



Date: _____
Series: Advent
Winter Year 2, Lesson 31

Love

Primary Scripture: John 3:16

Key Verse: John 3:16, “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.”

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

Kids need love. It is the basis for their security. From it they receive their self-worth. During Christmas, much talk will be given to the topic of love. Kids may get the idea that love is simply a feeling that one has for another. Though this is true, genuine love is more of an action and a decision than it is simply a feeling. Kids need to experience the love that God has for them through his action of sending his Son, Jesus. This was not an easy thing for God. It was very costly, but it also showed his great love. Kids need to learn that the love they share with others is not merely a feeling – it is an action. It means giving away a little bit of yourself – it means sacrifice. Kids need this bigger sense of true Christmas love.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus came as the God of heaven to be humbled and born as a person so that he could give his life completely for us.

Jesus in us: Jesus gave his life on the cross but rose again so that, through the Holy Spirit, we could have his resurrected life living within us.

Jesus through us: Just as God loved the world so that he gave sacrificially, so we love others and give sacrificially as well. This is how the world will experience God's true love.

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 needed: Advent wreath, paper cutout flower

Light the Advent candle (the first one this week), explaining each candle's special meaning:

1. Blue – the candle of hope.
2. Blue – the candle of faith.
3. Rose – the candle of joy.
4. Blue – the candle of love.
5. Center candle – white – the candle representing Christmas.

Have the child light only the first candle today. Explain that two candles will be lit next week, three the following, four the Sunday before Christmas, and the fifth after Christmas.

While lighting the candle, read the following responsively (put on PowerPoint or overhead) or have another child read the scripture responses.

Presenter: We worship in the name of the strong and living God – Father , Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. The living flame that burns on our Advent wreath gives us a picture of Jesus. He is the living light of the world. At one time Jesus said...

Reader: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have a life filled with light and will never live in the dark."* (John 8:12b)

Presenter: The evergreen of the wreath represents the life that is found in Christ. At another time, Jesus said...

Reader: *"But I came so that my sheep will have life and so that they will have everything they need."* (John 10:10b)

Presenter: What is the meaning of lighting the first candle?

Reader: This candle calls us to hope. Since Jesus has come into the world, we have a sure and certain hope of our future.

Presenter: What is the meaning of lighting the second candle?

Reader: This candle calls us to faith. Through faith in Jesus, we have been made right with God.

Presenter: What is the meaning of lighting the third candle?

Reader: This candle calls us to joy. Jesus came into the world to give us joy. With joy we look forward to seeing him again on the last day.

Presenter: What is the meaning of lighting the fourth candle?

Reader: This candle calls us to love. God loved the world so much that he gave us Jesus. We celebrate his love by loving others, just as he loved us.

Presenter: Dear Lord God, thank you for Christmas and for your love. We want to receive Jesus and all of his love today. We open our hearts to you as we worship you. We tell you that we love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Using a paper cutout flower, pull petals off while you recite the poem "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not."

Have you ever seen or heard of someone doing that? Have you ever done it?

Sometimes when this is done, people are only thinking about love as a feeling. Is love more than a feeling? Who do you know loves you? Parents, grandparents, or a special friend? What are some things they do to show you that they love you? Do they tell you? Do they do kind things for you? Do they make sacrifices for you? Do they give up their time or their money for you?

True love means much more than just feeling warm and fuzzy about another person. It means that you do things to show that you care for them even more than yourself.

How did God show that he loved us? Right, God gave Jesus so that we would never have to guess if God loves us. Since that is how God shows us he loves us, let's show our love for him by telling him that we love him. We do this when we sing songs to him that tell him how much we love him and are thankful to him. Let's worship him and say, "I love you, God."

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.

Needed: small candies

Do a brief interaction with the audience called, "Gimme, Gimme, Gimme." Without any introduction, go into the audience and prowl around for loose objects that kids might have with them. Upon spying an object beg, "Gimme, gimme, gimme," and take it without receiving permission. Collect as much "loot" as you can so the kids see the absurdity of what you are doing. When addressing the kids, point out that such a game is silly.

We can play the same game in our lives, though. When we think only about ourselves and we never share what we have with others, it is the same thing as saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." When we only talk about ourselves and are never interested in anyone else, it is just like saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme. Give me all the attention." If we think Christmas is only about getting presents we are saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme. All that really matters is me getting more."

The opposite of this game is playing, "Here you go. Here you go. Here you go."

Use this phrase while redistributing the "stolen" goods and offer small candies as well. Explain to the kids that we need help from God to keep us from only thinking, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." Instead we need to think, "Here you go. Here you go. Here you go."

Lead the kids in a confessional prayer. Ask God for forgiveness for our "gimme, gimme, gimmes." Claim forgiveness in the name of Jesus who said to us, "Here you go. Here you go. Here you go." Ask God to help all of us be unselfish and give things away.

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.

Needed: a piece of string large enough to make a heart shape on the floor for a child to stand inside.

Using a piece of string, make the shape of a heart on the floor. Ask that the kids who are bringing their offering forward would come and stand in the heart to place their money into the offering bucket. As they stand in the heart they are reminded that their offering is a way they say, "I love you, God." It is also a way that they give a little piece of themselves back to God.



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.

“Cheese Ball Face Feed”

Supplies:

- *several bags of cheese puffballs are needed*
- *one bowl per group of eight kids*
- *one spoon per child*

The object of this game is to feed one child as many cheese balls as possible in one minute. The only problem is that the cheese balls can never be touched by human hands and must be passed down a line of kids using only spoons. A bowl of cheese puffballs should be on one end, and a child sitting in a chair with mouth open at the other end. In between are the rest of each team, who pass the cheese balls down the line.

After one minute, see which group has gotten the most cheese balls to the eater. Then have new children take the eater's spot and play again.

The learning object of the game is:

We have blessings that come to us from God. The best blessing is his love, which comes to us in Jesus. We are not to keep that love to ourselves. We are to pass it along to others, just like we passed these cheese balls.

After the game, challenge each group to think of several ways they can share Jesus' love with someone else during this Christmas week. You might even offer additional cheese balls for every answer a group comes up with.

Bible Reading:

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.

Needed: wrapped present with a flashlight inside

Hold up the wrapped present while reading the Bible and talk about how Jesus was God's best gift.

Read John 3:16-21. Open the present and show kids the flashlight and say:

Jesus came as the light to the world. Some people did not like to receive the gift because they liked to walk in darkness (that means they liked to be selfish). These people got nervous if they had to listen to God and what he wanted them to do. God's Word is like this light exposing and showing their selfishness. But instead of fixing their selfishness, they ran away from the light. They did not even want to take the gift of Jesus.

Those people that take the gift of Jesus understand that their selfishness can be changed. By trusting in Jesus they cannot only live with him forever in heaven, but they can also give their lives to others to show Jesus' love. They can be like this flashlight.

Read *The Tale of Three Trees: A Traditional Folktale* by Angela Elwell Hunt (published by Lion Publishing Corporation). This book tells how we can desire to give ourselves to God and his purposes. God will use us just the way he wants. We can make a difference for him. What is best about this book is that it shows what Jesus gave for us – his birth, his ministry, and his death and resurrection.



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 share ways that God's love for them has changed them or the way they act. Ask how they have been God's light to others in their lives.

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.

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Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- Advent wreath
- paper cutout flower

Offering:

- string large enough to make a heart shape on the floor for a child to stand in

The Power of the Cross:

- small candies

Learning Game:

- several bags of cheese puffballs
- one bowl per group of eight kids
- one spoon per child

Bible Reading:

- *The Tale of Three Trees: A Traditional Folktale* by Angela Elwell Hunt (published by Lion Publishing Corporation)—order from: http://www.parable.com/parable/item_0745917437.htm
- wrapped present with a flashlight inside