

Jer. 31:7–14 or
Sir. 24:1–12
Ps. 147:12–20 or
Wis. 10:15–21
Eph. 1:3–14
John 1:(1–9) 10–18

Living in Christ's Light

Goal for the Session *Children will listen to John's introduction of Jesus and explore ways to live as children of God in Christ's light.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on John 1:(1–9) 10–18

WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," William R. Herzog II

John uses *logos* to express a most astounding Christology, "and the Word became flesh and dwelled in our midst, full of grace and truth" (my translation). As Genesis 1 begins with creation, so John 1 begins with a new creation (1:3). Clearly, the hymn proclaims the activity of God in the coming of the *logos*. The coming of the true light into the world (1:9) inspires not only conflict and rejection (1:10–11) but acceptance and empowerment (1:12–13). What counts is God's authority to enable all people to become children of God. This is the empowerment brought by the *logos*, and it is a direct challenge to the violence, privilege, power, and oppressive rule found in John's world.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," James C. Howell

We often think of the incarnation as an emptying: Christ, "though he was in the form of God . . . emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil. 2:6–7). But this Word made flesh isn't a hollow vessel, an empty shell. The humanity of Jesus is full, it is Fullness itself. The emptying is not an emptying of grace. The Word made flesh *is* grace. The flesh is God's glory. Jesus was not pretending to be human; he really did enter into our flesh of weakness, mortality, pain. There is no other God, no other secret truth about God.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," William V. Arnold

The second half of John's prologue is a powerful and graphic theological description of the unfolding process of God's love revealed in Christ. The outcome of that process is new comprehension of who we are. In like manner, this theological description can serve as more than a theological statement. It also can be a pastoral word for us—bearing in mind that the word "pastoral" does not refer only to ordained clergy. We all are called to be pastors to one another. As pastors of the Word, we are called to recognize the helplessness of many who do not even know what is possible. Our recognition of their helplessness, combined with an awareness of God's recognition of our helplessness, can become an occasion—or perhaps a call—to offer them good news.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Shelley D. B. Copeland

When the light comes, one must choose either to stay in the anonymity of darkness or to move forward in the familiarity of light. Darkness is somehow relaxed and distant. Light is intimate in the midst of visibility and understanding. The question we each must answer for ourselves is, would you rather live your life in the dark or in the light?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

John 1:(1–9) 10–18

Focus on Your Teaching

At last, sigh parents and many children, we can be back to a normal routine. After the rush of holiday preparation and the excitement of Christmas, everyone needs the calmer life that routines provide. Children will be assured by familiar routines in your class, too. The moments in Gathering and Closing are one way to maintain the classroom routine. As the children use their imaginations to wonder what John wants them to know about Jesus, encourage them to delight in the mystery and awe of God.

God of wonder and mystery, awaken me to the mystery of your word and the wonder of your love for creation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- poster board
- marker
- white cloth
- Advent wreath
- matches
- Christ candle
- Bible
- offering basket
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

For Responding

- option 1:
construction paper in various colors, scissors, stapler, markers, glitter glue or sequins, hole punch, long pipe cleaners
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, markers or crayons
- option 3: Color Pack 10, copies of Resource Sheet 3 on three colors, scissors, markers, tape
- option 4: *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, print the gathering ritual on poster board. Place a bookmark at the Gospel of John in the worship table Bible.

As the children arrive, invite them to arrange these items on the worship table: white cloth, Advent wreath, Christ candle (large white candle with a cross painted or etched on it, set inside the Advent wreath), Bible, and offering basket. When it is time to begin, play “God, We Sing” (track 7 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Explain that today is a Sunday during Christmastide or the Twelve Days of Christmas. Point out the white cloth and the Christ candle. Light the candles on the Advent wreath and the Christ candle. Show the learners the ritual on poster board. Explain that they will say the underlined lines. Lead the ritual or invite a child to lead it.

Leader: On this Sunday of Christmastide,

Everyone: we remember the birth of Jesus.

Leader: And we pray:

Everyone: God, we gather today to celebrate the birth of your Son.

Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candles.

Show Color Pack 5, 6, and 7, one at a time in order. Ask about each picture:

✠ What can you tell me about this picture?

When the children have told the story of Jesus' birth and presentation in the temple, move to Exploring.

Take your time. Encourage the children to think deeply and ponder what they see and hear. Ask a question and pause. Ask it again after a child answers, not searching for the "right" answer, but to encourage them to think.

EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 8. Explain that it is another way an artist has shown the birth of Jesus. Note that it does not show the clear figures on Color Pack 6. Explain that the stories about Jesus the learners recalled from Luke are much clearer than the story about Jesus in another book in the New Testament.

Ask a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the bookmark, and read the name of the book. Explain that the way the writer of the Gospel of John explains Jesus seems cloudier or less clear than the stories in Luke. Invite the children to look closely and intently at Color Pack 8. Invite them to see if they can find the baby Jesus along with Mary and Joseph. Read the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Sent from God). After the story, ask:

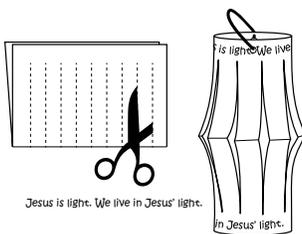
- ✎ What good news does John want you to know about Jesus?
- ✎ What does John want you to know about Jesus and God?
- ✎ How does this story make you feel about Jesus and God?

Show Color Pack 9. Explain that it is not a painting about Jesus. Ask:

- ✎ How does this photograph remind you of John's explanation for Jesus as light?
- ✎ What good things come from light?

RESPONDING

If possible, provide two options so children have a choice. Select one that is more challenging for children who are able to work on their own.



1. Paper Lantern These lanterns will remind the children that Jesus is light and they live in Christ's light. Have each child select a sheet of colored construction paper and fold it in half lengthwise, making a sharp crease. Give the learners scissors to cut slits on the folded edge about 1" from the edges and about 1/2" apart. Have them unfold the paper and write these words along the bottom and top with markers: *Jesus is light. We live in Jesus' light.* The lanterns can also be decorated with glitter glue or shiny sequins of various sizes. Staple the short ends together to make the lantern. Punch two holes opposite each other in the top. Thread a pipe cleaner through the holes and bend to make a handle.

2. Heart Prayer This prayer will help children continue to ponder and wonder about Jesus and God. It is more appropriate for children who can read the words on their own. Recall that John wrote that we can know more about God through Jesus and that Jesus gives us grace, a love bigger than we can imagine. Ask:

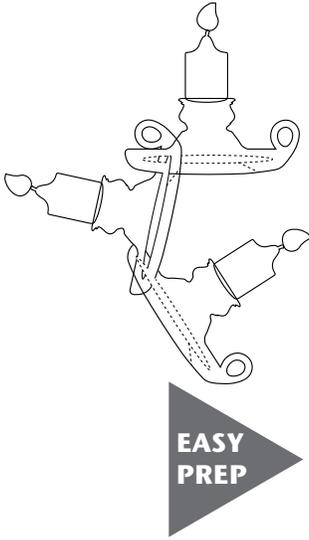
- ✎ How does it feel to know that love from Jesus is that big?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Heart Prayer). Read the directions together. Allow a time of silence for the children to pray as described there. Provide markers or crayons for them to draw or write ways they can do as a child of God in Jesus' light.

FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

Living in Christ's Light



- 3. Prayer Chain** The children will create a prayer chain of candles as a reminder that Jesus' light comes to them, children of God. Look together at Color Pack 10, wondering what the child is praying. Each child will need three copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Candle Pattern) copied on three different colors. Provide scissors for them to cut out the candles. Show them how to fold the candlestick and cut out the center of it. Flatten the candles. As children of God, bearing the light of Jesus, they can show that light by praying for others. Give them markers to write on the candles the names of people for whom they want to pray. Help them assemble their candle prayer chains. Tape the candlesticks closed.
- 4. Song** The final stanza of "God, We Sing" (track 7 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) completes the Advent song and sends the children into new life with Jesus. Read the words aloud. Then read each line and ask the children what it means. They may need help to imagine "flame" as another word for "light" or to think of themselves entering "new life" now that Jesus Christ is with them. Sing the song together.

CLOSING

As the children gather at the worship table, play "God, We Sing" (track 7 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Light the Christ candle.

Sing the fifth stanza of "God, We Sing."

Show Color Pack 10 and invite the children to think about what they learned about Jesus today. Pray:

"Christ, be near us as we pray, and celebrate new life today." In Jesus' name. Amen.

As each child leaves, say: "(Name), go with joy in God. Be glad that Jesus Christ was born."

God, We Sing

5. God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of Christ
anew;
Light this candle, light the
way,
We celebrate new life today.
Christ, be near us as we
pray,
And celebrate new life
today.

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Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

Sent from God based on John 1:(1-9) 10-18

Many years after Jesus lived on earth, a man named John wanted to tell people how special Jesus was. He didn't tell about his birth and the shepherds who came to see him. He didn't tell about two people in the temple, Anna and Simeon, who recognized God's Spirit in the baby Jesus. He didn't even tell about the wise men who came from a faraway land. No, John talked about Jesus as the Word of God and as light sent from God.

John said that Jesus was with God at the very beginning. John reminded the people that when they believed that Jesus was from God they became children of God.

John described Jesus as one who was full of grace and truth and that we received that grace, a love bigger than anything we can imagine, from Jesus.

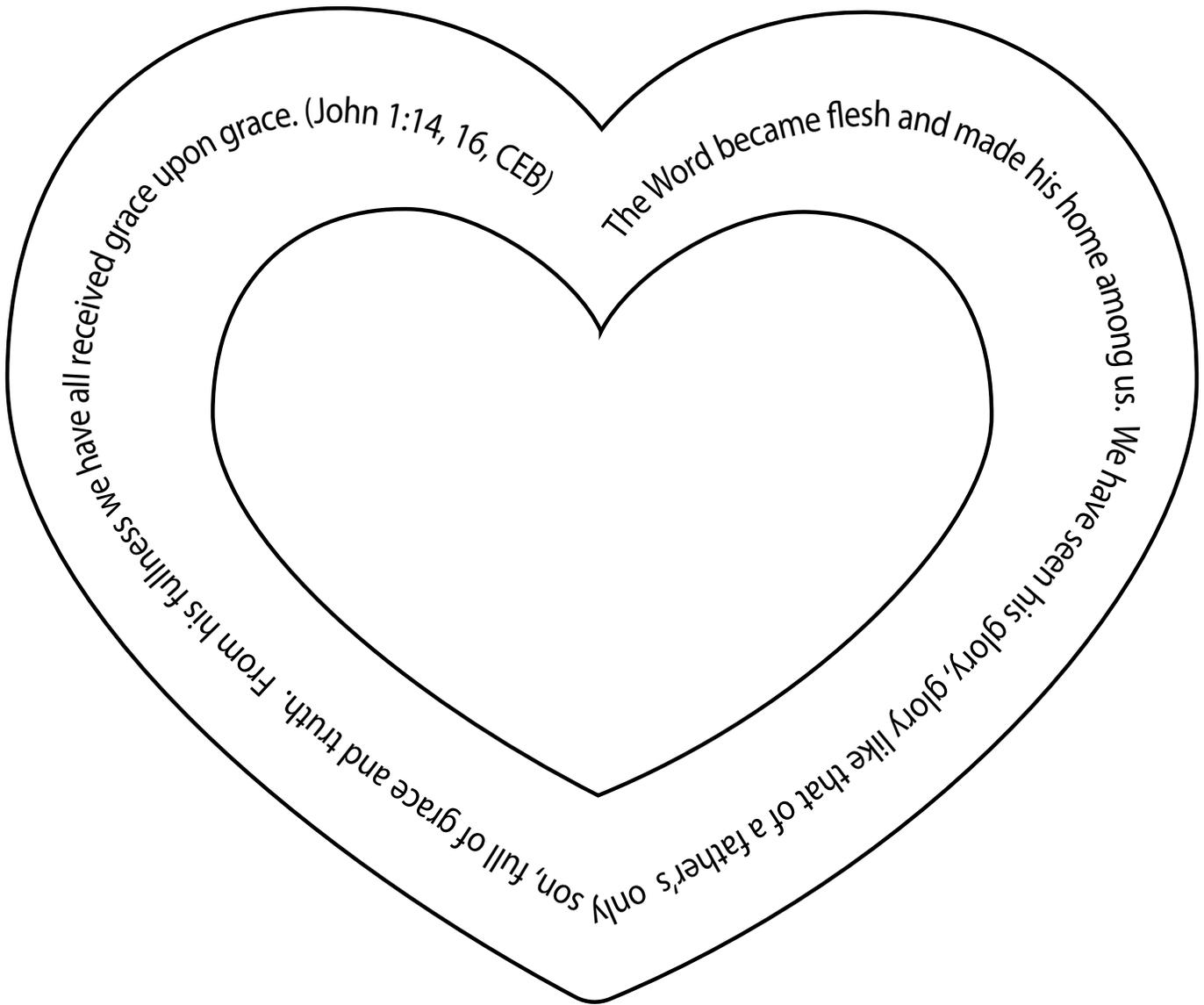
No one has seen God, wrote John, but we know all about God through Jesus.

When John's Gospel was read to people hundreds of years ago, they struggled to understand who Jesus is. Today we struggle with John's words, too, but it is a good struggle, one that brings us closer to God.



Heart Prayer

Directions: Slowly trace the lines of this heart with a fingertip. The first time you trace it, read the words quietly to yourself. The second time you trace it, be aware of images, events, names, or other things that come to mind. The third time you trace it, think about specific things you can do as God's child.



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Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 3

Candle Pattern

