

John 1-3 Review: Christmas Message

“Jesus: The Father’s Gift to Us”

Scripture: John 1-3

Memory Verse: John 1:12 *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*

Lesson Focus: We will look at key verses that will help us better understand the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHY of Christmas. Our intention is that the kids will marvel at what God did for mankind at Christmas and invite Him into their celebration (and hearts) this year.

Activities and Crafts: Coloring Picture of the Father’s Gift, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Christmas Devotional Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st & 2nd: Various Christmas crafts

Introduction/Starter Activity: A Christmas Story Video Clips

We will have all of the kids stay in the Summit Room for these introductory video clips. We will play a couple of scenes from the classic movie “A Christmas Story” and then have some discussion before dismissing the 1st & 2nd graders to their classrooms.

Q: What are some GIFTS that you are hoping to RECEIVE for Christmas this year? *

Q: How many of you put together a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child this year? Wasn’t it fun to spend some time thinking about what a poor child in a foreign country might like as a gift and GIVE to them?

There is something remarkably special about Christmas time in giving and receiving gifts, isn’t there? We are going to talk about why that is. But first:

Q: How many of you have seen the movie, “A Christmas Story”? It is about a 9-year old boy named Ralphie who wants only one thing for Christmas: A BB gun. While there are certain parts of the movie that are very inappropriate, we are going to watch a couple of scenes to introduce our Christmas message. **Important:** Watch the expression on the faces of the main characters. [Now show the movie scenes]

Q: How did Ralphie look when he opened the first gift? (apathy) The Aunt Clara gift? (disgust) But how did he look when he opened the special gift from his Dad? (delight!)

Q: Now how did his father look as he watched Ralphie receiving that gift? (love)

It struck me how much this scene actually can teach us about God’s love for us at the very first Christmas. Keep the faces of these characters fresh in your mind as this will become clearer as we progress through our Bible Study.

Bible Study:

We are going to review certain sections and verses of John 1-3 while also mixing in other verses to present a full picture of God's loving purpose behind Christmas. First we need to understand the WHAT, the HOW, and then the WHY of Christmas. We will look at them in that order. Let's review WHO Jesus is. This really is the "WHAT" of Christmas. (if you remove Jesus from Christmas, there is no Christmas, just "happy holidays"!)*

John 1:1-2: These verses introduce us to this "Word" and in verse 2 we see that this Word is a "He".

Q: Who do you think John is referring to when he is talking about the Word? Jesus! Let's reread these verses replacing Word with Jesus to make it clearer.

These verses very clearly teach that Jesus Christ is God, a separate person from the Father (and the Holy Spirit mentioned later), but all still just one God.

John 1:3: To make this point even clearer, John teaches us that Jesus created all things! He made you and He made me.

Teachers: Draw on the board one large box divided into two boxes and label them as "Created Things" and "Uncreated Things". This represents everything that exists. In the uncreated things box, put God. In the created things box, ask the kids for some things that belong in that box (i.e. animals, humans, earth, stars, etc.)

Now, take a cross or a coin or something and tell the kids that this represents Jesus. Ask them which box He belongs in. John 1:3 teaches that "ALL CREATED THINGS" came into being through Jesus Christ so He belongs in the "uncreated things" box with God.

Next, take another coin or something else and tell the kids that this represents the Holy Spirit. Ask them which box they think the Holy Spirit belongs in. He also belongs in the "Uncreated Things" box because He is also God. Later on in this gospel (John 14:26, John 15:26) we will see the Holy Spirit described as God, but as a third and separate Person from the Father and Jesus Christ.

These first three verses of John's gospel help us understand the Trinity: That there is one God in three distinct Persons. Not three Gods, but one. Not all the same Person, but three.

Q: Now when you think of God, and Who God is, what ideas come to your mind? If I wrote down God is _____, how would you fill in the blank?

A: While we all might have various ideas about God, what is true is what He has told us about Himself in the Bible: All-powerful (Jeremiah 10:12), All-knowing (Psalm 139), All-holy (Lev 20:26), All-righteous (Deut. 32:4), All-good (1 John 1:5), Eternal (Psalm 90:2), Creator (John 1:3), the almighty King (Jeremiah 10:10), the great I AM.

Now skip down to John 1:14: The Word, Jesus, became flesh which means He became human, like one of us. **Stop and think about that for a second.** We just rightly described God as the greatest, almighty King of the universe and He entered His creation as one of us. This creation was originally good (Genesis 1), but we messed it up (Genesis 3). Now He enters into what we messed up!

Q: How many of you are into legos? The best illustration I've been able to come up with for the WHAT of Christmas is to imagine yourself as the great "Master Architect and Designer" of a Lego universe. You create a Lego world and breathe life into the Lego people. But after sometime the Lego people make a mess of the creation and you decide to enter into your own creation as a Lego person yourself. This means that you have all of the limitations of a lego person (i.e. movements are limited, permanent lego smile on your face, etc.). You would be known as Lego-man!

This is the WHAT of Christmas and it should ASTONISH us. **Read Matthew 1:23.** Immanuel or "God with us" was planned and prophesied ages before and was now accomplished. The God-man had arrived!

This verse in Matthew leads us into the HOW. How did the God-man come? Wouldn't you expect with splendor and ceremony? With pomp and circumstance? This is the almighty King of the universe that we are talking about remember!

Read Luke 2:1-7: Joseph had to travel 90 miles with his pregnant fiancé to register at Bethlehem. They finally get there and there is no room at any hotels! No one would offer a woman about to give birth a room so she gave birth to the great I AM, the King of Kings, in a stable and cradled him in a feeding-trough! This is harsh and brutal!

Q: How many of us have manger scenes that we setup? They usually look cute and pretty don't they? But the real scene was a stinky *, uncomfortable, and cruel place to bring a baby into the world!

This is the HOW of Christmas and it should SHOCK us. **Read Philippians 2:7-8.** Jesus, the God-man, did not come in splendor and ceremony, but He emptied Himself, entering and then living in this world among the humblest of circumstances. God got small! *

These verses in Philippians finally lead us into the WHY. Why? Why would our almighty King and God do this? Why did the God-man come? Let's let Jesus answer for Himself:

Matthew 20:28: He came to serve and give His life away.

Luke 19:10: He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

He came to serve, to seek, and to save. This was a rescue mission. Remember earlier we discussed how God is all-holy, all-good, and all-righteous? He is also all-just, meaning God must punish all sin and evil. Hell is a place where God's justice is perfect.

Q: How many of you have ever sinned or done something evil? * Then you have a problem! Jesus, the God-man, is your only solution. His mission began in a cruel cradle and “it was finished” on a cruel cross. On that cross, He took the punishment of **His people** upon Himself, thus forgiving them and restoring relationship with them.

Q: But who are **His people**? Did Jesus death on the cross mean “automatic” forgiveness for everybody? *

A: No! **Read John 1:12**. Only those who receive Him, who believe in His name through faith and trust...they become **His people**. These people admit they are sinners, turn from their sin, and turn to Jesus in faith.

Key Point: This brings us back to the video we watched at the beginning. Remember little Ralphie? Which Christmas gift would you say he actually “received” (the socks, the bunny outfit, or the BB gun)? The BB gun was his treasure. He held it tight and cherished it. [Show the picture of him holding it tight at the end of the movie]

Q: Is that how you have received Jesus? Is He your treasure? Or is Jesus more like the socks that you throw over your shoulder or the outfit you only pretend to like around others?

The more we understand the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHY of Christmas, the more we will make Jesus Christ our greatest treasure! Jesus Christ, Who was rich, became poor for us, so that we, through His poverty, might become rich! (**2 Corinthians 8:9**)

Finally, remember the expression on the father’s face in the video as he watched Ralphie receive that gift? His love for Ralphie was fully demonstrated in the giving of that BB gun to him and you could see the loving joy as he watched Ralphie receive it.

In a similar way, God the Father demonstrates His love towards us in giving us His Son as His perfect gift (**Romans 5:8**). Last week we talked about the most famous verse of the Bible, **John 3:16**. For God so loved YOU, He gave His only Son.

Sin brings death and punishment, but the free GIFT of God is eternal life! (**Romans 6:23**)

[Show the picture of the present in the manger]

When you behold the baby in the manger this Christmas, behold God’s greatest gift of love to you. Receive Jesus, cherish Jesus, and live for Jesus!

Christmas Devotional

Lesson Theme: “Jesus: The Father’s Gift to Us”

Memory Verse: John 1:12 *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*

Teachers/Parents: We shared a few scenes from the classic movie “A Christmas Story”. Ask your kids if they remember how the scenes we shared relate to God the Father’s love for us in sending us His Son. While we would not necessarily recommend watching the movie, this movie does humorously capture one family’s Christmas traditions gone wrong. What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions or experiences?

Discussion Questions:

- 1) **Read John 1:1-3 and then John 1:14.** Reread these verses again, but then replace all instances of “the Word” with Jesus. Stop and consider what this really means. Jesus is God and yet became man. The Creator became a creature. The infinite became finite. The WHO of Christmas (Jesus: the God-man) truly is the WHAT of Christmas. Why is correctly knowing WHO Jesus is so important for us truly understanding the WHAT of Christmas?
- 2) In our study, we progressed from the WHAT to the HOW of Christmas. **Read Matthew 1:22-23** which aids us in this transition. The coming of Jesus to us (Immanuel) by a virgin was planned and prophesied ages before. What do you think are some reasons why Jesus came to us through a virgin? (Hint: Remember He is the God-man)
- 3) **Read Luke 2:1-7** which gives us more detail on the HOW. Remember WHO Jesus is. These are the humblest of circumstances and yet this is how our great God entered the world. Why do you think the God-man came this way instead of with ceremony and splendor, which He would have deserved?
- 4) In our study, we progressed from the HOW to the WHY of Christmas. **Read Philippians 2:7-8** where both are united. What does v. 8 say His purpose for coming was? Remember again WHO this is!
- 5) **Read John 3:16** which fully explains the WHY. Jesus is the Father’s Christmas gift to us. The gift is for everyone, but **read John 1:12**. Who are the people that will not perish but have everlasting life?
- 6) Think about something precious that you have received for Christmas that you have cherished and treasured. Do you treasure Jesus like this? Is there someone else that you can share Jesus with this Christmas?