

1 John 4:7-14

The “Heart” of Christmas

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-14

Memory Verse: 1 John 4:14 *“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”*

Lesson Focus: In this lesson we want to cut through the froth and fluff of Christmas in America today and get to the true heart of Christmas which is God’s amazing *agape* love for us. We hope this lesson will both challenge the kids and enrich their joy as they celebrate Christmas this year.

Activities and Crafts: Christmas Coloring Page and Activity Sheet, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for ALL Grades: Christmas “Believe” Mobile (NOTE: Carve out time for this!) *

Starter Activity: Silly Christmas Trivia

Consider starting off the lesson with a silly Christmas trivia game. * Ask the questions to the class as a whole or break them up into teams. Modify as you see fit to make it fun! Below are several silly Christmas questions with answers that you can use.

- 1) What are the two traditional Christmas colors? A: Red and green
- 2) How many reindeer are there including Rudolph? A: Nine
- 3) What did Rudolph never get to join in? A: Reindeer games
- 4) What color is the Grinch? A: Green
- 5) In “Home Alone” where was Kevin’s family visiting? A: France
- 6) What is Frosty the Snowman’s nose made out of? A: Button
- 7) In “Jingle Bells”, what ride is so much fun? A: A one-horse open sleigh.
- 8) What plant do people stand under to kiss at Christmas? A: Mistletoe
- 9) What are you supposed to “deck the halls” with? A: Boughs of holly
- 10) What is the name of the most famous Christmas ballet? A: The Nutcracker
- 11) How many gifts are given altogether in the 12 days of Christmas? A: 364 *

Afterwards, ask this important question to wrap-it-up and transition into the lesson.

Q: What was missing from all of those Christmas trivia questions? A: God/Jesus! *

While there is nothing wrong with enjoying some of the folklore surrounding Christmas in America today, we must be sure that we are able to see past all of that and still get to the “heart” of Christmas. * While God is certainly at the “heart” of Christmas, we are going to dig a little deeper into our Bibles and see how and why He is at the heart of Christmas. Let’s take a look!

Bible Study:

This letter from the apostle John was written to Christians many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1 John 4:7-8: Throughout this letter, John underscores the importance of Christians “practicing” love. Some of you might remember our lesson from the first weekend of December on the Good Samaritan where we were all challenged to “practice love.”

Q: What are some ways that you have “practiced love” so far this Christmas season? *

But notice how John connects this love back to God. Apart from God we CANNOT truly love. For not only does love come from God, but God IS LOVE. This is who God is at His core (as well as holy, righteous, powerful, etc.)

Our word “love” meant something much deeper back in John’s day. The original word here for love is *agape*. This kind of love is not just a feeling, but a choice to joyfully put the needs of what you “*agape*” love above your own needs. *

1 John 4:9: Whoa! While we have just read that God is “*agape*” love at His core, He has proven it to us also! Let’s read that verse again and then I will ask you a couple of Qs.

Q: How did God manifest or prove His love toward us? A: By sending us His only Son!

Q: And when did His only Son enter the world! A: At the very first Christmas!

Boys and Girls: Connecting these dots we see that love, God’s *agape* love, is what is at the heart of Christmas! Jesus came that very first Christmas so that we might live and be with Him forever! * (Teachers: To help the kids connect these dots, consider bringing in a box wrapped to look like a Christmas gift. Put inside the box something that represents “*agape*” love such as a heart, Christmas heart-shaped cookies, a cross, etc. Have a kid open it and use this to show how God’s *agape* love is at the heart of Christmas) *

1 John 4:10: We didn’t make Christmas...God did (though we made up all of the silly stuff that can distract us from the heart of Christmas!). But He made it because of our sin!

Q: What is sin? A: Anything we think, say, or do that disobeys God.

Q: What are some examples? A: Lying, stealing, hating others, disobeying our parents, etc. When we do things like this we are doing exactly what God hates! The Bible even calls us enemies of God because of our sin and that we deserve death and hell. And this is true! Every one of us is guilty! BUT even though our sin is great, God’s *agape* is greater!

And that *agape* love is wrapped up in this big word “propitiation”. * This is a big Bible word that refers to Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross and how His death paid for our sins. He took the punishment we deserved so that we didn’t have to! *

Q: What could be more “*agape*” loving than that? A: NOTHING! God the Son willingly came to earth to die on the cross and rise again for you and for me so that we might be forgiven and live with Him forever! And this all began at the very first Christmas! *

But this is not automatic for all people. God sending His Son for us is the greatest gift ever given, but each one of us must choose to RECEIVE that gift. (**Teachers:** Consider referring back to the gift you brought in that was opened before and point out how that gift wasn’t truly received until the kid came up and opened it!)

John 3:16 teaches us how we receive God’s gift. First, it repeats what we’ve been saying already, that “*God so _____ the world (agape loved) that He gave His only begotten Son*”. Continuing on, “*that whoever _____ (believes) in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

Q: So what must we do to receive this gift of God’s Son? A: Believe in Him! Trust in Him! This entails admitting you are a sinner, turning from your sin, and turning to Jesus in faith! We call this gift God’s grace: getting something good that we do not deserve!

1st & 2nd Grade Teachers: Consider closing the lesson here to make time for the craft!

1 John 4:11: Let’s take this verse and personalize it. “*If God so loved ME....then I also ought to love others.*” Notice what comes first! When you truly understand God’s grace and His *agape* love for you first shown to us at Christmas, you are changed. You are astounded by how wonderful Jesus is and gladly say “yes” to Him when He tells you to go and practice *agape* love towards others. *

1 John 4:12-13: God the Spirit dwells in all believers to help us love Him and others. Just as a car needs fuel to run, we need God’s Holy Spirit to help us love others!

1 John 4:14: While John said back in v. 12 that no one has seen God in His fully divine essence, John and the other apostles are assuring us that they have seen and can testify to Jesus Christ coming, dying, and rising again to be our Savior. This is important because it will help us cut through the silliness that we began our lesson with which can distract us from the heart of Christmas. *

Key Point: Rudolph, Frosty, the Nutcracker, and the Grinch are fairy tales that can certainly enhance our Christmas celebrations. But let’s get one thing straight. The heart of Christmas is NOT a fairy tale! John just said he HAS SEEN and testifies to Jesus Christ coming to rescue us! *

Boys and Girls: God’s *agape* love is not a fairy tale. It is REAL! Jesus was born in a REAL manger. He died on a REAL cross. He rose from a REAL grave. Believe and trust in Him and make Him the REAL heart and center of your life today! If you understand the heart of Christmas and all that He did for you in love, how could you not?

And if God so loved you, practice *agape* love to others throughout your holiday break!

BRING IT HOME

Read 1 John 4:9-10
What is the greatest
Christmas gift of all
time?

Parent Signature:

Parent Challenge:
What is the heart of
Christmas?

Read John 3:16
How do we receive
that gift?

