

# Paperless Christmas

## The Adventures of Mary and Joseph – The Road Movie

### *Episode 4: No room at the inn*

#### Introduction

The following lesson outline offers you a way to work through the story in the video with your class group. There are a variety of possible activities. There are also links to other related videos and to further web resources and books available from Barnabas.

#### Preparation

Download the episode and any associated videos ([www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/](http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/)) in advance so that these are easily accessible to use on a whiteboard during the session. Print off a copy of the Bible story as well as the discussion starters and activity suggestions to be used with small groups.

#### Development

##### 1. First Impressions – [No room at the inn](#)

Play this episode to the class. It tells the story of Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem during the census and looking for somewhere to stay.

Ask the class:

What did you like best about this episode?

What made you smile?

What did you find surprising?

What didn't seem to make sense?

What would you say was happening in this episode?

What adds to the atmosphere of despair in this film, as Joseph and Mary come to the end of their long journey?

What do you think went through their minds when at last they found somewhere to stay?

Which part of this story made the biggest impression on you?

##### 2. Group work – a glimmer of hope

Hand out the following discussion starters to small groups.

- What things do you hope for: for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?
- What sort of things make you feel like giving up hope?
- What situations have you heard of, perhaps on the news, that seem to be totally hopeless?
- What are the characteristics of a hopeful person? Maybe you could sum them up in a four-line poem using each letter of the word 'HOPE' to start each line?
- Have you ever experienced an unexpected glimmer of hope when everything seemed beyond hope?
- What sorts of encouragements help you to keeping hoping, even when things are tough?

Allow ten minutes for this and then ask one child per group to report back on what they talked about and what ideas they came up with.

Play the film clip [O little town of Bethlehem](#), which puts a series of images alongside the words of the carol 'O little town of Bethlehem'. This includes the lines: the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

### 3. The Story in the Bible

Read the Bible story for episode 4. You will find this below in the Contemporary English Version (CEV). There is also an easy-to-read retelling of this story in [The Barnabas Schools' Bible](#), story 247.

Luke 2:4-7

So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's home town, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family. Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Here is a [word search](#) based on this reading.

Talk about the Bible story:

- What is in the Bible story that is not in the video? What is in the video that is not in the Bible story? Does the video help you understand the Bible story better? Which parts of the Bible story do you find puzzling?
- I wonder what it felt like to be turned away from so many guest houses, hotels and inns as the evening wore on, and with Mary almost ready to give birth? I wonder how close they were to giving up hope? I wonder if they prayed to God?

### 4. A Carousel of Group Activities

- From newspapers or from what you have heard in the news headlines on television, make a list of all the troubles of our world at the present time. Now try to match these up as far as you can with different parts of the Christmas story. Can you find any points of contact?
- Consider the following list of 'solutions' to the world's problems:
  - *International peace talks*
  - *Putting war criminals on trial*
  - *A one-minute silence for all innocent victims*
  - *Declaring war on terrorists*
  - *Developing stronger armies and bigger weapons*
  - *Sending out United Nations peacekeeping forces*
  - *A baby in a manger*

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these possible solutions to the world's problems?

- There's a Jewish saying that the birth of a child always brings the possibility of a new beginning. Do you agree? Is this what Christmas is about? But can one life really make a difference?

Another well-known saying is this: 'It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness.' How is this linked to Christmas, do you think?

- Collect together some pictures of the stable scene from Christmas cards, books or the Internet.

Now compare what is being portrayed with what is actually written in Luke 2:1-12. What can you find in the pictures that is not mentioned in Luke? And what is missing that is in the Bible story?

- Print off a picture of the traditional stable scene at Christmas on to a sheet of acetate. Now fix that acetate picture inside a see-through frame so that it can stand upright. Placing a tea light in a holder behind the frame will create your very own backlit nativity scene for the classroom.
- In the video [No room at the inn](#), the angel air freshener spins madly as they pause to think about whether to try for the 'shared garage space'. Was this guidance from God? In what ways do you think God answers prayers and gives people guidance today? What helps you make decisions when you are faced with difficult choices? What guidance do you think Mary and Joseph received?
- The video uses an old garage as a modern setting for the nativity. Draw your own idea of a place in your own city, town or village that would be a modern-day stable for the birth of Jesus, for example, a shed at the bottom of a hotel garden, or a borrowed caravan in a neighbour's backyard.

#### 5. **Classroom Drama Ideas**

Play the video [No room at the inn](#) again and use this as an introduction to prompt some drama exercises:

- Put some 'off-camera' characters in the [word search](#), for example the garage owner – why did he let them stay? The check-point guards – what were they watching out for and what did they make of Joseph and his pregnant passenger?
- In groups of four, take on the roles of members of a family in the other half of the shared garage space. Work out a conversation between yourselves, talking about these last-minute neighbours. Are you sympathetic or annoyed? Maybe you had hoped to use the extra garage space for yourselves? Do your views change when you hear that a baby has been born?

#### 6. **Final reflection questions looking back on the session**

- Isn't Christmas just a way of trying to escape from the hopeless situations of our world, such as war, famine and disease? How can we in all conscience 'eat, drink and be merry' when so many people have so little? What do you think?
- Christmas doesn't seem to have changed much in our world, so what's it all about? Can you give good reasons why Christmas is worth celebrating?
- What keeps you awake with worry at night, when you think about our world?
- In what ways might Christmas give people something to hope for?
- We live in an age of celebrity and media hype. What sort of 'star' does our world need to give it hope?

#### 7. **Further web links and useful Barnabas books**

- [Christmas: the real meaning – assembly idea](#)
- [Christmas: suffering world – assembly idea](#)
- [The Christmas big picture – activity](#)
- [Lesson outline: Mary and Joseph's Journey \(Foundation\)](#)
- [Lesson outline: Jesus is born \(Foundation\)](#)
- [Mary and Joseph's journey \(early years\)](#)
- [Jesus is born \(early years\)](#)

Useful Barnabas books

[Silent Night](#)

[Who's Hiding?](#)

[Countdown to Christmas with Timothy Bear](#)

[Joseph's Story of Christmas](#)

[Our Christmas Play](#)

[Emmanuel... assemblies for Christmas](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays 1](#)

[Nursery Rhyme Nativities](#)

[Bethlehem Carols Unpacked](#)

[Easy Ways to Christmas Plays Volume 2](#)

[Getting Ready for Christmas](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Puppets](#)

[Make & Do Christmas Cards & Crib](#)

[Christmas Make & Do](#)

[Have you seen Christmas?](#)

[The Road to Christmas Day](#)

[The Christmas Journey](#)

8. **Play Episode 4 again to finish off the lesson and as a taster to the next session**