

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Second Sunday of Christmas
Lesson Plan for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 2:41-52

The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

A day back from the annual trip to Jerusalem for Passover, Joseph and Mary check with their extended family. Suddenly they realize that their young son, Jesus, is not with any of them. They race back to Jerusalem, frantically searching for the 12 year-old. Three days and unimaginable stress later they find him sitting in the Temple learning from the teachers. He is un-phased by their universal parental response of relief mixed with fury. "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?" asked Jesus. Yes, Mary had much to hold in her heart.

Theme: Boy in the Temple

Before Class: Decide from two choices offered here. The first option is a simple review of the events of Christmas with a Birthday party for Baby Jesus and one last chance to re-tell the story with the stuffed animals (refer to lessons for the Fourth Sunday of Advent). For the birthday party, you will need an angel-food cake from a grocery store, some powdered sugar (optional) to decorate the cake, a candle or two, and some fruit juice. The second option follows the lectionary for this Sunday, the infant Jesus now a 12 year old boy. Paper and crayons will be all the supplies you will need for this option.

Beginning: Invite the children to tell you the Christmas story. Ask them if any of them were at church on Christmas, and if so, what did they see that they remember? (If you were there with them, you can draw out of them things you think they would remember: what Christmas Carols did we sing, were there special flowers, etc.). Especially if you are going to tell the Lectionary story, ask the children if any of them went on a trip for Christmas – or if anyone special came to visit them.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the fun of Christmas and especially for the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Option 1 – A review and Birthday Party: If you have chosen this option, get out the box with all the stuffed animals and invite the children to tell you the story, using the stuffed animals. When the story has been told, bring out the cake and have the party. At the conclusion of your

time together, send the animals home with the children who brought them at the beginning of Advent.

Option 2 – Today's lectionary story: Begin by telling your own version of a lost child. Here is a prototype.

A little boy and his mother were shopping in the mall (or a local department store). The mother was paying for her purchase and picking up her package when she looked around and could not see her child. She started calling frantically for the child. Meanwhile, the child had wandered off and realized that he could not see his mother and was beginning to get really worried. Ask the children what they think the boy should do. Should he start running to try to find his mother, or should he stand very still right where he is, trusting that his mother will find him? Ask the children what they think they would do in a similar situation.

The Story: Tell the children that something similar happened to Jesus when he was a boy. In the story we have today, Jesus was 12 years old. Jesus, his mother, Mary, and his father, Joseph, went every year to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Passover was the celebration of the time the Hebrew people got out of Egypt where they were slaves and went across a deep river, safely, to a new country. Every year the Hebrew people would have a special dinner and as many members of the family as could possibly get there would be at the party. This year, the whole family was there. After the celebration, Mary, Joseph, and all the aunts and uncles and cousins started back to their hometown. They had been traveling for most of a day when Mary asked Aunt Elizabeth if Jesus was with her. No, said Aunt Elizabeth, he is not. So she asked Uncle Jacob. Same answer. Joseph was checking out the other groups. Jesus was not with any of them! So, Mary and Joseph raced back to Jerusalem. For three frantic days they searched for Jesus. Finally, they found him in the Temple (remember that is what they called their church) listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Mary rushed up to him and said: "We have been worried sick." Jesus answered: "Didn't you know I would be here?" All the way back to their home town, Mary kept thinking about what her son had said and wondering about this young boy she loved so much.

Activity: Perhaps the children can act out this story, taking turns being the 12 year-old Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the teachers in the Temple, and as many other parts as you have children to perform.

Option: If time permits, ask the children to draw what happened in the story, so they can take the pictures home and tell the story to their parents.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share their favorite part of the story. Invite them to sing one final Christmas song if time permits.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for sending us your Son as a baby on Christmas. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Second Sunday After Christmas
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 2:41-52

The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

A day back from the annual trip to Jerusalem for Passover, Joseph and Mary check with their extended family. Suddenly they realize that their young son, Jesus, is not with any of them. They race back to Jerusalem, frantically searching for the 12 year-old. Three days and unimaginable stress later they find him sitting in the Temple learning from the teachers. He is un-phased by their universal parental response of relief mixed with fury. "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?" asked Jesus. Yes, Mary had much to hold in her heart.

Theme: Boy in the Temple

Before Class: You will need plain white paper, a small bottle of cooking oil, cotton balls, plastic wrap to protect the table, and paper towels. (Instant Parchment!) Leftover lengths of ribbon can be used to tie the parchments. You will also need Bibles or copies of the scripture found at the end of this lesson.

Beginning: As the children are getting settled and gathering, ask if they have ever wandered away from their parents. Have them tell why they wandered away (looking at something interesting, to say hi to someone, etc.) Then tell the children that today the Bible story we have is about Jesus when he was 12 years old.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for Jesus' parents who loved him and took care of him. Thank you for our parents and our family. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 2: 41-52 One child could read the part of Mary, another the part of Jesus, and a third the part of the narrator.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about this story?
- I wonder what questions it gave you?
- I wonder if you have ever been separated from your parents?
- I wonder what this was like for Jesus? For his parents?

- Explore what the children know about the celebration of Passover. (Jewish people to this day celebrate this every year to mark the escape from Egypt and slavery, the crossing of the sea, dry-footed.) What do they think Mary might have been thinking at what Jesus replied (his reply is in verse 49).
- For some other clues about what Mary might have been thinking you could look up previous passages: Luke: 2: 8-19 (what the shepherds told Mary they heard about Jesus), Luke 2: 34-35 (what Simeon said to Mary when she and Joseph had brought the infant Jesus to the temple), Luke 2:36-38 (Anna the prophetess' response).

Activity: We do not know, of course, what questions Jesus might have been asking the teachers in the Temple. But we can be pretty sure the teachers would have known the books of the prophets. The "books" available would have been rolls of parchment.

Invite the children to find in Isaiah or Micah a passage they think Jesus would have known, copy it on a piece of plain white paper using a ball point pen. When they have copied what they want – and illustrated it, if they choose – make the oil and cotton balls available. Show the children how to ‘paint’ the sheet of paper with the oil using cotton balls. When the paper is lightly, but sufficiently oiled, dry it with paper towels. When it is dry, it can be rolled up like a parchment. (You may want to try this by yourself ahead of time.)

Some suggested passages, to get the children started looking:

Micah 6:8, Micah 4: 2b, Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 9: 6.

Getting Closure: Invite each child to share the passage from their parchment.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for these passages we found in our Bibles. And thank you for the birth of Jesus who lights up our lives. Amen.

Luke 2:41-52

Narrator: Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him,

Mary: 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.'

Jesus: 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'

Narrator: But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Second Sunday After Christmas
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 2:41-52

The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A notation for this week's Gospel

A day back from the annual trip to Jerusalem for Passover, Joseph and Mary check with their extended family. Suddenly they realize that their young son, Jesus, is not with any of them. They race back to Jerusalem, frantically searching for the 12 year-old. Three days and unimaginable stress later they find him sitting in the Temple learning from the teachers. He is un-phased by their universal parental response of relief mixed with fury. "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?" asked Jesus. Yes, Mary had much to hold in her heart.

Theme: Boy in the Temple

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture passage found at the end of this lesson.

Beginning: Invite individual members of the group to share highlights of their Christmas, especially anything new they discovered about their understanding of the Incarnation, God among us as an infant. Then, tell them that the reading we have for the Second Sunday after Christmas offers us insights into the very humanness of Jesus.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus. Help us to be always ready for the new insights you send us. Amen.

The Scripture: Invite one person to read the part of Mary, one to read the line of the 12 year-old Jesus, and one to be the narrator.

Reflection Questions:

- Has anyone had a comparable experience of having been separated from a child? If so, can that person help us get in touch with the mixed messages of waves of gratitude that the child is safe combined with noise of the rage that you had to go through this.
- Consider how this passage (the only mention of Jesus in the years between his birth and his appearance for his baptism when he was probably about 30) brings out the humanness of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. (A little boy apparently oblivious to the terror of his parents, a

curious little boy with many questions, the panic of his parents looking for him and their obvious relief – and anger – when they found him.)

- What do you make of Jesus' response to his parents? (Typical pre-teen response? Odd that he would assume they would know where he would be? Could he have been obedient to something they had taught him: if you are ever separated from us, stay where you are and we will come find you?)
- Invite the group to find other things, earlier in the Gospel of Luke that Mary had to "treasure in her heart." (Luke 1: 38; Luke 1: 44-45, Luke 2: 19; Luke 2: 34-35.)

Getting Closure: Invite the group to explore the concept of "both/and" and how it seems to be so prevalent in things that pertain to God. Jesus: both man and divine. Those we love: our greatest joy and our greatest ache. Our faith: abidingly deep and containing questions we are unable to answer.

You may choose to consider this: "The quest for certainty has produced a fascination with reducing everything to its basic components; everything must have an answer. Only the poets are unafraid of ambiguity." (Edwin H. Friedman in "Friedman's fables." P.104-105.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of your son. Help us to continue to unwrap this gift and claim it for ourselves so Jesus may continue to teach us. Amen.

Luke 2:41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

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