

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

The Season After Pentecost is the longest season of the church year, spanning almost half the calendar year. The weeks after Pentecost are called 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 liturgical color of the season is green. It is often thought of as a season of growth both in our personal faith and in the life of the church. Common themes to focus on throughout the season are:

- Our relationship with God.
- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our prayers, the sacraments and life in the body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The Church and its work for God’s mission.

Notation for this Scripture

This passage comes toward the end of Joshua. Joshua has led them into the promised land and brought them all together to renew their covenant, their promises with God. Joshua helps them understand the weight and importance of their decision by recounting the past for them, going back to what their ancestors went through and the choices they made on their journey. By going back to the beginning of their story, he is showing the Israelites that there has always been a place for them on the path with God.

As we hear the exchange between Joshua and the people, the refrain, “Serve the LORD,” comes again and again. This is not just about worship, but also about serving, about being the person of God in the world. Joshua knows

from history and experience that the people of Israel have trouble staying focused on God, especially then the going gets tough. He tries to impress upon them the weight and importance of this decision. This is a life choice and he wants them to understand that.

The Israelites pledge and choose to serve God because of what God has done for them. They retell their story of following God and say to Joshua, if God has done all these things, then this is our God.

Theme: Serving the Lord, Walking with God

Supplies Needed:

Choices and following God: paper, markers, crayons, art supplies, LEGOS for people to build with, clay to mold

Following God: Get permission to use the labyrinth at your church or make copies of the Labyrinths below. You will need response materials such as paper, markers, crayons, clay, and other art supplies.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what kinds of choices they get to make each day.

Opening Prayer: *Almighty God, we thank you for our time together as we come together again to hear the story of your people. Help us to understand what our part in that story is and how we can be people who serve you each day. Amen.*

The Story: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

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 Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25. Note: There are some challenging names in this passage. You can hear their pronunciations and see them phonetically spelled by going to: <http://netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm>

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about the story today?
- I wonder if it was hard for the Israelites to make their choice as to who to serve?
- I wonder what we would say to Joshua if we had to make that choice?

Choices and Following God

Opening: Would You Rather: Open your time together by playing a game of Would you Rather. This is a game where the children will decide if they would rather do this or that. Have everyone start in the middle of the room. Ask a question and then they have to walk to the side of the room of their choice. Below are some examples, but you can come up with your own as well. Stress to the children that there aren't any right or wrong answers, but they have to choose. No standing in the middle.

Start each question with Would You Rather... Left Side of the Room OR Right Side of the Room Have one good friend you can tell OR Have lots of friends without having a anything to best friend Be rich but hated OR Be poor but loved Not be able to hear anything OR Not be able to taste anything Be able to teleport OR Be able to turn invisible Be a cow OR Be a pig Be short OR Be tall Eat a spider OR Eat a worm Eat chocolate OR Eat potato chips Walk through a tunnel OR Walk over a bridge

Debrief:

- Did you find this exercise easy or difficult?
- Why?
- Did you act in the moment or think about your past experiences to help you decide?

Making Choices In today's lesson, we hear the Israelites having to make a really important decision. Joshua is asking them to decide whether they are going to follow God or if they are going to follow multiple gods. They have to make a choice that will impact the rest of their lives! To make such a choice, they look back on their experience and the experience of their ancestors to think about who God has been in their lives.

In our game, we had to make choices without having to actually live with any of the consequences. I wonder, what would your choice be if you were asked, "Would you rather serve God or serve the gods of the culture around you (money, things)" Don't answer, but make your response out of the art materials that are on the table.

Following God (Using a Labyrinth with response time)

In today's lesson, we hear the Israelites having to make a really important decision. Joshua is asking them to decide whether they are going to follow God or if they are going to follow multiple gods. They have to make a choice that will affect the rest of their lives! To make such a choice, they look back on their experience and the experience of their ancestors to think about who God has been in their lives.

Today, we are going to use something called a Labyrinth to help us focus and see where God is in our lives. The Labyrinth may look like a maze, but it isn't. A maze is something you can get lost in and may not find your way out, a trap. A Labyrinth is a path you follow, and as you twist and turn your way through, you pray for guidance and ask God to guide you. When you reach the middle, you pause to reflect and then wind your way back out of the Labyrinth. Many people use these when they have to make important decision because the Labyrinth gives them focus as they pray about their decision.

As you use your Labyrinth, pray about how you choose God, just as the Israelites chose God. How is God guiding you?

If you have a labyrinth at your church, you can use that or you can use the labyrinths below. You can color your Labyrinth as you trace it, or you can simply follow the path. You may want to use different colors going in and out. Once you have traced your Labyrinth, you will be given some response time to create something that represents how you choose God in your life or who God is for you.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space. Invite them to gather together and share what they created.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for guiding us each day as we try to serve you and those around us. Be with us as we leave this place and help us to remember that in serving you, we are given the gift of love from you. Amen.*

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors-- Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor-- lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

"Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and

our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD; for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good."

And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." The people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

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