

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– Second Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Background: Lent is a reflective season – an opportunity to go deep within ourselves and focus on our relationship with God and with others. The forty days of Lent remind us of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert following his baptism, pondering who he was and what he was to do. They also remind us of the forty years that the people of God wandered in the desert following the Exodus from Egypt, learning how to be the community of the people of God. The Hebrew Scripture lessons in year C focus on the covenants or promises that God made with the people of God. Like Jesus, we choose to enter this time of “desert,” in order to remember the promises of God, hear the stories of ways in which they were fulfilled (hint: They didn’t always look the way the people expected!), and the ways in which we are called to participate in those promises in our own time – to discover who we are in God and what we are to do.

A Notation for This Week’s Lesson: In this week’s lesson, we turn to one of the foundational stories of our faith, which tells us how God made a promise to Abram and Sarai to make them the starting place of the family of God, even though it seemed impossible, as they had no children of their own.

Theme: God Promises Abram and Sarai

Before Class: Determine which activity options you will be using and gather the materials needed. You will need the bowl of sand from last week, and a star to place in the sand. (Any type of star is fine. Wooden stars are easy to find at craft stores, or you might simply cut a star from cardstock.)

Beginning: Gather the children in your usual manner, perhaps with an opening song or greeting. Ask what they notice in your worship space. See what they remember about the season of Lent. If necessary, remind them that Lent is the time of the church year when we get ready to celebrate the mystery of Easter. It is time for us to focus on things that bring us close to God, and to remember that we are part of God’s family. Have them mark the sign of the cross on their forehead to remember that they are “marked as Christ’s own forever.”

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of Lent, the time we pay special attention to the ways we can come closer to you. Help us to hear your promises, and to remember that we are part of your great family. Amen.

The Story: During the season of Lent, we are hearing stories about times that God made promises to the people of God, even sometimes promises that seem impossible. Today’s story is about one of those promises. I am putting this star in our bowl of desert to help us remember this story. Listen and see if you can figure out why we are using a star to help us tell this story.

Abram and Sarai were living in the land of Haran. God had told them to leave the city, where they had family, and friends, and neighbors, to go to the land that God would show them, and they crossed through the desert and settled in Haran, near a place where large oak trees grew, called Mamre. They lived there with their servants, and their animals, and they grew crops. But they had a problem. They had always wanted a child, but they did not have any children. And they had grown too old to have a child.

One night, when Abram was talking to God, God asked Abram what was bothering him. And Abram said, "I have no children who will take over my land when I die. And we are too old to have children."

God said, "You will have a son. Look up at the stars. There are too many stars to count. Your family will be like the stars. There will be so many people in your family that you will not be able to count them. And they will live in this land."

It seemed impossible! But do you know what happened? They did have a child, a son named Isaac. And Isaac grew up and got married and had children. And his children had children. And Abram's family became known as the family of God.

Your children might enjoy this poem about Abraham and Sarah, by Calvin Miller:

I'm Gonna Have a Baby, Abie!

Haven't you found
that the mothers you know
Quit having babies at forty or so.
But Sarah at eighty
though wrinkled and gray
Sat knitting booties
through most of the day.

When Abraham said to her,
"Sarah you're knitting,
I feel that it's fitting
that you tell me why."
Old Sarah just winked,
then smiled and replied,
I'm going to have a baby, Abie."

It sounded so funny,
they giggled out loud,
They bellowed and laughed
and attracted a crowd
Who asked Abraham:
"What is so funny —
could you tell us maybe?"

"My Sarah is eighty, expecting a baby!"

When one of them saw
she was knitting some booties
They broke out in laughing
and roaring and hooting.
One of them mocked her:
"She's quite off her rocker!
Dear Lady, you're eighty,
you can't have a baby!"

They hooted and howled;
for nine months they roared.
They made so much noise
that they nearly ignored
The sound of the postman
who knocked at the door,
"Hey fellas! A letter from Abie has come.
Old Sarah his wife has a new little son!"

At last they quit laughing,
And yet they felt joy,
And all ran to Abie's
To see his new boy.
They all smiled at Abie
and said "Happy Baby!"
While Abraham beamed as proud as could be.
But God smiled down on nobody other
Than Sarah, the old one,
the happy new mother!

(from <http://www.30goodminutes.org/index.php/archives/23-member-archives/580-calvin-miller-program-3324>)

Reflection Questions: (Use the ones that interest you and your community of children)

- I wonder how Abram and Sarai felt when they didn't think they would ever have children?
- I wonder how it felt to hear God promise a son?
- I wonder if they believed God right away, or if it took some time?
- I wonder if there is anything that seems impossible to you?
- I wonder how Abram and Sarai felt when they saw the stars after God made this promise?
- I wonder if you have ever gone out at night to look at the stars?

Activity Options:

1. **Mobile or Story bag:** Each story in the coming weeks lends itself to a symbol, which can be created to hang on a mobile or to fill a story bag that the children can take home at

the end of Lent to remember the promises of God. (The symbols will be a star, a burning bush, stones, a portion of a map or a road, and a cross.) *The symbol for this week is a star.*

- a. **For the Mobile:** You will need the embroidery hoop hanger that you created last week. You will need to be prepared for children who were not here last week, either by helping them create the hanger (directions in week 1), or by having a few hangers prepared for them. Draw a large star for each child on a piece of construction paper or cardstock. Have the child cut out the star (or pre-cut it for younger children). Punch a hole in the top of the star with a hole punch, and string yarn through the hole punch. Have the child decorate the star while you talk about the reflection questions for the story. You could use glitter glue, or simply decorate the star with crayons or markers. Tie the yarn to the embroidery hoop so that it hangs down.
- b. **For the Story bag:** You will need a small cloth bag for each child. (These would be easy to make, or can be found inexpensively at craft stores. Burlap or muslin would be good choices to reflect the colors of the desert.) Prepare the star as above for the mobile, eliminating the hole punch and yarn. Have the child cut out and decorate the star while you talk together about the reflection questions. Add the star to the story bag.

2. Family Stars

- a. **As an Art Project.** Help children think about family by creating star family tree boards. You will need a number of paper stars, and large pieces of dark blue construction paper for sky. Help the children write the name or draw a picture of each person in their family. Help them think beyond their nuclear family to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, even who is in their “friend family.” Watch the board fill up with stars.
- b. **As a Group Activity/Game/Prayer.** You will need a lot of stars. Wooden stars work well for this activity. Have them in a bowl in the center of the circle of children. Have each child take one star. Go around the circle and have them say the name of someone who is part of God’s family (or their own family). After each person has said a name, say together “We give thanks for God’s family!” Repeat as long as the children have energy for this activity.

Getting Closure: Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. You might choose to again remind each child that they are a child of God through the tracing of an invisible cross on their foreheads. (Perhaps this week, the children want to trace invisible *stars* on their foreheads!)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your many promises, and for time for us to remember them through our faith stories. Thank you for the stars, which remind us that we are part of your family!

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