

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – First Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

A good deal of the media around us assures us that if we get it right, wear the latest styles, and gather the most toys we will have arrived. What if there was another way?

**Theme: Seeking Another Way**

**Before:** The season of Lent is primarily an adult discipline. However, children can grasp that they are setting their own boundaries, practice prayer, and noticing things that are helpful to them. A discussion with them would probably surface that playing outside is probably better than too much TV, some foods are better for you than others. Since children can all too easily get trapped into guilt and feeling bad about themselves, a better discipline for children is to encourage positive acts and noticing things for which to be grateful.

If your church will be offering Mite Boxes/offering boxes for children, you will have some information to share with the children about where the money will go. Instead, or in addition to, Mite Boxes, you might consider creating a Gratitude Box to receive pictures the children draw of things that make them glad. The box can be whatever you have handy (even a facial tissue box covered in colored gift wrap). The children can decorate it, if you choose.

Each week in Lent, you can ask the children what they have noticed that made them glad. You can also draw pictures of things you notice. Since it is suggested that each week the children draw something else for which they are grateful, it would be fun if you could vary the art supplies each week. To the extent budget and time constraints permit, you could bring white paper and crayons one week, tissue paper to tear and glue another week, dark construction paper and light colored crayons, felt markers another time, etc. Whatever strikes both your imagination and budget!

**Beginning:** Tell the children that we are beginning the season of Lent that will last for 40 days. We will be trying new things, hearing some new stories, and noticing things that make us glad.

**Praying:** Thank you, God, for the stories we have about Jesus and all the things he did for us. Amen.

**The Story.** Do you know what the word Tempted means? You get an idea, you think it will be fun, and then you think: "Oops! NOT a good idea. I know I am not supposed to do that!"

Jesus was trying to figure out what God wanted him to do. So, Jesus went off by himself where he could think. While he was thinking and praying, a voice came to Jesus and said, what if I turned some of these stones into bread? Bread would be good for hungry people. (pause) Nah, said Jesus. I don't think so. God does not want me to do magic tricks. God wants me to show people what they can do.

Then he the voice came with another idea: What if I jumped off a tall building to show that God takes care of me?(Pause) Nah. People might try to do that themselves and they would get hurt.

A third time, a voice came to him and said, What if I made myself the boss of everything? I could do a really good job. (Pause) Nah! It is not about being a big boss.

Then Jesus had another thought, and this one was a good one: Worship God and serve God. Yeah! That's it, Jesus said.

**Activity: Stretching** One way we can serve God is by taking good care of the bodies he gave us. So let's take care of our bodies, now, by stretching them. Let's make a big circle so each one of us can reach our arms out without touching anyone else. Then let's try some stretching exercises. We could start by reaching our arms up as high as we can and pretend we are picking apples off a tall tree. Then we could spread our arms out wide and swing one way and then the other. (Invite the children to suggest other ways we can stretch out bodies: touching our toes, stretching to the right and then to the left, etc.)

**Activity: Gratitude Box**

Show the children what you have brought to be the Gratitude Box. Invite them to draw pictures of things that make them glad. Tell them that you will be drawing a picture, too. The pictures can then be put in the box.

**Getting Closure:** Ask the children to be noticing things that make them glad so they can draw a picture of them when we come back next week.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for (include things the children and you have noticed.) Help us to notice you this week in the things that make us glad. Amen.

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