

**Lesson Plans that Work  
Year B – All Saints’  
Lesson Plans for Adults**

**Scripture: John 11:32-44**

*Note: This is the lesson plan for All Saints Day. Check with your clergy person about what propers you are using for this Sunday. Some churches use All Saints, others use the Sunday Propers.*

**Background:** During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

We step aside from the flow of the propers and celebrate all the saints. We stop. We notice. We are surrounded by a flock of witnesses in our midst -- many who have gone before us, some we are just now releasing, and still more with a full life ahead of them. Jesus raises back to life his friend, Lazarus. Lazarus will eventually die, but for now, those who are following Jesus need to know that death has had its stinger removed. "Unbind him and let him go", says Jesus. Each of us, on our last day on this side of life, will know that unbinding and that letting go.

**Theme: Saints**

**Before Class:** Cut a couple of sheets of paper into little strips about an inch high and a couple of inches wide. Make enough so each person in your group has several pieces. Have pencils or pens on hand. You will need Bibles and copies of The Book of Common Prayer and may want to have a few copies of The Hymnal.

**Beginning:** Remind the group that most Episcopal Churches will use the readings for All Saints Day (which is on November 1) at the worship services today, so those are the scriptures we will use today. You may wish to make sure you have a common understanding of the word "saint." (Yes, it means well-known saints like St. Francis or the disciples, and includes people the world has noticed like, for example Mother Theresa, and those quiet, everyday people who follow Jesus. Saints can be found among those who have left this life and among those still alive, including us.)

**Opening Prayer:** For all the saints who from their labors rest, we give you thanks, for the hundreds and thousands still in our midst who make the world bright with their love, we give you thanks. Amen.

**Option:** The passage appointed for today lands in the middle of a story, and if you have time, you can begin the reading at the beginning of Chapter 11 to capture the full story. Alternatively, you can give the class a brief synopsis of what comes before the reading for today starts. Before verse 32, Martha and Mary had sent word to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, was perilously sick. Jesus does not come at once. By the time Jesus does arrive, Lazarus has been dead 4 days and the family is in full grief.

**The Scripture: John 11: 32 - 44.** Ask for volunteers to read the different parts: Mary, Jesus, "the Jews", "some of them," and the narrator. (see below for script if you choose to do it in parts)

**Reflection Questions:**

- Notice the wide variety of emotions in verses 32 - 37. (Mary's grief and faith that Jesus could have saved her brother, Jesus weeping. The conflict for "the Jews" in verses 36 and 37.)
- Notice the significance that Lazarus has been laid to rest in a tomb covered with a stone.
- Notice the conflict for Martha who knows that Lazarus has been in the tomb four days yet Jesus is saying to take away the stone.
- I wonder what Jesus was gently trying to convey as he stood in front of the tomb. (Not that he is doing some kind of magic, but that God hears his plea and people will believe that God has sent Jesus.)
- What does Jesus command, after he has prayed? (verse 43b)
- What does Jesus tell them to do? (verse 44b)
- Lazarus will eventually die - probably of old age. What do you suppose was his reaction upon finding himself "alive" again? (Confusion? Disappointment? Delight? We do not know.)
- As Lazarus was "unbound" how might others in the group have also become "unbound?"
- I wonder in what ways does this passage "unbind" us?

**Getting Closure:** Put the scraps of paper you prepared where all in your group can reach them. Invite them to write on a slip the name of a person in their life who has been a saint to them. Could be a grandparent who has long since died, could be a special teacher, a mentor, a friend - living or dead. Invite them to take a piece of paper for each person they think of. Tell them that the closing prayer will be reading these names in thanksgiving.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, we remember today all these saints (read all the names) and give you thanks for their lives among us. Help us to remember the example they set for us and guide us on our journey through this life. Amen.

**John 11:32-44**

**Narrator:** When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him,

**Mary:** ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’

**Narrator:** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said,

**Jesus:** ‘Where have you laid him?’

**Mary and Crowd:** ‘Lord, come and see.’

**Narrator:** Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said,

**Jews:** ‘See how he loved him!’

**Narrator:** But some of them said,

**Jews:** ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

**Narrator:** Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said,

**Jesus:** ‘Take away the stone.’

**Narrator:** Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

**Martha:** ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’

**Jesus:** ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’

**Narrator:** So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said,

**Jesus:** ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’

**Narrator:** When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,

**Jesus:** ‘Lazarus, come out!’

**Narrator:** The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them,

**Jesus:** ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

*Published by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

*© 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*