

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - Third Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plan for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 3:7-18

Background: Advent extends an invitation. The invitation: don't just do something – stand, watch, prepare. *Stand*. Choose to believe that ours is a safe universe – a universe God chose to enter as an infant. *Watch*. Look for a coming that has already come and will come again. *Prepare*. Snatch moments from our busyness. Watching for wisps of awe and wonder to show up. Rediscover that God has chosen to dwell in us and we are invited to dwell in God.

What if – just what if – Jesus is already right here, standing silently with us, walking ahead of us, showing us we don't have to do it all? Could it be that we are called to be still, notice, listen – and then follow?

Advent Theme: Christ will come again: We watch, we prepare, we get ready.

A Notation for this week's Gospel: Convicted by John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?" As we wait, how will we get ready? Yes, the packages have to get wrapped. Yet John invites us to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." Perhaps we are being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

Theme: What Then Should We Do?

Before Class:

Preparation for NEXT Week: Young children need a place to visit and re-visit the story of the birth of Jesus. To help them "get their hands on" the story, we suggest you create a manger scene with the children using a simple cardboard box, a collection of small stuffed animals the children share, and some pieces of material for costumes. Be creative with how to create the manger. How many characters are represented in your scene will be limited only by the number of stuffed animals that show up for casting and the imagination of you and the children. You will definitely need baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In addition, assorted animals, shepherds, and angels. You could bring the cardboard box today and describe the project to the children, inviting them to loan stuffed animals by bringing them next week. You will also want to communicate this with the parents. Or, you could simply assemble the cast of characters yourself. You could begin this project this Sunday, or wait until next week.

THIS Week: You will need paper, crayons, the blue cloth, and Christmas tree lights. If you want to begin building the manger, you can begin this week, continuing next week as the children bring in their stuffed animals or other items.

If you want the children to bring stuffed animals from home, draft a note to go home to the parents explaining what you need and making clear when the children could have their animals come back home with them.

If your church provides food for the hungry, distributes clothing, participates in an angel tree, or is connected to an organization that does, have this information to pass along to parents. And if your church is engaged in any other outreach program the children could participate in, let the parents know about it, also.

Beginning: As the children come into your room, ask them who is coming in two weeks. (If you get "Santa Claus" agree, and ask who else is coming, offering clues until they tell you we will celebrate that Jesus is going to be born on Christmas.)

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to be born as a little baby. Help us remember today what we celebrate on Christmas. Amen.

The Story: Last week we had a story about a man named John the Baptist. He is in our story again today. He has been telling people they should stop doing bad stuff and start doing good stuff. The people listened to him for quite awhile and then somebody stepped up and asked, "OK, what should we do?" John had some suggestions for tax collectors and for soldiers, and he also had a suggestion that everyone could understand. John said, "If you have an extra coat, give it to someone who needs one. If you have enough food, share some of it with people who don't have enough."

Activity: Invite the children to act out the sharing using pretend coats and pretend big plates of food. One child can be the child with a batch of coats, struggling to hold so many coats. Another child can be shivering in the cold until the first child shares a coat. One child can be carrying several plates of food until that child sees another child, holding their tummy in hunger, and share the food until everyone is fed.

Outreach: If you have been able to find ways the children could participate in an outreach project, tell them about it and invite their participation.

Option: If you have sufficient time, you could invite the children to draw pictures of the sharing they acted out.

Getting Closure: Spread out the blue cloth and light the Christmas tree lights spread along side of the cloth. Then sit beside the cloth, or around it. Ask the children to tell you, again, who is coming in two weeks. Describe the manger scene you will be developing next week and remind the children to bring in stuffed animals. OR begin to assemble the pieces of the manger, reminding them that we will continue next week. Tell the children to be sure to give their parents the notes you have written so you are all ready for next week.

Closing Prayer: If your group likes to sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (Hymn 56), this could be your closing prayer. If not, use this prayer: Thank you, God, for showing us how we can also help by sharing. Be with us as we go into the world to love each other and you. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - Third Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plan for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 3:7-18

Background: Advent extends an invitation. The invitation: don't just do something – stand, watch, prepare. *Stand*. Choose to believe that ours is a safe universe – a universe God chose to enter as an infant. *Watch*. Look for a coming that has already come and will come again. *Prepare*. Snatch moments from our busyness. Watching for wisps of awe and wonder to show up. Rediscover that God has chosen to dwell in us and we are invited to dwell in God.

What if – just what if – Jesus is already right here, standing silently with us, walking ahead of us, showing us we don't have to do it all? Could it be that we are called to be still, notice, listen – and then follow?

Advent Theme: Christ will come again: We watch, we prepare, we get ready.

A Notation for this week's Gospel: Convicted by John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?" As we wait, how will we get ready? Yes, the packages have to get wrapped. Yet John invites us to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." Perhaps we are being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

Theme: What Then Should We Do?

Before Class: Print off enough copies of the Scripture (found below) for each child, or have enough Bibles for each child to use. You will need construction paper, white paper, or banner paper for the activity. Have newspapers, magazines, stories and pictures printed from the internet, etc. for the children to use. Make sure the magazines and stories are age appropriate and that you flip through them for age-appropriateness before class.

Beginning: Invite the children to share anything good that happened that week.

Opening Prayer: Here we are, God, listening to you and looking for ways to get ready. Be with us as we listen and wonder about your words to us. Amen.

The Story: Luke 3: 7-18 Give the children the copies of the Scripture and ask for volunteers to read.

Reflection Questions:

- What does John mean: "Bear fruits worthy of repentance?" (What did we decide the word "repentance" means?)
- What would be the "fruits" (results)?
- How were these people trying to get out of serious repentance? (They were thinking they had it made – they were chosen people, descendants of Abraham.)

- What do you think got the people's attention? (Perhaps the idea of trees getting chopped down, or stone replacing them.)
- What does John answer to each of the groups who ask, "What should we do?" (In general, verse 11; to tax collectors, verse 13; to soldiers, verse 14b.)
- What did the people expect in the Messiah? (Someone who would come, change everything, kick out the Romans, set up a beautiful new kingdom where everyone would live happily ever after.)
- What did John respond when they asked him if he was the Messiah? (Verse 16-18.)
- Luke states that what John was proclaiming was "good news." What about the message sounds like good news to you? (Possible answers: someone – someone more powerful than John – was coming. There would be a baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. Some serious changes were going to be made.)

Option: Invite the children to help you look for Good News. What is the good news that Jesus brings? What is the good news in our world? What might Jesus see as good news in our world?

Hand out the newspapers, magazines, or whatever other material you have for them. Have them look through and cut out words or pictures that seem like good news to them. Invite them to create either one large banner of good news or create individual banners of good news.

If some children do not want to use the media, they can create their own good news banner.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share their good news with each other and if it is possible post it in the room, hallway, or an area where others in the church can see the good news.

Closing Prayer: Thank you God for giving us these stories and this good news. Help us to do the work you have given us to do and serve those around us as you have called us to do. Amen.

Luke 3: 7-18

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.⁹ Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’

10 And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’¹¹ In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’¹² Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’¹³ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’¹⁷ His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - Third Sunday of Advent
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 3:7-18

Background: Advent extends an invitation. The invitation: don't just do something – stand, watch, prepare. *Stand*. Choose to believe that ours is a safe universe – a universe God chose to enter as an infant. *Watch*. Look for a coming that has already come and will come again. *Prepare*. Snatch moments from our busyness. Watching for wisps of awe and wonder to show up. Rediscover that God has chosen to dwell in us and we are invited to dwell in God.

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Advent Theme: Christ will come again: We watch, we prepare, we get ready.

A Notation for this week's Gospel: Convicted by John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?" As we wait, how will we get ready? Yes, the packages have to get wrapped. Yet John invites us to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." Perhaps we are being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

Theme: What Then Should We Do?

Before Class: You may need to check with your clergy to be informed of outreach opportunities available through your church, or in which your church participates in your community. Be prepared to share this information with your class. You will need Bibles and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Beginning: Consider beginning this session with a moment or two of silence in which you invite the group to get centered, shake off distractions, and be prepared to work with the Word appointed for today. If you are using an Advent wreath, light three candles and consider using one of the Opening Sentences on page 75 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Opening Prayer: Thank you God for this space amid all our busyness. Help us to pause and take a breath so we may more fully notice the message you have for us today. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 3: 7-18 As we read this rather long passage today, let's look for themes that present themselves to us. Invite each person to read the passage, silently, once. Then ask someone to read it aloud while the rest of the group listens for a particular word or phrase that speaks to them. After the passage has been read, invite people to share the word that spoke to them. When most or all have shared, you can reflect on the words.

Wonder With the Group

As we hear John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?"

I wonder, as we wait in this season of Advent, how will we get ready? Yes, we have lots of "to-do's," however how are we being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

Reflection Questions (optional): You may well have enough "words" surfacing in the group to not need additional questions. These are provided only if you need them.

- Verses 7-9 - Why do you think John the Baptist is so angry with these people? (He sees that they have become complacent, sure of themselves, confident that being descendants of Abraham puts them in a privileged position.)
- In what ways can we identify with their over-confidence?
- Verses 10-14 - What do you think turns the people to ask what they should do? (Perhaps, John is getting through to them.)
- Notice what he tells the soldiers to do (verse 14), the tax collectors (verse 13), and the rest of the people (Verse 11.)
- What does verse 11 say to us today in our community? What are we being called to share? (Some outreach opportunities you have checked out could be explored.)
- Verses 15-18 - What were the people expecting in the way of a Messiah? (The Hebrew Scriptures appointed for today, Zephaniah 3: 14-17, for instance.) Notice how John the Baptist describes "the one who is more powerful than I" (verse 16-17).
- Discuss why this sounded like "good news" to John's hearers. Consider how it is good news to us today.

Getting Closure: If the group has made any outreach decisions, discuss how you will go about what you have chosen to do and how you will report back to the group.

Closing Prayer: Dear God, help us to notice what we have received and guide us as we choose how we will share with others. Be with us as we continue to wait and prepare. Amen.

Luke 3: 7-18

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