

Isa. 64:1–9

Ps. 80:1–7, 17–19

1 Cor. 1:3–9

Mark 13:24–37

Everything We Need

Goal for the Session

Third- and fourth-graders will be reassured, by Paul's letter to the Corinthian Christians, that in Jesus we have everything we need to live faithfully.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:3–9

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” E. Elizabeth Johnson

The letter's thanksgiving (1:4–9) telegraphs to readers at the outset the basic concerns of the writer. In this case, Paul's concerns are several related issues pertaining to the welfare of the house churches in Corinth: their charismatic giftedness (vv. 4, 7), their wealth—particularly but not only in terms of speech and knowledge (v. 5), the revelation of Christ in glory on the Day of the Lord (vv. 7, 8), and the faithfulness of the God who has called them (v. 9). Each of these subjects recurs throughout 1 Corinthians.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Carlos F. Cardoza-Orandi

This text points to one of the unique characteristics of the Christian religion: the intimate relationship between God and the Christian community that God bestows in and through Jesus Christ. Christianity gives witness to an intimate relationship among God, creation, and, in particular, the Christian community. This relationship is contextual: in other words, it takes its life and its shape from the particular terms of people's cultures. Hence, Jesus is our brother, our Lord, our ancestor, our beloved one, our enlightened spirit. Paul reasserts that the Christian community will be sustained in this spiritual continuum for one crucial reason: “God is faithful” (v. 9).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Martin B. Copenhaver

Paul proceeds to bless the Corinthian congregation. He has some urgent matters to take up with them, but those can wait for a time. Instead, Paul begins by offering a gift of blessing. It is an offering that, in itself, reminds his readers of the bonds they share. This passage invites us to offer thanks to God, not for material gifts, but for spiritual gifts found in the church. It might also serve as a reminder that the gathered body, the body of Christ, is itself intended to be a feast of abundance laid out for the sake of the world.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

The grace of Jesus Christ, which is the source of the community's faith and life, undercuts all divisions in the community based on human accomplishments or status. Grace here has radical social implications; it is not simply a word spoken to individuals or a power at work in individuals. Grace creates a new kind of community. Paul invites the Corinthian church—and the contemporary church—to become an odd, new people in the context of a culture divided between superior and inferior, honored and shamed, insider and outsider. The grace of Jesus Christ is the source of that new kind of community.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
1 Corinthians 1:3–9

Focus on Your Teaching

Third- and fourth-graders understand the power of kind words and know the difference between painful put-downs and encouraging “pats on the back.” And, having recently celebrated Thanksgiving, they will be primed to discuss thankfulness, as did Paul in the Bible reading for this session. This session marks the first Sunday in Advent and makes the transition into the anticipation of Christmas. Be sure to bring battery-powered votive candles to use in Gathering and Closing for the next four sessions. Enter into this season with your learners with a growing sense of God’s generous love.

Generous Lord, help me to teach with kind words as I encourage these third- and fourth-graders to know how blessed they are to be your children. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ blue or purple fabric
- ❑ 4 battery-powered votive candles
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 33
- ❑ newsprint, markers
- ❑ Bible with maps

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: Resource Sheet 1, copies of Resource Sheet 2, construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, envelopes, paper clips
- ❑ option 2: *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast; writing paper; pencils
- ❑ option 3: construction paper, markers, glitter glue, stickers, envelopes, stamps

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Welcome learners as they arrive. Invite them to help you arrange blue or purple fabric in the center of your learning space, using the color your church uses in worship during Advent. Place Color Pack 1 on the cloth and four battery-powered votive candles along the road.

Show Color Pack 2, noting that this is the first Sunday in Advent and the first Sunday in a new church year. Invite learners to tell what they know about Advent. Look at Color Pack 1. How does this picture remind you of the season of Advent? If needed, remind them that *advent* means “waiting” and that many churches light candles of an Advent wreath to mark the time of waiting for Jesus to come. Light one candle. Play the first verse of “God, We Sing” (Color Pack 33, *Singing the Feast*), then sing it together. Pray aloud:

Holy God, on this first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of Hope and thank you for that gift. Be with us as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Amen.

Invite children to recall kind words that others have spoken to them recently:

- ✿ What is the nicest thing someone said to you last week? Why did these words seem especially kind?
- ✿ Were these words spoken to you, sent in a text or e-mail message, or delivered in some other way?

EXPLORING

Introduce the Bible reading for today as part of a letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. Invite learners to recall key events in Paul’s life and the places where he traveled to teach about Jesus. Show Color Pack 3 and ask learners to find Corinth on the map.



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

Everything We Need

God, We Sing (Verse 1)

God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of *hope*
anew;
Light this candle, light
the way,
Bring *hope* into our
hearts today.
Jesus, near us as we pray,
Let *hope* be in our hearts
today.

Thanksgiving Rap

O great God, we give you
thanks

For all the senses five,
For sight, hearing, taste,
touch, smell,
They make the world alive.

Twinkling stars and red
sports cars,
The dancing color and light,
Shapes and sizes, forms and
things,
We praise you, God, for sight.

The songbird sings, the car
phone rings,
The hail beats on the ground,
The crickets chirp, a baby
burps,
We praise you, God, for
sound.

Buttered popcorn, jelly beans,
Fruit and mint toothpaste,
Fries with ketchup,
chocolate milk,
We thank you, God, for taste.

Cinnamon and fresh-baked
bread,
A place we know so well,
All the flowers, perfume mist,
We praise you, God, for smell.

Gritty sand, a loving hand,
A silky milkweed pod,
For giving us the gift of
touch,
We give you thanks, O God.

O great God, we give you
thanks,
For all the senses five,
For sight and hearing, taste,
touch, smell,
They make the world alive.

Recall that much of what we know about Paul comes from the many letters he wrote to encourage new Christians in the faith. Sometimes he criticized them because he heard they had been fighting among themselves. Sometimes he wrote to teach them more about living as Christians. But he always tried to give them words of encouragement.

Print the following questions on newsprint:

- ✿ To whom is the letter written?
- ✿ For what is Paul thankful?
- ✿ Why is he confident the people will continue to do well?

Invite learners to listen for the answers to these questions as you read this retelling of 1 Corinthians 1:1–9:

I am Paul, an apostle of Jesus, chosen by God. I am writing to the church in Corinth and to all the other Christians who may read this letter. I wish you all the grace and peace that God and Jesus can give to you. I am always thanking God for the good things I hear about you. It is obvious by your way of talking, and the wisdom you share, and the stories of faith you tell, that God has given you everything you need in order to be faithful while you wait for Jesus to return. I know that God will continue to forgive you and strengthen you because we all know that God is faithful. It is God who called you to believe in Jesus Christ, and so God will give you everything you need to be faithful to the end.

Ask learners to answer the three questions you wrote on the newsprint, rereading appropriate phrases as needed to help them. Then discuss:

- ✿ How would you feel if you received this letter?
- ✿ Who encourages you with kind words?
- ✿ When have you experienced the power of unkind words?
- ✿ Whom can you encourage with kind words?

Invite the children to think back to their celebration of Thanksgiving. Together, list on newsprint the things that they expressed thanks for on that day. Ask volunteers to circle the physical things (food, homes, parents, schools) and put boxes around qualities or values (freedom, love, kindness, peace). Add to your list the things that Paul expressed thanks for in his letter to the Corinthians: boldness, wisdom, witnessing, strength, forgiveness. Ask: Would you put circles or boxes around these things? Note that some things on the list help us to be safe and healthy and other things on the list help us be faithful and grow as Christians.

Point out that the Corinthians were waiting for Jesus to return to earth. Because the Bible tells us Jesus will come again, we are waiting for this, too. We know it may take a long time. Advent is a time to wait to celebrate Jesus' birth and to wait for Jesus' return. It is a good time to ask God to help us grow in our faith while we're waiting. Paul says that God is faithful and will help us.

- ✿ What do we do at church that helps us have a stronger faith in Jesus? What might we do at home?

Extinguish the candle.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Advent Wreath** Advent is a wonderful opportunity for families to consider the ways they are growing in Christian faith. Follow the instructions on Resource Sheet 1 (Make an Advent Wreath) to guide children in making an Advent wreath to take home. Make sure to send home copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Advent Prayer) as well.
- 2. Songs of Thanksgiving** Paul gave thanks for God's faithfulness in sending the gift of Jesus Christ and for the faith-filled lives of the Corinthians. Listen to "Thanksgiving Rap" ([*Singing the Feast*](#)). Invite learners to write their own rap of thanks or create dance steps to accompany "Thanksgiving Rap." Some may like to create an acrostic poem by writing the word *thanksgiving* down the left side of a page and writing things to be thankful for that begin with each letter. Find a way to share these expressions of thanks with others.
- 3. Notes of Encouragement** Discuss with learners ways they can say encouraging things to others, like Paul did. Bring envelopes that you have addressed to your church's homebound members. As a group, brainstorm what you might say on Advent cards to these individuals. Make cards from folded construction paper, making sure they will fit into your envelopes. Decorate with markers, glitter glue, and stickers. If possible, go as a group to the mailbox to mail the cards.

EASY
PREP

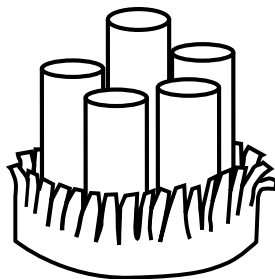
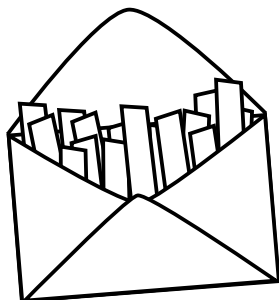
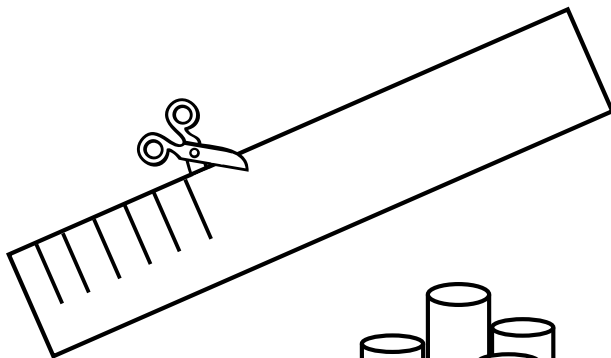
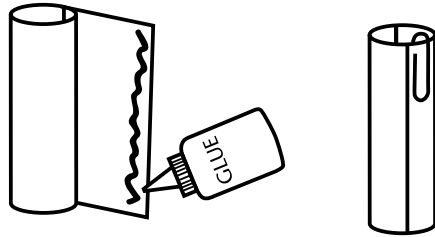
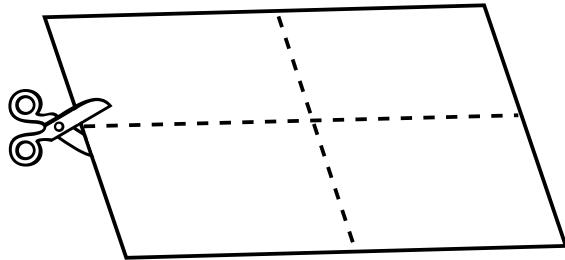
CLOSING

Gather around your Advent candles, and light one, if necessary. Invite children to take turns thanking God for someone who has encouraged them to learn more about Jesus.

Exchange a handshake or high-five with each learner as the group departs, saying, "God bless your Advent waiting!" Express your hope to see them again next Sunday.

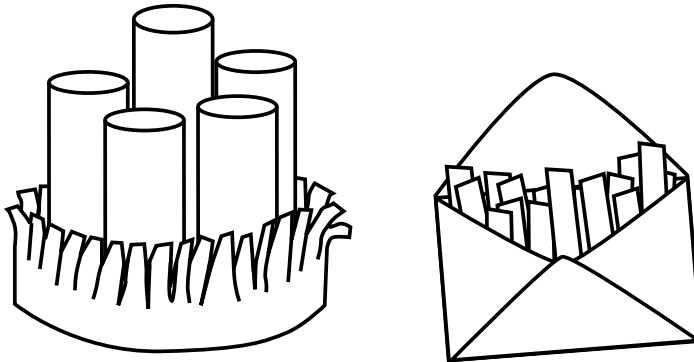
Extinguish the candle.

Make an Advent Wreath



1. **Make the four candles for the four Sundays in Advent.** Use a 9" x 12" sheet of purple or dark blue construction paper, according to the color your church uses in worship. Cut the paper into quarters. Roll each piece, starting at the short end, to make 4½-inch tall candles, about 1 inch in diameter. Glue the edge of each roll and use a paper clip to hold it in place until the glue dries.
2. **Make one Christ candle for the center of the wreath.** Trim a 9" x 12" piece of white construction paper to 9" x 10". Cut it into quarters. Roll one piece, starting at the long end, to make a 5-inch tall candle. Glue the edge and use a paper clip to hold it in place until the glue dries.
3. **Make the wreath.** Cut a 2" x 12" piece of dark green construction paper. Cut about halfway into the strip along the long edge to make "fringe." Glue the strip into a ring around the five candles. Hold it closed with a paper clip until dry, then fold the fringes out like foliage.
4. **Cut strips for the flames.** From orange construction paper, cut about 40 thin strips that are 6 inches long. Keep the strips in an envelope for use during Advent.
5. Be sure to send home copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Advent Prayer) for families to use with the wreaths.

Advent Prayer



Leader: Holy God, be with us as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

All: Loving God, hear our prayers.

Leader:

(First Sunday of Advent): On this first Sunday, we light the candle of Hope and thank you for that gift.

(Second Sunday of Advent): On this second Sunday, we light the candles of Hope and Peace and thank you for those gifts.

(Third Sunday of Advent): On this third Sunday, we light the candles of Hope, Peace, and Love and thank you for those gifts.

(Fourth Sunday of Advent): On this fourth Sunday, we light the candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy and thank you for those gifts.

All: Lord, we thank you.

Leader: Let us light this candle by saying what is on our hearts.

All: *(Take turns inserting orange strips into this week's candle as each one responds:)*

(First Sunday of Advent): *Thank God for something in your life, and add a strip to "light" the candle.*

(Second Sunday of Advent): *Tell a way to get ready for Christmas, and add a strip to "light" the candle.*

(Third Sunday of Advent): *Name a person or nation in need of God's love, and add a strip to "light" the candle.*

(Fourth Sunday of Advent): *Tell of something kind you did for another person last week, and add a strip to "light" the candle.*

(Christmas Day): *Fill the Christ candle with the remaining strips to celebrate the gift of Jesus.*

Leader: Shine your light on us and help us see your Son, Jesus, in new ways.

All: Amen.