**Stockings**

*What are they looking at?*

**PREP**

Obtain an empty stocking. Place it in front of the teaching area – hang it on something if possible.

Find a picture of the manger, with shepherds, angels, etc., gathered around and peering into the manger.

**DEMONSTRATION**

*Note: People’s traditions relating to stockings vary some. Take that into account as you are gathering responses from students. The point remains the same, though – the stocking is worth looking in when it has something worthy in it.*

Ask the students, “How many of you have stockings hanging in your house right now?” Take responses. Ask, “How many of you run every single morning to your stocking and look inside of it?” Get some “No”s, and then ask, “Well, why not?” (Because they are empty) Say, “And yet, on Christmas, it’s a different story altogether, isn’t it. The stocking is hanging there for weeks, and yet the only time we run over to look in it is on Christmas! Why? Because it has something worth looking at is on Christmas morning! What kind of things are in your stockings on Christmas morning?” Take responses. You might draw out the fact that the kids that are most excited to look in their stockings are the kids that think they’ll get better gifts in their stockings.

**OBJECT LESSON**

Say, “On Christmas, we sometimes see pictures like this (show manger picture). In the center of the picture is a manger. And who do you see gathered around and looking into the manger?” Take responses. Ask, “Do you think one week earlier, these same people were gathered around the manger? (no) One month before? (no) Why not?” Take responses. Ask, “What ARE they looking at? I mean why are they gathered around and looking into the stocking—I mean manger?” Take responses.

Say, “The stockings hanging in our homes can help us remember an amazing truth about Christmas. Long before the first Christmas, people were waiting for Jesus to arrive. Just as you look at the empty stocking in your home, and await the gifts that will be filling it on Christmas morning, God’s people awaited the arrival of Jesus for years and years. Even thousands of years before the birth of Jesus, God made a promise to Abraham about Jesus. He said to Abraham, ‘all people on earth will be blessed through you.’ (Genesis 12:3). God told David that one of his descendents would be a savior (Jeremiah 23:5–6) and that this descendent would sit on a throne forever and ever (Jeremiah 33:17). God even promises in the book of Micah that this great King will come from the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The Old Testament is full of promises of Jesus’ coming. Throughout these years, people awaited the coming Savior. God’s promise to send a savior hung above his people’s head like an empty stocking waiting for Christmas morning when it would be filled. And what did God do on the first Christmas morning 2000 years ago? He filled the stocking. God sent the promised One to Earth. He fulfilled his promise. As you look at the shepherds and others gathered around the manger, they aren’t just looking into a manger at a baby – they are looking at the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a great and mighty Savior King into the world.”

**WRAP UP**

 Say, “This Christmas when you see an empty stocking, think about the promise that Christmas holds—that the stocking will be filled. God fulfilled his promise to send a Savior to Earth on the first Christmas 2000 years ago, but there are still other promises God has made; a promise of Heaven coming down to Earth, a promise of Jesus’ triumphant return to Earth, and a promise of justice for all mankind. God’s promises hang like empty stockings above our head, and one day, He will fulfill them all!”

 Conclude the message by asking the preteens to think about, and share a promise of God that they are excited for Him to fulfill.