

Becoming a Panda

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

**Lesson 4
Focus:**
God became
human.

**Lesson 4
Bible Basis:**
John 1:1-18

**Lesson 4
Memory Verse:**
No one has ever seen God, but the one
and only Son, who is himself God and is
in closest relationship with the Father,
has made him known. —John 1:18

Students will learn that God became human to demonstrate His love for us.

Materials:

- Internet access

The scientists who work with giant pandas have a problem. Pandas may be cute and fuzzy, but they're also an endangered species. Naturally, people want to do everything they can to help pandas survive. But when humans hang out with pandas, the bears end up becoming dependent on people. That means they may not be ready to survive in the wild.

Panda researchers have come up with what they hope is a solution: whenever they interact with the bears, they dress in a special outfit so they don't look like people. Check out this video.

Share this video with your students [2:47].

Zookeepers Suit Up as Pandas 🤖 The Miracle Panda | The Smithsonian Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bwVFbNpoIk>

➤ **Do you think the panda cubs in the video were fooled: did they believe they were really interacting with an adult bear?** (Even if the human caretakers *looked* kind of like pandas, the cubs could probably tell by their smell that they weren't real bears.)

Clearly, panda outfits aren't the *perfect* way to care for cubs. They look kind of silly, and they may or may not be effective in the long run. The *perfect* solution would be for humans to *become* pandas!

➤ **Imagine that humans could magically become panda bears. What advantages would that have in taking care of cubs?** (The cubs could grow up being cared for by their own species. People-pandas would do the best possible job of preparing the cubs for life in the wild.)

Sadly for the panda cubs, humans can't turn themselves into animals. But if they could, it would be the perfect way for people to show pandas that they care!

> Can you think of any connection between a human becoming a panda and the story of Christmas? (If humans could become pandas, they would do it to show the pandas how much they care. In a similar way, Jesus became human because it was the perfect way for God to demonstrate His infinite love for us in a way we can understand.)

God became a human being. He chose to be born in a manger because living as a person was the most powerful way that the Lord of the universe could demonstrate His love. It's kind of like what the panda researchers are trying to do for the bear cubs, but in a miraculous way that could only come from God.

Let's read in the Gospel of John about how God became a human.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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God became human.

Lesson 4**Bible Basis:**

John 1:1-18

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Materials:

- Index cards
- Pens/pencils

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

When people “transform” into giant pandas—or at least put on panda suits—they’re doing it to try to care for the bears in the best way possible. When Jesus came to earth as an actual baby, He did demonstrate He loved us in the most profound way possible.

But Jesus hasn’t walked the earth in 2,000 years. That’s why it’s important for those of us who believe in Him to show other people His love. We can put on God’s love in the same way Chinese scientists put on panda suits! We become like Jesus for someone who needs to experience God.

- **What have you done in the past week to be Jesus to someone you care about?** (Make sure your students understand that you’re not asking for huge, dramatic things like feeding the homeless. We can be Jesus to others in little things, like talking to a peer who needs a friend or helping a parent or teacher who needs assistance. Set the tone by sharing an example of something small that you did in the past week to demonstrate Christ’s love.)

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). **Hopefully each one of you has had a chance over this past week to share the good news of Jesus with someone who needs to hear it. This week, I’m challenging you to demonstrate God’s love by being intentional about stepping into their world or situation.**

First, think of someone you’ll see this week who might need to experience God’s love. You won’t be seeing your friends at school since it’s winter break, but you’ll probably see lots of family members. Who needs to see Jesus in you?

Write that person's name on your card. If you're not sure who to choose, take a moment to pray about it. Give students a minute or two to pray about whose name to write down.

Now, think of something you can do to show this person God's love in a way that will demonstrate you care. You won't be able to wear a special suit to accomplish it, and it doesn't have to be a big, huge event! Love is often shown in little things. But think of something that specifically relates to that person's situation (share some examples with your students: carrying in packages from Mom's car without being asked; babysitting free of charge for an aunt and uncle so they can do errands; or making cookies for residents at a nursing home or for an elderly, shut-in neighbor). **What will you do to demonstrate Jesus' love in this person's life?** Again, give students a minute or two to write.

➤ **Who'd like to share how they're going to be Jesus to someone this week?** (Invite, but don't require, students to share what they wrote on their index card.)

Scientists are willing to dress up like pandas to show little cubs that they care. When you "dress up" like Jesus—not by putting on robes and a beard, but by putting on His love—you can show the people around you that you care and God cares.

Close in prayer, asking God to remind you and your students to carry out the loving plans you've written down today.

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