

WORDS OF CHRISTMAS

INTRODUCTION

Our society associates many words with Christmas. Some of the first ones that might come to mind may be rather secular like: lights, presents, trees, cookies, and greeting cards. Some even associate words like Santa and reindeer with Christmas. But the Christian treasures a very different set of words: Savior, love, heaven, salvation, and rejoice are but a few.

In the **Words of Christmas** worship service, the children lead the congregation to focus on four words: hope, joy, peace, and praise. These words easily depict the story of God's promise to save us from our sins through our loving Savior. Each word recounts the lives of those in the Bible who were connected with the birth of Jesus. In addition, they are also applied to us today. Yet the service does not end with those words. It would be impossible to speak of the words of Christmas without discussing the beautiful connection of the birth of Jesus, the true Word, as found in John 1. "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us!" What a fascinating study of Jesus as the "word". Jesus is the Word from the beginning of creation throughout all eternity.

ADVENT OUTLINES

Four Advent Outlines have been prepared for those who wish to carry the theme of Word of Christmas through the Advent season: The PROMISE of Hope, Joyful PREPARATION, Jesus is the PROVISION of Peace, a PROCLAMATION of Love. These outlines are included on the service disk.

THE PARTS

The service is divided into five parts:

PART ONE: OUR FIRST WORD: The HOPE of the Prophets

PART TWO: OUR SECOND WORD: The JOY of the Parents

PART THREE: OUR THIRD WORD: The PEACE of the Angels

PART FOUR: OUR FOURTH WORD: The PRAISE of the Shepherds

PART FIVE: And the WORD Was God

THE PRESENTATION

The worship service is designed to be presented by either large or small groups of children from preschool through elementary school. Certainly adults could assist with the narration and choirs could add to the enjoyment of the service.

There are parts written for two NARRATORS, however you may do as you please. Any section labeled RECITATION means it includes a Scripture passage. The poems in each section may be recited by lower grades if you so desire.

THE SONGS

The theme song, "*The Day When Christ Was Born*", is intended to be sung by all children. Several options are available on the accompaniment CD regarding presentation of the spoken part of the song. The same song may be sung by the entire congregation at the close of the service.

Also included for the children, are the songs "*You Gave Us Hope*", "*The Simple Birth*", and "*Away in the Manger*" (using both melodies). These are included on the music CD. You always have the option to make any song adjustments you wish. Four additional carols are included for the congregation to sing.

You will notice that this service is written to begin without a processional. Those directions apply especially to those using the optional DVD effects available.

THE DVD EFFECTS

Many churches today are making greater use of video presentations through use of Power Point or other programs. The DVD provided for this service includes a silent introduction to the service and the five parts. It was decided to use a DVD format because it is more versatile and easier to use. You can show this video on a large screen TV or on a full movie screen. Be certain when using a projector that your bulb contains enough lumens to reach the screen brightly, especially if the lights will be on or you will be using the effects during daylight hours. The teacher guide includes prompts for using the DVD. The opening introduction lasts about 40 seconds. All others are about 30 seconds.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

This service comes with the following materials:

- Teacher/Student Book on CD or sent via E-mail
- Accompaniment Disk on CD or sent via E-mail
- DVD Effects (cannot be sent via e-mail)
- Worship Bulletin covers

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks are once again in order for Chuck Cushinery (orchestration and arranging) and Arlyn Boll (editing). We would also like to thank Steve Chase (writer of *"The Day Christ Was Born"*) and Ralph Merrifield (writer of *"You Gave Us Hope"*)

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WORDS OF CHRISTMAS

In the beginning was the WORD!
And the WORD was God!
And the WORD became flesh . . . and made his dwelling among us!
John 1

(Lower lights in church. Children may carry tea light candles when quietly entering. All children remain standing, facing the congregation.)

(PLAY DVD "INTRODUCTION". KEEP LAST PICTURE ON SCREEN DURING OPENING SONG)

OPENING SONG BY ALL CHILDREN: "The Day When Christ Was Born" Word and Music by Steve Case, UK

*Time moves on, goes so fast;
Another year will soon be past.
Christmas time comes, and so
Thoughts turn to that day so long ago.
The day when Christ was born,
The day when Christ the Lord was born,
That glorious day when Christ was born.*

(Voice speaks on DVD)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

SONG REPRISE

*Holy child! Wondrous birth!
Creator of the universe!
Take it in, if you can,
The mighty God became a man.
The day when Christ was born,
The day when Christ the Lord was born.*

*Born to die, Lamb of God,
The pathway to the cross He trod.
Oh the grace! Oh the love!
Oh the gift that came from heaven above!
The day when Christ was born,
The day when Christ the Lord was born.
The day when Christ was born,
That glorious day when Christ was born.*

(DVD RETURN TO HOME SCREEN)

(Turn lights up)

INVOCATION BY PASTOR

INTRODUCTION BY PASTOR

Words! Where would we be without words? These lettered wonders that we take so much for granted have been used to start wars, propose marriage, sooth an anxious soul, put people to sleep, spread rumors, and make promises. Words are found in different forms all over the world. Sometimes we string lots of them together to make a point or preach a sermon, and sometimes we find that just one will do. We have fun rhyming them together, and we carefully place them into music. Sometimes we struggle to find just the right one to use because we know the harm that an ill-thought word can cause. We are thrilled when we hear a baby say his first words, and we treasure the last ones spoken by a dying friend. Do you have any idea how many words you said today, or last week or last year?

Today our children will tell us about words. They will show us the deep meanings behind several choice words that will point us to the manger in Bethlehem as they take us back to a night long ago when God said it was time to have his Word become flesh.

RESPONSIVE READING

P: Oh, wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord! True wisdom its pages unfold;

Congregation: And though we may read them a thousand times o'er, they never, no never, grow old.

P: It tells of a Savior, and points to the cross, where pardon we now may secure;

Children: And we know that when time and the world pass away, God's Word shall forever endure!

P: Oh, wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord! The lamp that our Father above . . .

Congregation: So kindly has lighted to teach us the way that leads to the arms of His love!

P: Its warnings, its counsels, are faithful and just; its judgments are perfect and pure;

Children: And we know that when time and the world pass away, God's Word shall forever endure.

P: Oh, wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord! The hope of our friends in the past;

Congregation: Its truth, where so firmly they anchored their trust, through ages eternal shall last.

P: Oh, wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord! Unchanging, abiding and sure;

All: For we know that when time and the world pass away, God's Word shall forever endure!

PRAYER

Dearest Lord Jesus, God's Word made flesh, we kneel beside your manger today to worship and adore you, to praise you and give thanks to you for taking on the form of a baby in Bethlehem, that you might begin the long and loving journey to pay a price that we could not. Send your Spirit into our hearts and kindle the fire of love and devotion for your precious Word. Then give us the zeal and courage to spread that Word to every corner of the earth. We ask this in your name. Amen.

(PLAY DVD "PART ONE". HOLD AT FINAL PICTURE)

OUR FIRST WORD: The HOPE of the Prophets

Narrator 1: Words! Someone once counted that the Bible contains about 775,000 words. That breaks down to about 595,000 in the Old Testament and 180,000 in the New Testament. We know that some of the words were spoken by Jesus, some were parts of songs, while others were included in the letters of Paul and the writings of the prophets.

Sometimes the Bible speaks to us about how we should and should not use words. Let's see what it says about how words **should never** be used:

Recitation: "When words are many, sin is not absent." (Proverbs 10:19)

Recitation: "Reckless words pierce like a sword." (Proverbs 12:18)

Recitation: "The more the words, the less the meaning." (Ecclesiastes 6:11)

Recitation: "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts." (Proverbs 18:8)

Narrator: The Bible also tells us how we **are** to use words:

Recitation: "Pleasant words promote instruction." (Proverbs 16:21)

Recitation: "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint." (Proverbs 17:27)

Recitation: "Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious." (Ecclesiastes 10:12)

Recitation: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." (Proverbs 25:11)

Narrator: Today we will focus on four special words as we tell the story of Jesus. They are the words: HOPE, JOY, PEACE and PRAISE.

Lower Grades: Our first word is HOPE. It means "to wish that something will happen".

Lower Grades:

*Hope is just a four-letter word,
But its meaning's important you see.
It tells me of Jesus who gives me the hope
Of a heaven that's waiting for me.*

Song: "You Gave Us Hope" (Middle or Upper Grades) Music and Words by Ralph Merrifield (New Hope Music)

1. You gave us ***hope** when You sent Your Son.
True **hope**, perfect **hope**, pure **hope**.
Into the darkness Jesus has come.
True **hope**, perfect **hope**, pure **hope**.

Let Your light shine through us to the nations.
Let Your light shine through us to the world.
For You gave us **hope** when You sent Your Son.
True **hope**, perfect **hope**, pure **hope**.

* 2. **joy** 3. **peace** 4. **love**

Narrator 2: Hope is what the Old Testament was all about. God promised his people that a Savior would be born who would pay the ultimate sacrifice for their sins. He was to be their Messiah, their Immanuel, their Anointed One, their Prince of Peace. The Psalm-writer wrote:

Recitation: "We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield . . . May your unfailing love rest upon us as we put our hope in you." (Psalm 33:20,21)

Narrator 2: Jeremiah even gave the Lord a new nickname when in a prayer, he called God, "O Hope of Israel, its Savior in times of distress." (Jeremiah 14:8)

Narrator 1: But the Old Testament people weren't the only ones with hope. Their hope was fulfilled when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. We also have hope inside of us. We hope for the day when we will see Jesus come back again; this time to take us home to heaven. The Bible also tells us about that hope in Titus 2:13:

Recitation: "We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

Narrator 1: And in 1 Peter 1:21:

Recitation: "Your faith and hope are in God." (1 Peter 1:21)

Congregation Song: "*The People That in Darkness Sat*" (stanzas 1-4 only)

(RETURN DVD TO HOME PAGE. PLAY DVD "PART TWO. HOLD AT FINAL PICTURE)

OUR SECOND WORD: The JOY of the Parents

Narrator 2: Do any Christmas carols come to mind when I mention the word **Joy**? That was an easy question, wasn't it? *Joy to the World* has been a favorite Christmas carol for many, many years. It's a happy song that puts a smile on our faces, and a warm, Christmas-like feeling in our hearts.

Lower Grades: The dictionary says that joy is "gladness of our spirit". What would Christmas be without joy?

Lower Grades:

*Our faces show what we feel in our hearts
All because of a new baby boy,
Who brought with him peace, love, and promises too,
And an indescribable joy!*

Narrator 1: If we're joyful each year when Christmas comes, just think of the joy that Mary and Joseph felt. Nothing like this had ever happened to any parents, nor will it ever happen again. Out of all people, God chose Mary and Joseph to be the parents of His Son. They were to be the parents of God. No wonder Mary said:

Recitation: "From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name." (Luke 1:48)

Narrator 2: Let's hear the joy-filled story that we can never hear often enough!

Recitation: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."
(Luke 2:1-11)

Narrator 2: Did you hear the message of the angels? They were bringing good news of great JOY.

Congregation and Children Song: *“While By My Sheep”*

(In the refrain, the congregation sings the first part of each line while the children respond with the echo.)

Narrator 1: We love to hear about the joy that filled the hearts of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels on that first Christmas. But we didn’t live back then. We weren’t at the stable when Jesus was born. We never had the chance to see the baby Jesus. Can we still feel that same joy today?

Narrator 2: Peter answered that question:

Recitation: “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy!” (1 Peter 1:8)

Narrator 2: How could we possibly have a Christmas without any joy! Let’s all raise our voices and sing that song we mentioned earlier, the song of joy to the world, and joy to the earth.

Congregation Song: *“Joy to the World”* (stanzas 1,2)

-----PART 3 & 4 REMOVED-----

Part Five: And the WORD Was GOD

Narrator 1: We’ve studied four words as we learned about the **hope** of the prophets, the **joy** of Jesus’ parents, the **peace** of the angels, and the **praise** of the shepherds. We’ve also seen how we can share in that same hope, joy, peace and praise. But we saved the best **“word”** ‘til last.

Narrator 2: We’ve talked a lot about words. But did you know there was someone who was even named **The Word**? That sounds odd doesn’t it? How could anyone be called simply **The Word**?

Narrator 1: Six times in Genesis 1 we read: “And God said.” Each time he created something, he began by speaking some words and it happened. So God’s words were there as he created the world.

But when God spoke the seventh time, the Bible says, “Then God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness.” Hmm! Who was there with God when he said, “let **us** make” and “in **our** image”?

Narrator 2: That question is answered when we open the Bible to the book of John, chapter 1. Let’s read that together:

Congregation: “In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that had been made.” (John 1:1,2)

All Children: But who was the **Word** that was God? Let’s read some more:

Congregation: “The **Word** became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Congregation:

*When God made this wide world, he spoke and it was,
As he formed and he fashioned all things.
Now we know that those Words became flesh, and a man,
They were Jesus our Savior and King.*

Pastor or Speaker: We've enjoyed the story of words, but before we close, I would like to share with you a few more special words from the Bible. They are just a few words, but they sum up our theme of words into a neat Christmas package. John shares a fascinating study of Jesus as the Word when he writes in Revelation 19, beginning with verse 11: "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, **and his name is the Word of God.**" (Revelation 19:11-13)

May the words we have discovered today always carry with them special meaning. May we all share in the **hope** of eternity. May we always find **joy** in service to our Lord. May we enjoy true **peace** and comfort in his Word, and may we spend every day in **praise** of him who was born in a stable, who died on a cross, and who rose triumphant from a grave. And his name is the **Word** of God.

Benediction

(RETURN DVD TO HOME PAGE. PLAY DVD "FINAL". HOLD AT FINAL PICTURE)

Congregation and All Children Recessional:

Holy child! Wondrous birth!

Creator of the universe!

Take it in, if you can,

The mighty God became a man.

The day when Christ was born,

The day when Christ the Lord was born.

Born to die, Lamb of God,

The pathway to the cross He trod.

Oh the grace! Oh the love!

Oh the gift that came from heaven above!

The day when Christ was born,

The day when Christ the Lord was born.

The day when Christ was born,

That glorious day when Christ was born.