



Date: _____

Series: Advent
Winter Year 3, Lesson 29

Do You Have an Open Heart for Jesus?

Primary Scripture: Psalm 51:10

Key Verse: Psalm 51:10, "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a faithful spirit within me."

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

Kids, like adults, can be either spiritually receptive to receiving God's presence in their lives or spiritually resistant. Having an open heart means one is willing and eager to receive what God desires. Particularly, it means experiencing the love and forgiveness that are ours through Jesus. Yet, many times apathy or stubbornness can make us resistant to what God would do for us. Especially during the Christmas season, we want to be ready to receive the gift of God's love to us in Jesus. Christmas celebrates God the Father giving the gift of Jesus to the world. Because Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for us, we can experience the depth of God's love.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Christmas celebrates God the Father giving the gift of Jesus to the world. Because Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for us, we can experience the depth of God's love.

Jesus in us: Since we have received Jesus as our Savior, we can continually receive his working in our lives as we model what he wants us to do.

Jesus through us: God's love comes into the world today through the way we express God's love to others—sharing the message of Jesus.

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: a heart-shaped box that has a lock attached to it or drawn on it (In some way it needs to give the visual of a heart that can be opened and closed.)

What do you see on this heart-shaped box? (A lock.)

The Bible suggests that our hearts have a lock on them, like a lock on a door. Listen while I read the words of Revelation 3:20, "Look, I'm standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I'll come in and we'll eat together."

Who is saying these words? (Jesus.)

Who is he saying them to? (Us.)

What does he mean? (He wants to live in our hearts.)

God made us with a kind of hole in our hearts. And he made it for a special reason – so we would fill it with Jesus. Let's worship Jesus now with our voices and our hearts.

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 songs.

The Power of the Cross:

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

Supplies needed: a large trashcan labeled with a red heart cut from construction paper, easel with at least eight sheets of paper (Each sheet should have a message from the following. The first four sheets represent closed hearts and the last four represent open hearts.)

Closed Hearts:

1. *"I don't need you, God."*
2. *"I can get to heaven by myself."*
3. *"I'd like to goof around in church."*
4. *"I don't need to learn about you, God."*

Open Hearts:

1. *"I'm here to worship you, God."*
2. *"I want to pray."*
3. *"I love you, Lord."*
4. *"Please live in my heart by helping me follow you."*

Give examples of closed hearts. While doing so, rip the page from the easel, wad it up, and throw it into the trash.

The trashcan is symbolic of our hearts. When we fill our hearts with attitudes like these, our hearts become closed to God. We make it difficult for God to work and move in our lives.

After giving these four examples, ask kids for more examples of a closed heart. Then say a prayer of confession. In the prayer, include a phrase that states that we want our hearts to be open to God. Then continue with:

We recognize that Jesus gave his life to take the punishment of our sin upon himself and remove that sin from our lives. He can take away our prideful hearts.

Empty the trashcan and announce the following:

James 4:6b says, "God opposes arrogant people, but he is kind to humble people." God gives grace to humble people. Since we have humbled ourselves to God and called on the name of Jesus, we have his forgiveness and he will live in us.

Next, fill the trashcan with the examples of someone with an open heart to God. After each phrase is read, remove the paper from the easel, roll it up neatly, and place it inside the trashcan.

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.

Supplies needed: M&M's or similar candy

Invite a child forward and give the child ten M&M's. Say to him/her:

These are your M&M's. You may do with them whatever you want.

Then add:

I am hungry for an M&M. Would you give one back?

If the child agrees to give one back, then give him/her more M&M's. Again ask if the child would share. As he/she does share, give more M&M's to the child.

This is very much like God and us. Who gives us all that we have? God does. We get to use the money he gives us however we want, but he does ask that we would give back to him just a small part of it. God wants one out of every ten. When we give to God, we are not only saying, "Thank you," we are also saying, "We trust you to provide for us whatever else we need."

Notice that every time our volunteer gave up an M&M, he/she received even more. When we trust God by giving him a portion of what he has given us, he always blesses us. God certainly takes care of us by giving us just what we need.

Encourage the volunteer to take some of the M&M's and share them with other kids.

Certainly, God wants us to share what He has given us with others. Today's offering is not only a gift we give to God, we will use it to help others.

Explain the current project and your progress toward your goal. Have kids bring forward their offerings.



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.

“Heart Failure”

Today's game requires a large playing area.

Ask children to get into groups of three. Have two of each group pair up, face each other, and join hands. *(Like the London Bridge game.)* Have the third person move in between each pair after their hands are moved up to create a passageway for the third child to enter. This represents when the heart is open.

One extra child is positioned in the middle of the room away from the groups of three.

Announce a certain characteristic to release players from their hearts. For example, say, “Anyone wearing black shoes.” Upon hearing this, any child wearing black shoes will leave the heart they are in. The hearts will stay open until another person runs inside. Once leaving a heart, a child may not run back into the same heart, he/she must run to another open heart.

The extra child in the middle is also trying to run to an open heart. The extra child will generally get to an open heart before one of the newly released kids does. Therefore, a new person will be left out of a heart. This person then waits for the next characteristic to be called so that the hearts open up to allow an exchange of kids again.

To release players from their hearts, use the following characteristics.

- Is wearing black shoes.
- Has blue eyes.
- Is not wearing socks.
- Has curly hair.
- Went to Kingdom Quest this morning.
- Has never gone to a Christmas service at this church.
- Has a brother.
- Has a sister.
- Loves Jesus.

The teaching point is that our hearts can spiritually be opened or closed.

When we say “no” to God in our hearts or think that we don’t need him, our hearts can be closed. When we worship God and tell him that we love him, pray to him, and read his word, our hearts are open to receive God’s blessings—just like the people running back into the open hearts.

God wants to send his blessing to us when we have our hearts open to him. The biggest blessing is that God himself would come and live in us! James 4:5b says, *“The Spirit that lives in us wants us to be his own.”*

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.

Read Psalm 51:10-12:

“Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a faithful spirit within me. Do not force me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.”

Application:

Application 1:

Explain how this scripture is a prayer that shows how someone has an open heart and wants God to come in, clean his heart with God’s forgiveness, and give him a faithful spirit. He wants God to let him be happy for his salvation and help him want to obey God in everything.

Application 2:

An interactive drama around the book *Jesus’ Christmas Party* by Nicholas Allan is presented.

The book, published by Random House, tells the story of the birth of Jesus from the viewpoint of the innkeeper. The book’s charming pictures might be displayed on Power Point with credit given to the illustrator Nicholas Allan. The learning event is designed so the audience participates as the book is read.

Before reading the book, choose various children for parts and prompt them with their assigned actions. This can all be done on the spot or before beginning.

The main character will be the innkeeper who will be given either a nightcap or nightgown. The innkeeper should be in front of the audience and facing them. All other characters stay in the audience or briefly walk up to the innkeeper from the audience. The other parts are as noted:

Knocker—knocks hard on wood three times anytime there is a knock at the door.

Stair Climber—makes stair-climbing noises anytime the innkeeper goes up the stairs.

Door Slammer—makes the noise of a door slamming.

Mary and Joseph—wear the headpieces of a period costume. Two blankets need to be available plus a third smaller blanket.

Flashlight Shiner—shines a flashlight in the eyes of the innkeeper.

Three Shepherds—have staffs or headpieces like towels tied around heads.

Three Kings—wear crowns.

Angel—wears a garland headdress and is able to loudly sing “Hallelujah!”

After you have assigned the parts, be prepared to point out each part as it happens in the story. The story needs to be marked so that people know when their parts are. Try to keep the story moving along at a steady rhythm that is not bogged down with the special effects. The characters of Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men who come to visit the innkeeper can stand up on their cues and come face to face with the innkeeper. Again, try to keep the pace of the story moving along.

Discussion question for the end of the story:

What kind of heart do you think the innkeeper had at the beginning of the story? What kind of heart did he have at the end of the story? What made him change?

God wants us to have open hearts. When we think of him giving us Jesus, it helps open our hearts. He gave Jesus as a baby to the world so that we might know that Jesus came humbly into the world. Also, babies are easy to cuddle and to be close to. Through the Baby Jesus, God tells us that he wants us to come close to him.

It might be necessary to point out that this story is not from the Bible. The Bible does not say anything about whether the innkeeper had an open or closed heart. The story is fictional, but it is a good story of how someone’s heart could be open or closed to God.



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.

If there is time, let kids describe people they know who have open hearts to God. How can they tell?

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.

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:

- a heart-shaped box that has a lock attached to it or drawn on it (In some way it needs to give the visual of a heart that can be opened and closed.)

The Power of the Cross:

- a large trash can labeled with a red heart cut from construction paper
- easel with at least eight sheets of paper. Each sheet should contain a phrase from the list below.
 - "I don't need you, God."
 - "I can get to heaven by myself."
 - "I'd like to goof around in church."
 - "I don't need to learn about you, God."
 - "I'm here to worship you, God."
 - "I want to pray."
 - "I love you, Lord."
 - "Please live in my heart by helping me follow you."

Offering:

- M&M's or similar candy

Bible Presentation

Application 2:

- the book *Jesus' Christmas Party* by Nicholas Allan, published by Random House – order online at http://www.alibris.com/search/search.cfm?qwork=3427663&wtit=Jesus%20Christmas%20Party&matches=2&qsort=r&cm_re=works*listing*title
- Power Point presentation, if available, to show the pictures from the above book
- characters for the presentation of the story:
 - Knocker**—knocks hard on wood three times anytime there is a knock at the door.
 - Stair Climber**—makes stair-climbing noises anytime the innkeeper goes up the stairs.
 - Door Slammer**—makes the noise of a door slamming.
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 - Flashlight Shiner**—shines a flashlight in the eyes of the innkeeper.
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 - Angel**—wears a garland headdress and is able to loudly sing "Hallelujah!"