

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Acts 4:32-35

Background

Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Last week we celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord after emerging from the Lenten season of waiting and watching. We've walked with Jesus through the wilderness into Jerusalem and to the grave. But Easter isn't over with just that one (glorious) festival celebration. No! 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 reexplore 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. Today's passage is a short recollection of the unity of the new church. The church in this post-resurrection time period faces persecution and their unity as a body of faith will ensure their survival. This passage tells us a lot about the mission and ministry of the early church. We learn that the mission of the church was living into Christ's call to '...love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' (Luke 10:27) In doing these things, we hear that no member of the early church was in need despite not claiming private ownership of land or goods – this sounds in keeping with Jesus' frequent call

to leave ones possessions and follow him. This passage invites us to trust in God and to follow the Truth as we learned in and from Christ Jesus.

Theme: One Heart and Soul

Before Class: You will need:

- Bibles for each student
- Make a large heart out of a piece of poster board. Hang the large heart on the board at the front of your classroom before the children arrive.
- Smaller hearts made from a regular sized piece of constructions paper (one for each student)
- Markers
- Tape

Beginning:

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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

So what now? Jesus has been raised; the disciples are overjoyed. What now? The work of the disciples didn't end when Jesus came back to life; in a lot of ways it was just beginning. The Good News that Jesus was alive again was news that needed to be spread far and wide. The only way to grow the community of believers is to share the good news of God in Christ. We do this by telling people about Jesus and by our actions in the world (sharing kindness, love, generosity) Where have you seen examples of the love of God shared in the world this week? (Give them time to respond.) Let's give thanks for that love and pray together.

Opening Prayer: *Dear Lord, we thank you for all the ways you are raised to new life each and every day. Help us to love one another and spread love through the world. Amen.*

The Story: Acts 4:32-35

Today's story comes from the Book of Acts, also known as the Acts of the Apostles. In this book we hear stories from the early church as it was forming in the time after the resurrection of Jesus. In today's story we hear about the importance of togetherness and harmony in the church. Harmony doesn't mean that everything has to be the same – like in music, harmony means that everyone working together doing their part create a something that fits together.

Read Acts 4:32-35 together twice through. You could invite two different children to read.

After the first time through ask the following questions:

- I wonder what surprised you about the story today.
- I wonder what you heard God say in the story.

Now read the story a second time through with a different reader. After the second time through ask the following review questions:

- I wonder what you heard the second time that was new.
- I wonder what the most important part of this story is.

Activity: Today we are going to consider what it means to be of “one heart and soul.” In the passage from Acts we hear that all of the believers were of “one heart and soul.” Does this mean that everyone in the early church agreed about everything? No. But it does mean that the people in the early church understood the importance of prioritizing the big things and overcoming obstacles that could divide them.

Another way of looking at this would be to think of it as all of their hearts picking the most important thing(s) and focusing their attention only on those things.

Today we are going to do an experiment to see what our modern “heart” would look like if we focus on having “one heart and soul.”

Pass out the smaller hearts, one to each student. Each student will also need a marker.

In the heart in front of you I want you to write the things that are most important in your life. Consider all areas of life: school, home, church, etc. Take the next few minutes and consider the people, places, and things that are most important to you.

Give the children approximately 5 minutes to write in their hearts. You can gage when they are ready to move on.

Next, go around in a circle and invite each student to share what he/she wrote in her/his heart.

Now, ask the children what similarities they heard. What were the common things shared between all/most of the class members? Family, friends, God, etc. As children identify those things invite them to go to the front and write them inside of the big heart.

As a church, just as individuals, we must take stock of the things that bring us joy and light our hearts on fire. The difference is, while individuals can make personal choices and go out and follow whatever things they deem worthy, the church must consider the heart and mind of God and of the collective conscience of their members. As a church our primary focus should be God, but, as we know, God also called on us to be the Body of Christ in this world. If we are the body of Christ then it is up to us to make sure that the focus of the church, or its mission, are centered on the love of Jesus being shared with the world.

Do you think our class heart keeps that focus? If not, what do we need to add/change about our heart to correct it?

Getting Closure: After completing the class heart take the opportunity to invite the children to take turns reading the list of things written on it out loud. Ask the children if they think the focus of your church matches with their list? Are their examples they can offer? Invite the children to share this

heart with the leaders in the church to help illustrate the issues/ideas that are important to the children.

Closing Prayer: *God of Love and Life, you have brought us together as one church and called on us to have one heart and soul. Help us to keep our hearts always focused on you. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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