

Lesson Plans for Younger 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 offspring "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. You will need a male and female figurine for the story. 2. You will need 4 papers each with one of the following names written in large, clear letters: Abram, Abraham, Sarai, Sarah 3. Supplies for the activity:

- Die Cut Letters. (you'll need enough of the letters to spell each child's name.)
- A copy of the cloud page from the end of the lesson
- Yarn
- Wire coat hangers
- One-hole punch
- Glitter, stickers, sequins
- Glue
- Scotch Tape

Beginning: After welcoming each child by name, play a short name game with the class.

1. Have all of the children sit in a circle on the floor. 2. Go around the circle and invite each child to say their name and one word that describes them that starts with the same letter as their name. (Examples: Hannah – Happy, Elijah – Excited, Stuart – Silly, etc...) 3. Invite the children to clap their hands on their knees then clap their hands together to set the pace. (A slow pace!) 4. Give the children an example using your own name. Say your name as everyone claps on their knees, then your adjective when everyone claps their hands together. 5. Go around the circle until everyone has taken a turn. You may need to help the children think of an adjective that starts with a letter that “sounds like their name’s first sound.”

Tell the children that today we will learn about two people who God called by name and who were special to God, just like we are all special, too.

Opening Prayer: *Holy God, you called your son Jesus by name when he was baptized. 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

For today's story you will need 2 figures (wood cut figure from Godly Play or playmobile plastic figurines will work.) You will also need 4 pieces of paper, each with one of the 4 names of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah written on them in large letters. Tell the story as outlined below or use your own words:

There once was a married couple named Abram and Sarai. Show the children the two figurines.

Abram and Sarai were very loving people and they followed God all of their lives. They always wished they would have children, but they never had a baby. Sometimes this made them sad, but they trusted God and God's plan for their lives.

When Abram was a very, very, very old man, God came to Abram and said to him: "I am God. Be a good person and follow my commandments. If you do this, I will make sure you have a very big and happy family."

Abram was very surprised when God said this to him so he bowed down before God. Make the male figurine bow down.

God was so pleased with Abram's faithfulness that God said to Abram: "I am going to make you a promise: Your big, happy family that I will give you is going to start a whole new country of people. All of the people will be part of your family. And to mark this promise I am making with you, I am going to change your name from Abram (show the children the paper with the name Abram on it) to Abraham (now show the children the paper with the name

Abraham written on it.) Help the children to follow letter by letter until they see the difference between the two names.

Abraham was very pleased and he stood up and thanked God. Then he asked, “How will my descendants form a nation, I have no children.”

God said to Abraham and Sarai, “I will keep my promise! I will bless Sarai and you will have a son together. From today and forever more Sarai (show the children the paper with the name Sarai on it) will be called Sarah, (show the children the paper with the name Sarah on it and help them follow letter by letter to see the difference) and she will be the mother of all the people of God.”

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 baby 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 to be the beginning of the nation.

Activity: Our names are important parts of who we are. God calls Abraham and Sarah by new names to mark the special time when God made a promise to them. Last week we learned about a time when God used a rainbow to mark a special promise God made to Noah and all of the earth. God marks God’s promises with special reminders so we will always know God keeps God’s promises.

Today we are going to make special mobiles with our names so we always remember to listen when God calls to us.

Spread out the die cut letters on the table and invite the children to find the letters that make up their names. Some of the children, who are less familiar with their letters, may need help.

After the children have all of the letters in their names, help them to punch a single hole at the top of each letter.

Next, the children will decorate their letters so they look “special.”

After the letters are decorated, help each child suspend the letters, in order, from the wire coat hangers using the yarn.

Finally, let each of the students cut out his/her cloud from the activity sheet and tape it over the triangle at the top of the coat hanger.

Getting Closure: Have each of the students hold up their coat hangers to show their mobile to the class. Ask them why we made mobiles using our names today. Do they remember why God changed Abram and Sarai’s names? Finally, remind the children that God calls each of us by name and we are God’s.

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