

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 7
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 8:26-39

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

A Notation for his week's Gospel

Demons. Not a likely topic for a meeting of psychiatric medical professionals. And the prescription — tossing demons onto the back of pigs and subsequently driving the pigs off a cliff — is equally unlikely. Yet who among us has not been taunted by a demon in some other disguise? ("I am not qualified, I can't do it, it is too hard." etc.) And, oh, the delicious relief when the wind blows the demons away.

Theme: Demons blown away

Before: Children, just like adults, have many fears. Some are likely to occur (parents fighting, bullies at school, etc.), but some can be controlled, like the fear of tigers in the closet or monsters under the bed. Perhaps this scripture can help with what is in closets and under beds.

There are two options for today: blowing bubbles outside or “trashing” those things that scare us. Before class, you need to decide whether blowing bubbles outside will be doable in your setting. Depending on what you choose, you will need bubble supplies OR paper, crayons, and pencils.

Recipe for homemade bubbles: For every cup of water add 2 tablespoons of Dawn dishwashing liquid (this brand simply works best) and 1 tablespoon of Karo light corn syrup.

Note: Young children might be horrified that Jesus drove a batch of unsuspecting innocent pigs off a cliff to their death below. So we have softened the manner in which the demons are dispatched. We hope you will find it acceptable.

Beginning: Offer this story or something like it from when you were a child. When I was about 6 (or whatever the average age of your group is) I used to be afraid that monsters were under my bed. I would call my mother and she would come and turn on the light and look under the bed with me to show me that the monsters had gone away, and I could go back to sleep. Has this ever happened to you? Maybe it is something in your closet or outside your window? Invite the children to share their stories.

Praying: Thank you, Jesus, for calming our fears and being with us. Thank you for loving each of us. Amen.

The Story: A man was going crazy with all kinds of demons. A demon is something that makes you afraid and makes you act differently than you normally would. This man was suffering from all the demons and fear he had. Jesus did not want the man to be afraid. So Jesus said to the demons: "You come out of that man this instant and go away and do not ever come back to him. I am sending you demons off the cliff and into the ocean and you are to never come back!" Well, the man felt better right away. He said "Thank you, thank you, thank you to Jesus." The man went home to his friends and told them Jesus had sent his demons away, never to come back.

Option: Invite the children to think of fears or things that they want to get rid of and then tell them we are going to let all those fears go up to God. Take them outside to blow bubbles in the wind. Invite them to say with each bubble, "Go away, bad dream, and do not ever come back!" or "I want my fears to be gone!" Each time they blow the bubbles they can watch them float away and when they pop, those fears have gone up to be with God!

Inside Option: Give the children pieces of paper and crayons. Tell them we are all going to draw our bad dreams and then tear up our drawings into a zillion pieces and put the pieces in the trash.

Getting Closure: Gather the children and tell them that IF the bad dream or fear (or whatever they named) comes back, you can tell it you have already gotten rid of it, and it is not allowed to come back! Tell your parents to come into your room and remind the bad dream that it has been blown to the wind (or torn into a zillion pieces).

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you want us to be happy and live a peaceful life. When things make us scared, help us to remember that you are there for us. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 7
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 8:26-39

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

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Theme: Demons blown away

Before Class: You will need enough Alka-Seltzer (or something similar) so each child has at least one tablet and a large clear bowl filled with water or enough cups of water for each child.

Beginning: Tell the children that today's scripture talks about the damage demons can do. Demons grab people's attention, make them think lies about themselves, and can make people very miserable. Share a demon you can resonate with and something that is true for you. (i.e. I didn't think I was smart enough, but I was.)

Some things we cannot change: I am not a good enough baseball player to be invited to play for a professional team. But the demons we are talking about are the demons we can get rid of. Some demons we are okay talking about, and some we may not want to share with each other. No matter what they are, God waits for us to share them with God.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for wanting us to be free of the demons that bother us. Thank you for making us free to serve you and to live our lives in love and in peace. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 8: 26- 39. Here is a way to divide up the reading: Verses 26-31, Verses 32-33, Verses 34-37, Verses 38 and 39

Questions:

- What is the illness of the man in this story? (So consumed by demons that he even tears his clothes off!)
- What do the demons say to Jesus? (Verse 28b)
- What did Jesus do about this? (Verse 29a)

- I wonder why didn't the demons want to get out of the man? (They were having a wonderful time making the man miserable — that is what demons do.)
- What did the demons propose as a solution? (Verse 32)
- What did the people taking care of the swine do? (Verse 34)
- What did the man who was cured of the demons do? (Verse 38)
- I wonder why do you think Jesus told the man to go home and not follow Jesus? (Maybe Jesus realized that this happy, healed man could help other people get rid of their demons.)

Activity: Wondering

I wonder if you would come up with the same solution as Jesus did? (Even if we had a herd of swine and a cliff, would the owners of the herd be so understanding?)

I wonder what demons we might experience in our culture today? I wonder if we have any demons that hold us back? They do not have to share, just think about them. Then ask them to think about how much more energy they would have if these demons were not bugging them.

Activity: Since we do not have a herd of swine in our classroom, let alone a cliff to drive them over, we can try something else. Show them the big bowl of water and the Alka-Seltzer tablets. Tell the children to, one by one, take one of the tablets, think about a demon you want to let go of, put the demon on the back of the Alka-Seltzer and drop it in the water. Watch what happens to the tablet! Then invite another child to do the same. Keep going until each child has drowned a demon. Remember to take a turn yourself also.

Getting Closure: Ask the children what they think they could do the next time they meet something that looks a lot like that drowned demon? Could they tell the demon: "Sorry, you have no more power over me. I drowned you a long time ago. Get away!"

Closing Prayer: Loving God, you tell us not to be afraid. Thank you for helping us get rid of our demons and fears. Be with us as we confront them each day. Amen.

Luke 8:26-39

26 Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me’— ²⁹for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him. ³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

32 Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³

⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’ So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 7
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 8:26-39

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

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Theme: Demons blown away

Before Class: You will need Bibles, small pieces of paper, pencils or pens, and envelopes that can be sealed.

Beginning: Tell the class that demons are our subject today. We are not qualified to serve as psychiatric counselors, and serious psychological problems deserve competent treatment. Invite the group to share demons we are capable of grappling with and helping each other as we free ourselves from their grip. Ask the group to take a few moments thinking about the demons that sneak up on us and rob us of our self-confidence and our conviction that we are children of God. Encourage them to make the distinction between things we can do nothing about (poor eyesight, for example) and those things that are mostly figments of our poor self-respect (they wouldn't want my help, etc.). Ask them to write on scraps of paper demons that show up. What they write will be for their eyes only and shared only if they choose to do so.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for wanting us to be free of the demons that bind us, free to serve you and to live our lives in love and in peace. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 8: 26 - 39 Invite someone to read the scripture passage.

Questions:

- Describe the situation of the "man" in this passage. (Verses 27, 29b)
- Describe what the demons request of Jesus (verse 31) and Jesus' solution (verse 32-33).
- I wonder what could Jesus be telling us to do with the demons that torment us?
- I wonder what we can do to rid ourselves of the things that bind us?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to sit in a circle. Give each person an envelope in which they can seal their piece of paper with the demon described. Invite each person to consider giving the demon back to Jesus. Allow a moment or two of silent prayer for people to do just that. Then invite them to tear up the envelope. Once they have torn up their envelope, invite them to imagine if the demon tries to show up again, remind the demon that you have already dealt with it and it needs to go away and leave you alone.

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank you for wanting us to be free of demons that drag us down, and we trust you will take and drive away these demons we have offered to you. Amen.

Luke 8:26-39

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me’— for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’ So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

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