Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
1 Christmas
New Testament: John 1:1-18

BACKGROUND
The world – that played Christmas carols all through the penitential season of Advent – has packed away the ornaments, taken down the Christmas trees, and has moved on to after-Christmas sales. We gaze in wonder at the gift shimmering before us that we have barely unwrapped, let alone begun to understand. God among us – the Word made flesh. So we make the only response we can: we celebrate! We keep the greens in the church and sing the Christmas carols. We are being nurtured for the work that will be given us to do.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
Hovering over all of history – the parts we have recorded and all that came before – is the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. This Jesus, whom we can begin to grasp as the baby born on Christmas, is obviously something infinitely beyond our understanding. This is light no darkness can blot out. This true light is now loose in the world. John had proclaimed this coming, yet those Jesus came to did not accept him. But the choice is still there: accept him and become the children of God.

THEME
Celebration – A Child among Us

BEGINNING
Enjoy time together with coffee and cookies.

Ask each person to think of ONE thing that happened this Christmas that really worked for them. Many of us are still beating ourselves up about having spent too much money, too little time with those we love, and just getting so tired! Now we can offer a cool cup of mercy to each other by sharing Christmas joys. Perhaps it was one hymn that really sang to you, time spent with a young child, a particularly delicious meal.

OPENING PRAYER
Gracious and Loving God, you came among us as a child, that we might know you as the incarnate God. Be with us as we continue this Christmas journey. Today, we thank you, God, for … (Say some of the things you heard during the earlier discussion). Help us to see you present in the world around us. Amen.

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THE STORY: JOHN 1:1-18

Invite someone to read the passage aloud while the rest of the group follows in their Bibles. Introduce the passage by explaining that this is a very different rendition of the Christmas story, perhaps equally familiar, but it contains no baby, no manger, no stars or angels or shepherds or wise men.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What strikes you first when you hear this passage?
- What do you think the writer means by "the Word" that was present from the beginning? What relationship do you see between Jesus and the creation of the world?
- How do you reconcile the line "the light shines in darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" with the terrible evils of this life? What does "the light" mean to you? What do you associate with light?
- What other images from the reading stand out for you?
- Why do you think the writer chose these images to talk about Jesus?
- On a piece of newsprint make two columns, one headed by the word "GOD," the second headed by the word "Jesus." Brainstorm to come up with words that describe God. Then brainstorm to come up with words that describe Jesus. Compare the two lists. How do we think of God and Jesus? Do we use different words in describing them? How are the lists alike? How are they different?

GETTING CLOSURE

Sing the second verse of "O come all ye faithful."

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, page 213)

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JOHN 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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