

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday of Christmas
Lesson Plan for Younger Children

Scripture: John 1:1-18

Background: The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A Notation for this Week's Gospel: Here we have Salvation history in a nutshell. In the beginning was the "Word." Word as verb: moving, creating, redeeming. Word: creating since the beginning, now here as an infant. The prophets proclaimed this would happen, right through to the last of the prophets: John the Baptist. We have the law, thanks to Moses. Now we receive grace and truth through Jesus, the only Son. He is the Light; the Light that no darkness can extinguish dawns on. Now we are invited to decide who is this child for us?

Theme: The Word became Flesh

Before Class: You will need a flashlight with a new or otherwise reliable battery. If your class space is brightly lit, see if you can find a darker place to go to for a bit of your time together. In addition, check out the presentation of the story, below. This is one of the most beautiful passages in Scripture, but it may be way too abstract for the children, so this telling is suggested.

Beginning: If you have found another spot for this part of today's session, describe where you are going to go and how you are going to get there. (Example: it is up a flight of stairs and we will go in partners and tip toe without saying a word.)

Opening Prayer: When you have arrived at your new location, or settled in a darker corner of your space, have the children gather and become quiet, then begin your prayer.

Thank you, God, for creating this beautiful world and for sending Jesus to come to us as a little baby. Amen.

The Story: Long, long, long, long ago, there was nothing at all. There were no animals, no birds, no fish, no people. There was no world, no skies, no stars, no moon, no sun. Just lots and lots of nothing. And it was very, very dark. (At this point, if there are any lights on in the room, turn them off.)

Suddenly, and no one knows for sure how this happened, light came into all the darkness. (Turn the flashlight on.) The light was a lot brighter than this flashlight. This flashlight can be turned off, and the batteries might even run down. But the light that came from God will last forever.

Soon there was a bright sun, a moon, and stars, and all kinds of animals and birds and fish. And then there were people. Lots of people.

One day, a very special baby was born. (Turn the flashlight on a space in the middle of the children) Anyone remember who that baby is? Yes, Jesus. And Jesus would tell people that the light that shines on him shines on each of us. (Shine the flashlight, in turn, on each child - naming the child as you do: "The light shines on Colin, the light shines on Ashley," etc.) And so each of us is a light for Jesus.

Activity: Sing a verse or two of "This Little Light of Mine" taking turns with the flashlight until each child has been able to flash the light around the room while all of you sing. Here are a couple of the verses:

Verse 1

This little light of mine

I'm going to let it shine

This little light of mine,

I'm going to let it shine

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Verse 2

All around the neighborhood

I'm going to let it shine

All around the neighborhood

I'm going to let it shine

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Option: Give the children sheets of white paper and crayons and glitter. Ask them to illustrate the light shining on the baby Jesus and the light flowing out from Jesus and landing on each of us. Encourage their creativity and let them create whatever they think represents Jesus and light.

Getting Closure: Gather the children into a circle. Give each child a turn to shine the flashlight on what they have created and tell the rest about it. Keep going until each child has had a chance to shine the light on his/her art work.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the light of Jesus shining in us for all the world to see. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday After Christmas
Lesson Plan for Older Children

Scripture: John 1:1-18

Background: The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

Here we have Salvation history in a nutshell. In the beginning was the "Word." Word as verb: moving, creating, redeeming. Word: creating since the beginning, now here as an infant. The prophets proclaimed this would happen, right through to the last of the prophets: John the Baptist. We have the law, thanks to Moses. Now we receive grace and truth through Jesus, the only Son. He is the Light; the Light that no darkness can extinguish dawns on. Now we are invited to decide who is this child for us?

Theme: The Word became Flesh

Before Class: The passage we have for today is beautiful, but extremely abstract, so you will need copies of the text for each person. Take time the week before to read the passage and discuss it with clergy if parts are eluding you. Here are some notes that might help:

John, the writer of the Gospel, is saying that Jesus has been since the very beginning with God, and all things come through God and through Jesus. Verses 6-8 describe John the Baptist who was sent to get people ready for the Light that was Jesus. Even though John the Baptist clearly understood who Jesus was, his own people to whom Jesus came, did not understand who he was. "The Word became flesh" is our way of saying that Jesus came among us as an infant taking on a body just like ours. Jesus came to pour out on us all the grace and truth available to him. We simply need to accept it. No one has seen God. But now the world has seen Jesus, so they have also seen God.

Beginning: Ask the children if they have ever been in the position of knowing something was true, being sure they had their facts, and the person they were talking to simply did not believe them. If they are having difficulty thinking of something, offer something from your own experience. You could also ask them if they can think of something they know is true, but they are not confident they know how it works. (For example, the Internet, for cell phones, or more natural phenomenon like lightning or the northern lights.)

Opening Prayer: Light-filled God, thank you for the words we have today to help us think about who this Jesus really is in every possible way. Amen.

The Scripture: John 1:1-18 Pass out copies of the scripture and pencils. Ask for volunteers to read sections of the passage. There are five paragraphs below, so you could ask for five readers.

Option: Tell the children to look at their copy of the Scripture and using a pencil -- and a code they choose to mark the parts they think they understand and another code for the parts they don't understand. (The code could be underlining, or drawing a circle or a square around the part.)

Reflection Questions:

- Parts of this Gospel are talking about John and parts are talking about Jesus. Let's find the parts that are talking about John the Baptist. (Verses 6-8 describe John, Verse 15 is a quote from John)
- Which parts talk about Jesus? What phrases are about Jesus?
- Ask them to notice words that might be different descriptions of Jesus. (Word, true light, Word became flesh, grace and truth, for example).
- Which parts did they understand?
- Which parts were not clear?

Translation: Invite the children to work together to translate this passage so friends of theirs could understand it. Offer to scribe their ideas, assuring them it is okay to use slang words, as long as they are sure their friends will understand.

Getting Closure: Read aloud what they have drafted. Ask for any modifications. Then offer to send their draft to them by e-mail (if this works for you and the class), make copies at the church before the end of class (if that is possible), or make copies later and send them to the children.

You could also read from another Bible such as "The Message" or "The Common English Bible" to get a different reading of the passage.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the beautiful words in today's scripture and for the words we found today to make them easier to understand. Be with us as we continue to live into the Christmas Season, celebrating Jesus who always has been. Amen.

John 1:1-18

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."')

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday After Christmas
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 1:1-18

Background: The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

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Theme: The Word became Flesh

Before Class: It would be helpful for each person to have a copy of the Gospel and pencils to make notes on the passage. You can either bring enough Bibles for everyone or simply make copies of the scripture found below. You might want to bring sheets of paper and colored pencils or crayons.

Beginning: Start your discussion today by mentioning that the passage we have for today is beautiful for some and mysterious and difficult for others. Invite the group to have patience with each other no matter which preference they have. Invite them into the story that John is trying to convey. Help each other wonder about this way of speaking of God, Jesus, and the beginning.

Opening Prayer: Thank you God, for light that shines in the darkness and that the darkness is unable to overcome the light. Amen.

The Scripture: To highlight the different voices, suggest that you have different readers for each of the paragraphs found below.

Reflection Questions: Invite people to name what stood out for them.

- I wonder if there were things that seemed odd?
- Beautiful?
- Mysterious?
- Unique?
- Invite discussion comparing this passage to the one we heard on Christmas Eve/Christmas.

Option: Ask the group to read the entire passage to themselves, circling words they find that point to Jesus. Next, underline words that define John the Baptist or his mission. Share what they have found.

Option: Offer the group the choice of either working alone or working in pairs. If they decide to work alone, use the paper and pencils or crayons to sketch images, write words, or play with color to describe the feelings the passage conveys. If they choose to work in pairs, discuss the words and images, sketching or scribing concepts as they arise.

Getting Closure: Invite the members of the group to share words, sketches, concepts they came up with. Listen carefully for words you can include in the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer: Thank you God, for what we have found in these words, for (include phrases that came up in the sharing.) Be with us as we live into your Word. Amen.

John 1:1-18

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

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