

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 4:5-42

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Politically incorrect: she was of a gender without voice and a race without acceptance. Yet she may well have been the first evangelist. "Come and see!" she said. They did, and they believed.

Theme: Come and see

Before: Few children will have seen a well like the one in today's story. An option is suggested for letting the children experience something of a well. To create this you will need a plastic trash bag (to protect the floor), a clean trash can, a broomstick (or similar piece of wood), a length of rope, something to serve as a "bucket" (could be a child's plastic bucket, or some other small container), and water poured into the trash can until it is about half full. Secure the rope to the center of the stick, tie the other end to the bucket making sure the rope is long enough for the bucket to go below the level of the water. The children can hold the opposite ends of the stick and twist it until the bucket is lowered into the water, then reverse the direction of the twisting until the bucket is high enough to reach in and grasp. (You may choose to rehearse this a bit before showing the children!) You will need a towel or two for spills, a pitcher of fresh water, and small cups so each child may have a cup of water.

If you have access to watercolor paints bring them for the closing art project. If you do not, provide art supplies you do have on hand.

Beginning: If you are going to use the well, ask the children how we get water at our house. How do we get water when we are at a park? Tell them that when Jesus was telling this story, no one had water piped into their houses or into drinking fountains in parks. They had to go to a well, lower a bucket into the well and pull the bucket back up to get the water they needed to drink, cook with, take baths in and give to their animals. Show the children the well and let them experiment with getting water from it. If this activity does not fit your space, print out some pictures of a well and describe it to the children. Ask them to pretend to get water from a well, pantomiming the motions necessary to lower a bucket, turn the crank, and pull the bucket up to the surface.

Praying: Thank you, God, for giving us water. Thank you for chances to hear about you more. Help us to know you more each day. Amen.

The Story: It was hot and Jesus was tired so Jesus sat down by a well to rest while the disciples went into town to get food for lunch. A woman came to the well to get some water, so Jesus asked her to get him a drink of water. She was very surprised that Jesus talked to her. She did not have many friends so she didn't expect Jesus to speak to her. She didn't know who Jesus was, but as she listened to him, she decided he must be this Jesus she had heard about. So she raced back to her town and called the people there to come with her and see Jesus. They came. They listened to Jesus, and they decided to be Jesus' followers too.

Activity: Offer the pitcher of water and cups so each child may have a cup of water. (If they ask, you can tell them that our well might not have water clean enough to drink, so we will drink water from the pitcher). As you sip your cups of water, ask the children to name their favorite thing about water. Has anyone gone swimming in a river? The ocean? A pool? Played in the sprinkler? What else does water do for us? Has anyone seen what we do with water at a baptism?

Getting Closure: Gratitude Pictures

If you have watercolors, use the water from the well (putting it into small cups) and let the children paint things for which they are grateful. You can paint along with the children. If the paintings are too wet to put in the Gratitude Box, put them in a secure place for next week (taking them home, if necessary) when the children can place their pictures in the box.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the things we can do with water and for the love that you show each of us. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 4:5-42

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Politically incorrect: she was of a gender without voice and a race without acceptance. Yet she may well have been the first evangelist. “Come and see!” she said. They did, and they believed.

Theme: Come and See

Before Class: Be thinking of who in your community are the Samaritans: those we avoid because they are different. Be prepared to invite the children to notice who gets treated as different. The passage for today, as are all of them in Lent, is so long it would probably take most of the class period for the children to read it aloud. An option is offered to let the children read key passages, and the teacher provides a summary of the other parts. To help the children get into the story, the technique of news reporting is suggested.

Beginning: Tell the children that in today’s story Jesus talks with a woman from Samaria. Tell them that Jews and Samaritans had very different ways of worshipping, and each thought the other’s way was very wrong. Ask the children to think about people who get discriminated against in our community and in our schools. Is there a child no one wants to play with? Are there people in our community who have a hard time getting good jobs, decent houses, etc.?

Opening Prayer: “Help us, God, to see people as Jesus sees them. Amen.”

The Story: John: 4:5-42 Look to the end of the lesson for directions for how to shorten the reading with summaries and key passages. Have copies for each person.

Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about this story?
- I wonder what questions or thoughts you have about this story?
- What do they remember about the Samaritan woman? (She would not have expected Jesus to speak to her for she was (1) a Samaritan, (2) a woman, and (3) a woman outcast even in her own community.)
- How does Jesus see this woman? (A child of God; a person who could receive his message. Possibly even a person who could bring others to believe also.)
- How do the disciples see the woman? (As a foreigner. Someone who is different. They are shocked that Jesus would even speak to her.)

- How did the people in her community respond to her excitement? (They risk going to see for themselves if she is right.)

Activity: Newscast

Tell the children that their task is to report this story as a newscast, so they will need to decide who is going to play each part. They will need at least one reporter, Jesus, and the Samaritan woman. If there are sufficient children in the class, other characters are the Samaritan people who return with the woman and the disciples. You can also divide them into groups having one group do what they read and another do a modern day version of this story.

Invite the children to present their newscast for you.

Getting Closure: Ask the children if any questions occurred to them as they were presenting the newscast. Invite them to share how they think this might apply to their lives today.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you see us as we really are and that you love us. Help us to see ourselves and each other in the same way you see us. Amen.

John 4:5-42

Setting: Jesus and the disciples were walking home to Galilee. To get there, they had to walk through the country of Samaria, which must have made the disciples nervous. They agreed to let Jesus stay all by himself by the well while they went into town to get some food for lunch. The well was Jacob's well, and most people came to get water either early in the morning or late in the day when it was cooler. The middle of the day was so hot no one was likely to come, so they thought he would be safe. While he was resting by the well a Samaritan woman came to the well. The fact that she was coming in the middle of the day when no one else would be there was Jesus' first clue that this was a woman whose lifestyle was probably not very respected.

John 4:7-9: Ask for a volunteer to read these verses.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

Teacher Summary: Jesus is gently inviting this woman to notice who he is and what he could offer her if she believed in him. The more they talk, the more she realizes who he is and that she can trust him.

John 4:27-30: Ask for a volunteer to read these verses.

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Teacher Summary: The disciples urged Jesus to eat the lunch they had brought, but he needs to remind them that his ministry and work is more important than food. Meanwhile, the woman was racing back to her town, telling everyone who would listen to her that she had found the Messiah, the one they had all been waiting for, and that he was sitting by the very well they went to daily for water. A bunch of them raced back to the well with her.

John 4:40-42: Ask for a volunteer to read these verses.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday in Lent
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 4:5-42

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Politically incorrect: she was of a gender without voice and a race without acceptance. Yet she may well have been the first evangelist. “Come and see!” she said. They did, and they believed.

Theme: Come and See

Before Class: This week, and the weeks to come in Lent, the passage is quite long and complex. You will need either Bibles or copies of the scripture for each person in the group. If you wish to read the passage using readers for each person, see the script at the end of the lesson and make sure to have enough copies for those who will need to read.

Beginning: Tell the group that today’s passage involves a conversation between a Jew (Jesus) and a Samaritan woman. The conversation startles the disciples because (1) Jews and Samaritans avoided each other at all costs, (2) men would not speak to a woman they did not know, and (3) this woman had a lifestyle that was suspect.

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to hear in this passage the message Jesus has for us today. Open our ears and minds so we may hear your word. Amen.

Option: Suggest the group be thinking of a parallel setting in our own time of two people of such different perspectives that they would not be expected to hear each other.

The Scripture: John 4:5-42 Invite people to read the following parts: Narrator, Jesus, Samaritan Woman, Disciples, and Samaritans.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage?
- What caught you by surprise?
- If you have heard this passage before, what did you hear differently today?
- What might be going on in the head of the Samaritan woman when she approached the well at noon, a time when she was confident she would be alone? (Oops. A man! How odd. Double oops, it is a Jew so I must be especially careful, but he will probably pretend he does not see me. Wow! He speaks to me, he even asks me to get him a drink of water. Surely he would not take a drink from my bucket and he seems to have no bucket of his own.)

- What would you say is happening in the interchange between Jesus and the woman? (Jesus is portraying a large picture, she responds to the parts she understands and Jesus is firm but patient with her.)
- What risk does she take when Jesus reveals to her just who he is? (She rushes back to her town where she probably has little status and tells all who will listen that she has found the Messiah. Her testimony is so persuasive that “many” go back with her to see for themselves.)
- What was the disciples response to all this? (Astounded as they might have been to find him talking with a woman, and a Samaritan at that, they said nothing. Perhaps they were now used to Jesus approaching people they would not have approached.)
- What do you think the disciples understood of what Jesus said to them in verses 34-38? (The work they thought they were just beginning to do was already bringing results. Things were happening that they had not initiated.)
- What caused these Samaritans to believe? (First it was the testimony of the woman; then it was hearing for themselves.)

Option: If time permits, invite the group to notice the steps in the woman’s movement from being a person of low self-esteem and distrust of Jews to believing in Jesus and becoming an evangelist. What might be the implications for us as we seek to share our faith? (She came to a faith she truly believed in, her energy caused others to risk checking out what she said, she pointed to Jesus — inviting them to see for themselves.)

Option: Invite the group to talk about what a similar situation might be today. Think about situations in your own community, region, state, country, and world.

Getting Closure: Invite the group to a few moments of silence. Suggest they picture themselves seated beside the well, with Jesus sitting silently beside them. Tell them that Jesus is accepting them just as they are right now and loving each one of us. After a time of silence, simply say Amen.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your patience with us. Guide us to the well so we may find your life-giving water and love. Amen.

John 4:5-42

Narrator: Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her,

Jesus: 'Give me a drink.'

Narrator: ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?'

Narrator: (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her,

Jesus: 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

Samaritan Woman: 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?'

Jesus: 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'

Samaritan Woman: 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus: 'Go, call your husband, and come back.'

Samaritan Woman: 'I have no husband.'

Jesus: 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!'

Samaritan Woman: 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.'

Jesus: 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'

Samaritan Woman: ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’

Jesus: ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’

Narrator: Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking with her?’²⁸ Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

Samaritan Woman: ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’

Narrator: They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him,

Disciples: ‘Rabbi, eat something.’

Jesus: ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’

Narrator: So the disciples said to one another,

Disciples: ‘Surely no one has brought him something to eat?’

Jesus: ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.’

Narrator: Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman,

Samaritans: ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’

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