

BY ALICIA BRUXVOORT

# The fight for Baby Jesus

It was the first cold day of November. Sleet slapped at our windows and the Iowa wind chill held steady at a bitter ten degrees. While the initial sight of snowflakes had created pre-dawn excitement, winter's luster faded fast. By 9 a.m., my preschoolers wandered listlessly through the house, and I wondered if we'd survive the day with goodwill intact. That's when I got the idea. Disappearing into the depths of the storage closet, I excavated the Fisher-Price nativity scene and triumphantly lifted my sanity-saver from its box.

When my 5-year-old recognized the shiny brown stable, she squealed with delight. "I have the perfect place for the stable. Let's set it up by the window!" Immediately, Lizzy began arranging the pudgy little shepherds, the royally robed angels and the irresistibly cute animals. Peace restored, I congratulated myself on salvaging the day and began my mental inventory of holiday to-dos. Then Lizzy noticed her younger sister lingering near. "See our Jesus story?" my eldest daughter asked.

Wide-eyed, 2-year-old Hannah edged closer. "Cow!" she declared as she grabbed the plastic bovine and moo-ed. "Donkey!" she exclaimed while caressing the inflexible silver mane. With loud delight, Hannah inspected each animal until her eyes landed on the tiny figure propped atop the synthetic manger. "It's a baby!" she murmured, then reached for the miniature version of our infant Savior. Cupping the two-inch Jesus in her hands, Hannah began to rock and sway. "Rock-a-bye-baby," she sang.

Horried by her sister's lack of reverence for the Christ child, Lizzy stooped to face Hannah eye-to-eye and set the record straight. "That's not ANY baby," Lizzy harrumphed. "That's Baby JESUS!"

On cue, Hannah stopped rocking and her blue eyes began to sparkle. "Oh . . . yeah," she said with a contented sigh, "It's MY Jesus!" Then, before her indignant sister could stop her, Hannah

raced from the room and tucked Jesus in her crib. "Shh," she whispered as she returned with a finger covering her pursed lips, "Baby Jesus is peeping."

Realizing that the star of her story had been snatched, Lizzy objected. "You can't have Jesus! I was playing with him."

"No!" Hannah replied in typical toddler fashion. "My Jesus!" In a flurry, she snatched the Christ child from his midday snooze and protectively hugged him to her heart.

"He's not YOURS!" Lizzy responded with unusual fury. "He's MINE!" And with that, my normally kindhearted girls fell to the floor in a heap of flailing arms and legs.

Once baby Jesus had been rescued from my toddler's clinched fists, he was put into a "timeout" on top of the refrigerator until a truce could be reached. Tears were wiped away. Apologies and kisses were exchanged, and a second baby Jesus was created out of a tiny doll swaddled in a Kleenex.

Later as I moved the stable to a nearby tabletop, I chuckled at the drama that had unfolded over a two-inch baby with synthetic swaddles and a painted red smile. And I thanked God that when it comes to the REAL Christ child, there need be no dispute.

My daughters may have been unable to share their plastic Jesus without leaving someone at a loss, but we can share the real Jesus without coming up empty-handed. Because of God's amazing grace on that first Christmas, Jesus belongs to all of us. **M**

**Alicia Bruxvoort** is a frequent guest speaker at MOPS groups across the Midwest. She is the privileged "referee" of three young children who are looking forward to sharing the joy of their next baby's arrival this Christmas. Alicia resides in Pella, Iowa.

**A Season of Traditions** Each night, starting December 1, we read from the Advent calendar about the story of Jesus' birth. I also let my son put one part of the manger up each week. My son gets excited, as we wait until Christmas morning to put Jesus in the manger.

— Stephanie Rich, single mom of Sean (5) and MOPS Marketing Coordinator