Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Proper 15 (B)
New Testament: John 6:51-58

BACKGROUND
During this "Ordinary Time" our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
Nutritionists will assure us that we are what we eat. Jesus, long before nutritionists, told us that we become what we eat. And so Jesus invites us to become one with him by eating his flesh and by drinking his blood. Our task is to trust that "whoever eats this bread will live forever."

THEME
We Become What We Eat

BEFORE CLASS
You will need a Bible, paper, pencils, and some ideas of things to look for on a scavenger hunt. It would be good to go outside, if at all possible, for this session. A simple snack would be good with lemonade or fruit juice.

BEGINNING
Ask the children if any of them have been to a place the rest of us have not visited. To get them started, tell them of a place you have been that they might not have been -- a place you went on a vacation, another town you have lived in, for example. See if you can get each child to tell of a place he or she has been that the rest of you have not visited. Maybe it was a place they used to live or a place they went on vacation. It can be as simple as a home in your town that no one else in the group has been in. The idea is to show how hard it is to describe a place to those who have not seen it. Tell the children that now they have a better idea of how hard it was for Jesus to describe – in ways people could really understand – what it was like to be with God and to know what heaven is like.

OPENING PRAYER
Thank you, God, for loving us and for sending Jesus to help us understand that you love us and want to be in our lives. Amen.

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THE STORY: JOHN 6:51-58

Read John 6: 51-58 to the children.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what you heard in this story.
- How does it sound to us when Jesus tells us to "eat his flesh"? (Accept what they offer.)
- Why do we suppose Jesus did this? (Jesus knows that if we choose to stay connected to him, Jesus can work in us, to help us and strengthen us.)
- Ask the children what they would say to this statement: "You are what you eat." (Draw out of them the difference between eating nothing but junk food and eating a balanced diet.)
- What do we think Jesus meant in verse 38: "The one who eats this bread will live forever"? Does he mean we will live to be thousands of years old? If not, what do we think he means? (We will die, yes, but go on to live forever with Jesus.)
- Ask the children if they know how the mother sheep knows her own lambs – even when there are many in the flock? (She recognizes the smell of her own milk on her lamb.) Tell the children Jesus uses very ordinary things to explain things to us. Here he uses bread and wine. Can anyone think of other very ordinary things that show up in Jesus' stories? (Water, fish, food at a party, etc.)

ACTIVITY

Especially if you can be outside, invite the children to go on a scavenger hunt – one where you look, but don't touch. If you have sufficient numbers, send the children out in teams of three with a pencil and a pad of paper. Invite them to notice as many "ordinary" things as they can (for example: a flower blooming, a tree growing, a weed growing in a crack in the sidewalk). If you cannot go outside, ask the children to "be" some of these ordinary things: show us what a flower looks like when it blooms, for example.

GETTING CLOSURE

Bring the children together in a circle. Ask wondering questions so the children can reflect. (I wonder what ordinary things you found? I wonder what those ordinary things said to us about Jesus? I wonder what they said to us about being a part of God's creation?) A snack would be nice as you wonder with the children.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus and for the stories we have to better understand your love for us. Amen.

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JOHN 6:51-58

51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will
live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The
Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to
eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of
Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink
my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true
food and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in
me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father,
so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from
heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this
bread will live forever."

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