

THE CANDY CANE LESSON

(Object lesson. Bring one large candy cane to lead the study and then small ones for each member of the study if you can.)

- What candy reminds you the most of Christmas? (...)
- How many of you love Candy Canes? (...)
- Has anyone ever decorated a Christmas tree with Candy Canes? (...)
- How many were left on the tree by the time Christmas came? (...)
- Did anyone ever make Candy Canes from scratch? (...)
- Did you know that there are 1.76 billion Candy Canes made each year? -90% of those are sold each year between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- They even have fun jokes about Candy Canes, such as: “What is red, white and blue all over? A Candy Cane holding its’ breath!”
- Another one: “How did Santa cross the road? With his Candy Cane of course!”

- This all sounds humorous, but have you ever wondered where this popular treat came from? (...)
- According to tradition, in 1670 the choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany, was frustrated by fidgety kids at the living Nativity that they were having. He asked the town candy maker to make some white, sugar-candy sticks to keep the youngsters quiet. The candy maker curved them to look like a shepherd’s hook. They became a huge hit. The candy maker then decided to make them with unique features to represent Jesus whom they celebrated at Christmastime. The idea caught on and the candy canes became common at living Nativities all over Europe and eventually all over the world.

- Did you ever think something so small and insignificant would become such an important tradition all over the world during Christmastime?

- In honor of this tradition, I thought it would be fun to look at the candy cane together and see what the candy maker wanted us to see.
- From the story, what shape did the candy maker make the candy cane? (A shepherd’s staff.)
- According to the Bible, Who is the “Good Shepherd”? (Jesus)
- The candy maker wanted us to remember that Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

- Let’s read our first verse on our Verse Sheet that reminds us of this: (Psalm 21:1 “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”)
- According to this verse, Who is our Shepherd? (The Lord Jesus)
- So if He is our Shepherd, than what are we? (His sheep)
- Sometimes when a sheep goes astray, the shepherd would reach out with his hook and pull him back into the fold. (Show example by using the Candy Cane pulling back something.)
- Does Jesus do that to us today when we are living on the edge of sin, maybe through bad attitudes or sinful habits? (...)
- Yes, He pulls us back with His staff or the rod of His Word, the Bible.

-He also does something even better than that. Let's read our next verse together to find out, #2 on our Verse Sheet: (John 10:11 "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd *lays down His life* for the sheep.")

-According to this verse, what gift did Jesus give to us? (His life)

-The Good Shepherd laid down His life for our sins, so we may live with Him one day in eternity.

-That's the best gift anyone can give to someone else.

-What are some gifts we can give Jesus in return for this gift? (Ourselves)

-We can give Him our selves. That is the gift that would be most precious to Him.

-Let's turn the candy cane upside down, what letter does it become? ("J")

-And this letter stands for? (Jesus)

-Do you know where Jesus got His name? (An angel of the Lord came to Joseph when Mary was pregnant and told him to name Him Jesus.)

-Let's read verse #3 to hear what the angel had to say: (Matthew 1:21 "She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name of Jesus, because *He will save His people from their sins.*")

-Does anyone know what the Hebrew name "Jesus" means? (God saves)

-Jesus is our Savior. It says if you call upon the name of Jesus, you shall be saved! Romans 10:9 says "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

-So, remember how precious that name is!

-Let's talk about the color of the candy cane and what it represents.

-What is the primary color under the red stripes? (White)

-When you think of the color white, what do you think of? (Clean laundry, white as snow, pure, etc.)

-Who do we know was pure, white as snow, without sin? (Jesus)

-Who believes Jesus never sinned? (...)

-Can you imagine what it must have been like to be His brother or sister? (...)

-Imagine you just stole a cookie from the cookie jar and Jesus was standing there. He probably would say "You shouldn't be doing that." You would probably tell Him to leave you alone, like we did with our own brothers and sisters! ☺ He was so perfect! Can you imagine living with someone so perfect? But, He was also loving.

-So, the white color reminds us that Jesus was pure. He was born of a virgin and never sinned. He was our perfect sinless sacrifice.

-What color is on top of the white on the candy cane? (Red)

-What do you think that represents? (The blood Jesus shed for us.)

-The Bible says that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sins.

Let's read our next verse to remind us of this, #4 on our Verse Sheet: (Hebrews 9:22 "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins.")

-Before Jesus came, they had to get a lamb or another type of animal, kill it and take the blood and sprinkle it on the alter for their sins. Then Jesus came and He became the perfect sinless sacrifice for all our sins.

-John the Baptist even proclaimed this in our next verse. Let's read it together, #5 on our Verse Sheet: (John 11:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, *Who takes away* the sin of the world.")

-Does it say He just covers them? What does it say? (No, He takes them away!)

-So, red is for the blood He shed for us to take away our sins.

-Traditional candy canes had 3 small red strips between the large stripes. The candy maker used those to represent the stripes Jesus bore for us when He was beaten before they crucified Him.

-Let's read our next verse, #6 on our Verse Sheet, to see what it has to say about His stripes. (I Peter 2:24 "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, *by Whose stripes you were healed.*")

-By His stripes we are what? (Healed!)

-He took our sin upon Him and was beaten for them. He shed His blood and by those stripes we are healed. Totally saved. God sees you as righteous because Jesus took our punishment.

-So when you see the red stripes on a candy cane, remember Jesus' was beaten for you so you may be healed from your sins.

-What is the flavor of a candy cane? (Peppermint)

-Who likes peppermint? (...)

-The peppermint in the candy cane represents the spices the Wisemen brought to Jesus when He was a child in Bethlehem. Does anyone remember what these were? (Frankincense, Myrrh)

-Frankincense and myrrh were extensively used in the Middle Eastern burial rituals as an embalming material to cover the dead body. These gifts were a foretelling of what was to come for the Jesus. The sacrifice He was going to make for the world.

-Now, we all know the candy cane is hard.

-Has anyone broken a tooth or crown on a candy cane? (...) It isn't very pleasant is it? (...)

-But, what if you are leaning on something, do you want it to be hard so it will support you?

-We do because it not only gives us support but also security.

-That is what Jesus does for us.

-The candy maker made the candy cane hard to represent that Christ is our Rock, our security and our support.

-Let's read our next verse together that talks about this, #7: (Psalm 18:2 "The LORD is my *Rock*, and my *Fortress*, and my deliverer; my God, my *Strength*, in whom I will trust...")

-When you think of Rock, Fortress and Strength, they all make you think of something hard and strong that you can lean on and depend on.

-That is what Jesus is to the believer. He is our Salvation, the Rock Who saved us and now we can depend on Him throughout the storms of life. Always there, never failing, always faithful to the end until He calls us home to be with Him.

-So, whenever you see the candy cane, I hope it reminds you of the great love Jesus has for you and to celebrate the sweetest gift He gave us at Christmas...HIMSELF! Let's read together the Candy Cane Poem at the bottom of our Verse Sheet to celebrate this sweet gift at Christmas.

“THE CANDY CANE” VERSE SHEET

1. Psalm 21:1 “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”
2. John 10:11 “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd *lays down His life* for the sheep.”
3. Matthew 1:21 “She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name of Jesus, because *He will save His people from their sins.*”
4. Hebrews 9:22 “...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins.”
5. John 11:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, *Who takes away the sin of the world.*’”
6. I Peter 2:24 “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, *by Whose stripes you were healed.*”
7. Psalm 18:2 “The LORD is my *Rock*, and my *Fortress*, and my deliverer; my God, my *Strength*, in whom I will trust...”

Look at the *Candy Cane*
What do you see?
Stripes that are *red*
Like the *blood* shed for me!
White for my *Savior*
Who’s sinless and *pure*!
“J” is for *Jesus*
My Lord, that’s for sure!
Turn it around
And a *staff* you will see,
Jesus my *Shepherd*
Was born for me!