

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Fourth Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 10:22-30

"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." An astounding discovery! The Easter news was spread to all who would listen. The disciples told people, who in turn, told people, and to this day, we hear the message — a message of weeping and then of joy that comes with the morning of a new day. We too like the disciples weep **AND** then delight in the joy bursting forth in us. We too are called to bring this message with our lives, and, if necessary, with words, to those who have not yet heard it.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The voice of Jesus can be hard to hear in the halls of institutions and in the noise of our hectic lives. When we listen attentively we may hear his voice. Then we discover to our awe and delight that he knows each of us by name. He has chosen us and will not give us up. Jesus waits to see if we will choose to follow him.

Theme: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before: Assemble your art supplies each child to make a plaque with his or her name and decorated as each child wishes. Oak tag or cardboard would be a good material for the plaque and can be found at the craft store. Make sure you have washable paints or markers for decorating. Note: If you know you will have a lot of children who do not write, you may want to pre-paint their names on the plaques or have a helper there to assist the children.

Option: If you have access to a digital camera (so you can easily make copies) or a standard camera with film (so you can process it before next week), bring it and take a picture of each child holding his/her plaque. Also take a group picture. Then, if you want to, these photos can go on cards the children make to give to their mothers on Mother's Day. Or, you could display the photos on your altar. Or get double prints and do both! If there is a child who does not have a mother for whatever reason, you may decide not to do this activity. Or you could simply take a picture of the group and place it on your altar.

Beginning: Ask the children this question: If you were in a big room, with lots and lots of people, and your mother — or your father — loudly called out your name, would you recognize the voice and know they were calling you? (allow time for responses) Well, did you know that in a field full of sheep, all of them making a lot of noise, the baby sheep knows which of the noisy sheep is his mother? The baby sheep can tell which of the sheep is her mother. The people Jesus was talking to all knew about sheep.

Praying: Gather the children by the altar. If you have a candle, light it. Thank you, Jesus, that you know each one of us and you know each of our names. Amen.

The Story: Questions, questions, questions. People were always asking Jesus so many questions. This time, they are asking Jesus to tell them plainly if he has come to save them. Jesus told them, “My sheep know my voice. When my sheep hear my voice, they come quickly. When I call my sheep, they follow me wherever I go. I love these sheep and no one can ever take them away from me. They are my sheep.”

Activity: Play *Follow the Leader*. Begin with the teacher being the leader until the children get the hang of the game. Then be sure each child who wants to gets to be the leader.

The leader says, "Follow me, follow me. And do what I am doing." Then do something easy to imitate: put both hands on your head while walking in a circle. Or, take three steps and then turn in a complete circle and take three more steps. Hop on one foot. Whatever. Then ask who would like to be the leader. Take turns until each child who wants to be the leader gets the chance.

Activity: Offer the art supplies you have brought and show the children how to write their name in big letters in the middle of the plaque. For those children who do not write yet, you may have to help them. Invite them to decorate their name plaque however they want. The children can also decorate a second plaque, which will stay on the altar.

When they have finished, if you have brought a camera, photograph each child holding the plaque they have created. If you have some doubts about your photographic skills and are not sure you will have results next week, do not tell the children what you have planned to do with the photos.

Getting Closure: Put the decorated plaques on the altar. Let each child who wants to tell all of you about the plaque he or she made. Help the children notice that each one is a bit different, just like people are.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, that you know each of our names and that you will never give us up. Amen. (Be sure the candle is extinguished.)

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Theme: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before Class: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture and sufficient copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* so each child can read from it. Bring the art supplies you have gathered for the icons the class is making, including the template from Easter 2 if you have been using that for making icons.

Beginning: Ask the children if any have ever seen sheep grazing in a field and a shepherd caring for the sheep. If you are fortunate enough to have a child in the class who has, ask the child to describe what he or she has noticed. If none have had the experience, simply suggest they look for times we act like sheep and who are the people who "shepherd," take care of, us. You may also want to tell the children that the rest of the stories we have in Easter all happened before the crucifixion, when Jesus was walking with and teaching his disciples.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, help us to hear your voice and to follow you. Be with us as we listen to your word that we might know you better. Amen.

The Story: John 10: 22-30. You will need the narrator, the Jewish people, and Jesus if you wish to read it in parts. (See below for script.)

Questions:

I wonder why the Jewish leaders did not recognize that Jesus was the Messiah? (Some were afraid they would lose their powerful positions. Jesus had not come the way they understood the Bible to say he would come.)

How else could we say, "The works I do in my Father's name testify to me?" (Actions speak louder than words, watch what I do to see what I mean, etc.)

I wonder why Jesus refers to his followers as "sheep?" (They are being pulled in different directions by different leaders, but they trust Jesus.)

What is Jesus declaring to the leaders in verse 29? (Those who follow Jesus will always belong to Jesus.)

I wonder why the leaders were so threatened by Jesus saying: "The Father and I are one?" (If you do not believe Jesus is who he says he is, how could he be "one" with the Father?)

Activity: Let the children choose which words to translate into their icon for the day. It could be something like actions speak louder than words, a parallel for sheep that follow, or Jesus and God working together. Then provide the art supplies and encourage the children as they develop their icons. Have them produce one for the class and a copy to take home and use as a bookmark.

Getting Closure: The Psalm appointed for today is the 23rd Psalm, probably the most well known psalm in the Bible. Read together the psalm as it appears on page 612 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for choosing us and not giving up on us. Help us to hear you as you call our name. Amen.

John 10:22-30

Narrator: At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him,

Jewish People: ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.’

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: ‘I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me;²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand.³⁰ The Father and I are one.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Fourth Sunday in Easter
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 10:22-30

"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." An astounding discovery! The Easter news was spread to all who would listen. The disciples told people, who in turn, told people, and to this day, we hear the message — a message of weeping and then of joy that comes with the morning of a new day. We too like the disciples weep **AND** then delight in the joy bursting forth in us. We too are called to bring this message with our lives, and, if necessary, with words, to those who have not yet heard it.

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Theme: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before Class: You will need paper for note taking, pencils or pens, and Bibles (possibly more than one translation). You will find the NRSV Translation at the end of this lesson. You may also want to bring a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Beginning: Make available the paper and pencils or pens. Tell the group that the approach to Bible Study you will use today is to notice words or phrases that seem to jump out at you, either in a new way or in a familiar way, and then sharing those insights you want to share with each other. Agree to some ground rules. For example, instead of disagreeing with what a person shares, offer a contrasting observation. Be sure everyone has had the opportunity to fully describe his or her impression before another jumps in.

Tell the group that for our opening prayer you will read the 23rd Psalm, for it is familiar to most and comforting to many. (You could read it from the Bible, or read either of the versions in *The Book of Common Prayer*: pages 612 or 476)

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the presence of your voice in our lives. Guide us today as we listen and wonder about where and how you call us. Amen.

The Scripture: John 10: 22-30. Ask one member of the class to read the passage and then maintain a period of silence for people to reflect and jot down words or phrases.

The Process: Key Words and Phrases

If it is obvious that several people have written things and are eager to share, invite people to share an observation.

If it seems appropriate, ask another person to read the passage so all can hear it again, possibly from another translation. Then keep silence long enough for people to hear and record new insights. Then invite people to share, reflect, and wonder together.

Getting Closure: Remind the group of the two other methods we have used and ask for candid evaluation of the methods. If one method was really preferred, be sure to use it again, even next Sunday.

If you have time, you may wish to read Psalm 23.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for the assurance that no one will snatch us out of your hand. Amen.

John 10:22-30

22 At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.’²⁵ Jesus answered, ‘I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; ²⁶but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one.’

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