

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 15:1-8

Background: Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these Scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

We have work to do, but not as lone rangers. We are called to stay connected to the vine, faithfully and courageously reaching out, securely connected to the vine of life. We will probably experience some very painful pruning. Later, often much later, we will experience the fruit. Abiding in that vine, trusting in it, and accepting its confines, we will learn to want the appropriate things and be free to ask for them. The work we are given to do, we will be able to do joyfully to the glory of God.

Theme: I am the Vine, You are the Branches

Before Class: You will need copies of the Scripture or Bibles and of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP).

Decide how you will “create” a vine that goes all around your space. Using the following sketch as a guide, you could make photocopies of the pattern

or show it to the children and invite them to create their own vine. The proposed project invites the children to see the vine as Jesus, and to create a branch for each of their families and friends with a leaf for each person.

Possible materials for this project: brown or green chenille stems and construction paper leaves, floral wire would work. Brown construction paper for lengths of branches and leaves cut from green construction paper would work.

If you have a small enough church to make this a possibility, create the vine where all who come out of church can see it -- cut sufficient branches and leaves for each family in your church -- and have the children in your class help people, after church, place their branches on the church vine. Obviously, you would need to check this out with the leaders of your church before launching the project.

Beginning: Ask the children if they have seen a vine and could describe it to you. (If there are vines growing on or near your church, you could even go out and look at them.) See if any of the children know of a vine growing in their own yard. Tell the children that people who lived when Jesus was telling our story all had not only seen vines, but most of them had vines growing near their houses.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, God, for the stories we have from Jesus that help us understand the love you have for us through Jesus. Amen.*

The Story: Tell the children that today's Bible story is John 15:1-8 and ask them to find the passage in the Bible. Before asking for volunteers to read, point out some words that they may not be able to define. Say the words, one at a time, see if the children want to define the words, and if not, offer a definition. Abide: A fancy word for live. You could say, "I abide with my family at my house." Prune: Yes, a kind of fruit, but it also means cutting away stuff that is no longer producing. We prune the dead branches off our trees so those that are alive will be even healthier. We also prune things that are interfering with the work we have to do. (For example, stop eating junk

food and eat stuff that will help us stay healthy.) Glorified: Means to be exalted and honored; to be praised.

Ask for volunteers to read the passage.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in this story?
- Let's see if we can figure out where we are in this passage. If Jesus were here, telling us this story, who would we understand is "the vine?" (Jesus.)
- Who are the branches?
- Who might some other branches be? (Parents, siblings, extended family, friends, community members, teachers)
- What other branches are on the Jesus vine? (The other members of our community.)

Activity: Show the children the materials you have assembled to make a vine that will either go up around your class space or possibly in a central place in your church. Invite the children to help you create the vine.

Ask each child to create their vine and branches, cutting out a leaf for each person and positioning it on their branch.

Getting Closure: Make sure each child has access to a BCP. Tell the children to turn to page 383 and look at the list at the top of the page. This is the fourth Sunday of this project, so some will notice which intercession we will look at today: "the concerns of the local community." What ARE the concerns of our community? (Weather-related concerns like drought or floods; people needing jobs, people living alone and lonely.) Accept what the children offer and write them down.

Closing Prayer: *Pray for the concerns the children have offered then add "Amen."*

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.