

# Once Upon A Stable

## Study Guide

### Summary:

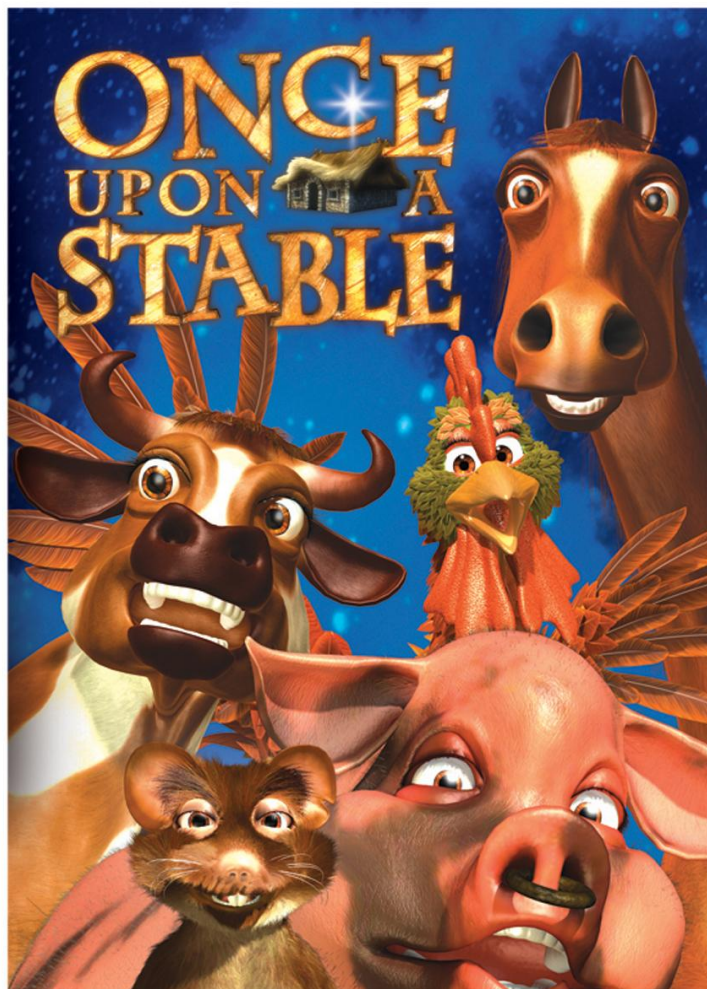
Knowing that starry night something was about to happen, no one really understood what the special star they spotted meant.

A comical group of friends, a Cow (Esmay), a Mouse (Slink), a Horse (Monty), a Pig (Horace), and a Rooster (Drake) are about to have an important houseguest to their small stable in Bethlehem.

Word on the street is that a King is coming to visit, but why to a stable? What kind of gift could they present to the King?

And who's this mysterious creature from the "Darkside" and what has made her so mean that everyone is afraid of HER?

Experience this hilarious and uplifting tale of the very first Christmas and learn that there's more to life than being able to burp the loudest, be the party clown, or even give the nicest gift!



1. Where did the story take place? (*Stable*)
2. The animals wonder about a mystery star. Who do they decide to ask what the star means? *Helda (Hen)*
3. How do they decide who will talk to Helda (Hen)? *They draw straws*
4. Who gets the short straw? *Rooster (Drake)*
5. Does the rooster ask Helda? *No – He's too afraid to ask her.*
6. When the pig (Horace) asks her does she answer? *NO*
7. Who arrives at the stable? *A couple & a donkey*
8. Who does the donkey say is coming? *The King*
9. The animals decide they should pay their respects to the King by giving him a present. What present do they decide on, that causes a big ruckus in the stable? *The ring in the pig's (Horace) nose*
10. What does each animal find in the stable to give to the King?  
*Mouse (Slink) – feather                      Pig (Horace) – Shovel*  
*Horse (Monty) – Horseshoe                Rooster (Drake) – Egg*  
*Cow (Esmay) – Straw (Hay)*
11. Are any of the gifts they chose from the heart? *NO*
12. When the animals realize that Drake the rooster has taken Helda's unhatched egg what happens and where does the egg end up? *They panic and start throwing it to each other until it ends up in the food trough.*
13. What does Helda do? *She gently scoops her egg out of the trough and quietly walks away with it.*
14. What makes all the animals faint? *They see the baby being born*
15. What do the animals work together to make for the baby? *They build a bed for the baby*
16. When the donkey says the King is here, where do the animals look for the King?  
*Outside the window*
17. What gift does Helda give the baby? *Her unhatched egg*
18. What had Helda seen for the first time that day when she said the baby "robbed them of themselves"? *The other animals worked together – forgot themselves (became selfless) and only thought of another.*
19. Helda gave the egg to the King and she said that her hope, pain, joy, and grief were wrapped up in her egg and she needed to give it to him. What did she mean?  
*Her egg never hatched which made her very sad and in her grief she became angry and took it out on those around her. She never shared her pain with anyone until she gave it to Jesus.*
20. How do the other animals feel when Helda shares this with them?  
*They realize they have misjudged her and apologize for not understanding her and being mean.*
21. What miracle happens when the Helda gives her egg and her pain to the baby King?  
*A beautiful baby chick hatches from the egg.*
22. If you're like Helda, worried or sad or afraid, how could you give your worries to Jesus?  
*Through prayer or just talking to God about your problem. Read Matthew 11:28-30.*
23. Who else would God like you to talk to if you're having problems? *Your parents, sibling, teacher, or a best friend.*

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## Questions for Older Children

1. Who is the peacemaker? *Monty the Horse*
  - Can you think of people you know who are peacemakers and, if so, what traits do you see in them that make them one?
  - In the Beatitudes, what does Jesus say about Peacemakers? (look up Matt. 5:9)
  - In the movie, what scene brings to mind one of Jesus' names – "The Prince of Peace"? *The animals laid aside their differences to work as a team to build a manger for the Christ child. Helda pointed that fact out to them.*
  - What peaceful solution did the animals use to determine who would speak with Helda? *Drew straws.*
  - What other peaceful means can you think of to resolve a situation.
2. The animals were afraid to talk to Helda. What did Drake say that he thought was so scary about talking to her? *Her tones and actions when she spoke.*
  - How do you think people react to what you're saying, if your words aren't angry, but your look sure is?
  - How do you feel when someone glares and points their finger at you when talking to you?
  - It's a scientific fact that people hear and respond more to your tone of voice than the actual words you say.
3. Horace strongly resisted giving up his gold ring to give as a gift to the King.
  - Which possessions would you have a hard time giving to someone else, and why?
  - When Horace resisted, did the other animals accede to his not wanting to give up his ring? *No.* Why do you think that was?
4. Drake took the hen's egg without even realizing what he had done.
  - Do you think we often sin without even realizing it?
  - How do you feel once you've realized what has happened?
  - What can we do to make ourselves think about sinning before we actually do it?
5. What other lesson did the animals learn about themselves? *How they had treated Helda because of a perception they had about her.*
  - Helda pointed out to the other animals their treatment of her, and how the birth of the King had imperceptibly changed them. Have you known someone who has change you to be/to do something good? How did you feel about yourself afterward?
  - The birth of the King made the animals see another in a different light. In what ways do we see the work of the King today?

*Written by Lorna McSwan*

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:**

### **OLDER CHILDREN**

#### **Giving It Over To God** (Saved by God's Grace)

1. Either make a large cross yourself or have the kids make one to hang on the wall. You can use sheets of construction paper or cut two pieces from a roll of art paper.
2. Using Post-It® Notes have children write about something that is troubling them, explain they can simply use one word as God already knows what they are trying to tell him. (Examples: Lying, Cheating, Hitting, Dishonesty, Grief, Loneliness, Fear, etc.).
3. When they are all done have the children gather back at the base of the cross. You may wish to have some prayer or praise & worship music playing softly in the background.
4. Have each individual child go forward and give their hope, joy, grief and pain over to God. They may wish to say a short prayer as they do so:  
*Prayer:* "Dear Heavenly Father, I praise you with all my heart and thank you for always being there for me. To you I give it over! Amen."

### **YOUNGER CHILDREN**

#### **1. Suggested Storybooks from the Animals Perspective:**

- "The Something Wonderful: A Christmas Story", by: Karen Hill, Crossway Books & Bibles, 2005, 9781581347326, Hardcover, Ages 4-8.
- "Who is Coming to Our House?", by: Joseph Slate, Putnam Juvenile, 2001, 9780399234101, Board Book, Ages 2-5.

#### **2. Playtime**

Take a child's nativity set (appropriate for your children's ages) and add to it the characters from the movie. Stuffed animals or puppets are also other ideas. Check your local toy store and/or educational toy stores for the individual animals.

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|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| • Cow (Esmay)   | • Horse (Monty) | • Rooster (Drake) |
| • Mouse (Slink) | • Pig (Horace)  | • Hen (Helda)     |

#### **3. Songs**

- The Friendly Beasts
- Away in a Manger
- Other songs with themes such as: peacemaker or giving your burdens to Jesus – look in your church hymnbook or children's Christian music CD's for songs encompassing these ideas.

#### **4. Matching Game**

Take pictures of each character from the story, 2 of each, spread out face down on table. Have children take turns finding a match. Include all the animals, stable, baby Jesus, manger, star, and an egg.

*Written by Luanne Payne*