Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
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

BEFORE CLASS
You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for each person, a large piece of paper (from a flip chart, for example), and felt markers. You may also want to supply some cookies and milk or water. You will also need colored modeling clay, markers, colored paper, white paper, glitter, glue, scissors, paper and pens.

Note: Keep in mind that your class may be small today if people are still away for the holidays, AND you may have new children there that are visiting for the holidays. You may want to have nametags. Make sure and have everyone introduce him or herself if that is the case. You can go around the circle and invite each child to say their name and the first thing they did on Christmas morning. OR their name and the most memorable thing about Christmas for them. Keep this in mind during the lesson, trying not to ask too many questions from the previous weeks.

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BEGINNING

Spend time talking about the events of Christmas day, etc. Encourage the children to describe traditions in their homes – special foods, music, etc. You may wish to serve cookies and milk or water as you talk.

THE STORY: JOHN 1:1-18

Invite someone read the passage aloud while the rest of the class follows in their Bibles or on a printed copy of the passage. Introduce the passage by explaining that this is a very different rendition of the Christmas Story. There is no baby in the manger, no star or shepherds or Wisemen. It is a passage full of symbols.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what images you heard in today's reading?
- What images come into your mind as you hear this passage? Share in a word or two all the pictures you saw in your mind as you listened.
- What do you think the writer means by "the Word" was there from the beginning?
- What does "the light" mean to you? What do you associate with light?
- Why do you think the writer chose these images to talk about Jesus?

ACTIVITIES

Retell Christmas to a Stranger

Tell the children that you have just arrived on this planet and you are trying to make sense of what you have observed this past week. Ask the children to bring you up to speed. Some questions to get them started: "Whose birthday was this past week, Jesus or a jolly man in a red suit? 'Santa', I think you call him. Or was it a reindeer with a red nose? Where was this Jesus born and what are his folks' names? What did their house look like? Who came to see the new baby?"

After you have had this discussion, invite the children to create a huge Christmas card and draw the elements of Christmas – the manger, the baby, shepherds on a hill, angels – even the wise men approaching from a distance on their camels.

Symbols

Provide the class with colored modeling clay, markers, colored paper, white paper, glitter, glue, and scissors. Ask them to think about the passage and create a symbol that stands for what they feel when they think of God entering the world as a human being. They can be as abstract as they want to be.

If art isn't someone's thing, they might prefer to write a haiku poem to express their feelings of God becoming human. The formula for haikus:
Line one: 5 syllables
Line two: 7 syllables

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Line three: 5 syllables

Normally the first two lines describe something in nature and the final line compares that to a feeling or something human.

GETTING CLOSURE

Read John 1:1-8 again.

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)

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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