

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

Background

Epiphany means several things: a gift is received; the gift must be shared. Jesus appears to be suggesting a rhythm, a balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God. We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus is putting together his team. He seems to understand that people learn best when they can see – in action – what is being taught. So Jesus takes these men with him when he teaches and when he heals. And most importantly, they are there with Jesus, day by day, as he gently reveals who he is. In today's passage, Simon and Andrew leap out of their fishing boats to follow this man who has told them he will make them fishers of men. James and John are next. Jesus is demonstrating the fellowship he invites us to accept.

Theme: Follow Me

Before Class: You will need a “fishing boat” (a table you can turn upside down) and several large imaginary nets (some of the plastic netting that potatoes and sometimes lemons come in at a grocery store that you can cut so it will lie flat). You might consider bringing a package of goldfish crackers and some juice. You will also need paper, crayons, and a roll of transparent tape.

Beginning: Greet each child by name and ask questions that show you have been listening to what the child has offered in previous sessions.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for this time we have together and for the stories you have given us to hear. Amen. (Obviously, if you have a concern or the children have brought a concern, be sure to include it in your prayer.)

The Story: Mark 1:14-20 Has anyone here ever gone fishing? Did you use a fishing pole? What did you use for bait? Did you get to eat the fish you caught?

Today we have a story about fishing, but it’s a kind of fishing you may not have done. And I haven't either. In the story there is a big boat, at least two men, and huge nets. A net is a huge piece of material with the threads far apart so tiny fish can get through and only big fish get

caught. (If you have the net bag from the grocery store, show it to the children and ask them to imagine that the net is as big as the room.)

Two men are out on the water in their boat, fishing with great big nets. One man is named Simon, the other is named Andrew. On the other side of the lake is another boat with two other men, James and John. They were brothers and their Dad's name was Zebedee.

Simon and Andrew lift the huge net and throw it into the water. Just then, Jesus comes along. "Hey Simon! Hey Andrew! Follow me. I will show you how to fish for people!" Well, they hopped out of their boat and went with Jesus. James and John were by the shore in their boats, fixing some holes in their net when Jesus came to them: "Hey James! Hey John! Follow me." And they did.

Let's go fishing: Invite the children to come fishing with you.

First, we need to practice tossing our huge net. You can't see this net, so we will just have to use our imaginations. Let's spread out to the edges of the room and each of us take hold of an edge of the net. Let's shake the net and then throw it as far as we can -- into the water. Great!

Now into the boat. What boat? Well, how about this table? We can turn it upside down and it will be a boat for us. OK. We need 5 people. Can you remember the names of the fishermen? (Simon, Andrew, James, John) And who else is in the story? Yes, Jesus.

Act out the story – tossing the net or mending the net by taking huge sweeping stitches in the net. Then Jesus calls: "Follow me." And they do.

Continue acting out the story until each child gets to play their part he or she wants to play.

Snack: If you brought goldfish crackers and juice, share it with the children and ask them what it was like to pretend to fish with a net. Would they want to do that in real life?

Art Activity: If you were able to secure the plastic netting, cut it into pieces so each child has a piece. Invite them to draw a picture of the fishing story they have just acted out, and secure the net where they want it on their picture using transparent tape.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to tell you about their pictures, if they want to.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for Jesus, who still comes looking for us and inviting us to follow Him. Help us to follow Jesus each day. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

Background

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Jesus is putting together his team. He seems to understand that people learn best when they can see – in action – what is being taught. So Jesus takes these men with him when he teaches and when he heals. And most importantly, they are there with Jesus, day by day, as he gently reveals who he is. In today's passage, Simon and Andrew leap out of their fishing boats to follow this man who has told them he will make them fishers of men. James and John are next. Jesus is demonstrating the fellowship he invites us to accept.

Theme: Follow Me

Before class: If you can find a real fishing net that you could bring to class, that would be outstanding. (Ask around and see if you can find one or go to a local store and see if you can find one to borrow). If you have a bit of time, and some patience, and want to create a net for the children to see, check out <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Handmade-Fishing-Net>.

You will need a large ball of twine or inexpensive yarn (beige or brown would be best) and cut at least 6 lengths about a foot or so long. You will also need paper and markers.

Beginning: Ask the children if any of them have ever gone fishing. Listen to their fish stories. Tell them we have a story about four fishermen today, who fished in a way none of us have.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for this time we have together. Thank you that you are right here with us as we listen to stories that tell us about Jesus. Amen.

The Story: Mark 1:14-20 Make sure each child has access to a Bible. Our gospel reading today is Mark 1:16-20. Help them find it in their Bibles and ask for volunteers to read. (Or you could ask, “Who would like to read the first two verses, the last two verses?”)

Reflection Questions:

- Do you think you would have hopped off a boat that you had just filled with fish? Why? Why not?
- Do you think you would have left the tedious job of fixing broken nets to follow Jesus? Why? Why not?
- What do you think Jesus meant by saying he wanted these men to "fish for people"?
- What do you think Zebedee, the father of James and John, thought about getting left with the boat and no sons to help him? Do you think he was sad? Proud?

Net Making: In today's story, we find four men who are fishermen, and they fish in the lake using huge nets. It was a lot of work to fish this way. And it was a lot of work to keep the nets in shape to fish. The nets were made of a heavy twine and they were designed so that the tiny fish could get out of the net and only the large fish would be caught. The small ones that get away can grow up to be food for another day. We are going to try to make a very small piece of a net today. (If you have more than 3 or 4 children in the group, divide them into two groups.)

Let's tie two pieces of string together, then a third, then the fourth, until we have fashioned a square. Then tie one piece of string to the top piece of string about one third of the way across the top and then another piece of string about a third of the way from that. Tie those pieces to the bottom piece of string. We will have a square with two pieces of string tied at the top and at the bottom. Tie two more pieces of string – on the side string so we have two pieces of string going across the square. Then tie those two pieces to the opposite side. Every place the strings cross, take a short piece of string and tie a knot. (This is not the way a net is created, but it gets the idea across, and it shows that it is a lot of work!)

Follow: You can play a game of follow the leader or have the children follow complicated instructions to a game. After you have done this, invite them to share what it is like to follow. Are there times that it is easy to follow – that way you don't have to worry about leading? Are there times that you like to lead and it is hard to follow?

What are the ways in which we follow Jesus? (Invite them to share and if you have time, they can create posters about how they follow Jesus.)

Getting Closure: Remind the children that the theme is "Receiving the Gift and Offering the Gift." Can they name a gift received and offered in the story? How about in their own life?

Closing Prayer: Pass out copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* and ask the children if, using the index, they can find The Collects: Contemporary (second page of the Index) and then the Collect for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany (p. 215). Invite them to follow along as you, or invite one of the children to read it.

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

Background

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Theme: Follow Me

Before Class: You will need an easel or white board, and markers. Each person needs to have either a copy of the scripture or a Bible from which to read.

Beginning: Invite the group to reflect on a time when they followed someone else even when they were not sure where that person was taking them or what they were going to be doing.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gifts you give us, and for accepting the gifts we offer to you. Help us to follow you more faithfully that we can also become fishers of people. Amen.

The Scripture: Mark 1:14-20 (Each person needs access to a Bible.) Invite people to be readers for the passage. You could have one reader for the entire passage. Another option would be to divide it between three readers: verses 14 - 15; verses 16 – 18; verses 19 - 20.

After it has been read, ask the group to take a couple of minutes to look back at the passage and see if any particular words or concepts spoke to them. Then invite sharing.

Reflection Questions:

- Verse 15: Notice what Jesus says – and what he does not say. Not "I am going to show you the way to get to God," but "the kingdom of God has come near." What do you think this implies?

- "Repent and believe." Why not believe first, which will cause you to want to repent?
- "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." What does this mean to you?
- What do you think of the decisions to leave a boat full of fish and to leave nets that still needed mending – with an elderly father to run the fishing business?
- Has there been a time in your lives (that you are comfortable sharing with us) when you were called to leave the equivalent of a boatload of fish to go and do something very different?
- In what ways might we, here today, be called to leave boatloads of fish and go?
- What “fishing for people” is waiting for our participation in our neighborhoods, our jobs, our community?

Getting Closure: There may have been gifts of learning today. Would anyone like to offer that gift back to the group?

Closing Prayer: Collect for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (Book of Common Prayer, page 215)

Mark 1:14-20

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