

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 13
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 6:24-35

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

The crowd continued looking for Jesus. Maybe they were curious as to how Jesus got to the other side when his boat remained behind. Perhaps they were looking for more miracles. They were drawn to the gentle charisma of this man even though they were struggling to understand what he was saying. They were looking for a sign, missing the message. From our vantage point – 2,000 years later – we still struggle to grasp the message: "I am the bread of life."

Theme: Bread of Life

Before Class: Check with your clergy person to determine whether the Feast of the Transfiguration, celebrated August 6, will actually be celebrated today using its associated readings. If it is, use the online lesson plans for the Feast of the Transfiguration today. If not, use these lessons.

Make or purchase a bag of popcorn, and bring a box of paper muffin liners. Alternatively, you could get Matzo bread found in the Jewish section of the grocery store. If you want, you or the teacher of the older children may also purchase a small quantity of coriander seed (this should be available in the spice section of a grocery store). If you are going to conduct class outside, and if it is possible, before the children arrive "hide" enough muffin cups filled with popcorn so that each child will have one to find (or Matzo). If you are going to be inside, "hide" the muffin cups filled with popcorn (or Matzo) around your room. Read Exodus 16:1-8 before class.

If you are combining groups, read the lesson plans for older children. While the older children are reading the scripture passage, the young children can be hiding cups of "manna" (popcorn/Matzo) for the older children to find.

Beginning: Tell the children we are going to go on a walk today. And we will pretend to be the people who lived a long time ago – long before Jesus. Then we will have a story about Jesus.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for watching over us, taking care of us, and giving us what we need. Thank you for all that you give us and the nourishment you provide for us each day. Amen.

The Story: Tell the children that you are all going on a walk. (If you cannot go outside, walk in place.) As you walk, pretend you have been walking for a long, long time and you are getting tired, cranky, and very hungry. So as you walk, complain: "I am getting so tired. My feet hurt. I am starving. I wish I had a hot dog – a slice of pizza – some ice cream." (Invite the children to call out what they wish they had.)

Pretend that you are so tired that you all need to sit down and rest. Tell the children that Moses was the people's leader, and he said do not give up hope. He told them that God will get us what we need. Now tell the children to close their eyes and rest and when they wake up they will be able to find food. Rest a minute and then get up and see what you can find. If the children do not immediately see the little cups, help them. Be sure each child finds a cup. If you want to, show the children the coriander seed and tell them that what the people found tasted like coriander. Explain that what they found wasn't popcorn or Matzo, but was called "manna."

While the children munch on the popcorn/Matzo, tell them that the people who were listening to Jesus knew the story we just heard. These people had been following Jesus everywhere he went. This day Jesus was talking to the people – but he was on the other side of the lake and the people were trying to figure out how Jesus got there when his boat was still where he had left it. Jesus reminded the people of the time God sent manna for the hungry people. Jesus told the people they could still get the food they need, but the food is not manna; it is the bread of life.

Tell the children we can get the bread of life when we gather together and take Communion. Ask the children if they can tell you when we receive the bread of life. Especially if they are not regularly receiving Communion, be sure they make the connection.

Activity: If you have time, you could play a few rounds of "Hide the Popcorn/Matzo." Everyone closes their eyes while one child takes a muffin cup and hides it, then the rest of the children try to find it. Then another child takes a turn. When time is up, give each child a muffin cup.

Option: If you and the children like to sing, you could teach them the first verse of Hymn 335, "I am the bread of life." If the older children are with you, invite the younger children to hide cups of popcorn for the older children to find.

Getting Closure: Tell the children we are going to have more stories about the Bread of Life in the weeks ahead. If they are receiving Eucharist, ask them to notice what is going on and tell you about it the next time you are together.

Closing Prayer: Jesus tells us: 'I am the bread of life.' Thank you, God, for feeding us and sending Jesus to show us the way.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 13
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 6:24-35

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

The crowd continued looking for Jesus. Maybe they were curious as to how Jesus got to the other side when his boat remained behind. Perhaps they were looking for more miracles. They were drawn to the gentle charisma of this man even though they were struggling to understand what he was saying. They were looking for a sign, missing the message. From our vantage point – 2,000 years later – we still struggle to grasp the message: "I am the bread of life."

Theme: Bread of Life

Before Class: Check with your clergy person to determine whether the Feast of the Transfiguration, celebrated August 6, will actually be celebrated today using its associated readings. If it is, use the online lesson plans for the Feast of the Transfiguration today. If not, use these lessons.

Bring a candle in a safe container, and if your clergy person is comfortable with the idea, bring a few unconsecrated communion wafers to class. If you are combining groups, read the lesson plan for young children before class. You could have the young children go hunt for the "manna" while the older children are reading the passage. Then the young children can hide the "manna" (popcorn in muffin cups) for the older children to find.

Before class, read Exodus 16:1-8, and have copies of the Bible available for each child. Make copies of the script (found at the end of this lesson) if you are planning on the children reading it in parts. You might bring in a small quantity of coriander to let the children taste. If you are working with just older children, you may want to purchase a bag of popcorn to share as a treat at the end of your class.

Beginning: Tell the children Jesus is referring, in today's passage, to something all the people he was talking to would know about. Everyone would have heard the story of the Hebrew people trekking out of Egypt to their new land and how tired, discouraged, cranky, and hungry they got and how God provided what they needed.

Opening Prayer: Help us to notice, God, that you give us what we need. Thank you. Amen.

The Story: John 6:24-35 Invite the children to choose which portion of the scripture to read. If you do not have enough children to read all the parts, you can read some.

Reflection Questions: Especially if you are not meeting every week with these children, be sure they know what happened just before this passage (John 6:16-21) when the disciples rowed across the lake, but Jesus' boat stayed on the shore and Jesus walked across the lake.

- The crowd had not seen the disciples or Jesus leave the night before. What did the crowd see when they came back the next day? (Jesus and the disciples were not there, the disciples' boat was gone, Jesus' boat was still where he had left it the day before.)
- So what did the crowd do? (They got in other boats to go to the other side of the lake to see if Jesus was there.)
- What did the crowd ask Jesus when they got to the other side? (See verse 25b.)
- Do you think the answers Jesus gives the crowd are answers to their questions? Why? Why not? (You could tell the children to be on the lookout, because Jesus often knows that people are not asking the right questions, so he answers the questions he knows they need to ask.)
- Can you find other answers that are not exact answers to questions, in this passage? (See the question in verse 28 and the answer in verse 29. Also see the questions in verses 30-31 and the answer in verses 32-35.)
- What is Jesus referring to in verse 32 - a story the crowd would all know? (The experience the Hebrew people had in the wilderness when they were hungry and manna appeared.)
- What do we think manna is? (The people said it tasted like coriander, a sufficient quantity for each day appeared each day.)
- Jesus says: "I am the bread of life." How do we get this bread? (At communion)

Option: If you have unconsecrated communion wafers for the children to handle – even taste if they do not regularly go to communion – share them with the children. Invite their questions about how and why we eat these wafers. If they ask questions you are not equipped to answer, promise them that you will do your best to get more information, probably from your clergy person. Invite them to ask others and share what they find the next time you meet.

Activity: If you are meeting with the younger children, they probably have hidden cups of "manna" (popcorn) for your group to find and share with them. If you are working only with older children, you could share the popcorn you brought.

Getting Closure: If you brought a candle, light it now. Tell the children that in the next few weeks the Feast of the Transfiguration is celebrated and there will be three more weeks during which we look at Jesus trying to help the people understand what he means by the bread of life.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for loving us and being patient with us as we try to figure out just what it is that you call us to do. Amen. (Extinguish the candle.)

John 6:24-35

Narrator: ²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him,

Disciples: “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

Jesus: “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.”

Disciples: ²⁸“What must we do to perform the works of God?”

Jesus: ²⁹“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Disciples: ³⁰“What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Jesus: ³²“Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Disciples: ³⁴“Sir, give us this bread always.”

Jesus ³⁵“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 13
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 6:24-35

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

The crowd continued looking for Jesus. Maybe they were curious as to how Jesus got to the other side when his boat remained behind. Perhaps they were looking for more miracles. They were drawn to the gentle charisma of this man even though they were struggling to understand what he was saying. They were looking for a sign, missing the message. From our vantage point – 2,000 years later – we still struggle to grasp the message: "I am the bread of life."

Theme: Bread of Life

Before Class: Check with your clergy person to determine whether the Feast of the Transfiguration, celebrated August 6, will actually be celebrated today using its associated readings. If it is, use the online lesson plans for the Feast of the Transfiguration today. If not, use these lessons.

You will need copies of the Book of Common Prayer and copies of the scripture reading below that is broken into parts. Be sure the adults who may be interacting with the children are aware that they are eating popcorn pretending it is manna. Children, especially the older children, may be asking questions about the meaning of Eucharist, so adults need to think about how they want to talk with the children about what we believe. The next four sessions will all be from the Book of John, Chapter 6, in which Jesus explains "the bread of life." If you have enough time in your session, you might want to use a different Eucharistic prayer each week. These prayers are found in the Book of Common Prayer, pp. 361-363, 367-375.

Beginning: Remind the group that we will be reading from John 6 for four more weeks. Jesus struggled to convey huge eternal concepts and continued patiently reaching out to those who listened to him. Invite the group to notice Jesus' teaching mechanism of answering the question that could have been posed, rather than the one that was posed. Notice how Jesus refused to be deflected from his message by going off on tangents.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for loving us, understanding us, and finding new ways to help us grasp the immensity of the gift of your grace. Amen.

The Scripture: Make sure each person has a copy of the scripture. If your group did not meet last week or if there are people in your group who were not with you last week, make sure they know the passage immediately preceding this one (John 6:16-21).

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in this reading?
- In verses 22-25, what has the crowd noticed? (Jesus' boat still on the shore, Jesus, the disciples and their boat on the other side.)
- How did Jesus get to the other side? What does the crowd ask Jesus about this? What is his answer? (See verse 25b and verse 26.)
- What is Jesus referring to when he says: "You ate your fill of the loaves?" (See John 6:11.)
- Notice the questions and Jesus' responses from Jesus: question – verse 28, response – verse 29; question – verses 30-31, response – verses 32-33; question – verse 34, response – verse 35.

Option: Make copies of the Book of Common Prayer available and tell people to go to page 361. Over the next four weeks we will look at all four of the Eucharistic Prayers. Today, we will look at Prayer A, probably the most familiar and in most churches the most frequently used of the four prayers. All four prayers begin identically, then each goes to praise and thanksgiving, a bit of history, then the words said to call down consecration of the elements, an acclamation from the congregation, and finally a few more prayers to get hearts and minds ready to receive the body and blood of Christ. You could read through the Eucharistic Prayer – or simply invite people to notice the various sections.

Getting Closure: Invite the group get into a comfortable sitting position and take a couple of really deep breaths. Then say something like this: "Get in touch with where you are hungry – a hunger that calories will not fill. Perhaps it is for recognition; perhaps it is longing to feel worthy. You decide what it is. Stay there a few minutes: being needy." (After a pause, continue.) "Now, picture Jesus coming to you – just you – and saying to you: 'I am the bread of life. Come to me – and you will never be hungry. Believe in me -- and you will never be thirsty. I am the bread of life.'" (Pause.) "Amen."

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for always being larger than our ability to completely grasp, yet always being there for us to seek. Amen.

John 6:24-35

Narrator: ²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him,

Disciples: “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

Jesus: “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.”

Disciples: ²⁸“What must we do to perform the works of God?”

Jesus: ²⁹“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Disciples: ³⁰“What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Jesus: ³²“Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

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Jesus ³⁵“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

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