

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Sixth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: John 15:9-17**

**Background:** Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

**A Notation for this Week’s Gospel**

God's love: God's love for us, enabling us to love God. God's joy in us making joy complete. We are invited into this vast collaboration of love, invited to be part of God’s team, considered friends, no longer servants. God has, so to speak, looked each one of us in the eye and said, "You did not choose me but I chose you." Chosen, by God, to bear the fruit of love.

**Theme: Abide in my Love**

**Before:** If your budget (finances and time) allows, purchase small, inexpensive mirrors from a hobby store. Shiny metal (not breakable glass) is safer, but if glass is all you can find, get very small and use hot glue to secure the mirrors to a piece of cardboard so they are safe for the children to handle. Construction paper, crayons, glue will also be needed. You may wish to write these words on each sheet for the child: "God loves" (sufficient space for the child to glue the mirror under the words.) Also, bring a hand mirror for the children to look into.

**Beginning:** Greet the children as they arrive. When all the children have arrived and are seated, get the mirror and sit along with the children. Look into the mirror and say something like: "Hmmm. Who do I see in this mirror?" If the children say your name, say something like this: "Yes, I do see (whatever the child’s name is), but I see something else. I see a person God loves." Then, pass the mirror to the child next to you and ask the child if they see someone who God loves? “Who is that person?” Keep passing the mirror along until each child has looked into the mirror and seen a person God loves.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for choosing to love each of us. Thank you for wanting each of us to be your happy child. Amen.

**The Story:** Jesus is talking to his friends. Maybe he asked them this question: “Do you think God loves Jesus?” What do you think? Do you think God loves Jesus just a little bit or a whole lot?

Well, everyone agreed that God loves Jesus a whole lot. Jesus said to his friends that the ‘whole lot’ that God loves Jesus is how much Jesus loves us – a whole lot. So, since Jesus loves me a whole lot, and Jesus loves you a whole lot (going around the circle, including each child) and you a whole lot, etc., we are all connected. So, what does Jesus expect us to do? We need to do the things he told us to do: love God, love each other. If we do these things we will have joy. Do you know what joy is? It is a word for “happy” that is even happier than happy. What happy things can you think of? (Help them come up with happy things: Birthday cake, splashing in a puddle, holding a puppy, whatever.) Well joy is like all those things at once. And you know what? God wants us to have joy – and gives us joy even during sad times because Jesus loves us so much.

**Activity:** If weather and your surroundings allow, this game can be played outside. Indicate a starting line and a goal line. The distance between the two will be determined by the ages of the children and their energy level and capability. All the children stand at the start line. One child goes first. (Choose the sequence by their birthday month, if they know it, or some other non-discriminatory method.) Tell the children to be thinking about different things that make them happy. The first child runs as fast as he or she can to the goal line, shouts out the happy thing she or he has thought of, and then runs back as all the children applaud and shout the word the child has offered: “YAY for ice cream!” The next child runs. When that child names a word, and starts to run back, the others all shout that word *and* the first word: "YAY for baseball and for ice cream." Continue until each child has had a run. Play it again if time permits.

**Easter Project:** Back inside, ask the children again, whose picture did they see in the mirror. (Hand the mirror around again if the running around has distanced them from the concept.) Then, tell them we are going to make a little mirror to take home and one mirror for our Easter tree or Easter mobile. Give each child a piece of construction paper, the small mirror you have prepared, glue sticks to glue the mirror to the paper.

Encourage them to decorate the paper so it can go home and perhaps be displayed on the refrigerator.

Engage as many children as possible in constructing the paper that will be placed on or under the Easter tree or Easter mobile.

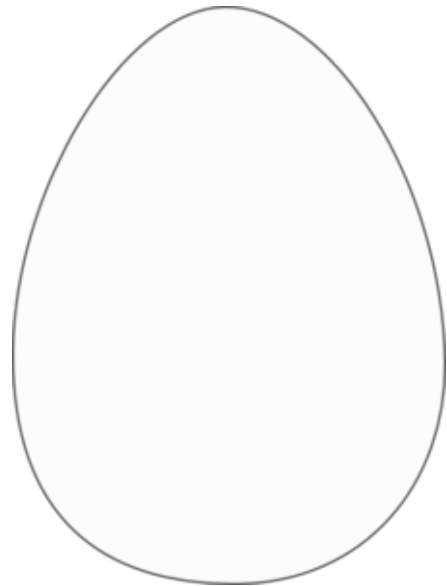
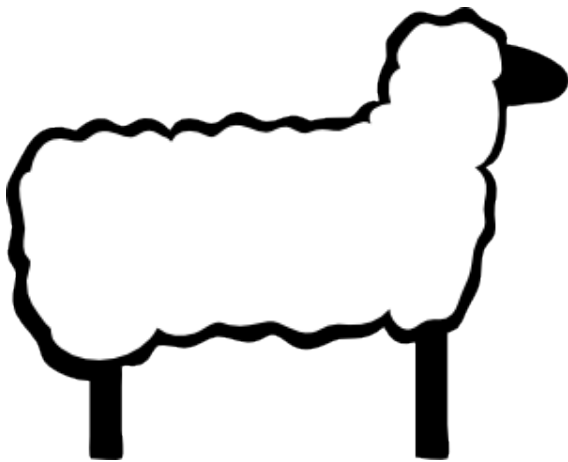
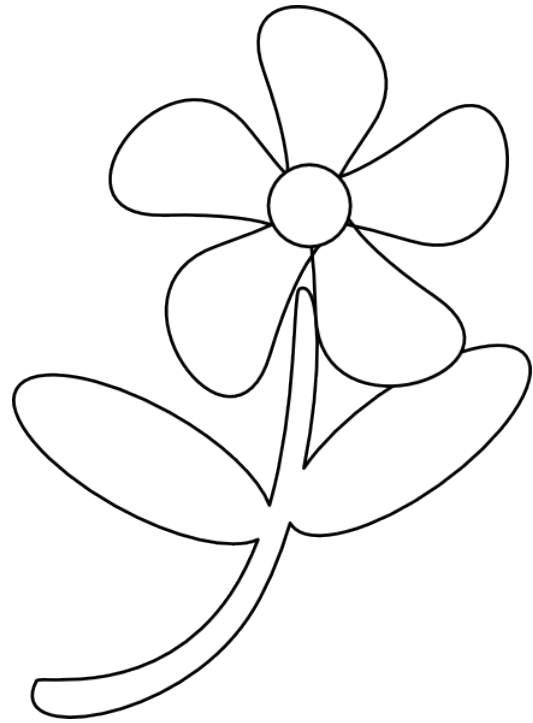
You can also decorate one of the Easter symbols to put on the tree or mobile.

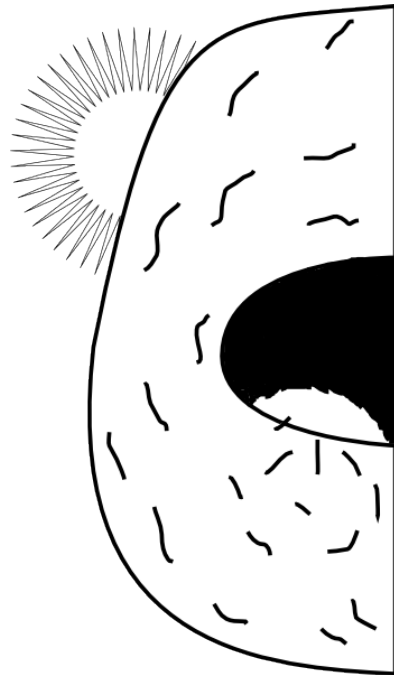
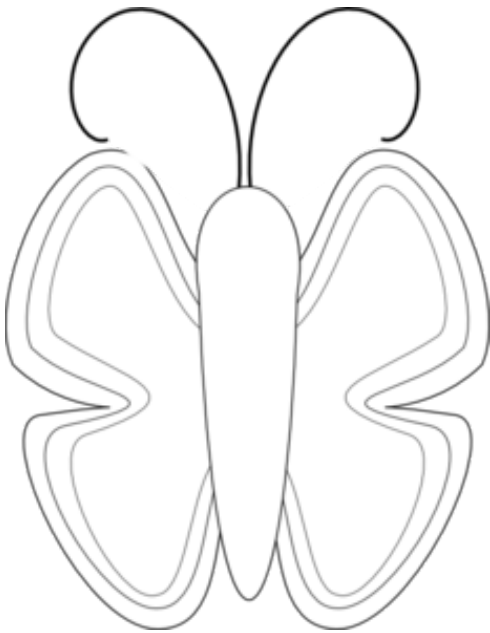
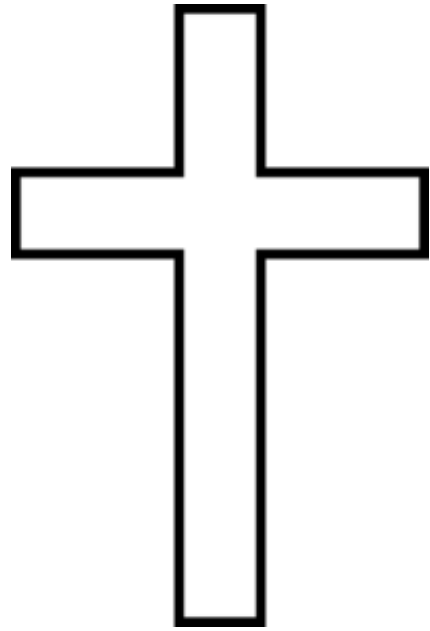
**Getting Closure:** Ask each child to hold the paper they have decorated and look in the mirror as you pray.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for wanting us to have joy and for loving each and every one of us. Amen.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Sixth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**Scripture: John 15:9-17**

**Background:** Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

**A Notation for this Week’s Gospel**

God's love: God's love for us, enabling us to love God. God's joy in us making joy complete. We are invited into this vast collaboration of love, invited to be part of God’s team, considered friends, no longer servants. God has, so to speak, looked each one of us in the eye and said, "You did not choose me but I chose you." Chosen, by God, to bear the fruit of love.

**Theme: Abide in my Love**

**Before:** You will need paper and pencils for the children and a large sheet of paper with a felt marker or two. Bibles or copies of the scripture and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) are also needed.

If the ‘Beginning’ activity does not feel right for your setting, you will simply need to explain the different ways people use the word “love.” The issue is that grade-school children tend to think of “love” as romantic love, kissing, and all that. So to be told they are called to “love” each other is very uncomfortable. Equally confusing is the idea that they should “love” the bully who beats them up. Add to that the fact that our culture tries to convince us we will “love” a new brand of toothpaste. Perhaps we can help children see that it is possible to “love” the bully at school without feeling guilty that they do not “like” that person, be grateful for the people in their lives they truly love, and delight in their very favorite candy bar and know that it is not “love” at all.

**Beginning:** Take a large sheet of paper and make three columns. Label the first one: LOVE as in ‘I like this.’ The second column: LOVE as in ‘because God loves this person’; the third column: LOVE as in ‘I REALLY LOVE.’ Then you give three examples that work for you. (For instance: First Column: Latte with whipped cream. Second Column: The person at my work who puts me down. Third Column: my mother.) Ask the children to work with you to define the difference between the three kinds of love. Ask for a volunteer to come up with an example for the first column. Then ask for a volunteer to come up with an example for the second column. Finally, ask for someone to come up with an example for the third column. Do the children agree that each of these items is in the correct column?

Give the children paper and pencils and ask them to make three columns, one for each of the categories you produced. Tell them to write items for each of the columns and take a few minutes to do this. Tell them that they will not need to show you the paper when they are through, and they will only need to volunteer the things they want to share.

When they have had the time to write, ask for a volunteer to write one item for the first column, a second volunteer to write something for the second, and another volunteer to write something in the third column. Then ask for volunteers to write something in any of the three columns. Keep going until each child has been free to add items to the columns. Then invite the children to listen to your opening prayer.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for showing us what love is. Thank you for loving us even when our behavior is not what it could be. Thank you for telling us to love everyone, even when you know we will not **LIKE** everyone. Amen.

**The Story: John 15:9-17** The passage is long with lots of words and no “action.” It might be easier to divide it into three sections, with questions after each of the sections. Be sure each child has access to a Bible or a copy of the reading.

Ask the children to be listening for the kinds of love in the first section (verses 9-11) and ask for a volunteer to read the two verses.

**Reflection Questions for verses 9-11:**

- Who is talking here? (Jesus)
- What kind of love does he describe between him and God the Father?
- What kind of love does he describe between Jesus and the friends he is talking to? (In both cases, true love.)

Ask for a volunteer to read verses 12-14.

**Reflection Questions for verses 12-14:**

- Who are the “friends” Jesus is talking to here? (The disciples – those who had been with him all this time.)
- What would one of these friends do if he disagreed with one of the others – or even got mad at one of the others? (They would work it out and not stop loving each other.)

Ask for a volunteer to read verses 15-17.

**Reflection Questions for verses 15-17:**

- What is the difference between being Jesus’ friends and Jesus’ servants? (The answer is in verse 15.)
- How did these people get to be Jesus’ friends? (Verse 16a.)
- What do we think Jesus means when he says that God will give these people “whatever you ask him in my name?” (They need to be sure that what they are asking for is in sync with what they know God wants.)

**Getting Closure:** Ask the children: “What if this also applies to us?” Ask the children to go back over the passage looking for places it could be referring to us as well. For example, do we think Jesus loves us as much as he loved the disciples? (Why? Why not?) Could he want us to really love each other and make up if we have an argument? Do we think we, too, are “chosen?” Are we friends of Jesus?

**Closing Prayer:** The fifth intercession in the Prayers of the People (BCP, p. 383) invites our prayers for those who suffer and those in any trouble. Ask the children for suggestions and offer your own also. Compile the suggestions and make them your closing prayer.

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### John 15:9-17

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – Sixth Sunday of Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Adults**

**Scripture: John 15:9-17**

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**Theme: Abide in my Love**

**Before Class:** You will need enough Bibles or copies of the scripture for everyone.

**Beginning:** Tell the class that today's reading is a continuation of the reading we had last week. Jesus is getting the disciples ready for their Commencement. Our task is to notice what this final-exam cram session has to say to us.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, that the disciples paid close attention to Jesus, learned what he had to teach them, and then went out to tell others so these stories and this truth comes down through the centuries to us, here and now. Amen.

**The Scripture: John 15:9-17** Tell the class we will read the passage through once, and then break the reading into three sections for discussion. Invite a volunteer to read the entire passage, with the rest of the group following along. Allow a moment of silence after the reading.

Then ask a different volunteer to read verses 9-11.

**Reflection Questions for verses 9-11:**

- Jesus is talking to his “friends.” Who else could Jesus be talking to here? (hint...us)
- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves us as God loves him?
- How does it make you feel that Jesus is inviting us to “abide” in that love - to expect it?
- What would it mean to abide in that love?
- What does verse 11 say to us? How would we describe Jesus' joy?



- How would we know that his joy is in us?

When you are ready to move on, ask for a volunteer to read verses 12-14

**Reflection Questions for verses 12-14:**

- “To love one another as I have loved you.” Is this mission impossible?
- How could we love as completely as Jesus does?
- How is it energizing and empowering to try to love as Jesus does? (How will Jesus help us do this work?)
- The disciples have graduated from being “servants” to being “friends.” How do we see ourselves – servants, friends, or a mixture of both?

When the group is ready, ask for another volunteer to read verses 15-17.

**Reflection Questions for verses 15-17:**

- “You did not choose me but I chose you.” How is this speaking to you today? Although many of us can name a time we specifically chose to be Christians, discuss how it makes us feel to know God got there ahead of us.
- “The father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.” How do we reconcile the times we asked for something that we truly believed would be in God’s name – and it did not happen?
- How do we balance our conviction that God loves us, wants what is best for us, and yet appears not to intercede? Share what helps us remain faithful although we appear to have a God who is not into micro management.

**Getting closure:** Take a moment to hold up in praise our God whose love for us is as great as the love Jesus receives. Hold up in thought those whom we have the capacity to really love – because God first loved us. Hold up the challenge of our charge to receive this love, delight in it, and then turn to share it with others.

**Closing Prayer:** Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter (BCP, p. 225)

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

## **John 15:9-17**

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