

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – First Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

In the early Church the Easter Vigil was the only time that Baptisms were performed. The forty days leading up to Easter was used as a time of reflection, self-examination, and instruction for the catechumens, or new converts, in preparation for the new life they would receive at Baptism. Lent has always been a teaching season. All the lectionary readings during Lent point towards Baptism, either its promises and covenants, or its signs and symbols. Lent is often referred to as a short course in Baptism or a primer of our Christian faith.

A Notation for This Week’s Scripture

The Book of Genesis starts in primeval history with a mythological account of the beginnings of our relationship with God. The story of the Fall is the second creation story and comes from a different source than the first. It begins the pattern of humanity’s constant choosing to separate from God, despite God’s ongoing invitation to participate in creation. By following our temptations to become our own gods, rather than putting all our trust in God, we open the door to pain and suffering in our own lives and others’. This Lectionary reading reflects the first three renunciations in the Baptismal Rite: “Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?” [*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 302.]

Theme: Saying Yes to God

Preparing for Lent

Lenten Waiting Table

A wonderful visual reminder to the children would be to create a “Waiting Table.” A purple cloth covering a table, a box or even a ledge would provide the display space. At the beginning of the season you could plant grass seed in a basket to produce a “living Easter basket.” Other ideas include fast growing seeds or bulbs, and caterpillars. The message we convey is that growth takes time and nurturing, and although we can’t always see it we can trust that it is taking place.

Lenten Roadmap: A visual tool to help the children mark time is recommended. Some possibilities include a large paper cross with forty spaces marked off, a “road map” with forty spaces leading to Easter, and made or purchased Lenten calendars.

Lenten Giving

A jar or other container to collect Lenten offerings is a visual reminder of sacrificial giving.

Before

For the story: have pictures of a garden, an apple tree and a snake or use a children’s picture Bible.

For Drama: something to function as a microphone, a “snake like costume” could be a long boa or scarf, fake fangs, or a sign or large badge that says “Wiley T. Serpent”. [The T is for tempter.]

For apple trees: precut trunk and branches from construction, or butcher paper, paper plates to contain glitter, markers and colored pencils for writing and drawing on apples.

Beginning: Invite the children to take a forty-day journey with you through Lent into Easter. Show the children what ever you have chosen to mark time. Explain to the children that Lent is the season that helps us to get ready for the gift of new life that Jesus gives us at Easter. Compare Lent to spring when things are growing and changing. Show something from your waiting table. Explain that the church has teachings or ways that help people get ready. One way is to give up something that gets in the way of our being close to God. Offer suggestions like gossiping, spending too much time on the computer, always having to have own way, etc. Another alternative is to take something on like saying extra prayers, doing extra chores, and helping others. We can respond to others in need. Show the jar or collection container. Give the children a couple of choices for a charity or mission offering.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to say no to what is bad and wrong. Help us to choose to say yes to what is good and brings us closer to you.

The Story: This is a story from the beginnings of things when the world was new and man and God were getting to know one another.

God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a place where everything was beautiful and perfect. It was a place where everything they would need would be taken care of. There were only two simple rules: take care of the garden and don't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Sadly it was only a very short time when humankind was in perfect harmony with God. The snake also lived in the garden. The snake loved to tempt God's creatures. That means he loved to try to get them to do bad things. The snake had several tricks up his sleeve. The first was to make Adam and Eve doubt God's warnings, the second was to make them not trust God's plan for them, and the third was to tell Adam and Eve that they could be as powerful as God themselves if they would just do what the snake told them. The woman saw that the tree was beautiful, the fruit looked good to eat and she wanted to be wise. She took a bite and then offered the fruit to the man. Their new knowledge made them feel naked so they tried to cover themselves with leaves. They tried to hide from God. They felt ashamed and afraid because they knew they had disobeyed God. They had made a bad choice.

Reflection Questions

- I wonder how many of us have said yes to doing the wrong thing when we should have said no.
- How did that make you feel?
- What kinds of choices do you get to make every day?
- What does it mean to choose?
- Who are the serpents in your life? [People who are trying to lead you astray]
- What are your apples [temptations]?

- Be careful to explain that all our desires are not evil. It is only when they cause us to break God's laws or make us forget God's importance in our lives that they are bad for us.

Activities:

Art Activity: Have the children brainstorm a list of things or activities that separate or distract them from being close to God. They can write or illustrate their ideas on precut paper apples. Adding some glitter will highlight the attractiveness of these things. The children will glue their apples onto a premade tree trunk and branches attached to a bulletin board or poster board. The trunk of the tree could say, "Temptations that Separate Us from God."

Drama Activity: Talk with children about the amount of advertising that they are exposed to daily on television, the computer, signs and billboards and even at the movies. Help them to define the purpose of advertising as getting us to want, and then buy things. Make a commercial about the Garden of Eden. They can take turns playing the snake [salesman] trying to sell Eve the apple. Those who are shyer may choose to draw or collage an advertisement for that special apple. If you have a camcorder or smart phone you can make impromptu videos. Analyze the effectiveness of the sales techniques with the children. Have them find strategies to help Eve say no.

Getting Closure: Have the children stand and stretch their arms up to the ceiling and then bow to the teacher to say thank you and then to one another as a way of thanking one another for the time together. Remind them to bring in their Lenten offerings next week.

Closing Prayer: Dear God thank you for this time to learn about you. Help us always to make good choices. Help us stay connected to you. Amen.

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