

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Acts 4:5-12

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 hear from Peter once again! Last week we heard as Peter preached repentance after he and John healed the crippled beggar. This week we learn that there were further consequences for that miracle and for the increased membership in this fledgling religion. As the church has grown drastically in membership in just a short time, the temple authorities are weary of the apostles and their actions. This week's Scripture finds Peter and John speaking testimony to the Authorities the morning after their arrest.

Theme: What's in a Name?

Before Class: You will need:

- Bibles for each child
- Baby name book or computer with internet access to find name meanings (one site that works well is: <https://www.babble.com/baby-names/>)
- Index Cards
- Pens/Pencils

Beginning:

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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

How many names for Jesus can we think of together? Let's make a list on the board: Jesus, Lord, King of the Jews (was written on the plaque where Jesus was crucified,) Son of God, Messiah, Emmanuel, Brother, Teacher, Rabbi... Jesus has a lot of names! How many names do you have?

Our names are an important part of our identity: they tell the world who we are and allow us to feel known. Our names have special meanings too. Today we are going to think about the importance of our names and how God might use them and us.

Opening Prayer: *Loving Jesus, Holy Emmanuel, help us to know you better with each passing day. Amen.*

The Story: Acts 4:5-12

Last week we learned about the time Peter and John healed the crippled man on the road using the name of Jesus. This week we learn that Peter and John faced consequences with the religious authorities for that healing. They were put in jail for proclaiming beliefs that were different than the beliefs of the temple authorities. Much like Jesus was crucified for claiming to be God's Son, his followers were now getting in trouble for speaking the truth

about Jesus' resurrection. This made the temple authorities nervous because a lot of people were turning their faith to Jesus.

Today's story comes the morning after John and Peter have been put in jail for preaching about Jesus.

Read Acts 4:5-12 together as a class.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what made Peter brave enough to speak to the officials like he did.
- I wonder what the officials thought about Peter's speech.
- I wonder what the most important part of the passage was to you.

Activity: Names are important. When people call us by name we pay attention. Sometimes, when we are in trouble or when our parents are serious they might call us by our full name. When we are baptized the priest calls us by name saying: "_____ you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own, forever." Our name is an important part of who we are.

Jesus' name is very important, too. At Christmas time we hear a lot about Jesus' name. We hear in the Scriptures that the Angel Gabriel tells Mary she is to bear a son and she should name him Emmanuel, which means "God with Us." On Christmas Day, we read in the book of the prophet Isaiah, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Jesus' name tells us a lot about him and what he has come to do.

Our parents were very deliberate when they chose our names as well. Today we are going to look up our names and learn what they mean. After we have done that we will create a prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, the way the Holy Spirit made Peter brave enough to speak to the Temple Authorities in today's story.

To start out, let's practice by looking up Peter's name.

Ask for a volunteer to look up the name Peter in the baby name book.

The name Peter means "Rock."

Does anyone remember how Peter got his name? In the Gospel of John, we hear of Simon coming to Jesus and Jesus renamed him 'Cephas' which is translated 'Peter.' (John 1:42) Later, when Jesus asked the disciples who people said he was Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of God..." and Jesus responded by saying that Peter was "the rock upon which I will build my church." (Matthew 16:15-18.) Jesus remained Peter when he first met him and years later said that Peter (whose name means Rock) that he is the "rock" upon which the whole church will be built. Peter's name is very important!

Now, each of you take an index card. At the top write your name and then look up your name in the baby book (or on the website) and write the meaning of your name on the index card.

*Some of the children may have unique names that parents have made up or spelled creatively. Googling these names before class could be helpful. Oftentimes modern names can be traced to a traditional root, which yields results in the name searches. For children with names spelled creatively, try searching for a traditionally spelled variant of the name.

** For those with extremely creative names, for which no origin can be found: this can be an opportunity to "create their own name meaning." Ask the child some things about themselves. Maybe they know a story about why their parents chose that name. Help the child to create a meaning for their unique name. Ask them if they know the story of their name as well.

Getting Closure: After all of the children have completed their index card with name meaning, invite them to go around the circle sharing what they have learned about their name.

After everyone has shared about his/her name, ask the class to brainstorm what special gifts the Holy Spirit might give to them based on their name.

Some will be more challenging than others. This is a great time to get creative and to work together! Are there special skills or talents a child has that could influence the gift he/she might receive?

Closing Prayer: *Risen Christ, We praise your Holy Name and thank you for teaching us more about who we are. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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