



Date: _____
Series: The Best Gift of All – Jesus
Winter Year 4, Lesson 29

The True Spirit of Christmas

Primary Scripture: John 3:16-21

Key Verse: John 3:17, “God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world but to save the world.”

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Christmas is the most popular holiday for kids. The emphasis on gifts and outward decorations foster the sensationalism of Christmas. Kids, like adults, need reminding that the true spirit of Christmas is about the gift of Jesus given to all people. Surprisingly enough, Jesus accepts us in the midst of our sin and displaced priorities, and forgives us so that we might be free to forgive others as he forgives us.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus died and rose again so that we would not be condemned but be drawn into his light.

Jesus in us: Jesus fills us so that we might have his giving attitude toward others.

Jesus through us: Jesus will use our kind acts of giving, especially during the Christmas season, to proclaim his change—the eternal change he brings to the world.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies: the nicest kid's bike that you can find (If it's impossible to bring one in, then you might talk about a nice bike or bring a picture of a really nice one.)

Begin with the following story:

This is a story about a boy and a bike. Colton was only eight years old. More than anything in the world, he wanted a new bike that was bigger than the one he had been riding. His older brother was fifteen and had outgrown his bike. He had one of the best bikes that Colton had ever seen. One day, for no reason at all, Colton's big brother Jeremy, came to him and said, "Colton, you look like you need a bike. Here, this bike of mine is yours. I was going to sell it, but I think you need it more than I need the money." Colton was overjoyed. He was so excited that he rode it all day and could hardly sleep at night thinking about it.

Now, I've got a question to ask you. How would you feel if you were Colton in the story? I want you to answer that by filling in the blank of this sentence:

"Wow, I sure wish I had a brother that _____."

Call on a child or two to fill in the blank. Most kids will say, "I sure wish I had a brother that would give me a bike."

Surprise answer:

If you found yourself wishing you had a brother like Colton's, listen to this. Today God wants to give us the spirit of Christmas so that we might answer that question differently. When we think of this story, God wants to give us the power to say: "Wow, I wish I had a brother that I could give a bike TO."

This is God's true spirit of Christmas—a giving spirit.

So, let's worship God and give him something that he will never own unless we give it to him. We can give him the gift of our praise and worship.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Refer back to the bike.

Is it okay to want a bike? Of course. There isn't anything wrong with that. Is there anything wrong with looking at a bike and telling yourself, "I'm not going to be happy until I get that bike?" Yes, something IS wrong with that.

The reason this is wrong is because you won't be happy until you get that bike. Then guess what? After you get that bike, your mind will wander to the next thing and you won't be happy until you get that thing.

Sometimes you can even look at what your friends have and wish they didn't have it because you want it so badly. This is called envy. God tells us not to be envious of others because he knows that it doesn't work for us to depend on things, or stuff, to make us happy.

Let's pray about that now and let the power of Jesus working in our lives give us forgiveness and help to avoid wanting what someone else has.

Dear God, there are times, especially around Christmas, that we see certain things we think we must have to be happy. This is wrong, and we want to turn away from that attitude and ask for your forgiveness. We know that we don't even deserve the things, or stuff, we have already.

Because of our selfishness and sin, we even deserve to be condemned. But we do know the most important thing you give us is the gift of your Son. Thank you that Jesus came into the world, not to condemn us or make us feel badly, but to forgive us and fill us with your presence. In Jesus' name and by the power of his cross, please forgive us and give us the spirit of Christmas. We want to be able to give the way you give. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Put the offering basket on the bike and have kids bring their offerings forward.

We can't buy God a new bike for Christmas. However, when we give our gifts to him that help other people, it's better than buying a bike for God. He is delighted with those gifts. This is a way to have the spirit of giving instead of getting.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

The “Give Away” Game

Supplies: clothespins, music, heavy tape to clearly define the game space

For especially large groups, you might let one group of students play at a time and take out the top four or five from each group for one final contest.

If space is limited, divide kids into groups or “rounds” to play the game. Pass out four clothespins to every student who is playing in the round. Have them pin them onto their clothes. Invite kids for “round one” into a clearly defined space in your room and explain the game.

I will play some music and when you hear it begin, you will have one-minute to take the clothespins from your clothes and pin them onto other peoples’ clothing.

Remind kids not to pinch each other with the pins but to only attach them to the clothes of others.

As you are attaching pins to another child’s clothing, oftentimes pins are being attached to you. So, if you find new clothespins attached to you, you can take those off and attach them to other people. At the end of the minute, I will stop the music and everyone must “freeze” in place. No clothespins may be taken off or attached when there is no music playing.

I will look around at how many clothespins are attached to the kids’ clothing and pick the winners. The top contestants are the people with the fewest number of clothespins and are eligible to advance to a championship round.

You can play several rounds and then have a championship round, if desired. Following the game, relate what happened to scripture.

Acts 20:35 says, “I have given you an example that by working hard like this we should help the weak. We should remember the words that the Lord Jesus said, ‘Giving gifts is more satisfying than receiving them.’”

How is this verse like the game we just played? (Kids had more fun giving away the clothespins than collecting them.)

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Questions might be asked to the entire group so that students raise their hands and answer if the group is mid-sized or smaller (under twenty children). If it is a large group, use a game format. Select three students who want to try to answer questions and bring them up on stage. They can see who can answer the most questions correctly or pick a replacement if they miss. Or, it can be a contest between boys and girls with several representatives from each side coming forward. These games work best with closed questions, that is, those questions that have one clear expected answer.

Supplies: video—The City That Forgot About Christmas, 1987 Family Films, ISBN # 0-570-09145-4. Order from <http://www.booksofthebible.com>.

Have a volunteer read the scripture verses from John 3:16-21.

“God loved the world this way: He gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but to save the world. Those who believe in him won’t be condemned. But those who don’t believe are already condemned because they don’t believe in God’s only Son.

“This is why people are condemned: The light came into the world. Yet, people loved the dark rather than the light because their actions were evil. People who do what is wrong hate the light and don’t come to the light. They don’t want their actions to be exposed. But people who do what is true come to the light so that the things they do for God may be clearly seen.”

What did God give to us and why? (God gave us his only Son because he loved the world.)

What does it mean to be condemned? (To spend eternity separated from God in hell.)

Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, but came so that through him the world might be _____. (Saved.)

When someone is a follower of Jesus, it means that they are in the light. Do you think people want to be closer to the light? Why or why not? *(According to verse 20 and 21, those that do wrong hate the light because they don't want their actions to be exposed. But people who do what is true want the light so that the things they do for God may be seen.)*

During the following video you will see a boy named Dillon. Watch for what he does that is like what Jesus would do on Christmas.

Show the video, *The City That Forgot About Christmas*, 1987 Family Films, ISBN # 0-570-09145-4, 22 minutes. Order from <http://www.booksofthebible.com>.

After watching the video, ask:

What did Dillon do that is very much like what God would do on Christmas? *(He gave something very valuable, a bike.)*

What possession of great value did God give away? *(His Son, Jesus.)*

Do you think it is possible to skip Christmas, even if the town mayor tries to ruin the city's celebration? *(No, because Jesus is the reason for joy and that cannot be taken away.)*



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Have kids think about gifts to give others that show God's love for them. Encourage some to share their ideas.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Safety and Security: Safety and security procedures are important for each church to carefully define and implement according to their unique needs. The security, safety, illness and accident procedures described in this curriculum are provided for example purposes only and may not be appropriate, applicable or adequate for every situation. Each church is responsible for determining whether any security, safety, illness and accident procedures contained in the curriculum are appropriate, applicable or adequate for its unique situation. The activities described in this curriculum require adult supervision and may not be suitable for each child and each situation. Each church is responsible for ensuring that adequate adult supervision is provided for all activities and for determining whether an activity is appropriate for each child and each situation. Kids Kount Publishing disclaims all liability for the implementation of any procedures or the performance of any activities described in this curriculum.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- the nicest kid's bike that you can find (If it's impossible to bring one in, then you might talk about a nice one or bring a picture of a really nice bike.)

Learning Game:

- clothespins
- music
- heavy tape to clearly define the game space

Bible Presentation:

- video, *The City That Forgot About Christmas*, 1987 Family Films, ISBN # 0-570-09145-4, 22 minutes—order from <http://www.booksofthebible.com/p669.html>