

*Karyn Henley's* **PLAYSONGS<sup>®</sup> MUSICALS**

# **The Best Gift of All**

Matthew 2:1-12

**A Bible Story Musical  
with Activities  
for Preschool Children**

**by Karyn Henley**

## Karyn Henley's: The Best Gift of All

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Written and illustrated by Karyn Henley  
Layout by Kristi J. West

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For more information about this product, contact:

Karyn Henley Resources  
PO Box 40269  
Nashville, TN 37204-0269

1-888-573-3953 (toll-free U.S.)

[www.KarynHenley.com](http://www.KarynHenley.com)

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# Introduction

These musicals are designed to provide an age-appropriate medium for pre-school children, ages four and five. Our hope is that the children who participate will enjoy God, gain a greater understanding of His love for them, and share their love for God with others through telling God's Word in story and song.

## Age-Appropriate Features

This musical contains several features which we believe enhance a preschooler's experience in learning and retelling Bible stories. These age-appropriate features include:

- Multi-sensory experiences because preschoolers learn best by doing and using all their senses,
- Short duration for their short attention spans,
- Simple lines, songs and actions to insure that all the children can participate successfully,
- Minimal props, sets and costumes that can be created easily from materials normally found in school supplies (optional),
- Preparation time that can be accomplished during normal class time without special rehearsals,
- Enrichment activities, to reinforce the Bible story.

## The Format

The design of this musical gives the greater share of the storytelling responsibility to the teacher or adult volunteer who tells or reads the story as the narrator, giving vocal cues to the children throughout the play. The children learn short responses to these cues, so that the musical is performed in a responsive reading fashion. Many of the cues are repeated throughout the story, which helps the children learn and remember their lines more easily. Actions and movement enhance the children's spoken parts.

## Curriculum Enhancement

This musical can be utilized in a classroom setting in a variety of ways. You may desire to use this musical as a four-week curriculum. Learning the musical and doing the activities can easily fill four class periods.

Or you may wish to introduce the musical during a quarter as an extra activity to enhance the curriculum you are presently using.

The activities found in the second half of this book include arts and crafts, scripture memory, music and movement, science, cooking, and games. These activities will give the children a variety of experiences that reinforce the lessons taught through the Bible story.

Keep in mind that this book is to be used as a guide. Feel free to use any ideas you may have for costumes, props and other activities that you feel are appropriate.

Remember that the main objective is for the children to enjoy learning more about God and to share the Bible story with an audience. Props, sets, costumes and other preparations should never overshadow the focus of what God desires to do with the children as they learn and tell His truth.

### Children's Lines and Cues

When the narrator reads a line or phrase of words that is underlined, this is the cue for the children's response. In the sample below, the words "three grown up boys" is the cue for the children to raise their arms, show their muscles and say "One, two, three!" This may occur several times throughout the story, but the cue will be the same each time, underlined so the teacher/narrator will know how to emphasize the cues. The children's response will be the same every time they hear this cue.

#### Teacher

Noah had a wife.

Noah also had three grown up boys.

#### **Children**

One, two three!

(Make strong arms, showing muscles)

### Hand Motions and Actions

Diagrams throughout the script and songs illustrate our recommendations for various movements and hand motions for the children. If you have children who are unable to participate in a particular movement due to a physical hindrance, feel free to adapt or create a more appropriate motion. We want all of the children to feel that they have contributed to the telling of the story.

## Script & Songs

Because of young children's short attention spans, we have kept the script to a short duration and songs to a minimum in quantity. All the songs and lines are simple and repetitive and lend themselves easily to the suggested actions. The script may be photocopied.

## The CD

The CD contains everything you will need for the performance and rehearsals of the musical. You may find it helpful to copy practice tapes or CD's to send home with the children. We have placed the demonstration of the performance at the end of the CD. You have permission to copy the demonstration performance onto practice cassettes or CD's.

Please remember that copying the entire CD and/or resale of copies violates copyright laws. We do grant permission for making copies of the demonstration performance from the CD for rehearsal use only.

## The Mission

We encourage you to pray with the children as they learn their parts and songs. Pray for each other and for the people who will see and hear the program. Pray that the simplicity of God's truths will speak loudly and clearly through the simplicity of the production and the children's hearts.

We believe God uses children to bring His message of truth and love to people of all ages. This format provides an opportunity for children to enjoy God, learn more about Him, then share Him with others, passing the news of God's marvelous works to other generations.

# Putting It All Together

## Learning the Musical

To teach the script, we recommend that you treat it as the storytelling portion of your Bible lesson. Children enjoy and learn from repetition. Go through the story at least once per class, or if time doesn't allow, half the script per class. After the children have heard and said their parts for two or three classes, they may learn your lines as

well!

We recommend that the songs be learned separately as the music portion of your lessons. As the children grow more familiar with the script and songs, begin weaving the songs into the script.

It is very helpful to make a cassette or CD practice copy of the songs and script for each child to have at home so that children can work on their parts during the week. Even if they only listen to the tape or CD in the car, it will reinforce the lines, songs and message. The demonstration performance on the teacher's CD may be copied onto cassettes or CD's for rehearsal use.

### Words to Talk About

Before learning the script to "The Best Gift of All" we recommend that you talk about some of the words that are used in the script. As often as possible, we have used vocabulary that is appropriate for preschoolers. However, there is sometimes a term that doesn't have an appropriate preschool synonym. You may need to explain this word to the children.

*guide:* someone or something that leads you  
(from the songs "Winter Sky" and "Star Light, Star Bright")

As you go through the script with the children, encourage them to ask you about any other words they may not understand.

### An Adult Helper

We recommend that you have a teacher/helper to serve as a prompter. He or she can say the children's lines with them during practice times, and can also do the actions. If you have a large number of children, you may need two adult prompters. As the children become more familiar with the script and actions, the helper can simply mouth the words instead of actually saying them. This same approach can then be used during the performance, with the adult helper seated near the children where they can clearly see their cues and receive help.

You may prefer to be the prompter and let someone else be the storyteller. You may even wish to involve older students in the storytelling. But remember, once your roles are decided, rehearse the script the same way every time, and don't make changes on the day of the performance. This will help the children feel comfortable and confident.

You know your children's needs. If they are struggling to remember a certain part or action, have the prompters use cue card pictures or even sign language to help them remember.

## Blocking or Staging

There is no need for complicated blocking or staging for the children. Simply make sure everyone can see and be seen. Using risers, steps or simple platforms can help keep all the children visible to the audience. When the actions include hopping up and down or any other movement, make sure the riser or area on which the children stand is secure.

## Costumes

We recommend taking a very relaxed approach to costuming. Let the children wear their Sunday clothes or nice play clothes. You may add simple costumes pieces if you wish. Use only one item per child, such as a headband, apron or hat.

To represent a character or group of characters like soldiers, try to use a single item like a badge, sash or special headband.

No matter how you decide to dress the children, ALL children say all the children's lines. This is a team effort in storytelling. We recommend that you not assign lines to "solo" children. The focus is the telling of the story. We want all the children to learn that they have the ability to share stories from God's Word.

Here are some ideas you may wish to use.

- Have the children dress as "gifts." Have the children wear a variety of colors of solid-color t-shirts. Stick a large gift bow in the center of each t-shirt and secure with safety pins.

## Sets and Props

If you are going to decorate your stage area for the performance of "The Best Gift of All" take a very simple, general approach. Here are some ideas you may wish to use.

- Strands of twinkling lights.
- One large star high on a wall—either made from yellow posterboard or purchased as a large decorative Christmas star
- Stacks of gift-wrapped boxes of different sizes

These are simple ideas that help children use their imagination, and help to reinforce the story. The focus is the story, not the set, costumes, and props.

# Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

Your children are learning a short musical *The Best Gift of All*. To help reinforce the songs and actions, we have prepared each family a rehearsal tape.

Please encourage your child to listen to his tape during the week. We want to give the children every opportunity to learn the Bible story. We hope you enjoy letting your child teach you the actions to the script and songs.

Thank you for your help.

## **Winter Sky**

by Karyn Henley

Winter sky, stars so high,  
What can you tell my watching eye?  
Winter sky, stars so high,  
What will you show tonight?

Stars that wink, stars that blink,  
Which one can show me what I seek?  
Stars that wink, stars that blink,  
Which one will be my guide?

## **Camels, Camels, Come**

by Karyn Henley

Camels, camels, come, camels!  
Donkeys, donkeys, come, donkeys!  
Carry all our presents.  
We're going to see the king.

Over hills and through valleys,  
Down the streets and through alleys,  
Following the bright star,  
We're going to see the king.

Trip, trop, clip, clop,  
Hip, hop, don't stop.  
Follow,  
follow the star.

## **Star Light, Star Bright**

by Karyn Henley

Star light, star bright,  
Brightest star I've seen tonight,  
Wish you may, wish you might  
Hear the song I sing.

Star light, star bright,  
Brightest star I've seen tonight,  
Wish you may, wish you might  
Guide me to my king.

## **Bethlehem, Bethlehem**

by Karyn Henley

Bethlehem, Bethlehem,  
We are going to Bethlehem.  
Bethlehem, Bethlehem,  
We're going to Bethlehem.

Baby king, baby king,  
We will see the baby king.  
Baby king, baby king,  
We're going to see our king.

Worship him, worship him.  
We'll bow down and worship him.  
Worship him, worship him,  
We'll bow before our king.

## **The Best Gift of All**

by Karyn Henley

This is the best gift of all.  
This is the best gift of all.  
A baby who shows us God's great love.  
This is the best gift of all.  
This is the best gift of all.  
God has come to live with us.

Let the sea waves splash!  
Let the thunder clap!  
Let the trees bow low!  
Let the wild wind blow!  
Let the girls and boys  
Sing a song of joy!  
As the angels laugh  
And the stars in the heavens dance!

**Teacher**

This is a true story.

**Children**

It really happened.

(Nod on “really” and “happened.”)



**Teacher**

Long ago and far away there lived some wise men who watched the stars.

**Children**

(Hands circled around eyes as if looking through binoculars.)

Star light, star bright,

First star I've seen tonight.



**Teacher**

They believed that the stars could show them important news.

♪ **SONG: Winter Sky**



# The Best Gift of All

# Script

**Teacher**

One night, they saw a special star, big and bright.

**Children**

(Point upward.) Big and bright.



**Teacher**

The wise men said, "This can mean only one thing."

**Children**

One thing. (Hold up one finger.)



**Teacher**

Someone important has been born.

**Children**

Who?

(Hands, palm up, by shoulders.)

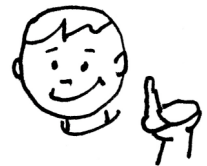


**Teacher**

A king! The wise men said, "Let's go see this baby king!"

**Children**

I've got an idea! (Pointer finger up.) Let's take presents!



**Teacher**

They took gold presents.

**Children**

Shiny, shiny. (Fingers "sparkle.")



**Teacher**

And sweet-smelling presents.

**Children**

(sniff) Mmmmm.



**Teacher**

They loaded the presents on their camels and donkeys.

♪ **SONG: Camels, Camels, Come**