

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – First Sunday after Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
(*Book of Common Prayer*, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

Power. What power do we call upon to do the work we have been given to do? And where do we defer to a person with greater power? Jesus honors the sphere of John the Baptist's authority and then accepts the power now clearly his after baptism. He is the beloved.

Theme: Anointed with the Holy Spirit and With Power

Before Class: You will need to have enough copies of the scripture/script below for each child. You may want to bring a dictionary to class so the children can look up the word Epiphany. You will need something for them to take notes on for the next five weeks. It could be a set of 4" by 6" cards or sheets of paper cut in fourths. An envelope for each child or a sheet of construction paper folded in half with paper clips to secure it will work. The idea is for the children to be taking notes on what constitutes a person they would choose to follow.

Beginning: Tell the children what you have planned for the next few weeks. Tell them that this season is called "Epiphany" (and if you have brought the dictionary invite someone to look up the word and read the definition.) Invite the children to come up with their own definition of Epiphany. (Some hints: "something's up," "something's happening," "ah-ha moment" etc.) Give them the cards or sheets of paper and invite them to write down the definition they like best. They do not have to share if they do not want to do so. Then describe which of the options you have chosen for this five-week set of sessions. (Option One: looking at some things a person must be like in order for us to choose to follow that person. Option Two: choosing also to look at the characteristics Jesus describes in The Beatitudes.)

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus who came for all of us. Help us see the ways in which he shows us the way to follow you. Amen.

The Story: Ask for volunteers to read the different parts: The narrator, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the voice of God.

Questions:

- I wonder why John didn't think he should baptize Jesus? (John knew that his job was to get people ready for Jesus, so he thought his job was done.)
- Why did Jesus come to John for baptism? (It had been John's job to baptize people and Jesus wanted to recognize John's authority in this matter.)

- John did not have a baptismal font nor pretty silver dishes, so how did he baptize Jesus? (They walked together into a river. John plunged Jesus down into the water, and then helped him up.)
- What did they both see when Jesus came up from the water? (something “like” a dove)
- And what did they hear? (a voice from heaven)

Activity: Invite the children to pretend they had been standing on the banks of the River Jordan as all this was happening and are now trying to figure out how to describe what they have just seen so they can tell you about it. Tell them they do not have to use “Bible” language but instead use words they would use to describe what they saw. When they are ready, invite them to tell you about it.

Ask the children to make some notes for themselves, on the paper you have provided, about the way John exercised his power. (He was authorized to baptize, he consented to baptize Jesus.)

How did Jesus exercise his power? (By honoring John’s power and asking him to perform the baptism.)

I wonder what Jesus saw in John to make him authentic enough to follow? (If they get stuck: Jesus recognized that John was probably the last in a long line of prophets. John knew the stories of previous prophets and used their messages in his talks.)

What, then, did John see in Jesus, to choose to follow him? (John knew that the Messiah, the Son of God, was coming and this man had all the attributes he expected in a Messiah.)

Ask the children if any of them have ever had the experience of suddenly just knowing something. An: “I got it!” kind of a moment. Ask them to try to describe it. Is it hard to find the exact words to describe what happened? What if you were watching someone else have an “I got it!” moment? In what ways would it be hard to describe what happened to them? Ask them to try to identify with the author of today’s Gospel who was not an eyewitness to the event and yet still had to describe it.

Tell the children to save their notes and we will have opportunities to add to them each week. These notes can help us when we are choosing who to trust and when we are seeing what is involved in following Jesus.

Getting Closure: Ask for volunteers to offer qualities of people we would choose to follow that we read about today. You may want to write these up on a whiteboard or easel paper so you can refer back to them in the coming weeks.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for John who helped Jesus begin his ministry. Help us hear your voice telling us that we are your beloved. Amen.

Matthew 3:13-17

Narrator: Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by John. John would have prevented him saying,

John: ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come from me?’

Narrator: But Jesus answered him,

Jesus: ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.’

Narrator: Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said,

God: ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2013 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.