

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Acts 8:26-40

Background

Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! We are now firmly rooted in the Easter season and we continue to celebrate as Jesus' time with his disciples marches on. We've walked with Jesus through the wilderness into Jerusalem and to the grave. Easter is a season of 50 days in which we name and claim our identity in Christ as an Easter People. Easter is a season of baptism and rebirth. Many of the Scripture passages we will hear are about baptism or about Jesus' sacrifice for us. Many churches use this as a season for baptisms and receptions into the church. It is the season when we re-explore our identity as Christians as it is the key to our faith tradition: that Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose to new life again from the grave. In doing so, Jesus has opened the pathway to everlasting life for all of us. Thanks be to God!

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

During Eastertide, the Old Testament readings are replaced in the lectionary with passages from the book of Acts. This week we encounter a familiar story: that of Philip teaching the Ethiopian Eunuch. In today's passage Philip, one of the original deacons of the church, is told by an angel to go down to a particular road. On the road Philip encounters an Ethiopian court official who is reading Scripture but struggling to understand. Philip answered the angel's prompting and because of that is able to share his knowledge and faith leading to the baptism of the Ethiopian. What would happen if more of us felt able and willing to instruct others in the faith?

Theme: Called to Teach

Before Class: You will need:

- Bibles for each child
- Sheets of 11"X17" paper for each child
- Empty paper towel tubes (1 for each child)
- Popsicle sticks
- Markers
- Ribbon
- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue

Beginning: Have you ever been reading a book and you come across a word or a section that you don't understand? How did you move forward? A good teacher is very helpful when we are trying to make sense of a difficult reading. Today's story is about a man who is struggling to read the bible and it teaches us what can happen when we help others understand the love that God is trying to share with us.

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Children: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Opening Prayer: *Dear God, open our eyes to see the people and places where we might be called to share your love. Amen.*

The Story: Acts 8:26-40

An important part of Jesus' call to his followers was to spread the word about God. Today our story finds Philip, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, following Jesus' call when he encountered a foreign man who needed help understanding the Scripture. Philip used all of the knowledge he had from years of study and of learning from Jesus to instruct this new follower of the faith.

Read Acts 8:26-40 together as a class.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what the Ethiopian thought when Philip approached his chariot.
- I wonder what made the Ethiopian try to read the Scripture.
- I wonder how Philip felt when the Ethiopian asked to get baptized.

*Help for Teachers: Curious children may ask what a eunuch is – especially since our whole lesson today talks about a person who needs help understanding the Scripture he is reading! With younger children you could simply say that a eunuch is a special servant for the queen. With older children it can be more of a challenge. You could simply say that a eunuch is a special servant for the queen who is not allowed to get married or have children. If an older child is mature enough and enquiring further, you could tell him/her that a eunuch has been castrated, which means he has had his testicles removed. (This was done to servant who would be called upon to protect the queen’s chambers – in those days, it was thought safer to ensure that the male servants called to that role would not be tempted.) I would shy away from sharing that with the full class as maturity levels vary. Save that information for individual children who are genuinely curious and pushing for a clear answer. If you share the later information make sure to talk to the child’s parents after class so that they know what was shared. While it would be tempting to shut down these types of questions, that could lead to children who feel their questions are not honored or important. Being a safe teacher for children involves helping them to know that you take all of their questions seriously.

Activity: When Philip encountered the Ethiopian he was reading from the prophet Isaiah. In those days, Scripture was commonly written on what is called a scroll. Do any of you know what a scroll is? A scroll is a roll of parchment or hide upon which Scripture was written. It is likely the Scripture that the Ethiopian was reading was on a scroll. Today we are going to create our own scrolls to take home.

The first thing you'll need to decide is what you want your scroll to say. Think about everything you know about God. What is the most important thing you would want to communicate to someone who is new to the church? Let's brainstorm some ideas.

At this point go to the board and write some of the children's ideas up as they share them. If they need help coming up with ideas you could suggest simple things like: "God Loves You", "Jesus is Lord", or "Alleluia, Christ is Risen!" After listing some ideas on the board it will be time to construct the scrolls.

Give each child a piece of paper, a paper towel tube, and two popsicle sticks. On the left hand edge of the paper the children will tape the paper towel roll. On the right hand edge of the paper they will glue the popsicle sticks.

After assembling the scroll, the children can write their chosen phrase about God on the paper and decorate it. Once the scroll is decorated the kids will roll the scroll from left to right, so that the paper is around the paper towel tube. Once it is tightly rolled they can tie a ribbon around the outside to hold the scroll closed.

Getting Closure: After everyone has finished their scrolls ask them to pass theirs to the person on their right. Going around in a circle, invite the children to open the scroll they are holding and read it out loud to the group.

Closing Prayer: *Holy God, give us courage to share what we know about you with others whom we meet. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Children: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

