

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