Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

Proper 16 (B)

New Testament: John 6:56-59

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

The fork in the road. The moment of truth. The choice. Will we do things the way we've always done it, or will we take a leap of faith? "This teaching is difficult!" say those who have trekked with Jesus. Will we risk the spirit that gives life or will we pin all our hopes on "the flesh"? Jesus invites us into the unfathomable joys of the kingdom of God. What will we choose?

THEME

What Will We Choose?

BEFORE CLASS

You will need a Bible, and you may choose to bring a small candle in a glass jar and some matches. Look at the activity section and decide what game you will play. Make sure you have the needed supplies (like bubbles) for the game.

BEGINNING

Ask one child to pretend to be the coach of an imaginary baseball team. Tell that child to invite the other children to play on the team. Tell the other children to answer the coach in ways that are not definite. For example: "Yes, I want to play baseball, and I want to be the pitcher. No, wait a minute. I want to be the catcher. I can't make up my mind." Make sure each child has an opportunity to give an answer that is really not an answer. Perhaps the child will say, "Yes, I want to play a game, but I want it to be soccer, instead." Then ask the children what chance they think this poor coach has of putting together a team. What do you think would happen if the coach decided not to make anyone do anything they did not want to do? If people really made up their minds they wanted to play, how might the game go?

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OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for inviting us to be with you and for waiting for us to choose you. Be with us today as we explore your teachings. Amen.

THE STORY: JOHN 6:56-59

If you have been together with these children for the past four sessions, tell them that today is the last part of the story of Jesus trying to help people understand what he was inviting them into. Read the passage (John 6: 56-69) to the children. If you have strong readers or assistants in the class, you can also read the passage in parts. (See below) Before you begin ask the children to listen for something that sticks out for them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what you remember most about the lesson we just read. (Allow the children time to respond)
- The disciples say: "this is a hard saying." Do you think they meant it was hard to decide what to do or that they really didn't understand what Jesus was saying? (Could be either, but it is probably that they thought it would be hard to do.)
- "Does this offend you?" Jesus asked. I wonder why Jesus would ask that? Do you think the disciples were "offended?" grossed out? Do you think you would have been?
- Jesus said: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless." The Hebrew word for "spirit" is the same word as for "breath." What would happen to our bodies, if we could not breathe? (We would not be alive.)
- Does Jesus mean that our bodies are not of any value? (No, but without breath they are "useless.")
- What will happen to our bodies when we die? (They will not work as bodies anymore.)
- What will happen to our spirits when we die? (If we have chosen to be with Jesus, we will be with Jesus.)

ACTIVITY

If you are able to be outside for this game, and the location allows, play a game that will let the children really run and get "out of breath." (Suggestions for games would be tag, a simple race, blowing bubbles and inviting them to pop as many as possible, hopping around, etc.) Play for a bit, until the children are getting tired. Then ask the children to sit in a circle. Ask them if they are feeling a "bit out of breath." Does this mean they are dying? (Of course not.) Does it mean that God's spirit is no longer inside them? (Of course not.) Could we have played this game if we could not breathe? (Of course not.)

GETTING CLOSURE

(If you have brought a candle, light it now.) Invite the children to use their imagination and pretend that you, the teacher, know nothing about what they have been exploring these past sessions. Ask them to explain to you – in a way they understand

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and they hope you will – what Jesus was telling his disciples to do. What do we do in church to help people keep this promise to eat the Bread of Life? If you have time, you could also invite them to draw illustrations of what they have learned and then have them share them with the class.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for inviting us to choose you and for never giving up on us once we do choose you. Amen. (Extinguish the candle.)

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JOHN 6:56-59

Jesus: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 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 for ever."

Narrator: Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said,

Disciples: 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?'

Narrator: But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them,

Jesus: 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.'

Narrator: For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said,

Jesus: 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Narrator: Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve,

Jesus: 'Do you also wish to go away?'

Narrator: Simon Peter answered him,

Simon Peter/Disciple: 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

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