

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 16
Lesson Plans for Younger

Scripture: John 6:56-59

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

The fork in the road. The moment of truth. The choice. Will we do things the way we've always done it, or will we take a leap of faith? "This teaching is difficult!" say those who have trekked with Jesus. Will we risk the spirit that gives life or will we pin all our hopes on "the flesh"? Jesus invites us into the unfathomable joys of the kingdom of God. What will we choose?

Theme: What Will We Choose?

Before Class: Balloons would be good for this session. Blow up a few before class, then blow up a few more when the children are with you. You can also use bubbles or pinwheels.

Beginning: Show the children a balloon that is inflated and one that has no air in it. Ask the children which one bounces higher. What has made the difference? Tell the children that in the language Jesus spoke, the word for “air” – or “breath” – was the same as the word for “spirit.” Today we will hear what Jesus said about spirit.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for helping us to know that you love us and that you want us to have your spirit in us. Amen.

The Story: The people who had been listening to Jesus were having a hard time understanding him. “This is hard!” they said. Some of them thought it was so hard that they just went away. Jesus asked his friends if they wanted to go away too. “No way,” they said, “we want to be with you.” Jesus said to them, “It is the spirit that gives life. Without the spirit, my breath, your bodies are not good for much of anything.”

Activity: If you can go outside, have a balloon relay race. (Since you might be popping balloons, make sure you do this in an area that will not disrupt others.) Set up a course that works for your setting. If it is an especially hot day, instead of running, tell the children to walk heel-toe, heel-toe. Or have them tiptoe or take three big steps forward and then two back. Take extra balloons with you in case one pops. If the children ask, “What happens to the spirit when the balloon pops?” You can tell them that the "spirit" has gone out of the balloon and its body is not of much use. When we die, the spirit goes out of our bodies, our bodies are not of much use, but our spirit goes to be with Jesus.

Option: If you cannot go outside, you could use bubbles or pinwheels to show breath/spirit for this activity and do it inside. You could also invite the children to draw some pictures of breath or the spirit.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for these summer days we have had together. Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how to stay close to him. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 16
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 6:56-59

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

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Theme: What Will We Choose?

Before Class: You will need a Bible, and you may choose to bring a small candle in a glass jar and some matches. Look at the activity section and decide what game you will play. Make sure you have the needed supplies (like bubbles) for the game.

Beginning: Ask one child to pretend to be the coach of an imaginary baseball team. Tell that child to invite the other children to play on the team. Tell the other children to answer the coach in ways that are not definite. For example: "Yes, I want to play baseball, and I want to be the pitcher. No, wait a minute. I want to be the catcher. I can't make up my mind." Make sure each child has an opportunity to give an answer that is really not an answer. Perhaps the child will say, "Yes, I want to play a game, but I want it to be soccer, instead." Then ask the children what chance they think this poor coach has of putting together a team. What do you think would happen if the coach decided not to make anyone do anything they did not want to do? If people really made up their minds they wanted to play, how might the game go?

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for inviting us to be with you and for waiting for us to choose you. Be with us today as we explore your teachings. Amen.

The Story: If you have been together with these children for the past four sessions, tell them that today is the last part of the story of Jesus trying to help people understand what he was inviting them into. Read the passage (John 6: 56-69) to the children. If you have strong readers or assistants in the class, you can also read the passage in parts. (See below) Before you begin ask the children to listen for something that sticks out for them.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you remember most about the lesson we just read. (Allow the children time to respond)

- The disciples say: "this is a hard saying." Do you think they meant it was hard to decide what to do or that they really didn't understand what Jesus was saying? (Could be either, but it is probably that they thought it would be hard to do.)
- "Does this offend you?" Jesus asked. I wonder why Jesus would ask that? Do you think the disciples were "offended?" grossed out? Do you think you would have been?
- Jesus said: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless." The Hebrew word for "spirit" is the same word as for "breath." What would happen to our bodies, if we could not breathe? (We would not be alive.)
- Does Jesus mean that our bodies are not of any value? (No, but without breath they are "useless.")
- What will happen to our bodies when we die? (They will not work as bodies anymore.)
- What will happen to our spirits when we die? (If we have chosen to be with Jesus, we will be with Jesus.)

Activity: If you are able to be outside for this game, and the location allows, play a game that will let the children really run and get "out of breath." (Suggestions for games would be tag, a simple race, blowing bubbles and inviting them to pop as many as possible, hopping around, etc.) Play for a bit, until the children are getting tired. Then ask the children to sit in a circle. Ask them if they are feeling a "bit out of breath." Does this mean they are dying? (Of course not.) Does it mean that God's spirit is no longer inside them? (Of course not.) Could we have played this game if we could not breathe? (Of course not.)

Getting Closure: (If you have brought a candle, light it now.) Invite the children to use their imagination and pretend that you, the teacher, know nothing about what they have been exploring these past sessions. Ask them to explain to you – in a way they understand and they hope you will – what Jesus was telling his disciples to do. What do we do in church to help people keep this promise to eat the Bread of Life? If you have time, you could also invite them to draw illustrations of what they have learned and then have them share them with the class.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for inviting us to choose you and for never giving up on us once we do choose you. Amen. (Extinguish the candle.)

John 6:56-69

Jesus: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.”

Narrator: Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said,

Disciples: ‘This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?’

Narrator: But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them,

Jesus: ‘Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.’

Narrator: For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said,

Jesus: ‘For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.’

Narrator: Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve,

Jesus: ‘Do you also wish to go away?’

Narrator: Simon Peter answered him,

Simon Peter/Disciple: ‘Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 16
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 6:56-59

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The fork in the road. The moment of truth. The choice. Will we do things the way we've always done it, or will we take a leap of faith? "This teaching is difficult!" say those who have trekked with Jesus. Will we risk the spirit that gives life or will we pin all our hopes on "the flesh"? Jesus invites us into the unfathomable joys of the kingdom of God. What will we choose?

Theme: What Will We Choose?

Before Class: You will need copies of the Scripture reading (found below) or enough Bibles for the group. You will also need copies of the Book of Common Prayer for the group.

Beginning: Tell the group that this is the last of the sessions on John 6, and today we will look at the scripture passage to see what it has to say to us: right here where we are. Then tell them we will look at Eucharistic Prayer D and close with a few minutes of contemplative prayer.

Opening Prayer: Teaching God, be with us today and help us to be open to your Spirit – your Spirit that gives life. Amen.

The Scripture (John 6:56-69): Invite people to choose a part to read -- the part of Jesus, the narrator, or the disciples (which could be read in unison by all the rest of the group).

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in this passage?
- What is the struggle the disciples are having with what Jesus is saying? (See verses 60, 67b. They want to believe, but it is hard. They realize that Jesus has the words of life so they want to choose to follow.)
- I wonder if any of us struggle with this passage?
- In verse 63, what is Jesus saying to the disciples – and to us? Does he mean that we should abandon our bodies? (No, but our bodies will not, finally, take us where we need to go.)
- Consider the word “wind” in Genesis 1:2: "while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." The word *ruach* (pronounced “ROO–hah”) in Hebrew means “wind,” “breath,” and also “spirit.” In what ways does our breathing signify that we are alive?
- Notice how often the word "choice" is used in this passage. In verse 65, God chooses who can come to God. In verse 66, some of the disciples choose to go away. In verse 67, Jesus

asks those who stayed if they want to leave. In verse 70, Jesus has chosen the disciples. And one of the disciples will choose to betray him. How do we show that we are choosing "the spirit that gives life?" (By continuing to follow, being willing to grow, being faithful, trusting.)

Option: Look at Eucharistic Prayer D, The Book of Common Prayer (p. 372). If you have time, ask someone to read the entire prayer while the rest follow along or have people switch off reading by paragraph. As you are reading through the Eucharistic Prayer, invite people to make note of a particular word or phrase that particularly spoke to them. Once you are done reading, invite the group to share the word or phrase that struck them.

Getting Closure: Invite the group into a brief contemplative prayer. If they are unfamiliar with this type of prayer, explain that the purpose is to sit quietly with eyes closed and simply "be" for God. Instead of offering petitions, simply being quiet. As stray thoughts occur, let them float on by and return again to the quiet. If there is too much noise in your head, simply select a simple word: "Jesus," "Spirit," "Abba," or even "Amen." When the group is ready, say: "Be still, and know." If the group is new to this type of prayer, 3 to 5 minutes will be sufficient. If they are experienced with this type of prayer, agree together how long the time should be and you should watch the clock. At the end, you could simply say: "Amen." Or you could lead the group in saying The Lord's Prayer.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, we offer our prayers to you and thank you for the ways in which you teach us to live with you and with each other. Bless us as we continue on our journey today. Amen.

John 6:56-69

Jesus: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.”

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