

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Proper 19 (A)

New Testament: Matthew 18:15-20

BACKGROUND

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

This week's lesson follows on the heels of Jesus teaching on how we are all to humble ourselves as children in order to enter the Kingdom of God, on how we are to look for the lost sheep if there is one lost, and how we are to solve conflicts in our communities. This section of Matthew deals with how Jesus calls us to live together in community in this new way which leads to a good number of questions about what this means.

Peter asks Jesus how many times we are to forgive someone who has sinned against us or has done us wrong. Jesus responds with the parable known as the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. Throughout the ages as people have interpreted Jesus' answer of 77 times to mean never. We are never to stop forgiving and the parable leads us to see that as well. The servant who comes before the king owes him an outrageous amount. The king's first reaction is to sell him and his family. Out of fear, the servant begs for mercy, and he is forgiven his debt. However, when the servant requires another person to repay him a rather small amount of money and does not forgive that person of his debt, the king shows no mercy. When the king sees that the servant is unwilling to forgive this small debt, he lets the servant know that he has had enough and hands him over to be tortured until he can pay his debt.

We are to show mercy and forgiveness to others just as God shows us mercy. The king's willingness to forgive the debt completely at first is an example of how much God is willing to forgive us. It is only when we see the burden of our own debts that we can see the magnitude of God's mercy in our lives.

THEME

Forgiveness



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BEFORE CLASS

You will need a few different translations of the Bible, Red Thread or Yarn and Beads, Costumes for the “Modern Day” scenarios on the scripture for the day, something heavy for each child to carry as soon as they arrive (bag of bird seed, bag of play dough or clay, large rock, etc.)

Prepare:

- Modern Day Scenarios: make sure you have costumes and props for them to use.
- Weighed Down and Forgiven: make sure you have something heavy to give each child as they walk in. They don’t all have to be the same thing, but you want to make sure that it is heavy enough that they will be burdened by carrying it around. Make sure you also have the bracelet making materials out for them.
- Bracelets: set out the supplies ahead of time. Putting thread and beads in individual bowls for each person may cut down on some of the mess and chaos

BEGINNING

As the children arrive, welcome them to the room and invite them to your gathering area. Note: If you are doing the “Weighed Down” activity, please give them their item to carry around with them as soon as they arrive. You don’t need to explain why, but just tell them they must carry it or have it with them at all times and they can’t put it on the floor. As you are waiting for children to arrive, ask them about their week.

OPENING PRAYER

Merciful and loving God, as we prepare to hear your word today, we thank you for your continued loving presence and your generous forgiveness. May your words and message touch our hearts, minds and soul that we may live as you have taught us to live. Amen.

THE STORY: MATTHEW 18:21-35

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God’s plan is for each of us too.

Read Matthew 18:21 from a Bible or Children’s Bible.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what your favorite part of the story was?
- I wonder what you might have questions about after hearing the story?
- I wonder who you think the King might be in this story?
- I wonder how the servant felt when he was forgiven his debt?
- I wonder how the servant felt when he was caught not forgiving another person’s debt?
- I wonder what you think this might mean for God’s forgiveness for us?

ACTIVITIES

Jesus was a great storyteller. The story we heard today is what we call a parable. A parable is a short story that teaches us something about something very important. Today, our parable was about forgiveness. Peter asked Jesus how many times you are supposed to forgive someone. Why do you think he asked this? (allow them time to respond)

Peter wondered if seven times was enough to forgive someone, and Jesus made it very clear that it was not. He told Peter that you should forgive 77 times. This was a way for Jesus to say that we should forgive someone over and over and over again, that there wasn't a limit to how many times we should forgive. (Not that we should keep a chart with each person's name and stop forgiving them when they get to 78.)

When we forgive someone, there is a weight lifted from us and from the person we forgave. That is one of the reasons that Jesus wanted us to forgive, so we can more easily love one another. Love and forgiveness go hand in hand.

Forgiveness Bracelets

To help us remember this, we are going to make bracelets that will help us to remember to forgive one another when we need to and to always love one another. The red thread is the color of love. The beads are to help us to not only forgive someone once or twice, but to forgive and love them always.

Give each child red thread and beads to create bracelets. **See sheet below for possible ideas for creating Forgiveness Bracelets.

GETTING CLOSURE

Gather the children back together and invite them to share what they created or to present their Modern Day scenario of the story. If you have time you can invite them to share what they learned about forgiveness or stories they have heard about forgiveness.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to remember to forgive and to love others as you love us. Be with us as we go into the world to do your work. Amen.

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly.



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Forgiveness Bracelets

You can use red embroidery thread or red yarn for this activity.

Possible colors for the beads:

- Green is known to be a color associated with forgiveness because it symbolizes growth and new life.
- Blue is also associated with forgiveness because it symbolizes water, baptism and new life.

Encourage the children to make a pattern with their beads and think ahead about what they want to create with the materials that you give them.

Knot Bracelets

- Put three pieces of thread together and knot it at one end.
- Tie a few more knots on the end and then separate the three threads.
- Put a bead on the middle thread and then gather them back together and tie another knot so the bead now has one thread going through it, and one on either side.
- Keep this pattern up and vary the pattern by adding braiding, etc. until the bracelet is long enough.

Braided Bracelets

- Take three pieces of thread.
- Tie them at one end.
- Begin braiding the bracelet until it is long enough to fit on your arm but do not tie it off.
- Add bead to the bracelet and then tie off the end so the beads stay on.

These are just a few simple ideas. You can go online and discover lots of wonderful patterns and ways to create bracelets