

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: Lesson Five

Theme: Practicing faith means dying and rising with Christ.

Background: As Easter people, we know that the love of God wins out over sin and death in the end. We also know that we are called to walk in the way of Christ which is the way of the cross. Just as Jesus took up his cross, we are also called to take up our cross as we follow him. The climate crisis happening right now is a cross we can't avoid. By accepting it as reality and working to address it, we serve God and seek the way to eternal life.

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, and Bibles for each participant. If you have a crucifix, you can add it to the table as well. If you are in person, you will need clipboards with a piece of paper and a writing instrument for each student.

Before: Prepare your prayer table. Open the prayerbook to p. 99 "A Collect for Fridays" and place it on the table open to this page.

Beginning: Ask the youth how many of them participated in Good Friday worship this year, or any year. Ask them how many participated in Easter Sunday worship this year, or any year. Remind them that on Good Friday, we remember Jesus' death, which happened before his resurrection.

Opening Prayer: Light the candle, tell the students the prayer is adapted from one prayed every Friday by Episcopalians honoring the death of Christ on Good Friday, and pray:

*Almighty God, your beloved Son only entered your joy
After he suffered human pain.
He did not enter into glory
Before he was crucified.
Of your mercy,
show us how to walk the way of the cross,
that we also may find it a way of life and peace,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Tell the story: If you have not yet, or if some students are new, share the "Note on Scripture" in the curriculum overview. Also, share the background above. Then invite the youth to open their Bibles to Matthew 16:21-26.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, Matthew 16:21-23. Summarize what it teaches:

- Jesus knew that he would be killed and rise from the dead, and he told his friends.
- His friend Peter tried to get Jesus to be in denial about it and to stop talking about it, because talking about it made Peter uncomfortable.
- Jesus tells Peter that denying reality comes from Satan, the unholy one.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, Matthew 16:24-26. Summarize what it teaches:

- Jesus teaches Christians that our walk-in life is to imitate his. This means we can't be in denial about the death-dealing forces in our day.
- Christ teaches us that we are meant to die to self and rise again. Christianity isn't comfortable.
- Picking up our cross means entering into, rather than denying, what is difficult. By doing this, we practice faith and discover the meaning of resurrection in our own lives.

Make the connection to the climate crisis:

- The powers of the day (religious and political) killed Christ, because they feared his power. But he rose from the dead to show the power of God over the powers of the day.
- Our time in history is a cross we bear. When we accept the climate crisis as part of our lives, we pick up our cross. That's the first step.
- Addressing and mitigating the climate crisis requires radical personal and societal change. Facing this reality can feel like death and dying. It's easier to be in denial. But as disciples we have faith that on the other side is eternal life.

Reflection Questions: Have you ever had a friend try to make you stay quiet about something that was uncomfortable to discuss? Have you been in a situation like Jesus was with Peter, where you speak a difficult truth despite how hard it is? How easy is it for you to talk about the climate crisis with friends, at home, at church? Does it feel overwhelming, confusing, or scary to talk about? Or is talking about climate justice an ordinary part of your life? What makes it easier or harder to discuss?

In Person or Online Activity: Hard Truths

Either using the clipboard/paper or an online document, ask youth to make a list of everything they do in a typical weekday, starting from when they wake up in the morning and ending when they go to sleep. This is a no-shame list, just meant to surface what their typical day looks like. Then, ask them to go through the list and circle everything on it that supports releasing carbon into the atmosphere. (All transportation that is not carbon-neutral; learning in buildings that are not carbon neutral (including the church); all food that is not carbon-neutral... they will probably need to circle everything.)

Make clear that they are not adults: this is not something they have the power to change... yet. But hopefully the list opens their eyes to how much needs to change for the climate crisis to be averted. And hopefully it gives them hard truths to speak out loud, including to families, friends, church, and leaders. Finally, ask them to look at the list and find the easiest thing to consider shifting. Can they find anything they have the power to change, where change can make a difference? If they can't change anything themselves, what is the easiest thing to discuss and consider changing with an adult?

Gather/Ending:

When we think about how much our everyday lives contribute to the climate crisis, it's easy to be overwhelmed. And it can feel like our whole way of life has to die in order for the earth to

heal. But we know that when we name hard truths, and when we accept difficult realities, we follow in the path of Jesus who spoke truth and accepted reality. And we can trust Jesus to lead us forward when we speak truth. The death and resurrection of Jesus are why we are here today. We can trust Jesus with our lives. Because we trust him, day by day we can turn aside from all that is sin and death, and find our way to newness of life, through his grace.

Prayer: To close, offer the Collect for Fridays again, either in the words of the prayerbook or the adaptation:

Almighty God, your beloved Son only entered your joy

After he suffered human pain.

He did not enter into glory

Before he was crucified.

Of your mercy,

show us how to walk the way of the cross,

that we also may find it a way of life and peace,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Published by the Department of Faith Formation of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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