

# 10

# God With Us

*(a lesson for Christmas or for Christmas in July)*

## YOU'LL NEED

- masking tape or garlands
- Christmas ornaments or candy canes
- blindfolds
- a photocopy of the "One Special Night" story (pp. 90-91)
- scissors
- photocopies of the "Symbols of Christmas" handout (pp. 94-97)
- various colors of construction paper or felt
- glue or glue sticks
- dowels (optional)
- cassettes or CDs of Christmas music
- cassette player or CD player

## TEACHER TIP

This lesson works well with an intergenerational class. You may wish to invite whole families to join you for this session.

## LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ Jesus' birth means God is with us.

## OBJECTIVES

Kids or families will

- experience having someone guide them,
- participate in an interactive story about the birth of Christ,
- learn about Christmas symbols and create a banner, and
- commit to being aware of God's presence in their lives.

## BIBLE BASIS

### Matthew 1:18-25

Immanuel. First spoken by Isaiah in his Messianic prophecy, "Immanuel" is one of Scripture's most profoundly beautiful words. It means, simply, "God with us." Since the beginning of the world, God has desired to be with us. Genesis 3:8-9 says, "Then they heard the Lord God walking in the garden during the cool part of the day, and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees in the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said, 'Where are you?'" Sin had disrupted their fellowship. God gave the Law to define sin and point the way toward holiness. But only the incarnation of God's own Son could make it possible for God to truly be with us.

Jesus walked on earth to show us who God is. Jesus died to redeem us from our sins. Jesus rose again to conquer death and give us eternal life. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. Immanuel, God with us. What a gift!

**Luke 2:11-12**

The angel gave the shepherds a sign to recognize the Christ child: He would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. We can be a sign to fellow Christians and to the world that the Christ of Christmas is with us today!

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## UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

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Kids in today's society learn to be on their own at an early age. They rehearse important "home alone" rules with their parents. By first grade many kids know how to be safe as they walk home from school, how to use the house key to let themselves in, how to fix themselves a snack, and how to call Mom or Dad to report that they're safe at home. Can you see how the concept that "God is with us" is an important one for these kids?

There's so much to be excited about at Christmas—even when it's Christmas in July! But the very best news you can give your kids is that God is truly with them, whether they're home alone, on a crowded school bus, confronting a neighborhood bully, or feeling secure with Mom and Dad close by. God's presence is the best of all presents!

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## ATTENTION GRABBER

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# The Lesson

### Christmas Lane

Set up an obstacle course with Christmas decorations. Use garlands or masking tape to mark edges of a path about 3 feet wide and 15 feet long. Strew Christmas ornaments or candy canes along the path.

Pair up participants as they arrive, matching older kids or adults with younger kids. Have pairs decide which partner will be the walker and which will be the guide. Blindfold all the walkers.

## TEACHER TIP

It's best not to place any breakable ornaments in the path. For extra fun, play lively Christmas music as partners work their way through the path.

Say: **Walkers, your job is to walk down Christmas Lane without stepping on any candy canes (or ornaments). Guides, your job is to talk your partner through the lane. You may not touch your partner—just walk alongside and tell him or her where to step.**

After the first walker is a few feet into the path, have the next walker begin. When each pair finishes the path, greet the partners with applause and remove the walker's blindfold. If you have plenty of time, you may want to let the walkers and guides switch roles. When everyone has finished, gather the group and ask:

● **What was it like to walk through Christmas Lane blindfolded?** (Scary; exciting.)

● **Walkers, how did you feel about your guides?** (I trusted her; I hoped he would tell me the right thing.)

● **What would've happened if you hadn't had a guide?** (I might've tripped or broken something; I wouldn't have been able to stay on the path.)

● **Guides, how did you feel about your walkers?** (I wanted to take good care of him; I tried really hard to tell her where to step.)

● **How is what the guides did like what God does for his followers?** (God tells us how to live; God's words keep us on the right path.)

● **When the prophet Isaiah foretold Jesus' birth, he said Jesus would be called "Immanuel." Can anyone tell me what "Immanuel" means?** (God with us.)

● **Why would Jesus be called that?** (Because he is God, and he came to earth to be with people; because he is the way to God.)

Say: ★ **Jesus' birth means God is with us. Today we're going to celebrate that fact and discover through symbols of Christmas what it means to have God with us.**

## BIBLE STUDY

**One Special Night (Matthew 2:1-11; Luke 2:8-20)**

Say: **Let's review the Christmas story in a brand-new way.**

Before class, photocopy the "One Special Night" story (pp. 90-91). Cut apart the 15 verses and distribute them as evenly as possible among the partners.

Say: **Decide which partner will be the reader and**

**which partner will lead the motions. I'll give you a couple of minutes to go over your verses together.**

Have the pairs stand in a circle in the order their verse or verses fall in the story. Explain that everyone should do the motions with the pair that's performing.

Introduce the story by saying: **And now, welcome to our presentation of the Christmas story, "One Special Night."**

Lead everyone in a round of applause as the story ends. Then say: **If you could be anyone in the Christmas story, I wonder who you'd chose to be. Turn and tell your partner who you'd want to be and why.**

Allow a few moments for partners to talk, then ask volunteers to share what their partners said.

## LIFE APPLICATION

### Symbols of Christmas

**Say: There are so many wonderful things about the Christmas story! We look forward to hearing it year after year. There are also lots of wonderful Christmas symbols and traditions we enjoy. Let's have some fun learning more about them.**

Distribute photocopies of the "Symbols of Christmas" handout (pp. 94-97).

Choose volunteers to read aloud the explanation and Bible verse on or near each symbol. Then distribute scissors and have participants cut out the symbols.

Have partners or families use the symbols to create Christmas banners from construction paper or felt.

Decide whether you'll have each family make a banner or if you'll have each participant make his or her own banner. Even if individuals make their own banners, it's helpful to have them work in pairs so they can share ideas and work out problems together. Be sure that younger students are paired with older students or adult helpers.

Students or families will need 11×17-inch rectangles of construction paper or felt for their banners. Have them fold the rectangles in half and cut a pointed bottom 4 inches deep as shown in the margin illustration on page 92. Provide red, green, white, blue, yellow, gold, and brown construction paper or felt. Participants can trace around the symbol patterns on

### TEACHER TIP

**C**onsider backing the "Symbols of Christmas" handout with poster board, then cutting out the shapes. Participants can take turns tracing around these sturdier shapes.

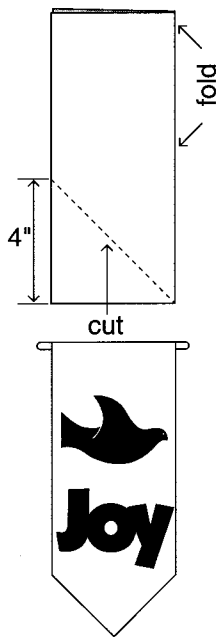
## One Special Night

(from Matthew 2:1-11; Luke 2:8-20)

- 1 In faraway Bethlehem one special night,  
tired shepherds watched over their sheep.  
(Rest cheek on hands.)  
Then the sky was suddenly filled with light,  
and the shepherds awoke from their sleep.  
(Sit up and look startled.)
- 2 "Good news I bring you," the bright angel said,  
"news that will fill you with joy:  
In Bethlehem-town, in a dark cattle shed,  
is born a brand-new baby boy."  
(Pretend to hold a baby.)
- 3 "This child is the Christ, the Savior of all.  
He'll be in a warm manger bed  
(pretend to pull up a blanket),  
wrapped in soft clothes, this baby so small,  
with straw to pillow his head."
- 4 Then suddenly angels filled the whole sky  
(make star bursts with fingers),  
singing God's glory and praise.  
"Peace upon earth," came their song from on high.  
The shepherds stood watching, amazed.
- 5 Then, in a twinkling, the angels were gone.  
(Cross hands, then pull them apart.)  
The night grew cold and still.  
But the shepherds remembered the heavenly song  
as they stood on their lonely hill.
- 6 "Let's hurry to Bethlehem," one shepherd said  
(pump arms as though you're running),  
"to find the holy child."  
And, sure enough, there in a manger bed  
lay Jesus, sweet and mild.
- 7 The little sheep's "baa" and the doves' soft "coo"  
were the baby's lullaby.  
The shepherds fell down and worshiped, too  
(bow and fold hands),  
as a bright star shone in the sky.
- 8 "The Son of God has been born tonight!"  
(Cup hands around mouth.)  
The shepherds spread the word.

(continued)

- And those who came to see the sight  
(clap hands to cheeks)  
could hardly believe what they heard.
- 9** Three wise men in a land far away  
saw the beautiful star.  
(Point upward.)  
"It tells of a special child born today,"  
they said. "We must travel far."
- 10** "God has sent us this special light  
to guide us on our way.  
(Point into the distance.)  
We'll cross the desert during the night  
and rest in the heat of the day."
- 11** So by-and-by, the wise men found  
Jesus and Joseph and Mary.  
Then the three wise men bowed to the ground  
and said, "Take these gifts that we carry."  
(Hold up cupped hands.)
- 12** Gold and sweet perfume they gave  
and thought, "Our gifts are small.  
For Jesus came the world to save  
(spread arms wide);  
he brings God's love to all."  
(Cross hands over heart.)
- 13** On Christmas Eve, some people still search  
for Mary's baby Son.  
But he's not in a manger and not in a church.  
(Shake head.)  
He lives in everyone.  
(Point both hands to heart.)
- 14** So when you see a star twinkling bright  
(make a star burst with fingers),  
in a crisp, quiet winter sky,  
remember the gift God gave that night  
and the angels that sang on high.
- 15** There's a gift that you can give Jesus, too.  
It's not too hard to find.  
To each person you see the whole year through  
(pretend to point to several people),  
be loving and gentle and kind.  
(Give a hug.)



their chosen colors, cut out the symbols, then glue them in place on their banners.

If you choose to make felt banners, you may also want to supply slender dowels for hanging.

Play Christmas music as participants work on their banners. Encourage people who finish first to help others complete their banners.

## COMMITMENT

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### Procession of Banners

When all the banners are complete, have everyone help clean up the work area, then line up for a procession of banners. Encourage everyone to sing "O Come, All Ye Faithful" as you lead the procession around the room or around the church building.

Close the procession by having everyone sit in a circle. One by one, invite participants to stand and explain why they chose to use certain symbols and what their banners mean to them.

When everyone has shared, say: **Our banners can be reminders that ★ Jesus' birth means God is with us. You may want to hang your banner in a window or on your front door. Or perhaps you'd like to give it away to someone who would enjoy its message.**

Have participants turn to partners and tell what they plan to do with their banners.

## CLOSING

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### Christmas Greeting

Say: **Let's close our class with a special greeting. Ask:**

- **What special greeting do Christians use on Easter?**

(Christ is risen; he is risen indeed.)

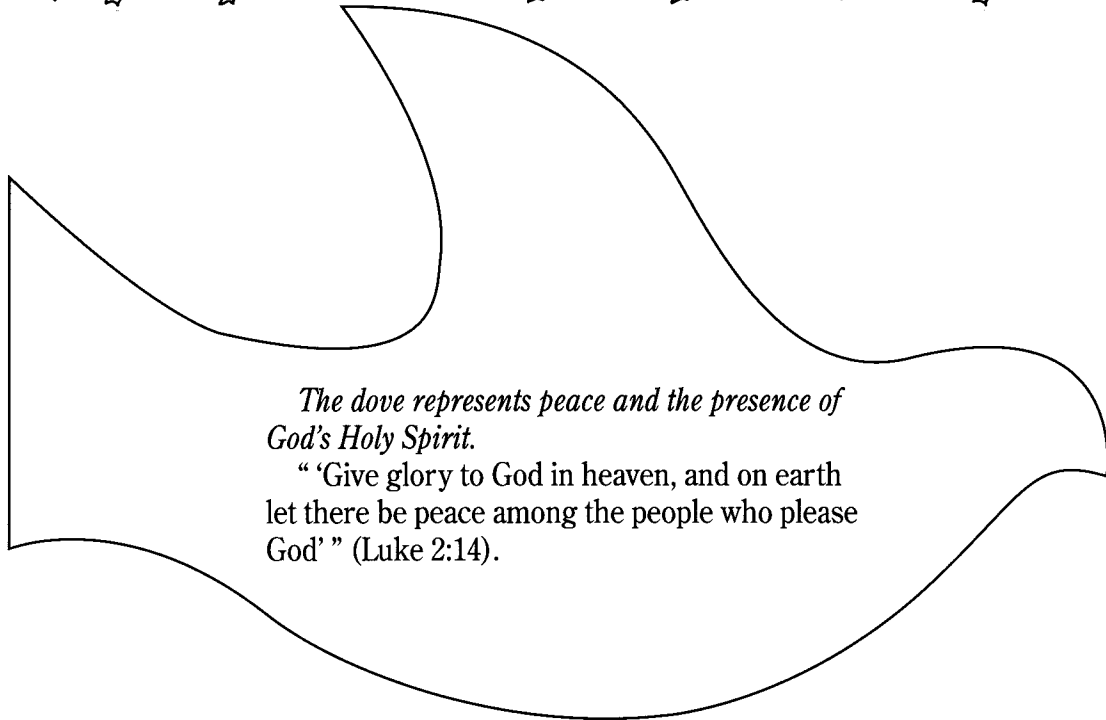
Say: **Let's make up a similar greeting for the Christmas season. You'll step up to someone, shake his or her hand, and say, "Jesus is born." The other person will respond, "God is with us." Let's try that together: Jesus is born; God is with us.**

Allow participants to exchange greetings with several people. Then close with a prayer similar to this one: **Dear Lord,**

**what a difference it makes in our lives that you were  
born as a tiny baby long ago. Thank you for being with  
us. We love you. Amen.**



# SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS



*The dove represents peace and the presence of God's Holy Spirit.*

*“Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God’ ” (Luke 2:14).*

*Holly stays green even in winter's cold. It stands for life that never ends—Jesus' gift to those who believe in him.*

*“God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life’ ” (John 3:16).*

