

Riverview Baptist Church

Sunday School Teaching Plan

December 20, 2015

“God Became Flesh”

Memory Verse

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14, NIV

The Big Idea

Sunday School Scripture: Various Passages

Sunday School Title: “God Became Flesh”

ESS: During this Christmas season, let us take time to recognize and celebrate our God, who put on flesh and lived among us in order to show us His love.

Presentation

Would anyone like to share something that you’ve learned or been challenged with through the recent lessons or sermons?

Of the many names and titles Jesus is given throughout Scripture, which one means the most to you personally? Why? Today we will talk about Jesus as Immanuel: God With Us.

1. God Became **FLESH** and **LIVED** Among Us **READ John 1:14 and Matthew 2:23**

This is the very essence of the Christmas story. All the prophecies, all the characters, and the complete storyline exist to communicate this one truth: God became a man and lived on Earth. Jesus is Immanuel: God with us. The Message version of John 1:14 rocks my world every time I read it. It says, “*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.*” Wow. Think about that for a minute. God – the creator and sustainer of the entire universe – the all-powerful, all knowing, ever-present God – chose to make Himself a human and come to live among His own creation. The self-existent, self-reliant God came to Earth as a helpless baby who relied on Mary for everything. The King of Kings came to Earth to be born in a dirty stable among animals, to live a common life, and to die a criminal’s death. “*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.*” Regardless of your social status, your financial means, your relational struggles, your wins and losses, your joys and your sorrows, God came to be a part of it all.

Why? Why did God bother? Why in the world would God become flesh and blood and come live in all our mess? The answer is simple and startling. God, through the birth of Jesus, shows His creation His boundless love and mercy. You see, the Bible tells us that God is perfect, righteous, holy. And a perfect and just God cannot ignore or excuse our sin. Enter: Jesus. While on Earth, Jesus experienced all the trials and temptations that challenge any man, and yet lived a sinless life. His death on the cross was a substitute or payment for our sins. God accepted Jesus’ death on the cross in place of yours and mine. We deserved punishment and death, but Jesus died for us. We know all this, right? But it’s another thing to realize that God sent Jesus with the cross in mind. Actually, to be more to the point, God HIMSELF came to Earth to be born as a baby, live as a man, and die. God – HIMSELF – came to die. For us. And that is what’s so amazing about the Christmas story. God came to make way for us to be with Him forever. He came so we would never be alone. Jesus, Immanuel, came to be God With Us. God became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.

2. Some **NOTICED** the Messiah's Birth READ Luke 2:1-16 and Matthew 2:1-3

From these 2 Scriptural accounts of Jesus' birth, who were some people who noticed the birth of the Messiah? Why do you think God allowed these particular people to be eyewitness and have first-hand encounters with the birth of His son?

Apart from the angels notifying the shepherds, no special announcement or news report alerted people to the birth of the Messiah. Only a select few noticed that it even occurred. Those few included Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men. Why them? What was it about those people that made them notice the events of that special night? Let's look closer at the shepherds and the Wise Men to see what we can learn.

SHEPHERDS: (Luke 2: 8-16) The shepherds noticed the Messiah's birth because they lived simple lives. They had time to wait and listen for God. They didn't have material possessions distracting them or alternate priorities vying for their time and attention.

***CONSIDER THIS:** Would God call your life simple or complicated? What possessions or priorities complicate your life? If God wanted to speak to you today, what might prevent you from hearing Him?*

WISE MEN: (Matt 2:1-3) The wise men noticed the birth of the Messiah because they had been paying attention, waiting and watching expectantly. When they saw the evidence of the strange new star in the sky, they knew God was at work. They were so confident, in fact, that they packed up, followed the star, and arrived in Jerusalem prepared to worship the newborn king. They noticed simply because they were waiting and watching in expectation. The ironic thing is that every Israelite who knew the Old Testament should have been waiting and watching for a coming Messiah, too. But many missed it.

***CONSIDER THIS:** The Holy Spirit is at work in our world today. Are we waiting and watching in expectation, or are we distracted by other things? Jesus promises to return again. Are we waiting and watching in eager anticipation, or are we focused on other things?*

3. Many **MISSED** the Messiah's Birth READ John 1:10-11 and Matt 2:1-3

Think about the night of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. It was the end of a busy day of commerce for the townspeople and traveling for the visitors. Because of the census, the town was much more crowded than normal. But no one seems to have taken particular notice of Jesus' birth. Apart from some shepherders and a few barn animals, the new baby had no visitors. So many missed it that night. So many failed to notice that God Himself had arrived in their neighborhood. And sadly, the same is still true today.

***DISCUSS:** What are some reasons for many people missing Jesus' birth that night?*

The verses from the first chapter of John make it clear that many never noticed Jesus' birth. Even later in Jesus' life, many still refused to recognize him as the Messiah. The verses from Matthew chapter two tell us that Herod was surprised and troubled to hear the news of Jesus' birth. Matthew 3:2 says that Herod was disturbed, and all of Jerusalem with him." Obviously Herod was disturbed to hear of Jesus' birth because he viewed Jesus as a threat to his power. But why was Jerusalem troubled with him? Why were the people of Jerusalem worried? Could it be that some of the Jewish people of that time heard the news, remembered the prophecies, and thought to themselves, "No. Wait... Wow! Could it be? Has it really happened? Has the Messiah really come? And I MISSED IT!?! I wonder..."

- Many missed his birth that night. They were busy, tired, pre-occupied.
- Many miss His presence today. Are the reasons any different now?

CLOSING: During this Christmas season, let us take time to recognize and celebrate our God, who put on flesh and lived among us in order to show us His love.

Apply It!

Jesus was and still is Immanuel: God With Us. Take time to slow down this season to reflect upon and celebrate this truth: that God put on flesh and blood and moved into your neighborhood!

STUDY NOTES (This is NOT the lesson)

Okay, so this is not really for your study. It's just an FYI from the author of the lesson. This "Immanuel" stuff – it's a big deal. And I just want to admit that I REALLY struggle to put it into words. The concept of God caring enough to put on flesh and live among us blows my mind. I remember being 15 years old, reading the description of Jesus as "Immanuel – God With Us" and having those words really sink in for the first time. Since then, this concept has settled deep in my soul but has never been one that I can speak about clearly or explain well. So first, I apologize for the simplicity of the lesson. But second, I want you to know that I'm praying earnestly for YOU as you read and study this lesson. I want God to open your eyes to the significance of Jesus as Immanuel. I want Him to stir your soul and leave you changed... ragged, torn up one side and down the other, and just totally amazed and maybe even perplexed that God would do something this incredible. I'm praying that you get it... and never get over it. And may God give YOU the words to say on this topic – words that I've never really had.

- Hailey Burns