

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – First Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger 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 of Man is the second creation story and comes from a different source than the first. It begins the pattern of man’s constant choosing to separate himself from God, despite God’s ongoing invitation to participate with Him 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.

Before Class:

For the story have pictures of a garden, an apple tree, and a snake, or use a children’s picture Bible. For game you will need: two paper plates per child, red and green construction paper or crayons, scissors, glue, craft sticks [optional]. For snakes: clay or play dough. For apple trees,

pre-cut one apple per child, trunk and branches from construction or butcher paper. Paper plates to contain the glitter. Markers for names and writing on apples.

Beginning: Invite the children to take a forty-day journey with you to Easter. Show the children whatever 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 being selfish and wanting to have or buy lots of things for ourselves. Instead we can give 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 humans 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. He 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; 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.
- What does it mean to choose?
- What kinds of things do your parents let you choose for yourselves? [Answers might include picking a toy, which book to read, what kind of juice, etc.]
- What kinds of things are up to our parents, not a child's choice? [Going to school, going to the doctor, eating vegetables, washing our hands, etc.]
- Why is it important to obey our parents?
- I wonder who you think knew best what was good for Adam and Eve. God? The serpent? Themselves?
- I wonder how you feel when you have made a bad choice?

Game: Red Light, Green Light. Let's play a game about making choices. Have the children each cut or color a red and a green circle and glue each on a paper plate. If craft sticks or tongue depressors are available glue one on to make a handle. Ask, "What does a green light mean? What does a red light mean?" Make up a list of short situations that the children might face.

Examples:

1. Mom says no cookies before dinner. The plate is sitting on the table, and Mom is in the other room.
2. There is a long line of children ahead of you to use the slide at the park, and you don't want to wait.
3. A child has left his pail and shovel in the sandbox and gone on the swings, and you don't have one to play with.
4. Mom says don't cross the street alone, but your friend calls out to you to come over and play.
5. Everyone is teasing and making fun of the new kid in school.

For each situation give one child a chance to say what he would do. Ask the other children to hold up either the red or green plate to show either their agreement or disagreement with the choice made. Discuss the situations. Emphasize that they are all making choices. For added movement this can be played standing up and facing different directions for either choice [left green, right red]

Activity: Snakes

Young children love to make snakes. Using whatever kinds of clay or play dough available demonstrate the rolling and lengthening technique. When all are done have the children pretend the snakes are talking. Have the snake ask the children to do something wrong and have all the other children practice saying "NO" loudly and firmly.

Art Activity: Apple Trees

Children can put red glitter on pre-cut paper apples. They can add their names and the word NO. The teacher will have precut a large trunk and branches. On the trunk write "We say No to bad choices." Have children glue or tape their apples on the branches. Hang on wall or bulletin board.

Closing: Have the children stand and stretch their arms up to the ceiling, bow to the teacher and 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. Amen.

Lent Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone.

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

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