

BORN



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Lesson 4



Kingdom



Bible Verses: Isaiah 61:1-3



Bottom Line: Jesus' birth reminds us to live and reveal the Kingdom of God.

SUPPLIES

- A way to play music for your students – either in-person and virtual – if you’re using the “It’s Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas” opening bit.
- A few bags of jumbo marshmallows, depending on how many game participants you want.
- A table or something to place marshmallow bags on.

OPENING GAME

(IN-PERSON) Pile O' Marshmallows

GAME PREP:

- Secure jumbo marshmallows.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Say,

- Tonight, we will test your strength, wisdom, and coordination; I need __ volunteers.
- On the table before you are some opened bags of jumbo marshmallows.
- When I say go, I want you to start placing marshmallows in one of your open hands to see who can hold the most marshmallows
- You can stack them, stick them between your fingers, lick them, whatever.
- We'll do this together, one marshmallow at a time.
- If you ever drop a marshmallow on the floor, you're out.
- If you can't get another marshmallow to stick or stack or stay, you're out.
- Let's go!

Have students place one marshmallow in their hand.

Look around to make sure they're all good, then tell them to stack a second marshmallow.

Make sure they're all good again, then add another. (The first few rounds will be quick.)

As marshmallows fall or students can't get them into their pile, those students are out.

Play until only one student remains.

Play multiple rounds with new students if time permits.

When you're done, say,

- The game started easy, but the more marshmallows you had in your hand, the more difficult it was to add more.
- When your hands are full, you can't receive what someone wants to give you.
- Remember that idea, and we'll come back to it a little later.

OPENING GAME

(ONLINE) Pile O' Stuff

GAME PREP:

None.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Same as above, but once you have your volunteers, get them to agree on what they'll pile in their hands.

Ideas include washcloths, sponges, crackers, etc.

TEACH

Hello friends!

Guess what? IT'S ALMOST CHRISTMAS!!!

Do you know what I'd love to do right now? Let's sing!

"It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas ..."
[You could also play the song if it makes sense with your group.]

After all these weeks, we sound ... AMAZING!!!

Welcome back to the last week of our Christmas series, "Born," where you might guess – we've talked about the birth of Jesus and how it's a really big deal.

Each week we've focused on one thing the Christmas story can remind us of.

In week one, we learned from Matthew 1 that Christmas can remind us that God is always with us.

Do you remember what the name Emmanuel means?

[Let students answer.]

You're so smart!

God loves every one of you so much that he's always with you; Christmas can remind us of that.

In week two, we looked at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and were reminded that God always keeps his promises.

Does anyone remember how many prophecies Jesus fulfilled throughout his life?

More than one hundred! That's crazy!

Christmas can be a reminder that God will keep His promises to us. He always keeps His promises because He kept His promises about Jesus.

Last week we learned that God likes to upset tradition if it gets in the way of His Kingdom purposes.

God wants to give us the best things – things that really matter – but we’ve got to trust Him enough to say yes.

Christmas is a great time to be reminded that God wants to fill our hands, but we’ve got to empty them first.

And tonight, we’re going to take a “big picture” view of Jesus’ life, so that He can remind us to live the Kingdom life and cooperate with God to reveal it to others.

Before we jump in, let’s have some MANDATORY FUN TIME.

Get in groups of three or four or so and answer this question: If a new student showed up at your school, what are some things he or she could do that would let you know that he or she is a committed follower of Jesus?

In other words, if they’re serious about their relationship with Jesus, what would you expect them to do, and what would you expect them not to do?

[Give students a few minutes. We’re trying to drill down on how they understand Christian living on their campuses.]

Let me hear your thoughts; first, what would you expect this transfer student NOT to do?

[Let students share and interact with one another. Ask some follow-up questions to help students process.]

Great stuff ... now the other side of the coin: What would you expect this new student to do? How would they act?

[Let students share again and interact again, guiding as needed.]

Thanks for participating; that’s some solid stuff you just shared.

What we're really asking with that question is "What does it mean to live the Kingdom life on our school campuses?"

What do I mean when I say, "Kingdom life?"

[Interact with student answers.]

The Kingdom life is the life God designed us to live.

If we go back to **Genesis 1 and 2** before sin entered the world, we see Adam and Eve living in perfect oneness with God, perfect oneness with one another, and perfect oneness with the world around them.

They spent time with God every day, learning about His nature and His character.

There was no sin, so there was nothing to get in the way of their relationship with God.

They also spent time with one another, and there was no jealousy, no anger, no insecurity, no brokenness, no shame. They were committed to each other, and their relationship was fulfilling.

They also spent time with creation, enjoying the fruit of the garden of Eden.

According to **Genesis 2:20**, the second chapter in the first book of the Bible, Adam gave all the animals names; that means humans and animals existed together without any worry of being attacked or eaten.

They lived in paradise: everyone got along with no drama, no fear, no shame.

That's how God intended us to live.

Then sin entered the world in **Genesis 3**, and everything changed.

Sin brought shame and brokenness and fear, and the consequences affected every relationship – with God, with one another, and with creation.

God immediately responded with grace, and Adam and Eve tried to trust God and live the way he intended, but sin had fundamentally changed everything.

I'm not sure we understand how much sin affects everything.

Sin promises you anything, gives you nothing, and takes your everything.

The rest of the Old Testament is filled with similar stories:

- God loves and blesses people so they can love and bless others.
- People choose to sin, and sin messes everything up.
- God hears the peoples' cries and responds with grace to restore the people, so they can restore others.
- And the cycle repeats.

The sad truth is, God's people could live the Kingdom life, but they chose not to because they forgot who God was and who they were.

That's also why there were so many religious festivals and holy days in the Old Testament – to remind the people of who God was and who they were.

That's also one of the reasons God gave us the Sabbath – to remind us of our need for God every week.

So, when Jesus is born, He was God's gift to remind us of who God was and who we are.

Jesus showed us how to depend completely on the Father to live the Kingdom life – a life filled with love, peace, joy, and purpose.

Jesus also showed us how to live the Kingdom life in a world that is broken by sin – His life on earth was filled with forgiveness, selflessness, sacrifice, and grace.

And Jesus knew we were forgetful, so He told us to remember Him by sharing communion – the bread and the cup representing His body and blood.

And as another act of love and grace, God gave another gift to every one of His followers.

God gave the Holy Spirit, who would fill the life of every Christ-follower as much as we allow, to guide us, reveal the truth to us, and remind us of who God is and who we are.

If we remember those things, we stay connected to God, and our lives begin to look like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden before sin – marked by love, peace, joy, and purpose.

If we remember these things, we stay connected to God, and our lives begin to look like Jesus' life – marked by forgiveness, grace, selflessness, and sacrifice.

If we remember those things – who God is and who we are – we begin to live Kingdom lives, just like God intended.

In week two of this series, we read a passage from **Luke 4** where Jesus reads an Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

If you remember, a prophecy is like a promise God is making to his people – sometimes a promise of blessing for their faithfulness, but sometimes a promise of consequence for their disobedience.

That passage Jesus read was from Isaiah.

Can I get someone to read **Isaiah 61:1-3** aloud for the group?

[I LOVE having students read from the Bible. If it doesn't work for your group, feel free to read it yourself or have another adult read it.]

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.

2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

3 To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory. (NLT)

This passage is written to lift up those who are broken by sin.

If I could pick one phrase to summarize the big picture of the Kingdom life in a broken world, it's this: live in such a way that offers hope to those beaten down by sin.

That's the way God loved His people beginning with **Genesis 3**, and that's the way God invited His people to live throughout the Old Testament.

That's the way Jesus loved all people beginning with **Matthew 1**, and that's the way He invited His followers to live.

That's the way the Holy Spirit encourages and empowers us to live today.

The Kingdom of God is here in part because of Jesus' sacrifice and the Holy Spirit reminding us of who God is and who we are.

When everything is said and done, the Kingdom of God will be here in full because God will restore all things by eliminating all the sources of pain and brokenness forever.

And if you peek at the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation, and read that same passage we read in the first session in this series, that's the end of the story.

If you weren't here during week one, **Revelation 21:1-4** says:

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.

2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." (NLT)

As we move through this season, I hope every time something Christmas-y happens, you'll be reminded to live and reveal God's Kingdom.

Every Christmas song, Christmas movie, Christmas food, Christmas whatever ... let it remind you that **God loves you so you can love others; God blesses you so you can be a blessing to others.**

Make Christmas more than just one day and choose to stay in tune with the Holy Spirit and live a life that reveals God's kingdom to everyone around you.

Have a great small group!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the best Christmas gift you've ever received? What made it great?
- What is the best Christmas gift you've ever given? What made it great?
- On a scale of one (whoever said that is dumb) to ten (whoever said that is brilliant) – what do you think about the saying, “The best gifts aren't always the most expensive.”
- On a scale of one (whoever said that is dumb) to ten (whoever said that is brilliant) – what do you think about the saying, “It's better to give than to receive.”
- The older people get, the more they usually agree with both of those statements. Why do you think that is?
- We started with the question: If a new student showed up at your school, what are some things he or she could do that would let you know that they're a committed follower of Jesus? How did your group answer that question?
- Let's build on that last question. In your own words, what does it mean to “live a Kingdom life”?
- What does it mean to “reveal the Kingdom life”?
- Why is it so important to live and reveal the Kingdom of God? Why might it be more significant over the Christmas season?
- Who is someone you can invite into God's Kingdom this Christmas season?