



Date: _____
Series: The Best Gift of All – Jesus
Winter Year 4, Lesson 28

The True Meaning of Christmas

Primary Scripture: John 1:14; 3:16-17

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 are getting ready for the Christmas season and are excited about presents. Though there is nothing wrong with exchanging presents, oftentimes the true meaning of Christmas is lost. Kids (and adults) can become focused on the glitz and glitter of Christmas instead of the true meaning of Jesus, God's gift to the whole world. This lesson will help kids understand that Jesus is the gift that God gave us. He is the Word that was made human and lived among us so that we might be saved.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus came into the world to show us who God is and to give his life for us.

Jesus in us: Jesus not only came into this world as a baby at Bethlehem, but through the Holy Spirit, lives in the life of every believer.

Jesus through us: Jesus' presence is seen in this world today through the transformed lives of those who follow him.

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.

Props:

- *fancy wrapped gift box with the top wrapped separately so the gift may be opened without ruining the paper*
- *glittery or shiny confetti or paper shreds inside the gift box*
- *a manger filled with straw (a convenient straw substitute is Spanish moss available at Wal-mart)*

It is more illustrative in the lesson if the manger is constructed with the end pieces or legs in the shape of an "X" or cross.

Have any of you noticed indications that Christmas is coming soon?

Raise your hands and tell me some of the things you have noticed.

(The kids might mention Christmas lights, Christmas trees, store decorations and presents. They may also mention some sacred symbols such as nativity sets, Christmas programs rehearsals, etc.)

Many people get excited about these.

Hold up the present.

Some people think that this is what Christmas is all about. Presents are wonderful to receive and give, but is Christmas just about gifts?

Let's look inside this beautifully wrapped box.

Open the gift-wrapped box.

Notice the glittery shredded paper. This is the kind of packing one might find inside a box containing something very nice. But what is the gift inside? I don't see anything at all. I guess this box is empty. It might be wrapped fancy and glittery, but there is no real present here.

This reminds me of how Christmas is for some. The decorations may be bright and beautiful with fancy presents, but the meaning of Christmas is empty like this box.

Let me ask another question. How did God wrap his Christmas gift to us? Who wants to guess? *(His gift box was a manger and straw.)*

Point to the manger filled with straw.

This is not very nice wrapping. Just the opposite, it is a very drab box. But think of the wonderful gift that was placed in a box like this. That gift was God's own Son, Jesus, born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. We celebrate the true meaning of Christmas when we receive the gift of God's own Son, Jesus.

Now, let's wrap our gift of love to God in the songs we sing and the prayers we give him. Let's worship God and thank him for the gift he gave 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.

Supplies: manger with the end pieces in the shape of an "X" or cross

The craft of the day would serve if you do not have a larger manger.

You know that God sent his Son Jesus into the world as a gift. He even wrapped his gift in swaddling clothes (or rags) and had him placed in a manger.

The manger can remind us of the reason Jesus came into the world. Can anyone guess by looking at the manger?

Point to the cross-shaped ends of the manger.

Right. The reason Jesus came into the world was to give his life for us. When he grew up, he became the sacrifice for our sin when he died on the cross. But he didn't stay dead. He is alive with us today.

We don't know what the manger Jesus was laid in as a small baby actually looked like. Maybe it *did* look like this. If it did, it reminds us today how wonderful God's gift to us really is. Lets thank him for that now.

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming as a gift into the world. Thank you for giving your life for us. Thank you for dying and taking away our sin... the punishment for anything we have done against God. We believe that you are alive and we receive the gift of your life given for us. Live in our lives and give us your forgiveness. Help us to become more like you every day. 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.

Set the offering plate in the manger. Invite the children forward to show their love for the gift God gave them by giving their offerings back to him.



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.

Newspaper Missile Launch:

Supplies: half sheets of newspaper, one per child; two inches of masking tape per child; one hula hoop for every ten children, masking tape starting line on the floor

Today we will have a contest making newspaper missiles. Your newspaper missile might be a tube of newspaper rolled tightly together and taped so that it doesn't unwind when you throw it, or you may know how to make a newspaper airplane that can sail farther.

The contest will be for each person to make a newspaper missile however they want and then to throw it when it is their turn so that it goes through the hula hoop.

After kids have made their missiles, separate them into teams of ten. Give each child three chances to throw his/her missile.

Have an assistant (for every ten children) stand about 20 feet away from the team's throw (masking tape) line and hold up a hula hoop so that newspaper missiles can fly through it. If you do not have an assistant(s), you may suspend the hula hoops from the ceiling with string.

After all have had a chance, discuss the following:

Who can guess how this game is like Jesus?

Let several try to answer.

John 1:14 says, “The Word became human and lived among us. We saw his glory. It was the glory that the Father shares with his only Son, a glory full of kindness and truth.”

Jesus is described as the Word. God sent the Word (Jesus) into the world. He became human and lived among us. In this game, the newspaper filled with words reminds us of Jesus, the Word, that God sent into the world... just like our newspaper missiles we sent through the hula hoop.

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 the following Bible verse (John 3:16-17) with blanks and see if the boys and girls can guess what words go in it.

“God loved the world this way: He gave his only _____ so that everyone who _____s in him will not die but will have eternal life. God sent his Son into the _____, not to condemn the world, but to save the world.”

Questions:

How did God show his love to the world? (He gave his Son Jesus.)

How is it that we will have eternal life? (When we believe in Jesus, we will not die but will have eternal life.)

God didn’t send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to do what? (Save the world.)

Today we will make a craft to remind us of God’s gift to the world—Jesus. He wrapped his gift and placed him in a manger. So lets make a simple craft that looks like a manger. (See Appendix A.)

Application:

Supplies:

- *one Appendix A copied on cardstock per child*
- *pliers to break ends of Popsicle sticks so they are rough*
- *two Popsicle sticks per child—one full length and two halves*
- *newspapers and magazines for lettering*
- *Spanish moss for manger filler*
- *white glue and/or glue stick*

Option: If a good supply of newspapers and magazines is not available, kids may color Appendix B and attach the letters as a title for their picture.

Once completed, the picture may be used as a tree ornament or posted on the family refrigerator to remind us of God's gift—his Son Jesus.



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 come forward and share where they might place the craft to remind them that the best Christmas present is not one wrapped under the tree but the one wrapped in straw, the Word, Jesus who came into the world to give us eternal life.

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:

- fancy wrapped gift box with the top wrapped separately so the gift may be opened without ruining the paper
- glittery or shiny confetti or paper shreds placed inside the gift box
- a manger filled with straw (a convenient straw substitute is Spanish moss available at Wal-Mart)

Power of the Cross:

- manger with the end pieces in the shape of an “X” or cross or a completed craft project

Learning Game:

- half sheets of newspaper, one per child
- two inches of masking tape per child
- one hula hoop for every ten children
- masking tape starting line (on the floor)

Application:

- one Appendix A copied on cardstock per child
- pliers to break ends of Popsicle sticks so they are rough
- two Popsicle sticks per child—one full length and two halves
- newspapers and magazines for lettering
- Spanish moss for manger filler
- white glue and/or glue stick
- *option:* If a good supply of newspapers and magazines is not available, kids may color Appendix B and attach the letters as a header to their picture



