

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Just prior to our reading today, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they offer the various responses that they have heard from others. "But who do YOU say that I am?" asks Jesus. Who are you following? Today, Jesus once again teaches those around him who he is, therefore, what is ahead for the Son of God and what that means for the followers of Jesus.

Theme: Take Up Your Cross

Before Class: You will need Bibles for the children, copies of the cross (found on the last page) for each child and art supplies.

Beginning: Invite the children to gather together and ask them if they remember what season we are in at this time in the church year. Last week they explored what the season of Lent was and they may have talked a little bit about what they were giving up or taking on during Lent. Ask if they have done anything special this week to mark Lent in their home.

Opening Prayer: *Gracious Lord, we ask you to guide us today as we discover more about who you are and how we are to follow you in our lives each day. Amen.*

The Story: Mark 8:31-38 The theme of Lent this year is “Getting Equipped for Ministry” – getting ready to do the work we have been given to do. Jesus, also, was getting equipped for his ministry. And he was helping his friends get ready, too.

Ask the children to find this passage in their Bibles. (Mark 8:31-39). Ask them, “Which section of the Bible contains this book?” (Tell them it’s in the New Testament, in the gospels.) Ask for volunteers to read. You can have one child read, or ask for a few volunteers and ask them to read one or two verses at a time.

Reflection Questions:

- Jesus began to teach people openly about what was going to happen to him. What does Jesus say is going to happen to him? (He predicts rejection, then death and resurrection.)
- What is going on between Peter and Jesus in verses 32 and 33? (Peter wants to protect Jesus from the future that Jesus predicts, and Jesus tells Peter he is getting in the way.)
- Jesus then tells the crowd that “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” What do you think he means? What would it mean to take up our cross and follow Jesus? (If we want to follow Jesus, we have to be willing to let our old lives go and begin to take up the way of Jesus)

Take Up Your Cross:

Invite the children to explore the meaning of “taking up your cross and following Jesus” by developing their own “crosses.” In these 40 days of Lent,

as we give things up, take things on, or change how we are living our lives, how might those be ways that we are following Jesus?

Give them the print out of the cross illustration below and allow them to illustrate what it might mean to take up their cross to follow Jesus.

If they are having a difficult time thinking about this or figuring out what to do, invite the children to think about what it means to each of them to be a Christian. What are the hard parts? What are the comforting parts? Here are some additional questions that may help them as they ponder what it means to them.

Can you think of times when following Jesus will:

- make you seem odd to friends at school?
- will cause you to have to make difficult choices?
- invite you to be who you really are, using your gifts and talents?
- help you discover what is really true, valuable, and beautiful?
- maybe even change your priorities?

Getting Closure: Once they have spent some time with the activity, invite them to share either their illustration or some of the things that they came up with as they did their own cross.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for showing us the ways to follow you. Thank you for loving us as we learn how to do what you call us to do. Amen.*

Mark 8:31-38

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get

behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

