

Paperless Christmas

The Adventures of Mary and Joseph – The Road Movie

Episode 8: Escape to Egypt!

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 in advance (www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/) 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 – [Escape to Egypt!](#)

Play this episode to the class. This tells the story of how Joseph and Mary had to run away from Bethlehem and escape to Egypt because of King Herod's plan to kill all the children.

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?

How close do you think the danger came before Joseph and Mary decided to run for it?

How hard must it have been for Mary and Joseph to leave their own native country?

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

2. Group work – facing fear and danger

Hand out the following discussion starters to small groups.

- What is it that makes you want to run away sometimes?
- Share your worst fears with each other and how you try to overcome them.
- If you were forced to run away from your home, which five things would you take with you? What if you could take only one item?
- How could you alert others to danger without causing panic?
- What is the most dangerous situation you've ever faced?
- Where would you hide if enemy soldiers came to your house to arrest you?

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.

3. The Story in the Bible

Read the Bible story for episode 8. 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 252.

Matthew 2:13-15

The Escape to Egypt

After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him.'

That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, 'I called my son out of Egypt.'

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 when they heard the shouts of the soldiers moving from street to street? I wonder what Mary's thoughts were when she heard the soldiers closing in? I wonder what other plans might have gone through Joseph's mind before they decided to go to Egypt, and why these were rejected?

4. A Carousel of Group Activities

- Suddenly the story of Christmas is filled with fear and death. This isn't usually included in most Christmas presentations. Why do you think this is? Put forward some arguments both for and against including this part of the story.
- Herod's orders were that all the children under two should be killed. This suggests that this may have happened at least a year after Jesus' birth. Imagine what life had been like for Mary and Joseph during this time. Why hadn't they gone back to Nazareth? What did Mary write in her diary during these months?
- Herod was notorious for doing crazy and evil things. However this order to kill babies was perhaps the worst. Imagine you are one of the soldiers who have received these orders. Will you do it? What might happen if you don't? How is it that some of your friends are prepared to do these awful things?
- In the Bible it says that both the wise men and later Joseph were guided by God through a dream. Do you think dreams can be special like this? What dreams can you remember that were important to you later? Using a series of dream bubbles, draw the scenes from Joseph's dream that alerted him to leave Bethlehem.
- Egypt was a long way away, if you were travelling on foot. There were Jews living in Egypt. Imagine Joseph had relatives there. What sort of letter would he have written to them to prepare them for their arrival?
- All that happened to Mary must have left her both amazed and confused. How would this son of hers rescue her people (Jesus means 'rescuer'), if he were going to grow up in Egypt? Make a thought-bubble list of all the things that must have gone through Mary's mind as she slowly made her way to Egypt.
- Imagine you are one of those who have to warn Joseph and Mary. Can you write a secret message to them, hidden in a very ordinary looking message? Maybe you might hide key words between other innocent words; or maybe you could hint at the danger by cleverly worded sentences, for example:

'Dear Mary and Joseph, how are things? I hope the baby is well and he isn't giving you the run-around like soldiers do? That would be terrible for you. So why not take him outside for a while and get some fresh air, away from the town. It might help him and you sleep better...'

- Can you sum up all the many feelings of the Christmas story in colours? What colours will you choose to describe the fear, joy, wonder, confusion, mystery, surprise, anger, curiosity and terror that are all part of Mary and Joseph's adventure?

5. Classroom Drama Ideas

Play the video [Escape to Egypt!](#) again as a way to introduce the following drama activities.

- Put some of Mary's new Bethlehem friends in the [hot seat](#) and find out what happened in Bethlehem during the months after the birth and then on that day the soldiers came.
- Set up the scene in Alexandria in Egypt where Joseph's Aunty Naomi lives. (Imagine she is Joseph's father's sister and she has a big family.) Work out what they will all say when they welcome in the travellers and find out all their news. However, maybe Joseph and Mary will be reluctant to tell them everything, especially perhaps about the visit of the angels and then about all the killing in Bethlehem.
- Play the video [The Cast of Christmas](#). This is an amusing list of everyone involved in the Christmas story, including a lot of added extras down the years!

6. Final reflection questions looking back on the session

- Is there perhaps more fear than joy in the original Christmas story?
- By this stage of the adventure, Mary and Joseph have become refugees on the run. Have you ever seen this depicted on Christmas cards?
- There are several journeys in the Christmas story. Nazareth to Bethlehem; Bethlehem to Egypt; from the Far East across the desert to Bethlehem (for the wise men); which one of these journeys do you think was the hardest?
- I wonder if Mary ever doubted all the promises that had been given to her about Jesus by the angel Gabriel?
- Jesus could easily have been killed in the very first years of his life. How do think the world might have been different if this had happened?

7. Further web links and useful Barnabas books

- [The Christmas big picture](#)
- [A version of the Twelve days of Christmas](#)
- [Nine object lessons and carols](#)
- [Seasonal shopping – a simple sketch about Christmas](#)
- [A class assembly idea](#)

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 8 again to finish off the lesson and as a taster to the next session**