

Series: A Child is Born

Lesson I: The Visited Planet

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Students will choose one metaphor that best captures their understanding of the incarnation and will be able to defend it in group.
- Students will evaluate the content of God's incarnate communication to earth and be able to list five things they now know about God as a result of this message.

Materials Needed:

- ☐ DVD of *Claymation Incarnation* (on CD-rom)
- ☐ Play dough
- ☐ Board or chart paper and markers
- ☐ Two pieces of scrap paper with the words "The Good Samaritan" on each one.
- ☐ Two pieces of scrap paper with the name "Moses" on each one.
- ☐ Two pieces of scrap paper with the term "the quick and the dead" on each one.
- ☐ Prizes (optional)
- ☐ Copies of pages A-20 to A1-22

Lead In:

This lesson is about messages and how they are sent. To warm students up to this idea, play this version of the game charades. Divide the group into two teams. Invite two students to the front for each round of play.

The first round is the Play Dough Round. Each student will to be offered a bowl of play dough and will have to use the play dough (no words or other props) to communicate to their team. The category is biblical stories. Hand each competitor a piece of paper with the title 'The Good Samaritan' on it. Tell the students to use the play dough to communicate that story to their team until someone correctly guesses the story title. Give a point to the victorious team.

The second round is the Silent Story Round. Tell the teams that their representatives (new ones for each round) will now be acting out a biblical character. They cannot use sounds or words or the play dough from round one. Hand each competitor a piece of paper with the name Moses on it. Have the students act out Moses silently until one team guesses correctly. Give a point to the victorious team.

The third round is the Art Attack Round. This round is like pictionary. Give each student a piece of chart paper or a board space and a marker. They cannot use words or actions. The category is 'Christianese – Phrases We Use That No One Understands'. Hand them a piece of paper with the phrase "the quick and the dead" on it and have them draw it for their team. Give a point to the victorious team. Award a bonus point if anyone knows what the term means. It is a phrase from the KJV that means those who are alive (quick) and those who are not (dead) will rise at Christ's return.

Tally up the points and declare a winner. Give candy prizes if you want.

Transition by saying something like, *Communication is hard work. We have to take into account the intended audience for what we have to say and the best method for getting*

our message across. We also have to remember the different limitations that each form of communication involves. For example, e-mail is notoriously poor at communicating mood and so things said in jest are sometimes misunderstood. You also have to anticipate the distance in language and comprehension between yourselves and those you are trying to reach. For example if you were going to hire someone to teach Sunday School to junior high students, you might not recruit a very serious 80-year-old man whose speech is full of thees and thous. His phrases might be hard for the students to understand. He might say something like, "When I was a wee lad it took a fortnight to pen an epistle and to see it through the post and back across the pond. But then again a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush so I would always make a stitch in time to save nine." What the heck does that mean? My grandmother would know but she's dead. Communicating across boundaries of age and culture is tricky.

Tonight we are going to be talking about God's great communication strategy. When God wanted to communicate with humans he didn't write a letter or send an e-mail. He didn't write a message in the stars (can you imagine the impact on the tides if he had? Tsunami times a thousand!) or send four-headed cherubim with swords flaming out of their mouths. Instead he came as a baby boy, grew up and learned to speak the local language and spent three years communicating face to face with his intended audience. We call that the incarnation. It is the first and primary Christmas miracle and it is quite possibly the most complicated concept in humanity to understand. People say that teens are too stupid to understand or that they wouldn't care if they could, so they talk about peace, good will on earth and the little drummer boy. But Christmas is about being a part of the visited planet. It's about remembering again the lengths God went to in order to communicate with his creation.

We are going to watch a short video called Claymation Incarnation. The video offers three ways of understanding the incarnation, or how God became a person. As you watch, decide which of the three metaphors is the most accurate or most truthful one.

Task One:

Play the video. When it is over, solicit the group's initial answers. Do not give feedback yet. Ask the students to form small groups of three to six and give every student a copy of pages A-20 to A-22 and a pen. Instruct them to complete the first task and not to move on to the other tasks.

When the students are done this task, solicit their answers. The correct answers are one and five. Two, three, and four are incorrect. The most accurate claymation metaphor is number 1; number 3 represents a too high Christology and number 3 represents a too low Christology.

Task Two and Task Three:

Instruct the students to go on to Task Two and Task Three if they have time.

Regather as a group and solicit some answers. There are no right and wrong answers in Task Two. All of the statements are true but students will be more drawn to some than others. As you guide the discussion, look for things that the students agreed and disagreed upon. Solicit answers from Task Three as well and have listening students check the references for accuracy.

Closing:

Consider wrapping up the evening by saying something like this:

At Christmas it is really easy to get caught up in all the hype about happy, happy, joy, joy, peace on earth, good will to men and let's spend time together as a family. And all

that is fine but it is not at the heart of the Christmas miracle. The true miracle of Christmas is that God visited the planet earth! God wanted us to know him and so he took a great deal of care to communicate with us in the most effective way possible. God spoke! God revealed himself and was willing to humble himself, give up his glory, and become a human baby. A baby that could not speak or control his bladder or who held him or what went on around him. He did that because it was the best way possible to speak to you. That's a miracle and that's what Christmas is all about.