

# Shepherds



## Find

- Barney' the sheep
- A toy sheep (Hide the straw behind Barney)
- Ten small pictures of sheep

## Introduce

Introduce Barney as the sheep who has been on a Christmas Adventure. Explain that on his travels he has picked up a clue for us, and hidden it behind his back. Ask a volunteer to come and find what Barney's hiding. Get the volunteer to show the toy sheep, explain that the sheep is a clue to where the Barney has been on his Christmas adventure this week. Ask the school which part of the Christmas story they think Barney has visited. Where would Barney have found a sheep in the Christmas story? Barney has been in the fields with the shepherds.

The shepherds in the Christmas account were caught by surprise. They were just doing their normal day to day job, looking after sheep when all of a sudden they were stopped in their tracks by the appearance of an angel and later a whole host (group) of angels. How do we think they felt when all of a sudden, out of nowhere an angel appears in front of them?

The bible suggests they were afraid. Maybe they thought they were in trouble with God! The first thing the angel said to them was "Do not be afraid I've come to share with you some good news for everyone, Jesus has been born".

Why do we think out of all the people to tell the good news too Jesus told the shepherds? What was special about the shepherds?

## Play

Hide and sheep?

Get three children to come to the front to play a game. Then ask them to step out of the hall while you get some people to hide your ten sheep about the hall, which they will have to come back in and find. Explain you will also hide the toy sheep that was hidden behind Barney and explain that he is worth two points not one. The child that finds the most sheep wins. When the three volunteers have left the room ask some other children to help you hide the sheep about the hall. Then simply invite the children back in to find the lost sheep.

Then simply award the children with points according to how many sheep they have found.

If you want to make it more creative while the children are finding the lost sheep the school could be bleating like sheep to help them find them, but no pointing or shouting out!



continued...



## Talk

When a baby is born it is usual that the person who is helping the mother at the birth phones all the family and friends to announce the child's arrival – to share their good news. (If appropriate you could share how you felt when a friend phoned you to announce the birth of their child). Jesus' birth announcement was slightly unusual to say the least.

The shepherds were ordinary people – in fact they were often seen as the outsiders of society the ones other people avoided if they saw them walking down the street, yet God chose to announce the birth of Jesus his Son to them first. The shepherds were tough men – they were used to sitting out all night watching over their sheep. They were known as fighters – if their sheep were being attacked by a wild animal it was their job to defend their flock and if necessary kill the attacker. These were no push over – they were the roughest of rough and yet God chose them. Imagine that you were one of the shepherds sitting in the quiet on the hill outside of the town, listening out for any possible danger and suddenly the sky is filled with the most amazing bright light and then the angel appeared. Now I know that we often think of angels as little girls with tinsel in their hair. But angels in the Bible are not like that – they are warrior messengers of God – not to be messed with and the shepherds did the only thing any sane person would do, these tough men fell on their faces in fear. The angel spoke directly to the men:

'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.'

The angel goes on to explain about the birth of Jesus and once he had finished speaking the sky was filled with a whole host of angels. The shepherds by this time were no longer afraid but filled with the excitement of meeting with Jesus; they ran off to find the baby. Once they had seen Jesus the Shepherds could not stay silent and they told everyone they could about what had happened.

What can we learn from the shepherd's story? Maybe God wants us to know that even though we sometimes feel really ordinary like the shepherds to him we are really special. So special he wants to share his good news with people like us first. God may also be saying to you today, 'Don't be afraid because I am with you – just like I was with those shepherds.'

## Pray

Thank you God that even though we sometimes feel ordinary you see us as special and important. We matter to you. Thank you that we do not need to be afraid of you, you are good and want to share your Christmas good news with us. Amen.

### Classroom follow up:

Christmas crafts based around the shepherds and angels

A diary entry for a shepherd or if you want to make it amusing a diary entry from Barney the sheep

A birth announcement for Jesus