

Lesson Plans that Work

Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Young Adults: Lesson Two

Theme: I belong to Jesus Christ, who is God. He teaches me to seek truth.

Background: When we are baptized, we are made one with Jesus Christ, who is God. This doesn't happen in a way we can see, measure, or prove. It happens in a way which is invisible, eternal, and known by faith. Our baptism is the outward sign of an inward grace. We can see baptism happening with our eyes, but our eyes can't see what baptism really means. That involves taking a risk to trust what we cannot see: the grace of God. In baptism, we receive the invisible, eternal power of the Holy Spirit in this mortal, visible world of data and measurement.

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, Bibles for each participant, and at least one image or icon of Jesus for your prayer table. Please try to find images that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of human communities that worship Christ. (If you have materials to teach about baptism, you can include those too.) If you are gathering in person, you will need a bowl of water, water-soluble markers, and coffee filters. If you are gathering a young adult group for the first time, and meeting in person, get blank nametags for people to fill out with name and pronouns.

Before: Open the prayerbook to p. 254, "At Baptism," and place it on the table open to this page. Set up your prayer table with the candle, the dish of water, the image(s) of Jesus, and any materials you may have on hand to teach lessons about baptism. If you are teaching online, pull up the appropriate video on your browser and get ready to screenshare or share the link in the chat. If you are teaching in person, prepare to show the video if you would like to do that, and/or to get the water, markers and coffee filters out.

Beginning: Gather around the prayer table. Begin with any opening routine your group usually uses. If you are a new group, start with the basics: welcome new people, assure people that this is a safe space to be honest and also to pass if you aren't comfortable speaking, tell them that you expect a variety of backgrounds and experiences and we're here to learn with and from each other. If anyone is new, make sure people know where the bathrooms are. Invite people to re-introduce themselves (name, pronouns) and share highs and lows from the past week. Then move into the lesson by asking: Does anyone remember their own baptism? What happens in baptism? What does baptism mean?

Opening Prayer: Light your candle, pick up the prayerbook, and pray:

Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Tell the story: Review the previous week's discussion and share the background above. Then invite everyone to open their Bibles to John 1.

Ask someone to read aloud John 1:1-3. Summarize what it teaches:

- God is the one who began the creation of all life “in the beginning”
- “The Word” in John’s gospel refers to Jesus, who was one with God at the beginning
- All life was made through him, including this planet and all beings

Ask someone to read aloud John 1:4-5. Summarize what it teaches:

- Life itself began all Creation; that life is symbolized here by light
- Life is not conquered by death; light shines in darkness

Ask someone to read aloud John 1:10-11. Summarize what it teaches:

- Jesus is God, but when he was in the world, people did not recognize him

Ask someone to read aloud John 1:12-13. Summarize what it teaches:

- There were a few people who recognized and welcomed God in Jesus Christ when he came in history. Those people began the church. Generations later, here we are.
- In this broken and unjust world, God provides us a way to become children of God - one with Christ and Creation

Reflection Questions: The climate crisis has broken the world just as sin has always broken humanity’s relationships. Jesus Christ, through whom the world was made, comes to take away the sin of the world. But often, Christians are portrayed as not caring about the planet or climate. Sometimes it seems like you are supposed to be either a person of faith or a person of science. But in the Episcopal Church, science and faith go hand in hand. Is that how participants see Christianity generally portrayed in the news, media, or by friends? How do participants understand the interplay of science and faith in their own lives? What would be different if Christians everywhere understood our faith as mandating care for all Creation?

Online or In Person Activity: Play the NASA climate data video found here: (no audio) <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>. Then, watch a five-minute video featuring Dr. Katharine Hayhoe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV-loFFlwAA>). Discuss how she connects her faith to her work for climate justice.

Optional In Person Activity: Provide everyone water soluble markers and coffee filters. Ask them to write or draw on the coffee filter paper the sins of the world that they pray would be removed (poverty, pollution, homelessness) as well as any personal sins they would pray to have removed. Have them fold the filter papers in half for anything they would like to keep private, then put them in the tub of water. Add some of your own (open, unfolded) so they can see the water wash the sins away. Invite participants to reflect on how, even when we pray for our sins to be removed from us, that process is neither fast nor simple. The activity is meant to be a highly sped-up version of the reality that over time, practicing the faith begun at our baptism transforms us and the world. As we immerse ourselves in living differently, we can discover a new way forward.

Gather/Ending: Summarize what Scripture teaches: God made the entire world, and made us healers in it. Science gives us data and measurements that show us that the earth is warming. Faith gives us eyes to see our place as healers in Creation. As baptized people, we need science and faith to understand and act in the world. Ask people to share a sentence or two about what stood out to each of them today.

Prayer: To close, pray for all those gathered, and offer the Prayer at Baptism again.

As people depart, you can invite participants to bring a friend to the next session, if you think that can work for your group.

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