all those years ago, in a little town called Bethlehem. And you know what? Bethlehem is STILL there today!

Oh, it looks different now, of course. Instead of clothes like I’m wearing, now they wear things like blue jeans and t-shirts. They have smart phones and the Internet just like we do. But tonight we’re going to recreate Bethlehem just like it might have been on a special night a long time ago.

[MARY finishes putting on her costume during this next line]

The night when Jesus, the Son of God, was born to a virgin... To Mary ... To... ME! (*Giggles.*)

[MUSIC UP - MODERATELY LOUD; LIGHTS ONSTAGE - FADE UP.]

[MARY takes a step or two back talking louder and louder over the music.]

What would it have been like? On that night over 2000 years ago, on the other side of the world, in another country, in a little town called Bethlehem?

Let’s find out together as we journey back to.... A NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM!!

[MUSIC UP LOUD!]

[ALL CAST MEMBERS run ONSTAGE and FREEZE in assigned positions. MARY stays at CENTER FRONT. JOSEPH is at STAGE LEFT FRONT. (If looking down on the stage as if it is a clock face, Mary is at 6 o’clock, Kings are at 9 o’clock, Shepherds are at 12, Innkeeper is at 2, and Joseph is at 4 o’clock.)]

[MUSIC OFF - ABRUPTLY!]

SCENE #1 (continues) – MARY

MARY

About 2000 years ago, Mary... *(correcting herself)*... I mean, "I"... was a young girl in Israel. And I was engaged to be married to a wonderful man, who lived in our hometown of Nazareth. His name was Joseph.

[SPOTLIGHT UP on JOSEPH.]

[MARY indicates JOSEPH. JOSEPH is now UNFROZEN and begins to saw or hammer silently.]

Joseph was a carpenter. Isn't he cute?

[JOSEPH looks up at MARY, smiles, and then keeps on sawing. As MARY starts talking again, JOSEPH FREEZES.]

One day before Joseph and I were married, an angel of the Lord appeared to me and said... *(imitating the angel)* "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Well, I had NO IDEA what he was talking about, and I was pretty terrified by seeing this angel. But then he said, "Don't be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." I felt better after he said that. Somehow I didn't feel afraid anymore.

Then he went on to tell me that I was going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. He said that I was to give the baby the name Jesus. After that he told me that he would be great and be called the Son of the Most High.

The angel also said that "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

(Misty) That all sounded so wonderful... I felt really at peace... *(direct)* I just had one question!

(As if addressing angel) "Uh, excuse me... Mr. Angel, sir... uh... *(pointedly)* How?"

And this is what the angel said: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Well, that didn't seem too bad... In fact, that sounded pretty wonderful! So I found myself saying to him, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

And, then, the angel left me. But I never forgot. I always remembered what the angel had said.

END of SCENE #1

CAROL #1 – OPTIONAL

SCENE #2 - JOSEPH

[MUSIC UP.]

[As MUSIC plays, CAST moves around on stage to next position. INNKEEPER carries Joseph's sawhorse off STAGE LEFT and REENTERS. JOSEPH crosses to CENTER FRONT. MARY is at CENTER FRONT just RIGHT of JOSEPH, so she can be seen.]

[MUSIC OFF ABRUPTLY.]

[CAST FREEZES, except for JOSEPH. JOSEPH finishes adjusting his costume as he says his first lines.]

JOSEPH

Hi folks! My name is name. I'm a grader here at . And tonight I'm playing the role of Joseph, the man pledged to be married to Mary.

You may ask yourself, "Dude... What were you thinking? First you are engaged to be married to a beautiful young woman, and then she is found to be pregnant BEFORE your wedding day?" Can you spell SCANDAL? Back then that was really serious...In fact... it could be DEADLY!

So, not wanting anything bad to happen to Mary, I decided to divorce her quietly. Yeah, back then, even if you were just engaged, you had to actually get a DIVORCE to call off a wedding!

Well, one night after I had made up my mind to do this, I had a dream. An angel from God appeared to me in my dream. He said, *(imitating Angel)* "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

That made me feel a lot better right there.

Then the angel went on and said, "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."

When I woke up, I knew that I couldn't divorce Mary - I mean, God was doing something wonderful through her.

[MARY moves next to JOSEPH and JOSEPH puts his arm around her shoulders.]

So I took her into my home to keep her safe. Then all there was to do was to wait until the Son of God would be born!!

[MARY and JOSEPH EXIT STAGE RIGHT. While offstage Mary places pillow so that she appears to be expecting in the next scene.]

END of SCENE #2

CAROL #2 – OPTIONAL

SCENE #3 - The INNKEEPER

[MUSIC UP.]

[As MUSIC plays, CAST moves around on stage to next position. INNKEEPER crosses to CENTER FRONT. When ready, MARY and JOSEPH REENTER at STAGE RIGHT.]

[MUSIC OFF ABRUPTLY.]

[CAST FREEZES, except for INNKEEPER. INNKEEPER finishes putting on his costume as he talks. INNKEEPER may have an East Coast accent, for fun.]

INNKEEPER

Good evening! My name is (name). And I'm a ____ grader here at _____.
Tonight I am playing the role of the Innkeeper in the little town of Bethlehem.

(Very proudly) The Innkeeper is an important part, you know, although he hardly EVER gets the attention he deserves. I'll try to spell it out for you, so that way you can understand.

See, after Mary went to stay with Joseph, a decree was sent out to everyone in Israel that everyone had to return to the town of their ancestors so that they could be counted and TAXED. They didn't have any computers or phones like we do now. So, in order to keep track of everybody, folks had to actually show up somewhere to be counted.

Joseph, Mary's husband, was a descendant of David... KING David. And King David was from MY TOWN!! Bethlehem. So, Joseph had to come all the way to Bethlehem from Nazareth. Mary came with him, and that's when I... the Innkeeper... became the STAR of this show. And, it's when I delivered my now FAMOUS line... *(Clears throat and emphasizes every word)*... "There is no room in the Inn".

Here... watch... I'll show you!

[INNKEEPER turns to face STAGE LEFT and pretends to be cleaning a table with a rag. MARY and JOSEPH cross behind him from STAGE RIGHT to STAGE LEFT, then turn and walk forward to CENTER FRONT to face the INNKEEPER.]

[INNKEEPER is whistling as he wipes table.]

JOSEPH

Excuse me, sir.

INNKEEPER

Name?

JOSEPH

I am Joseph and this is Mary. We need a place to stay for the night... please.

INNKEEPER

Sorry, buddy, but there is... *(Looks at audience)*... “No room in the Inn.” *(Winks at audience)*

[Applause - started by other cast members onstage except for MARY and JOSEPH. INNKEEPER smiles and bows slightly.]

JOSEPH

Oh, but sir, please, we have walked over 70 miles to get here. And Mary is VERY tired.

INNKEEPER

Sorry, pal. I can't help ya. The place is packed! What with all the visitors from out of town, there's no place to put you or the Missus.

JOSEPH

Please, sir...Please. You see, Mary's going to have a baby. We think it may even be tonight. We need shelter somewhere... Anywhere!

INNKEEPER

I see your problem. We all got problems, don't we? I tell you what I'll do. Since it's obvious you have a need here...

[He looks both ways and then leans forward to whisper. MARY and JOSEPH lean forward to listen.]

INNKEEPER

... There's a stable out back...

[MARY and JOSEPH jump at the chance]

INNKEEPER

Now *(calming them)*, it's not much... but it's shelter from the wind and the night air. You can have some privacy. And, I'll throw in some nice, clean hay for ya. What do you say?!

JOSEPH

We'll take it!! And thank you! You have been most kind. God bless you!

[INNKEEPER turns to face the audience. MARY and JOSEPH cross to STAGE RIGHT.]

INNKEEPER

Did ya hear that? “God bless you,” he says. Well, little did I know, God was going to bless everyone on that night: On that special Night in Bethlehem!

[MARY, JOSEPH and INNKEEPER EXIT STAGE RIGHT. Backstage, MARY removes pillow and takes baby doll. INNKEEPER picks up manger. They wait offstage until cue.]

END of SCENE #3

CAROL #3 – OPTIONAL

SCENE #4 - The SHEPHERDS

[MUSIC UP.]

[As MUSIC plays, CAST moves around on stage to next position. SHEPHERDS cross to CENTER FRONT.]

[MUSIC OFF ABRUPTLY.]

[CAST FREEZES, except for SHEPHERDS. The SHEPHERDS arrive as a group, talk as a group and finish each other's sentences. They introduce themselves all at once. SHEPHERD #1 does most of the talking, but he is interrupted often by the other two. Wherever you see the parentheses () or brackets [] a different shepherd speaks.]

SHEPHERDS #1, 2, and 3

Hi there! We're _____, _____, and _____. We're all in _____ grade here at _____. We play shepherds (That's short for sheep herders)...in Bethlehem.

[INNKEEPER, MARY and JOSEPH ENTER from STAGE RIGHT and take up positions at RIGHT FRONT. INNKEEPER sets down manger. MARY puts baby doll in manger. INNKEEPER moves to BACK RIGHT.]

While Mary and Joseph were in the stable that night, the baby Jesus [the Son of God] was born and Mary wrapped Him in cloths [swaddling cloths] and laid Him in the manger [that means a wooden box that holds hay.]

But don't look at us... We didn't know anything about it! [Well, not when it happened anyway.] No, see... we were out in the fields watching over our flock of sheep that night.

And all of a sudden... [An angel]... (An angel from GOD!!)... appeared to us!

[SHEPHERDS ALL hit the dirt - face down on the stage. One by one they peek up to deliver their next line.]

And we were... (terrified!!!!) [But the angel said...]

[One SHEPHERD stands up and imitates angel in a kind and loving way.]

Don't be afraid!

[Other two SHEPHERDS stop trembling, look up, and sit up on their knees looking up at the first SHEPHERD, who is still speaking.]

Don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy [yeah, Good News of great joy!] that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David... [that's Bethlehem]...

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; [He is Christ the Lord!]

SHEPHERDS #1, 2, and 3 (as before)

And this will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

[The SHEPHERDS are no longer frightened. They excitedly tell the rest of the story.]

Yeah! Is that cool or what??!

But that's not all [No, that's not all at all...] Suddenly a whole bunch of angels appeared with the first angel...[And they were all praising God and saying...]

ALL SHEPHERDS

(Solemnly) “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

SHEPHERDS #1, 2, and 3 (as before)

Then the angels left us...And then... [We all looked at each other]... and then we said...

“DUDE! We gotta go see this!!”

Or as it says in the Bible “Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that's happened that the Lord has told us about.”

[ALL SHEPHERDS move towards STAGE RIGHT and see the baby in the manger.]

And so we went...And we found the stable [and the manger]...(And the baby)... just like God had told us!

And afterwards we went into the town of Bethlehem, rejoicing and telling anyone who would listen exactly what had happened. [And we praised and glorified God for all that we had been told and all we had seen.]

ALL SHEPHERDS

What a Night in Bethlehem!!

END of SCENE #4

CAROL #4 - OPTIONAL

SCENE #5 - The 3 KINGS

[MUSIC UP.]

[As MUSIC plays, CAST moves around on stage to next position. SHEPHERDS move to CENTER BACK. MARY and JOSEPH stay at STAGE RIGHT. MARY picks up baby doll and holds it. INNKEEPER picks up the manger, carries it offstage, and then REENTERS. KINGS cross to CENTER FRONT.]

[MUSIC OFF ABRUPTLY.]

[CAST FREEZES, except for KINGS. The KINGS are very stately and poised. They speak like very well educated persons. They do occasionally interrupt each other to give a fact. Where you see parentheses () or brackets [] the script indicates that another KING speaks. They solemnly put on their hats or crowns and adjust their robes just a little bit as they are introducing themselves. They each carry a gift.]

KINGS #1, 2, and 3

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mr. _____, and this is Mr. _____, and Miss _____. We are all _____ graders at _____. And we are, of course, ALL on the high honor roll. This evening we are portraying the three wise men of biblical fame. “Kings” you may call us, although the Bible does not.

[And there is no clear indication that there were three of us. There may have been more (or less for that matter.) But there were clearly three gifts and so tradition has indicated that there were three of us.]

Quite. Thank you.

(And although we may have traveled alone, it is quite likely that there were others in our entourage: Servants, cooks, camel bearers, just to name a few possible others. The scriptures are not specific regarding a number.)

Nevertheless, we arrived in Jerusalem seeking “The One who is born King of the Jews.”

[You see, we’d seen his star in the East and knew that he’d been born! So we came to Israel to find him.]

We applied in Jerusalem first, knowing that the learned men of the Jews resided there. We believed that the most likely place for their king to be born would be in their capital city.

However, when we asked at the city gate, “Where is he who is born king of the Jews?” their Roman ruler [a despicable man named Herod] was quite upset.

[Quite upset, and all Jerusalem with him.]

KINGS #1, 2, and 3 (as before)

But the loathsome Herod was helpful in his own way. He inquired of the Jewish leaders where their promised Messiah was to be born and they indicated that it was to be in the town of Bethlehem!

(Bethlehem! Of course! The ancestral home of their beloved King David! The Messiah was prophesied to be of the house and line of David. Of course He would be born there!)

Yes, thank you.

Then Herod lied to us and told us that he would like to come and worship the newborn king as well. He asked us to come back and tell him when we found the child.

[Terrible man! He had no intention of worshiping the child. He was jealous and did not want Him to live long enough to be king.]

Yes, that's what we found out later...but we are getting ahead of ourselves. We went to Bethlehem...

(Bethlehem means House of Bread... Did you know that?)

Uh, yes... thank you... I did. At any rate we traveled on to Bethlehem. And the star we had seen went on before us and shone down on the place where the young child lived.

[KINGS cross to STAGE RIGHT where MARY and JOSEPH are. KINGS set down presents on cue.]

[We found Him there and we fell to our knees and worshipped Him.]

We also brought gifts. (Three gifts... remember?)

Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

[The gifts, I believe, are now represented by your traditional Christmas gifts.]

Yes, Christmas gifts, very nice... thank you. And after we had delivered our gifts we left to go back home to our own countries. But we did NOT go back through Jerusalem.

[No, not back to Herod... We were warned in a dream NOT to go back his way again.]

Instead we went away in peace, having found the true King of Kings on a Night in Bethlehem.

END of SCENE #5

CAROL #5 - OPTIONAL

SCENE #6 - CONCLUSION

[MUSIC UP and FADES OUT.]

[As MUSIC plays, CAST moves around on stage. MARY, JOSEPH and INKEEPER are at CENTER FRONT. SHEPHERDS at STAGE LEFT, and KINGS at STAGE RIGHT]

MARY

A mother...

JOSEPH

A husband and protector...

INKEEPER

A hero!

SHEPHERDS

Some shepherds out in a field, dude!

KINGS

Wise men [possibly three] (potentially more) from the east.

MARY

We were all there in Bethlehem on a special night.

JOSEPH

We came there to be counted.

SHEPHERDS

We were visited by angels and came to see what had happened.

KINGS

We followed a star and searched for a King.

INNKEEPER

I was there to help some folks in need.

MARY

And I was there to have a baby... the Son of God... the King of Kings! God brought us all together on...

ALL CAST

A Night in Bethlehem!!

[MUSIC UP – MODERATE as ALL CAST takes CURTAIN CALL]

THE END