

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

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

We've all heard of the 10 Commandments. Many of the children who will be in class today will have at least heard of the phrase "The 10 Commandments," but how many of them will know where they came from or understand what they mean for our lives today? Jerome Berryman calls his Godly Play lesson for the 10 Commandments "The 10 Best Ways" as a way of translating for young children the understanding that these rule were meant to instruct the people of Israel in a philosophy that would help them to live as their best selves. The people were wandering in the desert, following Moses out of slavery in Egypt, searching for the land flowing with milk and honey they had been promised. The people were getting tired of wandering and searching and started to rebel against Moses and against God. They had put up with enough and wanted to find immediate gratification for their

needs. This made God sad and perplexed Moses, who felt ill equipped to get the people back on track. So God spoke to Moses and gave him these 10 straightforward, but deeply challenging rules to assist the people in following God and honoring the “dignity of every human being.”

Theme: Follow God’s Way

Before Class:

1. You will need 10 hearts cut out of felt to help tell the story.
2. Materials for the Activity:
 - 1 copy of the activity sheet for each child.* optional: cut out the squares on the activity sheet for each child.
 - You will need temper paint and a brush.
 - Wet wipes for the children’s hands.
 - 1 Piece of construction paper for each child
 - Scissors and a glue stick for each child

Beginning: Ask the children if there are rules they follow at school or at home that help to keep them safe and on the right path. After they have listed some of those rules, ask why: “I wonder why we have to follow rules.” Explain to the class: “Today we are going to read the 10 Commandments. Commandments are like special rules. How many of you have heard of the 10 Commandments?” (wait for a show of hands) “Who can tell us about the 10 Commandments?” (Allow some of the students to explain about the 10 Commandments as best as they are able. If they are not able, explain the to the children about God sending the people rules that will help them live in the best way they can.)

Opening Prayer: *Holy God, Strengthen us each day to follow you. Amen.*

The Story: Exodus 20:1-17

Take the 10 hearts you cut out of felt. With the naming of each commandment put one heart on the table or floor (depending on if you are sitting at a table or on the floor) in front of you.

A servant of God named Moses was leading God's people in the wilderness. They had traveled a very long way. The people were tired of traveling and they started to behave badly. They were not listening to Moses and they were not listening to God. God decided to help Moses by giving Moses 10 rules for the people to listen to and follow. God called these the 10 Commandments.

♥ Put God first.

This meant that God wanted the people to pray every day and remember how much God loves them.

♥ Only worship God

This rule was because God didn't want the people to get confused and to think that things were as important as God. How can things be as important as God? Things cannot love us!

♥ Use God's name respectfully

Sometimes the people would say God's name in a mean way and this made God sad. God wanted the people to only say God's name in nice ways.

♥ Take one day, every week, to rest from work and play with God.

God saw that the people were working very hard and they did not take the time to pray or rest as much as they should. When God made the world, God took a day off at the end. God decided it was important for the people to rest one day, every week. God thought this would be a good way to spend time with the people.

♥ Listen to your parents

God noticed that the people were not listening to their parents or doing what their parents asked them to do. God knew the parents loved their children and God wanted all of the children to be kind to their parents

♥ Don't hurt people

Sometimes the people would hurt each other to be mean. This made God very sad. God wanted all of the people to love each other.

♥ Don't cheat

When the people were together, sometimes they would do things they should not do. This was unfair to the people who loved them. God said the people should always follow the rules and behave nicely.

♥ Don't take things that belong to other people.

It is not nice to take things that do not belong to us! That is called stealing. Sometimes the people would take other people's belongings and that caused lots of fights.

♥ Always tell the truth

Sometimes the people were afraid to tell the truth so they would make up a story instead. Telling a lie was not respectful to other people and God wanted the people to say the truth always, even if it would be hard to say.

♥ Be thankful for the things you have

God loved the people and blessed them always. God wanted the people to be happy with what they had so they would not try to take things that belonged to other people.

After Moses told the people about the new Commandments from God the people tried very hard to follow the rules. Following God's rules made the people happier and the world a better place.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why God made the first commandment to put God first.
- I wonder which commandment is the most important.

- I wonder if any of the commandments are harder than the others.
- I wonder why God gave the commandments to the people.

Activity: Who remembers the signs or reminders God sent the people to remind them of their covenant with God in our last two stories? (The Rainbow and changing Abram and Sarai's names...) What is different about those signs and today's covenantal sign? (The 10 Commandments are physical slates with literal rules to follow. They are concrete and tangible.) God saw the need for us to have something we could actually touch and feel to teach us the law.

Today we will make a reminder we can take home. We will make a page of the 10 commandments to share with our families. Even though God made these Commandments many, many years ago – they are still rules we should remember and follow today.

Let each child select a piece of construction paper. Next, go around and you will help each child make a set of handprints on the lower half of the page, in the center of the paper.

Help each child to wipe the extra paint from their hands.

While the paint is drying, allow the children to cut the boxes out on the activity page.

After the boxes are cut out, the children can put a bit of glue on the back of them and place them above each finger on their hand print picture.

Getting Closure: Once all of the pictures are complete, help the children name all of the commandments again – enumerating them on their fingers. Remind the children that God sent the Commandments to help all of the people, even us today, to know the best way to live.

Closing Prayer: *Dear God, You sent the Commandments to help your people to follow you. Help us to hear your commandments with new ears and to use them in our lives today. Amen.*

1. Put God First 	6. Don't Hurt People 
2. Only Worship God 	7. Don't Cheat 
3. Use God's Name Respectfully 	8. Don't Take Other People's Things 
4. Take a Rest & Prayer Day Every Week 	9. Tell the Truth 
5. Listen to Your Parents 	10. Be Thankful for What You Have 