

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season After Pentecost, Proper 7
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Genesis 21:8-21

The Season After Pentecost is the longest season of the church year, spanning almost half the calendar year. The weeks after Pentecost are called Ordinary Time coming from the word “ordinal” which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The liturgical color of the season is green. It is often thought of as a season of growth both in our personal faith and in the life of the church. Common themes to focus on throughout the season are:

- Our relationship with God.
- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our prayers, the sacraments and life in the body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The Church and its work for God’s mission.

A Notation about this Week’s Scripture

There are many difficult stories in the Bible that are the stories of the relationship with God and a growing self understanding as God’s people. And we read this one with the perception and understanding of the faithful who remembered and told the story throughout the ages. These Biblical truths are not unlike the hard lessons we sometimes learn in fables or morality plays: Life is not always fair. Adults can often use metaphor to see the lesson for ourselves. For children this is harder. Be sensitive to these issues and shape the lesson for your own context.

The Book of Genesis provides foundational stories of our faith, God’s calling of a people, their often failed responses to God, and God’s steadfast love throughout. The Abraham saga tells of the formation of Israel, beginning with the faithfulness of its patriarch Abraham. Although disillusioned with the wickedness of human beings, God separates out one family line to bring divine blessing to all subsequent families of the world. Abraham, the model of absolute faithfulness, trust and obedience, is symbolic of Israel’s idealized self. At the request of God Abraham has left his homeland to travel to a promised land. He has entertained angels unaware and trusted God’s promise of an heir even at an advanced age. Today’s story is a prelude to the sacrifice of Isaac, with the sacrifice of Ishmael, the son of Hagar.

Theme: Where is God?

Important Note Regarding This Lesson:

There are biblical stories that are not pleasant: stories that, at first, seem to convey a God who is not fair and or kind; stories that are scary and difficult to understand or accept. However, they are in fact part of our scriptural traditions. At the end of all three segments of this lesson, we learn that our God is a loving God who keeps promises.

This is a difficult story and how (and if) you use all of the segments of this lesson is a decision only you as the teacher can make. You know the level of understanding on the part of your children and as well as how prepared their parents are to respond to questions the children may have after leaving class. Choose the parts of this lesson that are appropriate for use in your community.

Before: You will need two popsicle sticks or sticks for each child and various colors of yarn.

Beginning: Gather the children in a circle and invite them to share the various places they have seen God.

Opening Prayer: Dear God help us to listen for you and know that you are there, even with things are hard. Help us to hear your voice, no matter where we are. Amen.

The Story: Genesis 21:8-21

In the right context the story can deliver a good message. *Assess your audience and omit or add details as seems appropriate.*

Decide which Bible you will use if you are going to read the story. Otherwise you might find it better to “tell” the story using language that you believe will be comfortable for the children. A version of the story is as follows:

Today’s story comes from the first book of the Bible called Genesis. Genesis means beginnings. It tells the stories of how God made the world. It also tells the stories of how God’s people were trying to get to know God and understand Him. Sometimes they got it right and this made God very happy. Sometimes they didn’t understand at all and did some very wrong things as a result. Sometimes they tried to copy the way other people were worshipping different gods and this made God very upset. No matter what the people did, God continued to love and forgive them and over a long period of time the people grew in their understanding of God.

Now there was a man named Abraham who loved and trusted God with all his heart. God appreciated Abraham for his faithfulness and obedience. God chose Abraham to be the father of a new nation called Israel. Abraham had a child with a woman named Hagar. His wife, Sarah, was jealous of that child and did not want her to be around their family. Abraham was sad about this, but God told Abraham, “Do not worry because of the boy. Whatever Sarah asks you to do, you should do. Do not worry about Hagar and her son because I will make a nation from him also.”

So Abraham gave Hagar some water and send the child and her away. She left and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water was gone, she put her child in the bushes and sat down a little ways away from him because she did not want to see him die. She wept and God heard the voice of the boy and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven asking what was wrong. The angel told her not to be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy. The angel told her to lift up the boy and hold him, for he will make a great nation. God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She filled the water skin and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy and he grew up, living in the wilderness and becoming an expert with the bow and arrow.

Questions:

- I wonder what your favorite part of the story was?
- I wonder what questions you have about the story?
- I wonder what this story tells us about God's love and compassion for us?
- I wonder how Hagar felt when God sent her an angel and water to help her?
- I wonder what things God has sent to us?

Activity: Where is God?

Even when hard or difficult things happen in our lives, God is there with us. Let's think about times when we knew that God was with us. (Allow them time to brainstorm.)

As a reminder of God's presence in our lives and that God is there watching over us, we are going to make God's eyes today. Show the children how to make God's eyes. There are instructional videos online and if you need instructions, follow this link:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-an-Eye-of-God>

Closing:

Have the children help put all supplies away. Return to the circle. Invite the children to share what they have created.

Closing Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for watching over us, for hearing us when we are in need, and for sending people to help us. Be with us as we go forth from this place. Amen.

Genesis 21:8-21

⁸The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” ¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.”

¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. ¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Lesson written by Trudy Ardizzone, 2011

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