Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Advent 3 (B)
New Testament: John 1:6-8, 19-28

BACKGROUND
Advent means “coming.” The coming of the baby Jesus, God among us in human flesh. The coming of Christ again "the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. In between those two great comings is God’s constant longing for each of us to come to God, to love God, and to let God love us. "Be alert." Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? For the ways God will choose to get our attention this season. For those moments when we notice that our ways are not in alignment with God’s ways. For those shimmering glimpses of the Kingdom of God.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK’S READING
The Gospel of John tells the story of John the Baptist from a slightly different perspective. Who is this John? John understands he is a messenger of the light – not the light itself. Those in charge of keeping the faith are confused. Who is this man? Is this the long-awaited Messiah – or Elijah – or a prophet? John sees his mission as baptizing, and pointing to the one who is coming after him.

THEME
Who Are You?

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the Bible or of the scripture for each person.

BEGINNING
Gather and discuss the past week and getting ready for Christmas.

OPENING PRAYER
Help us, Dear Lord, as we struggle to balance the demands on our time and our desire to pull within and just be with you. Help us to see in the Scripture what you have for us today in our community. We ask this through your blessed son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE STORY: JOHN 1: 6-8, 19-28
Invite one person to read aloud the entire passage. Then pause for questions.

If people are not sure about what a Pharisee is (and they get pretty bad press) it might be helpful to think of them as religious leaders committed to keeping their religion pure –

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letting no false teaching corrupt it. Notice their struggle to find something orthodox about this John the Baptist.

After questions have been addressed, ask yet another person to read the passage aloud and move on to the reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What stands out for you in this passage?
- What adjectives would you use to describe John as revealed in this passage?
- How would you describe the Pharisees?
- What would it be like if you were a Pharisee. Think about how it might feel to be protecting the faith from what appears to you to be heresy.
- How might it have felt to have resonated with John's message, and realize the risk that following him would entail?
- If someone asked you, "Who are you?" how might you describe yourself? As a Christian, how might you answer that question?

GETTING CLOSURE

During Advent, the theme we are reminded of is staying awake, alert, and ready. There is a sense of joyous expectancy. We are caught between the first coming and the expected second coming of Christ. In what small way might we prepare ourselves, keep alert, and not be distracted?

CLOSING PRAYER

Some people may remember the gospel for today was once called the "post-communion gospel" (John 1: 1-14). Close by having someone read that portion. Or you could close with spontaneous prayer.

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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