



# Room In The Inn: There's no room here

## Lesson Plan 7th - 9th Grade

**Curriculum Connections:** Social Studies, English, Language Arts, Reading

**Thematic Connections:** Homelessness, Poverty, Friendship, Community, Responsibility, Tolerance, Self-Esteem

### Overview:

The goal of this lesson is to introduce students to the story of Room In The Inn through the story of the Nativity. It is important for this age group to learn about homelessness for the following reasons:

- Prepares students for encountering social issues in the future.
- Instills the value of citizenship at a young age.
- Begins breaking down stereotypes and fear of those that are different from them.
- Sensitizes students to be more accepting of those in their school or other circles that may be experiencing homelessness.

### Goals for 7th - 9th graders learning about homelessness:

- Build an awareness for homelessness and other social issues.
- Begin laying a foundation for understanding factors contributing to homelessness.
- Provide tangible means for students to contribute to the cause of ending homelessness.

In this lesson plan, we've provided suggested reading, videos, discussion questions, and an activity. We strongly encourage group discussion and the activity to ensure students are learning through participation.

### Introduction Activity:

Here's a high-energy game that'll give kids a sense of what it was like when Mary and Joseph couldn't find a place to stay for the night.

### You'll Need:

- Activity area
- Masking tape
- A Bible

Choose one child to be the Traveler. Have the rest of the children form a circle, standing an arm's length apart. Give the children in the circle two strips of masking tape each and have them create an "X" on the floor beneath their feet. The X represents their inn. To stay at their inn, they must keep their feet on the X. Have the Traveler stand in the center of the circle.

To play, have the Traveler approach a child in the circle and say, "I need a place to sleep tonight." The child responds, "There's no room here! Ask (child's name) and (child's name)." When two children's names are called, they must switch places before the Traveler can take a spot. Whoever's left in the center becomes the Traveler. If the original Traveler is still in the center, he or she claps and says, "I still don't have a place to stay!" That's the signal that everyone must run to find a new inn.

### **Once everyone has been the Traveler at least once, read Luke 2:1-7:**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** All went to their own towns to be registered. **4** Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. **5** He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

### **Then ask:**

- What did it feel like to be the Traveler?
- How did it feel when you found a place in the circle? What about when you lost your place?
- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they couldn't find a place to stay in Bethlehem?

### **Lesson:**

The feelings you expressed and the feelings Mary and Joseph experienced while trying to find a place to stay while traveling are some of the same feelings felt by those experiencing homelessness in our community. Room In The Inn takes the story of the Nativity as a call to action, so that there may always be room in the inn for our neighbors.

## Our Mission:

To provide programs that emphasize human development and recovery through education, self-help and work, centered in community and long-term support for those who call the streets of Nashville home.

## Our History

Room In The Inn began in the winter of 1985, when our Founding Director, Father Charles Strobel, opened the doors of his parish to individuals seeking sanctuary in the church parking lot. This simple act of kindness marked the beginning of Room In The Inn (RITI). In December 1986, four congregations committed to sheltering people experiencing homelessness through March 1987. By the end of that winter, 31 congregations had joined. Now, we have nearly 200 congregations from a wide variety of traditions and over 7,000 volunteers who shelter almost 1,500 men and women from November 1 through March 31 each season.

In 1995, we opened our downtown Campus, which offers emergency services, transitional programs, and long-term solutions to help people rebuild their lives. The opening of a 45,000 square foot facility in 2010 greatly enhanced our ability to support people through programs that emphasize health, education, employment, and housing. We do this work through building one-on-one relationships and offering hospitality to all who call the streets of Nashville home.

2020, has been a challenge, as it has been for every other organization, business, and household, as we have learned to adjust to new COVID-19 protocols. At RITI, we take a holistic approach to provide emergency and long-term support for those experiencing homelessness. Multiple factors contribute to homelessness and many in our community have experienced cycles of broken relationships with family, friends, or institutions. These broken relationships result in a lack of support, inclusion, and community. By cultivating a supportive community, we aim to meet people where they are and build relationships of trust that give them hope, confidence, and dignity as they move forward towards housing and stability. In this time of COVID-19, we have continued to honor this approach even through masks, contactless services and capacity limitations.

RITI has adapted our programs and services to comply with the safer-at-home orders from our city leaders beginning in March 2020. We continue to offer essential services to keep our community safe through the pandemic. To limit the number of people in our facility and to practice social distancing, we have moved our front desk from inside the building to the street in front of our entrance gate to triage individual needs. While services look different, the need is even more apparent.

While our services look different during COVID, the need continues to grow and our doors remain open. On average, we are serving up to 150 individuals per day through our essential services and day shelter.

