



Date: _____

Series: Advent
Winter Year 2, Lesson 32

God Comes Close - Jesus is Born

Primary Scripture: Matthew 1:23

Key Verse: Matthew 1:23, "The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,' which means 'God is with us.'"

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

Sometimes kids picture God as remote or distant. They need to see him as a God who is personal and close. Even though he is God of the universe, a God of all power and might, he also comes close to us by sending his own Son, Jesus. This is not merely a geographical closeness, it is a relationship closeness. Since Jesus was made one of us and took on human form, he was able to live a perfect life in our place and pay for the debt of our sins. Through Jesus, we have closeness with God in a relationship. We are made friends with God. Kids need this security. Kids need faith to see God as one who wants to be close to them, not only in geography, but also in relationship.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: The very name Jesus means "He saves." Jesus saves us through his life, death, and resurrection.

Jesus in us: Jesus is also referred to as Immanuel, "God with us." Receiving Jesus by faith means that he dwells in our lives personally. He understands our needs and gives his saving power to meet those needs.

Jesus through us: Just as God understands us in a personal way by sending Jesus to take human flesh, we can also attempt to understand others and the world in which they live. In so doing we are better equipped to bring the saving presence of Jesus to them.

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, Advent wreath, a center white candle, and some type of small gift toy or trinket

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 four candles?

Reader: These candles remind us of hope, faith, joy, and love. They remind us whom Jesus is as he comes into our world.

Presenter: What is the meaning of lighting the center white candle?

Reader: This candle is the Christ candle. It is white, reminding us of Jesus' holiness. It burns brightly now because Jesus is with us, born as a baby in Bethlehem.

Presenter: Dear Lord God, thank you for giving us hope, faith, joy, and love. Open our hearts to receive Jesus, who is God with us. Let us worship you and tell you how wonderful you are. Be close to us now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Invite a child up as an assistant. Place the child in a part of the stage that is some distance away. Have in your hand some type of small toy or trinket. It should be something that enables one to share and enjoy with another person. This sharing must be able to happen only if you are standing next to one another.

Use this as an illustration of how God wants to come near to us. He did that by sending his Son, Jesus. Another name given to Jesus is Immanuel, which means "God with us."

Kids, if I have a friend and I wanted to share a special gift (like the one I have in my hand), where do you think would be the best place for my friend to stand? Way over there? Of course not. I would want to get close to my friend to share this gift. I am going to walk over and stand next to my special friend. Now I am showing my friend this special gift.

Where do you think God would like to stand if we were standing right here where my friend is? Would he like to stand over there where I was? Or, would he like to be right next to us? Of course he would want to be standing right next to us, just like I am standing right next to my friend.

God, too, has a gift to share with us. The gift is himself. He wants to give us Jesus, who is God. To do that, he came and lived right with us, actually made a person, so he could be part of our world.

One of the names for Jesus is Immanuel. Do you know what that name means? It means “God with us.” Let’s praise him for being a God who wants to be right near us.

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.

Ask for a volunteer to come forward. Pose a scenario that gives an example of sin.

Sin is when God comes near to us offering a life with him, but we turn our back on him. Maybe we do this because we do not want God to tell us what to do. That is what sin is - turning our back on God and doing what we want instead of what he wants.

This can be illustrated by having the volunteer turn his back to someone or something representing God. The prayer of confession, receiving, and announcement of receiving forgiveness can be spoken as this person is turned to face the adult representing God.

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.

Use a gift-wrapped box as an offering container for the kids to put in their offerings as a thank you gift back to Jesus. Talk about your current mission project.



The Word

Learning Game:

Due to extended sections in other parts of the lesson today, the Learning Game section will not be implemented.

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.

Read Matthew 1:18-25. Then ask the following:

- **When Joseph found out Mary was going to have a baby, what did he plan to do at first?** *(Break the marriage agreement.)*
- **Why?** *(Because they weren't married yet. He thought some other man must be the father.)*
- **Who appeared to Joseph in a dream?** *(An angel.)*
- **What did the angel say to Joseph?** *(Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby's father is the Holy Spirit.)*
- **What did Joseph do when he woke up?** *(He took Mary to be his wife.)*

Application:

Application 1:

The purpose of this activity is to show that closeness can be more than physical nearness. Closeness can also mean an intimate relationship, even when separated physically.

Say:

Joseph raised Jesus as though he were his own son. They must have been very close. That is the way Jesus wants to be with each of us. He wants to be close to us by having a close friendship. The only way for God to do that was for him to be made a man. This is a big step. This is what it would be like.

Have a guinea pig or small pet available. Hold this animal in your hand. Talk to the pet and explain to it that you love it and want to have a close friendship with it.

As you reach in to grab the pet from the cage, the pet often runs and scampers away. How will you make the pet understand? The pet does not understand human talk. Maybe the only way would be to be a guinea pig yourself, so you could really be friends. That is what God did. Even though he was God, he made himself to be a man. That would be like a person becoming a guinea pig. That is quite a jump down, isn't it?

That is what God would do just so that he could save people from their sin. That is what happened at Christmas – God became a man, Jesus. Jesus was born to pay the price of punishment of all our sin. When we believe in him, he will live in our lives. We will be close to God forever.

Option: Use a pet dog instead. Talk about how you communicate to a dog in its language. It may understand a few human words, but if you brought a dog into the room with three kids in one corner and three dogs in another corner, which corner would the dog go to first? The dog corner. That is why God became a man, because he knew that we would naturally be drawn to Jesus as a man—one of us. When Jesus walked on earth as a man, people came to him by the hundreds, even thousands. God spoke to them through Jesus. He still speaks to us today through Jesus.

Application 2:

Show and discuss one of these videos:

- *Animated Stories from the New Testament: The King Is Born*, published by Family Entertainment Network. 25 minutes with intro, 23 minutes without.
- “*The Visual Bible for Kids: The Birth of Jesus*,” © 1998 by Tommy Nelson, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. for ages 6 and up. Approximately 30 minutes.



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.

Let kids share about a time they felt God was especially close to them.

Option: Have any kids who invited a friend to church during the Christmas season tell about their experience

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
- a center white candle
- some type of small gift toy or trinket

Offering:

- gift-wrapped box to put offering in

Application 1:

- guinea pig or small pet

Application 2:

- *Animated Stories from the New Testament: The King Is Born*, produced by Animated Stories, Inc. 1987—order from:
http://www.nestfamily.com/store/product_detail.asp?productID=KBD
- *“The Visual Bible for Kids: The Birth of Jesus,”* © 1998 by Tommy Nelson, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. for ages 6 and up. Approximately 30 minutes—order from:
http://www.thomasonelson.com/consumer/product_detail.asp?sku=0849986710