

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Background

Lent has begun and now we begin our long walk toward the resurrection light. It is often said that we cannot experience the joy of Easter without first experiencing the pain of Good Friday; this is true also of walking through the season of Lent. In Lent we search ourselves and face, head on, the vices that separate us from God. During this season we dedicate ourselves, through discipline and prayer, to growing closer to God and letting go of the things that distract us. In Year B of our Lectionary Cycle, the current lectionary year, we are blessed to experience a journey of covenant with God. Each week in this Lenten season we explore a text from the Hebrew Scriptures that focuses on an aspect of covenant with God. Through our exploration of the historical covenants with God we will seek to open for the children ways in which God invites us into covenant today.

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

This week we travel further into the book of Genesis to learn about God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah (Formerly: Abram and Sarai.) Abram and Sarai were faithful followers of God. For many years Abram and Sarai followed where God sent them. God promised to make Abram's off-spring "as numerous as the stars in the heavens" (Genesis 15:5) but Sarai's womb remained barren. Now, in their old age, God makes a new covenant with Abram. As a sign of the covenant God changes their names to Abraham and Sarah and, once again, promises that Sarah will have a child – a son. What we do not hear in this passage is that Abraham and Sarah laugh in response to God's promise, they cannot believe that in their old age they will finally have the child they have desired so long. However, God is, indeed, faithful to this promise. This week we learn the importance of a name. Just as we are

called by name at our baptism, God calls Abraham and Sarah by a new name before sending them into a new calling: to be the parents of a new nation.

Theme: God Will Call You By Name

Before Class:

1. Make copies of today's Scripture sheet for each student.
2. You will need a light playground ball for the first game.
3. Decide before class if you will have the children search for their name meaning on the internet, or if you will do it in advance and print results.
 - If the children will do the search, you will need access to a computer with internet access during your lesson.
 - If you do the search, make sure to search and print information in advance of class time.
4. You will need lined paper for writing for each student as well as a pen or pencil.
5. Bring copy a of the activity sheet from the end of this lesson plan for each student.

Beginning: After welcoming each child by name, play a short name game with the class. 1. Arrange the group in a circle, spread out around your classroom. 2. Give one person the ball and tell them the goal is to toss the ball around the circle so each person gets the ball only once and so that no one drops the ball. The trick is, they cannot say who is getting the ball. They have to toss it to someone who is not directly next to them as quickly as possible. 3. After the first try (either when the ball is dropped or when it gets to each circle member) ask them if the activity was easy or difficult. Can they think of a way to make it easier? What if you called out the name of the person to whom you are going to throw the ball? Let's try that! 4. You start this time. Take the ball, say the name of a person in the circle and toss the ball to that person. They should then say the name of the person to whom they are going to toss the ball. 5. The goal is, once again, to get the ball to every class member as quickly as possible. 6. Generally, the objective is to pass the ball around the circle without dropping it. If the ball is dropped, the group restarts until completed without dropping. 7. After

making it around the circle with names attached, ask them if it was easier or more challenging when their name was called prior to receiving the ball.

Opening Prayer: *Holy God, you called your son Jesus by name when he was baptized before sending him out into the dessert to be tempted. Help us to hear you calling our names and to answer your call when it comes. Amen.*

The Story: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Select 4 people to help tell the story today. Two students will read (God and Narrator) and 2 students will act (Abram and Sarai.) The script is found at the end of this lesson.

Explain to Abram and Sarai that their job will be to act out what they hear the Narrator and God dictating.

Your role will be to illustrate the name changes. This can be done by writing Abram and Sarai on the board in your room and when God announces the name changes you can dramatically erase and replace those words with Abraham and Sarah – or write all 4 names on separate sheets of paper before class and hold them up at the appropriate moments in the text.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder how Abram felt when God changed his name.
- I wonder what Sarai thought when she heard that God was going to give her a child at the age of 99 years old.
- I wonder what their friends thought when Abraham and Sarah announced they were going to be called by a different name.
- I wonder why God changed their names.
- I wonder what why God chose Abraham and Sarah.

Activity: Today our story is about another one of God's Covenant's with the people. Do you remember what sign God sent to mark the covenant we learned about last week? (The rainbow.)

The sign God gives the people today is to give new names to Abram and Sarai. For our activity today, we will learn more about our names, what makes them special, and how our names remind us of what God calls us to in this life.

Pair the children up in teams of 2 (or 3 if there is an uneven number.) The students should start by writing their name across the top of their sheet of paper.

Next, invite the children to share with one another anything they know about their name: is there a special reason their parents chose that name? Is there something about their name that they think is neat? Is there someone famous who shares their name to whom they look up? The children should write down some of the important parts that stand out about their name from this initial conversation.

Next, give the children the print out of their name background (if you chose to print it in advance) or invite the groups, one at a time, to come to the computer and enter their names into the www.babynames.com search bar. As they search their name, invite them to write down the origin, meaning, and any important facts they might find under the notes section.

*Note: some more modern names may not be found in the search engine. For those names a google search entering the child's name and "name meaning" may yield results. For others which are more creative or original names, it may be helpful to consider the elements of the name and if other words have gone into creating their name then looking at the meaning of those words.

After each child has had the opportunity to look up information about his or her name and to share familial information with his or her group, it is time for each student to take a moment and prayerfully consider what their name means to them, personally. They should complete the sentence sheet:

My name is _____ and my name is special to me because _____.

Getting Closure: After all of the students have completed their sentence go around the group allowing each child to share his or her sentence with the group. Finally, remind the children that God calls each of us by name and we are Gods.

Closing Prayer: *God, you love us like a parent. Open our ears to hear you when you call us by name. Amen.*

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Narrator: When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him,

God: 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.'

Narrator: Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

God: 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.'

As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

My Name is:

My Name is Special to Me Because:



Genesis 17:1-7; 15-16

This week we learned about God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah. In making the covenant with them, God gives them new names to mark them as God's own. We recognize that our names are important and that God calls us by name and recognizes us as beloved before sending us out in service.

"I have called you by name and you are mine." Isaiah 43:1