

Lesson Plans that Work
Feast of the Presentation – February 2
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 2:22-40

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

On February 2, the church remembers The Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple. It was an ancient Jewish custom that women who had given birth to a male child should come to the temple to be "purified" 40 days after giving birth. It was also the custom to present every firstborn child to God in the temple. Today, we celebrate Mary and Joseph going to the temple and what happened while they were there.

While in the temple, a devout old man, Simeon, took Jesus in his arms and praised God. Simeon proclaimed Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel." He blessed Mary and Joseph, telling them the child's destiny. We now know these words of praise to be the canticle *Nunc dimittis*. In medieval times, it was sung as candles were blessed, lit, and carried through the streets in a procession to mark the feast.

Theme: A Light to the Nations

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of scripture for the group as well as one other translation of the Bible. You will need enough candles so each person can have one to light and to take home. Consider having either glass contained votive candles or taper candles with drip cups. You may want to have copies of the Nunc Dimittis for everyone or copies of the prayer book so they can look at it.

Candle supplies: white taper candle for each child (and a few extras), alcohol wipes, acrylic paint, paint brushes, wet wipes, paper towels, ribbons, stickers, and other decorating supplies. Clean each candle with an alcohol wipe before the children come so they are ready to go. You may want to make a few examples for the children to see. Make sure you have time for the candles to dry if the children are painting on them. You can also have a hairdryer on hand to help dry them.

Beginning: Today we celebrate Jesus being presented in the Temple and his encounters with two people, Simeon and Anna. In Jesus' time, every first born son was publicly presented in the temple. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple today, they had a surprise waiting for them.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, we humbly pray that, as Jesus was presented in the temple on this day, may we also come to you with pure and clean hearts. Amen. *(adapted from Book of Common Prayer, Collect for the Feast of the Presentation, page 239)*

The Story: Luke 2:22-40 Invite three readers to be Narrator 1, Narrator 2, and Simeon. See the script below for parts.

Questions:

- I wonder what it was like for Mary and Joseph to come into the temple to present their son?
- I wonder how shocked they were when Simeon took Jesus in his arms and began to sing praises?
- I wonder what Simeon felt?
- He had been waiting for the Messiah for so long. I wonder what was that moment like for him to hold the Messiah?
- If you were Mary and Joseph, how would you respond to Simeon?
- I wonder how Anna's words of praise were taken?
- In Simeon's song, he praises Jesus as the light of the world. I wonder how you see Jesus shining in the world.

Option: Candle Creation

Jesus is a light that shines in all of our lives. To remind us of that Jesus is a light to us all, we are going to create candles today to take home. Before we begin, let's think about some of the symbols or things that remind us of Jesus. (Allow the children time to brainstorm ideas of images such as: the cross, a light, a star, etc.) Once they have some ideas, pass out the candle materials you brought and let them start decorating.

The candles are easy to decorate – you can paint on them, put stickers on them, and add ribbons to them. Be ready to help them if they need it.

Getting Closure: As the candles are drying, gather the children into a circle, lighting a candle in the middle. Invite them to name one way that they wish to bring Christ's light into the world.

Closing Prayer: God our Father, source of all light, today you revealed to the aged Simeon your light which enlightens the nations. Fill our hearts with the light of faith, that we who bear these candles may walk in the path of goodness, and come to the Light that shines for ever, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *(Book of Occasional Services, Candlemas Procession, page 54)*

Luke 2:22-40

Narrator 1: When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”),²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Narrator 2: Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

Simeon: “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Narrator 1:³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary,

Simeon: “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Narrator 2:³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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