

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday After Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Epiphany: Shimmering glimpses of the abundance of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps we, too, noticed a star and followed it. Or maybe someone led us to the gift of faith. Now we take the Light – the Good News – out into the world. Will others see the light shimmering in us? Will they risk taking a journey into faith with us?

A notation for this week's Gospel

"I have called you by name, you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1) Jesus had probably heard these words before seeking baptism from John the Baptist. As Jesus comes up out of the water, we have a hint of the working of the Trinity – a true ministry of collaboration. Jesus prays, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, and the Voice calls him by name.

Theme: Called by name

Before class: If at all possible, ascertain from your clergy or the parents of the children whether all the children in your class have been baptized. If any have not, be sure to adjust the materials so that a child is not made to feel excluded.

Decide on your own or plan on inviting the children to help make the decision as to how your class will keep track of ‘clues’ they find in the Epiphany Gospel stories over the weeks of Epiphany. You could illustrate the ‘clues’ using a roll of paper or a large poster, or you could make a document on a website via a lap top computer, etc. An optional activity for today invites children to make a plaque unique for each child by using thumb prints. You will need wood plaques or paper cardstock, washable ink, wipes, and felt markers. You will also need Bibles/copies of the scripture and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Materials: A long strip of paper (could be Butcher paper) to go along one wall of the classroom and be illustrated each week from the second week to the last week

Materials to make plaques: a hobby store has many options: balsa wood a couple of inches tall or other types of wood, felt, and paint plus brushes + washable ink stamp pads

Beginning: Invite the children to pretend you have come from a place where you never heard of Jesus. Tell them you went shopping a few weeks ago and heard strange music in the mall, saw lots of ads for Christmas sales, and will they please tell you what this is all about! Ask leading questions until you get from them that they have just celebrated the birth of Jesus, that wise people followed a star and found this baby. When you have drawn the story out of them, tell them what you heard them say and allowing them to correct or add to what you have said. Then tell them that now we have a new word and stories to unpack: ‘Epiphany’ is the word and there are many weeks of "epiphanies" as to

who this Jesus is. Working with the children, come up with a definition you are comfortable with for "Epiphany" (manifestation of a spiritual truth, a hint of the divine, a sudden recognition, an "Ah Ha!" moment, etc.) Tell them they will be "recording" these "epiphanies" and either invite them to help you figure out how to do it, or offer the option you have come up with.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to find the clues you spread before us so we will come to know more about your Son, Jesus. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22. Ask for volunteers to read the part of the narrator, John the Baptist, and the voice of God. Remind the children to be on the lookout for clues in this passage as to who Jesus is.

Questions:

Does anyone remember who John the Baptist is, and what he understands his job to be? (A cousin of Jesus, a man who knew the words of Isaiah, a man driven to help people notice where they were messing up their lives and calling them to make a big change, and then be baptized.)

Describe this baptism. Who was there? (John, Jesus, and a crowd of people.)

How did John baptize Jesus – with a baptismal font and a little silver dish? (No, they went into the river and went under the water.)

Looking at verse 21 and 22, describe the sequence of events – what happened when. (Everyone was baptized – they had gone into the water and had come up; Jesus prays; the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove came out of the heavens; a voice spoke.)

What did Jesus hear? ("You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.")

Activity: Once you have decided the way you will capture the clues over the next weeks of Epiphany, discuss what the epiphany from today's Gospel might be. There may be more than one. Invite them to illustrate what they came up with.

Option: Look at the service of Holy Baptism in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pages 299-308). Notice what is prayed over a newly-baptized person (middle of page 308).

Option: If you have the materials to make plaques to take home, make the supplies available. Invite the children to make individual plaques, marking them with their own thumb print which is unlike any other thumb print. Let the children decorate the plaques as they choose. It might be nice to have the prayer from the baptism service for the children to glue onto their plaque. (look at the end of this lesson for some nice copies of this prayer you can make available to the children.)

N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. *Amen.*

Getting Closure: Display the illustrated ‘epiphany’ and invite the children to tell about it. If you did the optional activity invite each child to describe the choices they made as they prepared their plaques. Prepare the plaques to go home, clean up whatever messes have been made, display your "epiphany."

Closing Prayer: Thank you Jesus for coming to be among us and for choosing to be baptized with ordinary people just like us. Amen.

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Narrator: As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying,

John: ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

Narrator: Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven,

God: ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

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