



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Who Needs Christmas? / Week 2

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

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BOTTOM LINE

God needed Christmas to demonstrate His love.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that Christmas proves to us how far God will go to demonstrate His love for us.

SCRIPTURE

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV).

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 NIV).

"You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you" (Acts 3:14 NIV).

"You killed the author of life" (Acts 3:15a NIV).

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20b 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" (Matthew 1:21 NIV).

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us") (Matthew 1:23 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Andy Stanley uses Scripture to illuminate the truth that God demonstrated His love for us, instead of simply telling us about His love. The verses from *Galatians* point to Jesus' humanity. The verse from *Romans* points to God's demonstration of love. The verses from *Acts* point to the sacrifice Jesus made—because you can't demonstrate love without sacrifice. And the verses from *Matthew* document the moment where this demonstration of love through Jesus began: Christmas.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

It wasn't just the world that needed Christmas. **God needed Christmas as well.**

I want my kids to know that in my decisions—even ones they don't like—my objective is to love them and not punish them.

So how does God, the creator of everything good, communicate to you and I how He feels about us? By creating Christmas.

The apostle Paul, the most famous Jesus-follower of all time, figured this out, even though he started off as a Jesus-hater.

Like we said last week, when God saw that the time was right, the stage was set, and He could get the world's undivided attention, He set Christmas in motion.

TENSION

But a quick history lesson leads us to believe that this was the *wrong* time.

So an empire built on corruption, control, and violence . . . *That's* when God felt like He had things just the way He wanted???

But why then? And more importantly, why at all? Why did God have to send Jesus?

TRUTH

Paul, who had surely wrestled with these questions himself, continues in his letter.

Jesus was accountable to the law—He played by the same rules as His people.

Out of His fanatic love for people, God kept pursuing them in different ways, trying to draw them back.

At Christmas, God took the first step to remove the obstacles that blocked relationship with Him.

This was personal, so God had to come in person.

God knew there had to be an action so big that history couldn't deny it!

God acted something out for the purpose of showing us something. He didn't *tell* us—He *demonstrated*.

Before we even knew that God sent Jesus into this world, Jesus died for us.

I remember silently asking this question as a teenager: Why did Jesus have to die?

1) Nobody would've believed Him. 2) We couldn't understand the gift of life. 3) Jesus' death demonstrated how big our offense was.

APPLICATION

God needed Christmas to demonstrate His love.

God staged a demonstration and then documented it so that the world would know thousands of years later.

LANDING

He had to be with us so that we could know He's for us. We needed a demonstration, which meant God needed Christmas.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Who Needs Christmas? / Week 2

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BOTTOM LINE

GOD NEEDED CHRISTMAS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS LOVE.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

The story of Christmas is pretty unbelievable. But in part one of this series, *Who Needs Christmas?*, we discovered that, starting with promises God made to Abraham thousands of years *before* Christmas, it's a remarkable story that would be hard for anybody to make up! God told Abraham that through him, every person and nation on Earth would be blessed.

Why? Because God knew that the world needed Christmas.

But it wasn't just the world that needed Christmas. **God needed Christmas as well.** Let me explain that.

Even though this may be hard to believe sometimes, your parents have probably thoughts like this several times . . .

- *I sure wish my kids understood how much I love them and care for them.*
- *I sure wish my kids would stop believing that I'm trying to make their lives miserable.*
- *I wish my kids believed that I have their best interest in mind.*

Almost every parent has had thoughts like this. You should ask your parents sometime if they've ever thought that!

I've tried to explain this to my kids before, but it was a #ParentingFail. I just wanted them to know that in my decisions—even ones they don't like—my objective is to love them and not punish them.

God feels the same way about us. Except He knows that because we can't physically see Him and have audible conversations, getting our attention is even more difficult.

So how does God, the creator of everything good, communicate to you and I how He feels about us? How does He get the attention of His children, especially children who have turned their backs on Him?

By creating Christmas.

The apostle Paul, the most famous Jesus-follower of all time, figured this out, even though he started off as a Jesus-hater. He was very educated and smart. Out of his love for God, he hated Christians. Justifiably so, because he thought Jesus was a lunatic. But then his eyes were opened to the truth of Jesus, and he began to see *everything* differently, including his interpretation of Jewish Scriptures.

He wrote to some friends in Rome . . .

"But when the set time had fully come (Galatians 4:4a NIV)."

Like we said last week, when God saw that the time was right, the stage was set, and He could get the world's undivided attention, He set Christmas in motion.

TENSION

1 MINUTE

But a quick history lesson leads us to believe that this was the *wrong* time.

- The 1st century Roman Empire was in power, and their goal was to Romanize any group of people they could get their hands on.
- Surprisingly, they were in a period of peace.
- In Jerusalem, there was the temple system that controlled the Jews: Money replaced morality, and corruption replaced compassion.
- The Roman people didn't think the Jewish people were actually important to God. (After all, they were under Roman rule!)

So an empire built on corruption, control, and violence . . . *That's* when God felt like He had things just the way He wanted???

Yup. Time to send Jesus!

But why then? And more importantly, why at all? **Why did God have to send Jesus?** Why didn't God just send another prophet or priest?

TRUTH

4 MINUTES

Paul, who had surely wrestled with these questions himself, continues in his letter:

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4 NIV).

Which means, Jesus was accountable to the law—He played by the same rules as His people.

If this sounds confusing, don't freak out. Track with me for a moment . . .

- God saw that laws and regulations weren't working.
- God knew that despite the tireless efforts of prophets, people weren't responding.
- Exile and punishment were causing people to doubt more than repent.
- Even Jewish Scriptures weren't compelling people's hearts.

Of course, God knew that all of this wouldn't accomplish His ultimate purpose. But out of His fanatic love for people, He kept pursuing them in different ways, trying to draw them back.

But now it was time for the biggest move of all! God sent Jesus . . .

"to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Galatians 4:5 NIV).

Meaning, **God didn't just want people to behave—He wanted people to know Him!**

At Christmas, God took the first step to remove the obstacles that blocked a relationship with Him.

This was personal, so God had to come in person. Think about it: It was the only way we would know where we stood with God—by Him actually coming to stand with us.

Actions speak louder than words, right? God knew there had to be an action so big that history couldn't deny it! It would write it down and preserve it, so that hundreds of years later, people would still know about it.

Remember last week we talked about the promises God made to Abraham 4,000 years ago? 2,000 years later, Jesus was born. And 2,000 years after that, we're still talking about it!

So . . . yeah, God knew what He was doing!

A lot of significant things have come and gone in the last 2,000 years. Things that we know no details about. Yet the birth of a Jewish baby to an unknown couple in the armpit of the Roman Empire is known by the majority of the planet. Wow!

A few years after Jesus died and resurrected, thousands of people living in Rome embraced Jesus as the Savior. This is while they lived under the dangerous and unpredictable rule of Emperor Nero.

In the midst of this, Paul writes another letter. He starts one line of thought by saying this . . .

"But God demonstrates . . . (Romans 5:8a NIV)."

Meaning, God acted something out for the purpose of showing us something. He didn't tell us—He *demonstrated*.

But demonstrated what?

“. . . his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8b NIV).”

I love that this DOESN'T say, “That while we *used to be* sinners.” No, this happened while we were still sinning. **Before we even knew that God sent Jesus into this world, Jesus died for us.**

Paul, who had been on a mission to terminate the church and all who followed Jesus, understood that Christ died for him anyway. It's hard for us to grasp the power of this message!

But I remember silently asking this question as a teenager: **Why did Jesus have to die?** Why did He have to come to Earth only to be violently beaten, publicly mocked, and shamefully executed? Instead of bleeding to death in public, couldn't He just say that everyone is forgiven?

A couple reasons . . .

1. **Nobody would've believed Him.** There are some accounts in the Gospels of Jesus performing a miracle and then telling someone, “Your sins are forgiven.” Religious leaders would freak out—not because He did a miracle, but because He claimed to forgive sins. *Nobody* has the power to do that, even people who have the power to make sick people well.

Think about it. You can forgive someone who sinned against *you*, but you can't forgive someone of all the sins they've committed against everybody (God included). That's crazy talk! Outside of the handful of people who experienced His life-changing miracles, nobody would've taken Him seriously.

2. **We wouldn't understand the gift of life.** When you really think about it, we owe our lives to God. Every single day, we should get up and say, “God, thank you for my life. Whatever the question is, the answer is yes.” How in the world would I say no to a God who gave me life? How in the world could I resist the will of the God who gave up His life for me?” We don't do that, but we *should*.

God is the author of life. He's the creator of life for us. When we dishonor Him, we're dishonoring the source of life for us. We're expressing ingratitude for the life He gave us. You and I, by our actions, attitudes, and thoughts, take for granted the greatest gift God ever gave us—the gift of life. We owe a debt to the giver of life that we cannot pay.

That's bad news, but we go back to Paul's letter for the good: *God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died in our place.* Christ died for us. We deserve to give up the thing most valuable to us—life—because we disrespect the one who gave it to us.

Instead, Jesus gave up His life for us.

That's the significance of the trade—Jesus' life instead of ours. Jesus died so that we can live.

After the resurrection, Jesus told His disciples to go to Jerusalem. They end up in the very area where Jesus was arrested and murdered, in the company of the very people who carried out the execution.

To those same people, the disciples said:

"You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you" (Acts 3:14 NIV).

When Jesus was on trial, Pilate offered to spare Jesus' life. What the disciples are saying here is, "You were so corrupt, you chose a murderer. You chose another prisoner. You chose someone who had taken life over the man who came to give life." And then, staring at the very people who caused Jesus' death, they said:

"You killed the author of life" (Acts 3:15a NIV)."

The author of life gave away His life. But God raised Him from the dead. He lived among us and grew up around us. But then He gave what we could not. **He paid what we owed.** Our lives belong to Him.

- 3. Jesus' death demonstrated how big our offenses are.** Jesus had to die a brutal death to show us the magnitude of our ingratitude. We abused the Supplier of life. We deserved to lose our own. **But while His death reveals how big of a deal our sin is, it also shows us how big His love for us is.** You cannot demonstrate love without sacrifice. Jesus' death showed us how big God's love for us is.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

So, how does God, who made you in His image and claims to love the world, demonstrate the personal level of His love? By making a sacrifice you would know about. By doing something you would remember instead of forget. He showed you and I how much He's willing to sacrifice on behalf of *us*.

God needed Christmas to demonstrate His love.

Otherwise, how would we have known? We would've continued in our rebellion and ingratitude, unaware of the severity of our offense or our need for a Savior.

So when the set time arrived. When everyone gave up hope. When nobody was expecting it. When the temple system was corrupted and the Roman Empire was in full swing. When people thought God was gone forever. When the Jewish people felt abandoned. THAT'S when a Jewish carpenter named Joseph found out his fiancée was pregnant. What should he do? Leave her? Publicly shame her? Protect her? Marry her?

That's when an angel of the Lord showed up for a pep talk . . .



TEACHING SCRIPT

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20b NIV).

In other words, God is on the move. The time is now. The angel goes on:

"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" (Matthew 1:21 NIV).

Then he quotes the prophet Isaiah:

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us")" (Matthew 1:23 NIV).

God staged a demonstration and then documented it so that the world would know thousands of years later. God needed Christmas to demonstrate His love.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

We needed to see it to believe it. We needed to know the story, and to know that the story was about *us*. It wasn't enough to say it. God had to send His son to pay the price we owed in such a way that there would be no question of God's love for us.

He had to be with us so that we could know He's for us. **We needed a demonstration, which meant God needed Christmas.**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
