

Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 15:9-17

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

God's love: God's love for us, enabling us to love God. God's joy in us making joy complete. We are invited into this vast collaboration of love, invited to be part of God's team, considered friends, no longer servants. God has, so to speak, looked each one of us in the eye and said, “You did not choose me but I chose you.” Chosen, by God, to bear the fruit of love.

Theme: Abide in my Love

Before Class: You will need enough Bibles or copies of the Scripture for everyone.

Beginning: Tell the class that today's reading is a continuation of the reading we had last week. Jesus is getting the disciples ready for their Commencement. Our task is to notice what this final- exam cram session has to say to us.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, God, that the disciples paid close attention to Jesus, learned what he had to teach them, and then went out to tell others so these stories and this truth comes down through the centuries to us, here and now. Amen.*

The Scripture: John 15:9-17 Tell the class we will read the passage through once, and then break the reading into three sections for discussion. Invite a volunteer to read the entire passage, with the rest of the group following along. Allow a moment of silence after the reading.

Then ask a different volunteer to read verses 9-11.

Reflection Questions for verses 9-11:

- Jesus is talking to his “friends.” Who else could Jesus be talking to here? (hint...us)
- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves us as God loves him?
- How does it make you feel that Jesus is inviting us to “abide” in that love - to expect it?
- What would it mean to abide in that love?
- What does verse 11 say to us? How would we describe Jesus’ joy?
- How would we know that his joy is in us?

When you are ready to move on, ask for a volunteer to read verses 12-14

Reflection Questions for verses 12-14:

- “To love one another as I have loved you.” Is this mission impossible?
- How could we love as completely as Jesus does?
- How it is energizing and empowering to try to love as Jesus does? (How will Jesus help us do this work?)

- The disciples have graduated from being “servants” to being “friends.” How do we see ourselves – servants, friends, or a mixture of both?

When the group is ready, ask for another volunteer to read verses 15-17.

Reflection Questions for verses 15-17:

- “You did not choose me but I chose you.” How is this speaking to you today? Although many of us can name a time we specifically chose to be Christians, discuss how it makes us feel to know God got there ahead of us.
- “The father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.” How do we reconcile the times we asked for something that we truly believed would be in God’s name – and it did not happen?
- How do we balance our conviction that God loves us, wants what is best for us, and yet appears not to intercede? Share what helps us remain faithful although we appear to have a God who is not into micro management.

Getting closure: Take a moment to hold up in praise our God whose love for us is as great as the love Jesus receives. Hold up in thought those whom we have the capacity to really love – because God first loved us. Hold up the challenge of our charge to receive this love, delight in it, and then turn to share it with others.

Closing Prayer: *Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter (BCP, p. 225) O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love toward you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

John 15:9-17

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.