

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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