

Thanksgiving Bonus Lesson

Let's Be Thankful

Psalm 95:2 (NKJV) *Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

The Christmas Tree Advent Lessons

Jesus is Our Hope

Matthew 1:21 (NIV) *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

Jesus is Our Peace

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV): *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Jesus is Our Joy

Matthew 2:10 NIV: *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.*

Jesus is Our Light

Luke 2:32 (NLT): *He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!*

New Year's Bonus Lesson

Chosen by God for a Purpose

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

The Christmas Tree Advent Lesson 1 - Jesus is Our Hope

Focus Point: Because Jesus was born, we have hope in Him.

Goal: The students will learn it is good and right to celebrate Christ's birth because He gives us hope.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 1:21 (NIV) *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

Supplies Needed:

- supplies for a benevolence project
- Advent wreath
- optional – supplies to make an Advent wreath
- 2 sets of gift tags with each word of the verse on one tag,
- 2 gift bags
- a book about pregnant women, a pair of baby booties or something that symbolizes having a baby
- cardstock or posterboard
- red or green ribbon or yarn
- glue or scotch tape
- scissors
- hole punch
- stickers, glitter, markers, and other items for decorating Advent Calendar

Opening: *Christmas Tree Advent* Slide (Available free with registration of this curriculum.)

Welcome: Advent

Welcome children. For the next four weeks, we're going to celebrate Advent. Advent is a Latin word that means "coming." At Christmas time, we celebrate the first coming of Jesus Christ into the world. In this first Advent, He was born as a baby so He could grow up and provide the way for salvation. But there are three Advents in Scripture. The first happened 2,000 years ago when Jesus came into the world as a baby to live as a man and die for us. The second can happen now. Jesus wants to come into our lives now. The third will happen in the future when Jesus comes back to the world as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Prayer: Ask a child to pray over the service.

Rules: (use rules slides) Go over the 5 Ups Rules.

Go over the *5 Ups Rules*: 1. Sit up straight. 2. Listen up. 3. Hush up. 4. Don't get up and run around or go to the bathroom. 5. Worship Up! (stand up and participate during praise and worship)

Theme or Activity Songs: Choose one or two fast-moving activity songs that go with the curriculum.

Benevolence Project:

At Christmastime, it is a great idea to involve your students in a benevolence project. This is the time where you can talk to your students about that project. If your church has a project they are already involved in, find a way to include your students. If not, here are some suggestions for projects:

- Sing at a nursing home.
- Make Christmas cards and collect gifts for missionaries.
- Collect canned goods for a nearby homeless shelter.
- Find out if there is a local project you can participate in.
- Serve food at a nearby soup kitchen.

Optional Decoration Activity: Make a Wreath

There are many craft projects online that describe how to make a wreath with anything from a Styrofoam ring and greenery to modeling clay and birthday candles. If you want to make a wreath with your students instead of buying one, check them out.

Advent Object Lesson: Hope

The wreath should have three purple candles and one pink candle. Some also have a white candle in the middle for a Christmas Eve service. When the wreath is finished, light the first purple candle. *This candle symbolizes hope.*

Talk to the children about what they hope to get for Christmas. Tell them about a gift you hoped to receive when you were a child, but you didn't get it. You got something else instead.

The hope we have in Jesus is completely different. He gives us the hope of salvation. All we have to do is put our hope in Him and accept His free gift of salvation. But He gives us many more free gifts. We can hope in Him for healing, for deliverance, for protection, for boldness, and for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We have the sure hope that, if we accept His gift of salvation, we will someday live for eternity in Heaven with Him. Why hope for something you can't have? When your hope is in Jesus, you can trust in Him completely.

Verse of the Day: Matthew 1:21 (NIV) *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

Memory Verse Talk: (use *The Christmas Tree Advent* Lesson 1, slide A)

Christmas is a time of hope. Christians have the greatest hope of all because Jesus was born to save us from our sins. Because of that, our hope is found in Him.

Memory Verse Activity: Verse Relay (use *The Christmas Tree Advent* Lesson 1, slide A)

Supplies needed: 2 sets of gift tags with each word of the verse on one tag, 2 gift bags

Split your students into two teams. Each gift bag will hold one set of gift tags with the memory verse

written on them. The team who sorts the gift tags so they correctly show the memory verse first, wins.

Object Lesson: Wreaths

Supplies needed: Advent Wreath

Have you ever wondered why wreaths are made in a circle? Why not a square or a triangle, or even a hexagon?

I like to think wreaths are made in circles because the circle symbolizes eternal life. Because Christ came to Earth, we have eternal life in Him. He is our hope, and our hope is in Him. The Bible talks about this hope.

Matthew 12:21 (NIV): *“In his name the nations will put their hope.”*

Colossians 1:27 (NIV): *“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

The circle can also symbolize God’s unending love. We usually hang wreaths on the door to welcome guests just as Jesus welcomes us to have eternal life in Him.

Wreaths can be made out of lots of things and come in many different colors, but did you ever notice Advent wreaths and Christmas wreaths are usually made out of evergreen? Because evergreen trees last all year round, it is a symbol that we have everlasting life in Christ.

We have hope we will live with Jesus forever.

Praise and Worship: Choose a couple of fast songs and a slow song to lead children into praise and worship. It would be good to include a traditional Christmas carol. For this week, we suggest *O Come O Come Emmanuel*, performed by Bethel Kids.

Message/Bible Story: Mary Gets Pregnant

(Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 1:26-38)

Supplies needed: a book about pregnant women, a pair of baby booties, or something that symbolizes having a baby

Tell this story in your own words as you show the object.

When a woman gets pregnant, it means she is having a baby. Every baby who is born has a mother and a father. Sometimes children don’t know their fathers, but even then, they have a father somewhere.

When Mary became pregnant, it was different. For the first time in history, a woman became pregnant with a baby who didn't have a father. That's because this child was Jesus, the Son of God. He is our hope who is God with us.

If you have your hope in Jesus and have given your life to Him, even if you don’t know your father, or if you don’t see your father often, or even if you do have a great earthly father, you have a Heavenly

Father you can put your trust in. Your Heavenly Father is Jesus' Father.

Mary might have been afraid when the angel came and told her what was going to happen. She had a fiancé and was planning to get married. Would Joseph believe her? Even if she was afraid, she showed her hope in God by what she said.

Luke 1:38 Mary said, "I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" Then the angel went away.

Just as Mary put her hope in God when she was afraid, we can put our hope in God when we're afraid.

When Mary told Joseph, he was confused. He wanted to believe her, but something like this had never happened before. Even though he was confused, his hope was in God. He had a dream that night. An angel appeared to him and told him Mary was telling the truth.

Matthew 1:21 (ICB) She will give birth to a son. You will name the son Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins.

Even when we are confused like Joseph, we can put our hope in God. He will never let us down.

That isn't the end of the story. After Jesus was born, died, and rose again, He said He would come back again. We hope for the day He comes again. That is our blessed hope.

Titus 2:13 (NIRV) That's how we should live as we wait for the blessed hope God has given us. We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in his glory. He is our great God and Savior.

Let's review.

Just as Mary was pregnant with Jesus, who had a Heavenly Father, we have a Heavenly Father we can put our hope and trust in.

Just as Mary put her hope in God when she was afraid, we can put our hope in God when we're afraid.

Even when we are confused like Joseph, we can put our hope in God. He will never let us down.

We can trust in Jesus to return for us some day. He is our Blessed Hope.

Response Time:

For response time, lay hands on each student and pray for him or her to have hope in God.

Craft Project: Christmas Tree Advent Verses Calendar

Supplies needed: card stock or posterboard for each child, 2 inch strips of red or green ribbon or yarn, 24-inch red or green ribbons or yarn, glue, scissors, scotch tape, hole punch, stickers, glitter, markers, and other items for decorating, templates from The Christmas Tree Advent downloadable media resources

Preparations: Make enough copies of Christmas Tree Background for each child on green cardstock or

posterboard. Each tree will require four 8 ½" by 11" pages taped together or one 16" by 20" poster. You can also draw the picture on posterboard. Copy pages of Advent Circles with Verse References for each child, glue, scissors, red yarn or ribbon, hole punch, Christmas sticker, markers, glitter, foam Christmas cut-outs. (Christmas Tree Background and Circles with verses are found in The Christmas Tree Advent media resources.) Cut out the Advent Circles with Verse References. Punch holes in each Circles with Verse References and thread red yarn or ribbon through it. On the opposite side of the circles, number 1-25 with black magic marker. Cut out the Christmas Tree Background. If your students are older and you have plenty of time, you can have them do some of this preparation work. If the first Sunday of your Christmas lessons start after December 1st, you don't need to use the circles for days that have already passed.

Have students glue or tape the Christmas Tree Background on the posterboard or cardstock or have it drawn on the posterboard. Have them glue each ribbon or yarn with a circle onto their Christmas tree so the number shows and the verse reference is on the inside. Punch two holes in the top edge of the posterboard and thread a twenty-four-inch piece of yarn or ribbon through them. Tie the ribbon or yarn together to create a hanger for the poster to be hung on the wall.

Now allow your students to decorate their calendar however they like. Have plenty of decorations available for them to use.

If you prefer, you could also buy an Advent calendar craft from most craft places or from an online store like Oriental Trading.

While the students are decorating their Advent calendars, explain how each verse in their Advent calendar is about the birth or coming of Jesus. They should turn over the circle every day to reveal that day's verse. Then, they can look up the verse references in their Bibles. For younger children, an adult can help them.

About the Author:

Pastor Tamera Kraft has been a children's pastor for over thirty years. She is the director of a ministry called Revival Fire For Kids, where she mentors other children's leaders, teaches workshops, and is a children's ministry consultant and children's revivalist. She is a recipient of the 2007 National Children's Leaders Association Shepherd's Cup for lifetime achievement in children's ministry.

Tamera hosts a children's ministry podcast called IGNITE KIDMIN, available on most podcast providers and provides coaching and resources for IGNITE KIDMIN patron subscribers. Find out more about this at <http://revivalfire4kids.com/ignite>.

You can find out more about Revival Fire for Kids at <http://revivalfire4kids.com>.