



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

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the living message

Scripture Story: John 1:1-18.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 1.

Key Text: John 1:1.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of Jesus' coming to earth marked the beginning of the most important stage of the plan of salvation. God the Son took on human form to save us. The human race could be saved only by God sacrificing His Son in the place of the fallen human beings.

Jesus' coming to earth—God the Son in human form—was the climax of the long story of Israel's covenant relationship with God and God's quest to reconcile humanity with Him. Jesus, the Logos, the Word of God, came to show the world what God was like. This perspective needs to be in place before we even begin to read the Gospels. We must explore every story, every parable, every miracle, every saying of Jesus with the question "What does this tell us about God?"

God had already revealed Himself to His people through prophets, through the sacrificial system, through the written words of Scripture. But none of these revelations were able to completely capture God's character. Only Jesus was able to do that; only Jesus is God's living message to humanity—not just for the 33 or so years He walked the earth, but for us today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the purpose for which God became a human being. (*Know*)
- Feel God's love for humanity expressed in Jesus. (*Feel*)
- Choose to follow the God they see revealed in Jesus. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

God the Son, Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs no. 4: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ." (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson, discuss their responses.

What does it mean to think of Jesus as God's message to humanity?

Ask them to share what Jesus said or did in the Gospels to communicate God's message to fallen humanity. In what way does Jesus deliver God's message to us today?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Writer Louis Cassels penned a story about a man who simply couldn't believe in the Incarnation—the idea of God coming to earth as the Man Jesus Christ. One winter as he sat in the living room reading his newspaper through the gathering snowstorm, he

heard a thudding noise from outside. He looked out to find a small group of birds, huddled and miserable in the snow. Looking for shelter, they had tried to fly right through the living room window.

The man went out and opened his barn door and tried to guide the frightened birds into the barn. But they were as frightened of him as they were of the storm, and they would not follow him, even when he tried to lure them with bread crumbs. He knew that they'd freeze if left outside in the storm, yet he had no way to communicate with them, no way to tell them there was a place of safety. *If only I could become a bird for just a few minutes!* he thought. *Then I could tell them, and they'd understand.*

For the first time the man really understood the story of the Incarnation—that God had to become a human being in order to reach us with the message of salvation. Only by becoming one of us could He lead us to safety.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We send and receive messages. We use texts, e-mails, social media messages, and voice mails. Every day we use body language to send messages without words. You have probably noticed how angry someone is by the way they move and the look on their face.

What we want is to send a clear message. What would happen if you greeted your best friend every day with friendly words and a frown on your face? You might not keep that friend for long, because they would start to believe that you don't really mean the words you say.

We send messages to others all the time. But our messages get through best when we speak to people in the language and format with which they're most comfortable. You'd probably use different language if you were asking your teacher for extra time on an assignment than if you were sending a text message to a friend inviting her to a party. When it comes to communicating with other species, as the man in the story found, the gap is usually too great to bridge. But God bridged the ultimate gap by finding a way to speak to us in our own language—by becoming one of us and living among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Reproduce the boxes from Monday's section of the student lesson on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flipchart at the front of the room. Say: "The Scripture passage we've read in John 1 tells us that Jesus came to reveal to us God's character of love. As we read in the Gospels the stories of what Jesus did, we are reading the record of God's message to us, the picture of God's character in human form."
- Get the class to suggest three stories from Jesus' life. Divide the class into three groups and ask each group to read and discuss one of the stories. Ask them to brainstorm a list of what each story teaches us about God. After allowing 10 to 15 minutes for discussion, bring the groups back together and ask each group to report on their story. Write down their findings in the boxes at the front. Discuss what picture of God's character we get from all these stories.
- Ask: "Would these messages about God's character have had the same effect if they were passed on through a prophet and written down? What's the advantage to having Jesus come personally to do these things?"

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Colossians 2:9, 10; Galatians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:5-11.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

"Incarnation" is a complex concept. On the surface it seems clear—God taking on human form, coming to earth to be born as a human being, growing up to reveal God's character of love, and dying to save us.

Yet the nature of Christ as both human and divine is a concept that we cannot fully comprehend with our finite human minds.

Keep in mind the meaning of Jesus' incarnation:

1. Only a human-divine Savior could bring salvation to lost humankind. We don't understand completely how Jesus could have a dual nature, but



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Using Bible Stories

When you try an activity such as the one suggested in *Out of the Story for Teachers* above (a group form of the same activity in Monday's student lesson), you'll find a tremendous diversity in how well students know their Bibles. Some will instantly be able to think of stories from Jesus' life, while others will barely be familiar with any of the great stories from the Gospels.

While it's sometimes good to allow students to choose their own groups and work with friends they're comfortable with, there can be advantages to assigning groups yourself. Try to mix groups so that each group contains a few young people who know their Bibles well and can help the others.

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it was a necessity that He be fully human and fully God. Only God in human form, still God but subject to the same experience as ordinary human beings, could accomplish the requirements for reconciling sinful human beings to God and restoring in them the image of God.

2. By becoming human, Jesus limited Himself in particular ways. He put a veil over His glory, so that

sinful people would not die when they saw Him in person. But Jesus never stopped being God. While He was on the earth, "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'" (John 8:58).

3. Jesus is God in nature as is His Father and the Holy Spirit. The disciples (and all of Israel, it seems) mistakenly thought that the Father is the true God. It took them a long time to realize who Jesus really is. Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).

As you discuss what it meant for God to become man, you may come across questions you can't answer. That's OK. You can spend your lifetime studying the answers to questions about the Trinity and the nature of Jesus. But don't lose sight of the big picture. God made the ultimate sacrifice and became human and the purpose of everything Jesus said and did was to reveal God to us, and to be God with us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Say: "After we've talked about how Jesus revealed God's character to us, what message do you think He is trying to communicate to you?"

Hand out 3" x 5" index cards or small pieces of paper with pencils and ask students to write their

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

*Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book *The Desire of Ages*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.*

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.

response to God. Encourage them to take the card with them and use it in prayer this week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus came to earth for one purpose—to be “God with us.” When you think of God, picture Jesus—walking the dusty roads of Galilee, healing and touching sick people, taking little children on

His lap, telling people about God’s love. *That’s* what God is like. He shows love to each of His children and provides for them in practical ways.

And that’s what God wants us to do—to carry on Jesus’ work of representing His character by the love we show to others every day. We are living messages to the people around us who don’t yet know or have not accepted the fact that God is their loving Creator and Savior.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*),* chapter 1.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.