

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

Scripture: Matthew 5:38-48

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

An eye for an eye not only doubles the grief, but also the blindness. Could it be that one of the reasons Jesus came was to help us see the futility of violence?

Theme: Choosing Peace

Before Class: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for the group.

Beginning: Tell the children to be noticing what Jesus tells us about getting even and how we should act.

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to find ways to settle things without using violence. Help us to see you in one another. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 5: 38-48 The entire passage is the voice of Jesus. You can invite each child to read a sentence, or one child to read the whole thing.

Question:

- What in the world do we think Jesus means in verse 38? (In each situation in which we find ourselves, we can remember what we have already learned about what God would want us to do in this situation.)
- What would our community look like if we practiced what was said in verse 38? (Almost everyone would be blind and toothless!)
- What is the problem with everyone trying to “get even?” (Where does it stop?)
- There are probably some people who wouldn't “get it” if we didn't try to “get even.” What might be some good things that would happen if we didn't **need** to get even? (The people we did not try to get even with might decide they would like to be friends instead of jerks. We might feel better about ourselves.)
- What might be some good things that could happen if we decided to “love our enemies” and “pray for those” who pick on us? (The changes we just discussed might happen here, too. Prayer is not magic, but amazing things can happen with prayer. And we might feel better about ourselves, here, too.)
- Ask the children to imagine rain falling from the sky and no rain falling on people who have never done anything bad. Would anyone be dry? Why, Why not?

- What's wrong with speaking only to people who are being nice to you? (There might not be many people to speak to. And maybe some people who want to be nice to us wouldn't get a chance.)

Option: Modern Day Scenarios

In today's lesson, Jesus uses words and images that made sense in his time and culture. If you were going to write this today, what might it say? Help the children brainstorm how things might be said differently.

Option: Love Your Enemies

Invite the children to work in groups of threes or fours and create a picture, drawing, mural, or skit of what it might look like to love your enemies. Then, if you have time, have them create one that pictures a peaceful world.

Option: Ten Commandments Cards. If your group has made these cards, ask the children which of these new instructions might be the flip side of one of the 10 Commandments. (Accept what the children come up with. It could be the First Commandment: it is hard to love God and still be trying to get even with your friend. It could be the Tenth Commandment: wishing you had stuff that doesn't belong to you.)

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share whatever they have created. Finally, ask them, "How can we help each other be peacemakers?" (Remind the children that Jesus almost never sent people out to do things alone, but at least two by two.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you show us how to be the people you dreamed us to be. Amen.

Matthew 5:38-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

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