

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday after Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

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

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And what does Jesus say? The kingdom of heaven has come near. What is this kingdom of heaven and how do we get ready to receive it?

Theme: A Light has Dawned

Before: You may need paper and crayons.

Beginning: Teach the children one more verse of the song, using the candles if they are handy.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
Hide it under a basket (shielding the light with their hands as they sing) NO! (removing hands)
I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, Let it shine.

Praying: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to us. Be with us today as we hear your story.
Amen.

The Story: After Jesus was baptized by John he decided he should go back to his hometown and think about what he was going to do. He spent a lot of time praying to God. Hmm, said Jesus. I think people are ready for me to tell them that God is right here with us. God wants us to know that God loves all of us. But, thought Jesus, if I am going to go tell this to people, I am going to need some help. I am going to have to find some people who will go with me and do the work along with me. So he went for a walk down by the sea where there were lots of people fishing. He saw Peter and Andrew and said to them: "Follow me and I will show you how to fish for people." Right then and there they said: "Yes! We want to follow you!" So the three of them went on down the beach where they saw James and John. James and John were also fishermen and good friends of Peter and Andrew. Jesus called James and John and they decided right then to go with this Jesus and help him. Now Jesus had four people to help him.

Activity: Tell the children we are going to act out this story and can take turns playing the part of Jesus. (It won't matter how many children you have, Jesus will call each child, by name, to follow him.) Suggest each child find a separate place in the room and pretend to be fishing. The child who is playing the part of Jesus goes to one child and says: "Follow me." Then those two

go to the next child and Jesus says: “Follow me,” continuing until all the children have been called.

Activity: If time permits, give the children paper and crayons and invite them to draw a picture of what it might look like if Jesus came to them and asked them to follow him.

Getting Closure: If the children want to share their drawings, provide the opportunity for them to do so. Then sing the song once more, either using the “candles” the children made or simply holding their index finger up in the air as they sing.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you want each of us to follow Jesus. Be with us as we leave here today and help us to see you. Amen.

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

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

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Theme: A Light has Dawned

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture for day, paper, and pencils.

Find an ad or a photo in a magazine or a newspaper that has a succinct scene: two children eating supper, people getting into a family car, an adult reading to a young child, etc. The purpose is to show the children the picture, briefly, then ask them, either working in two groups or individually, to remember what they saw, take some notes, and be ready to report what they saw. The purpose of the activity, obviously, is to notice that we do not all see the same event the same way.

Beginning: Give the children paper and pencils. Tell the children that you are going to hold up a picture for them to look at for just a moment. Then, put the picture where they cannot see it and suggest that either working in two groups, or alone, they make some notes about what they saw in the picture: how many people were in the picture, how old do you think they are, what color shirt was each wearing, etc. If they want to, they can decide what was going on (where were the people going, why were they together, etc.) When they have had a few minutes to collect their thoughts, invite each group to tell what they saw. Why do they think that although everyone saw the same picture, they noticed different things?

You will need markers and something for each group to make posters (poster board or large paper.)

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, that we have many people to tell us the story of Jesus so we may see you from many different sides. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 4:12-23 Tell the children that today's passage has three parts, so be noticing when each part begins. Notice, also, that we had some of this story, last week, from a different point of view. Invite one child to read the passage OR you can invite the children to

each read a sentence and just go around the circle having them read and saying ‘pass’ if they choose not to read.

Questions:

- I wonder what you noticed in this reading? What was interesting for you?
- I wonder what you were curious about as we read this?
- When did the moods change in the passage? (From Jesus considering what he was being called to do to his decision in verse 17, to his actions from verse 18 on.)
- What does this passage tell us Jesus was considering? (Verse 12, John is now in prison. Verse 13, he goes back home to think and because that is how he understands what Isaiah had said in verses 15-16).
- What does this passage tell us is the conclusion that Jesus has come to? (Verse 17)
- I wonder what “the kingdom of heaven” means? (Jesus knows that God is not “off somewhere” but right here. It would be Jesus’ task to try to help people stop doing what was not helping them, and turn to God.)
- What does Jesus do next? (He calls some people to help him do the work.)

Activity: Invite the children to choose a person to identify with from our stories – John the Baptist, the disciples Jesus is calling, Jesus, or a bystander who is witnessing all of this. Have them group themselves by who they are choosing. Once they are in groups, invite them to wonder with you, writing down their thoughts rather than sharing them.

- I wonder how John the Baptist felt and what he was doing now that Jesus was around?
- I wonder what Jesus saw in the fishermen to call them to follow?
- I wonder what made the fishermen drop their nets and follow Jesus?
- I wonder what you would give up if Jesus called you to follow?
- I wonder what qualities Jesus saw in them that he sees in us?

After they have had time, invite each group to create a response poster. It can be a reflection about the final question, it can be a response to who they chose to identify with, or it can be a combination. If they are stuck with what to do, they can list qualities that they see, they can draw a picture of a disciple and label the things that Jesus may have wanted in a disciple, they can do a combination, etc.

Getting Closure: Invite each group to share their posters they have made.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you call us, too, to follow. Help us to be your disciples that we may follow you faithfully. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday after Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

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.
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A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And what does Jesus say? The kingdom of heaven has come near. What is this kingdom of heaven and how do we get ready to receive it?

Theme: A Light has Dawned

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible for the group and at least one Bible in a different translation.

Beginning: Tell the group that we have had two accounts of Jesus' call to ministry. Today we will see aspects of his mission and of his Action Plan.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to bring us your breakthrough message. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23 Invite the group to notice that today's passage has three sections and to be noticing when each part begins. Notice, also, that we had some of this story, last week, from a different point of view. Invite one person to read the passage and invite the group to listen for things that stick out for them. After a few moments of silence after the passage has been read, invite another person to read the passage in a different translation. After the second reading, invite reflection.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in today's passage?
- I wonder if you noticed anything new or different in the two different translations of the passage?
- As we reflect on the Gospel, I wonder what is going on with Jesus in the first section, verses 12-16? (He has been affirmed in his ministry by hearing the words "This is my Son. . ." has discovered he will no longer have John's help, has gone back home to Capernaum, and turned to the prophesy of Isaiah to figure out his ministry.)
- Ask someone to read verse 16. What can we conjecture Jesus drew from this passage? (Jesus has been sent to be the "light" to this people who have sat in darkness.)

- What is the decision Jesus makes about the mission of his ministry in verse 17? (He needs to continue the message John began: “repent!” He also needs to help people see that God is not indifferent and far off, but right here in our midst.)
- I wonder what we might see about Jesus’ Action Plan? (Find people to work with him.)
- What might this pattern have for us in our various ministries? (Take time to find focus, looking to Scripture for assistance, staying on message and not getting diverted by distractions, and finding others to work with us.)
- I wonder how might Jesus be calling us into new ministry?
- I wonder how we can invite others into ministry?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to reflection (offering what they noticed only if they want to do so) on ways we can apply these methods to our own lives and ministries.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you have placed the kingdom of heaven right here in our midst. Help us to follow you and invite others we meet along the way to be a part of your call to us. Amen.

Matthew 4:12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.' From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

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