

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: John 15:1-8**

**Background:** Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

**A Notation for this Week’s Gospel**

We have work to do, but not as lone rangers. We are called to stay connected to the vine, faithfully and courageously reaching out, securely connected to the vine of life. We will probably experience some very painful pruning. Later, often much later, we will experience the fruit. Abiding in that vine, trusting in it, and accepting its confines, we will learn to want the appropriate things and be free to ask for them. The work we are given to do, we will be able to do joyfully to the glory of God.

**Theme: I am the Vine, You are the Branches**

**Before Class:** To create an image of the “connectedness” that a vine would connote, a ball of very soft yarn is recommended. It could be green or brown, if you want, and it would be good for it to be fairly thick. The word “connected” may not be understood at first, but as you use it in the story, the children will “connect” with its meaning. Construction paper, crayons or felt markers, and glue sticks will be needed.

**Beginning:** Greet the children with “Peace be with you.” If the children do not all show up at the very same time, invite each child to greet the next child who arrives with the same greeting. See if any of the children remember who said “Peace be with you” first a long time ago. (Jesus.) What do they think it means to say “Peace be with you.” (An answer could be that we want to tell people that Jesus loves us and wants us not to be worried about things.)

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for being here with us – even though we cannot see you. Thank you for showing us we are all connected to you. Amen.

**The Story:** Give each child a piece of the yarn -- about 18 inches or so long -- and take a piece yourself. Wad your length of yarn into a little ball. Invite the children to do the same thing. Tell the children that now each of us has a little ball of yarn. But none of these balls of string is connected to any of the others. Each one is all alone. Would you want to be all alone – not connected to anyone?

Jesus wants us to know that we are NOT all alone. We are connected to Jesus. So let's try something different. Let's stand in a circle. (Holding onto the end of a larger ball of yarn, unroll enough to hand the ball to the child next to you.) Let's pass this ball around the circle, so everyone has some yarn and we are all connected. (As the ball of yarn comes around the circle and back to you, hold both ends of the yarn to close the circle. Who else is in the circle? (Our parents, siblings, grandparents -- puppies, whatever is offered) And Jesus is like the yarn -- holding us all together!

Stay connected to me, Jesus tells us. Stay connected, and I will help you do hard stuff, and you will always know that I love you.

**Activity:** Ask for a volunteer to let go of the yarn, leave the circle, and stand outside the circle. Then ask for another volunteer to leave the circle and go gently bring that child back into the circle. Continue, until each child gets a chance to leave the circle and be brought back into the circle.

**Activity:** Give each child a piece of construction paper and either give each child a glue stick or tell them each will have a turn with a glue stick. Show the children how to make a circle with their piece of yarn, then make a circle with the glue stick on the paper so they can press the yarn on the paper – in a circle. Then they can draw little circles on the paper around the yarn circle, for themselves, their parents, siblings, friends, etc.

**Easter Project:** Invite the children to decorate one of the Easter symbols, found below, (from Easter 2) or, using another piece of construction paper, and the yarn piece you cut for yourself, glue a circle and pass the paper around the group so each child can draw themselves on the paper. This finished piece will go under our Easter tree or hang at the bottom of the Easter mobile.

**Getting Closure:** Ask the children to form a circle and again pass the ball of yarn around so each child is included in the circle. Ask the children, "Who is the yarn?" (As each child grabs hold of the yarn, invite them to say, "Jesus.")

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for connecting us together and connecting us to you. Thank you, Jesus, for loving us. Amen.

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