

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

The gospel for the First Sunday in Lent (Mark 1:9-15) reads much like the one we had the First Sunday after Epiphany (Mark 1:4-11), and the Second Sunday in Lent has the identical lesson as we had two weeks earlier for the Last Sunday after Epiphany! Lent provides us with different lenses, lenses that see the cross in the distance, while reading the same text.

Theme for Lent: Getting Equipped for Ministry Today we will see one way in which Jesus did just that.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus is Baptized, the Spirit descends on him "like a dove," and he hears the affirmation: "You are my Son, loved, and pleasing to me." It appears that he is affirmed and ready for ministry. Yet, immediately the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness where he must spend 40 days taming the temptations that come with power. Only then is Jesus equipped to proclaim the good news. And so we too are invited to notice the temptations that are pulling us

off course, diverting our energy, and impeding our ability to proclaim the good news.

Theme: Temptation and Prayer

Preparing for Lent: Depending on what is compatible with what is happening in your church, you might want to incorporate an extra activity during Lent. If your church has indicated a special offering for Lent, you will probably want to participate in that effort. If you are going to do anything to change the décor in your classroom (adding purple, for example, or simplifying things) you will want to either do it before the children arrive, or invite their participation in the change. Think through suggestions you might want to make to help the children choose to “give up” something, if you think that is appropriate and what could be involved if they choose to “add” something.

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of the Scripture for each child. You will also need copies of The Book of Common Prayer, individual spiral notebooks (fairly small) and/or a class notebook for the prayers the children will compose. You need white paper, pencils with erasers, and colored pencils or crayons or felt markers. Purple cloth to decorate the classroom is optional.

Beginning: Explore what the word “Lent” means to the children in your class. Yes, it is the past tense of “loan.” It is also the season of six weeks symbolizing the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. It is a time of giving up some things to make room for the joy of Easter and baptism. A time of discipline to make us more fit as disciples. Some people give up something for Lent, some take on something. Invite the children to share what they might be thinking about doing. If you are comfortable with it (and if you don’t think it will derail conversation), you might share decisions you are making with the children.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you for the season of Lent. Help us to use this time to become more like what you want us to be. Amen.*

The Story Mark 1:9-15 Invite one child to read verses 9 through 11, the second child verses 12 through 13 and a third child verses 14 through 15. If

the children are not comfortable reading, read the passage yourself making sure all the children can see the passage (either by having made photo copies of the passage in advance or by making sure each child has access to a Bible in the same translation as yours). You could invite the children to read with you 11b and 15.

Reflection Questions:

- What does the word “temptation” mean?
- What kind of things might be a temptation to us?
- I wonder what kinds of things could have tempted Jesus?
- Think about the kinds of things powerful people have (fancy cars, huge houses). Do you suppose Jesus might have wanted any of those things? Why? Why not?
- We think he was in the desert for 40 days -- lots of time to struggle with “wants,” but instead, Jesus took this time to get ready for his work. I wonder what we could do with this time to get ready for our work during Lent?
- What kinds of things are wasting our time, using up our energy?
- What kinds of things might we do that would help us get ready to be ministers?

Prayer Journal: *There are several ways to go about this. One is simply to give each child an inexpensive spiral booklet with lined paper and suggest the child record prayers for their eyes only – to share ONLY if they want to do so. Another option is to create a class prayer book inviting the children to add prayers to share with others – and you add prayers also. A third way is to give each child 5-10 sheets of paper, have them fold them in half, staple them together at the fold and have them decorate the front of it. Then invite them to write some prayers inside.*

Outreach Project: If you decide to take on a class outreach project, you could begin to make plans. If the project is going to involve a time or a place outside your class time, begin to secure the necessary permission and involve the children in planning the activity.

Getting Closure: You might close the class with prayer, telling the children that each week another child may volunteer to do this part. The personal or class prayer journal may act as a resource for them. If the class is going to do an outreach project, that could be a focus of prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, God, for showing Jesus how to get ready to do his work. Thank you for showing us what we need to do to get ready. Amen.*

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."