Jesus the Teacher

Scripture

We listen to Jesus, our Teacher.
- Angry listeners reject Jesus’ message, because they cannot see Jesus as an authentic teacher.
- We will present Jesus as a teacher and leader from whom we learn and follow.
- In today’s core session, we explore with children both a story of Jesus teaching, and a chance to encounter their own scary feelings, hearing an affirmation that Jesus is always with them.

Question of the Week
What makes me uncomfortable about Jesus’ words or actions?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: Jesus Teaches
- Jesus Is Near
- Praying Together (optional: candle, matches)

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Music and Painting (smocks, paint, brushes)
- Feelings Game (optional: Feeling Faces Cards, Koosh*)
- Discussion for Kindergartners
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Strong Feelings
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More about Today's Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- The World of the Bible: Prophet
**Getting Started** (5-10 minutes)
Tape or pin the *Jesus the Teacher* poster, attached to this document, in the storytelling area of the room. Today we focus on Jesus, our Teacher.

Begin by asking:
◆ Can you tie your shoe?
◆ Who taught you how to do that?

Affirm each person named as a teacher. Repeat with other simple skills:
◆ Can you use a telephone?
◆ Can you write your name?
◆ Who taught you?

Affirm each person named as a teacher.

Explain that we all have many different teachers. One teacher we all have is Jesus. Invite children to examine the poster. Ask:
◆ What is Jesus teaching?

**Gospel Story** (5-10 minutes)

**Jesus Teaches**

*Story Focus:* Use your fingers as you tell today’s story. The index finger of one hand will be Jesus. The five fingers of the other hand will be the crowd.

One day, Jesus went to a small building called a synagogue. In the synagogue were other people ready to read and talk about the Bible. They called the Bible the *mikra*: the readings.

The leader of the people there saw Jesus. He said, “Jesus, would you like to read to us from the readings?”

Jesus said, “Yes! I would!”

(Hold up right index finger in front of left hand.) Jesus read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Now is the time that God will save the people.”

Jesus looked at all the people and said, “These words in the reading are about me. God has sent me with good news to the poor! Now is the time that God will save the people.”

The people do not believe that Jesus is really from God. (Wiggle fingers of left hand.)

Jesus says to the people, “You are wrong not to believe the great things that God is doing.” (Shake right finger at left hand.)

When the people hear this, they get angry. (Make left hand into a fist and shake it.) The angry people take hold of Jesus and pull him out of their town. (Pull right index finger with the fingers of the left hand.)

Some people even want to push Jesus off a high hill! (Push at right index finger with left hand.) But Jesus simply walks away from the angry people. (Firmly move right index finger away.)

**Jesus Is Near** (5-10 minutes)
Gather the children in a circle. Invite them to recall what our teacher Jesus did when he was scared in today’s story. Explain that our teacher Jesus is near us when we are scared. Invite children to play a game that reminds them that Jesus is near.

Ask the children to take turns calling out scary things, for example, *barking dogs, the dark, thunder and lightning or monsters.* When a child has suggested a scary thing, such as *dogs,* the children join you in acting out that scary thing, for example, by growling and barking. Then say in a strong, clear voice, “Jesus is near.”

When you say, “Jesus is near,” the children stop their roleplay and link arms around the circle, joining you in saying over and over, “Jesus is near.”

**Praying Together** (5 minutes)
Gather the children in a circle. You may want to light a candle to help children focus their attention. Ask the children to name some of the scary times you remembered together.

Explain that Jesus is with us, even when we are scared. One thing we can do when we are scared is call on Jesus. We can say his name once or over and over, as we like.

Invite children to pray Jesus’ name. Children can pray the name of Jesus aloud or silently. Close by praying:
◆ Thank you, God, for being with Jesus when he was scared. Thank you, Jesus, for being with us when we are scared. Amen.

**Note:** If you use *At Home with the Good News,* either distribute this week’s papers to the children before they leave or e-mail the papers to their families.

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Discover the Good News (5-20 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s gospel story.

On page 2, you’ll find pictures and questions you can use for a simple talk about feelings. Page 2 also includes a To Parents note for families.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “Apples and Oranges” (p. 20 of the songbook)
◆ “Give a Little” (p. 36 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Winter-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Music and Painting (10-15 minutes)
Children paint as they listen to music that expresses strong emotions.

Invite children to paint to different feelings expressed in music. Set out painting materials. Play music as the children work, beginning with an exciting or fast-paced piece, such as Stravinsky’s “Berceuse and Finale” from The Firebird Suite. After 5-10 minutes, switch to a more meditative work, such as “Soon and Very Soon.” (Open your Winter-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.)

Children can work on one painting throughout both pieces of music, or make separate paintings for each piece.

Feelings Game (5-10 minutes)
Children use a simple game to name and explore their feelings. You can use the Feeling Faces Cards, attached to this document, to lead both the discussion and the game. Children are sometimes afraid of their strong feelings. The purpose of this game is to affirm for children that Jesus, like them, had many different feelings, including scary and angry feelings.

Gather the children in a circle. Explain:
◆ I am going to call out some feelings.
◆ Let’s act out each feeling together.

Then call out several feelings and lead the children in acting. (Instead, you can hold up each Feeling Face Card, one at a time.) When you say happy, you might jump up and down with a big smile on your face. When you say sad, you might put your hands on your face and pretend to cry.

When you say mad, you might stomp your feet and shake your fist. When you say scared, you might hug yourself and shiver.

After you have led the children in acting out these feelings together, the children can play a Feelings Game. Directions:
◆ Toss a Koosh® to one child and call out a feeling (or hold up a Feeling Face Card.)
◆ The child acts out that feeling, then tosses the Koosh® to another child.

Continue playing until each child has had a chance to act out a feeling. End the activity by saying:
◆ Some feelings are fun. (Hold up the happy Feeling Face Card or make a happy face.)
◆ But some feelings are scary.
◆ In today’s story, something scary happened to Jesus. (You can repeat for children today’s gospel story.)

Discussion for Kindergartners (5-10 minutes)
Kindergartners are old enough for a very short and simple discussion on ways they can handle troubling feelings.

Gather the children in a circle. Say:
◆ In today’s story, Jesus did something hard. He told people they were wrong.
◆ What are hard things we do? (You can suggest such examples as sharing a new toy, meeting a new friend, saying sorry, telling someone that you are angry, etc.)

Say:
◆ Facing that angry crowd must have been scary for Jesus.
◆ What things can scare us? (You can suggest examples from the Jesus is Near activity: barking dogs, the dark, thunder and lightning, monsters, etc.)
◆ What do you think we can do when we feel scared?

Welcome the children’s ideas, adding your own only as necessary:
◆ holding a parent’s hand
◆ turning on a night light
◆ holding a favorite doll or stuffed animal
Young Children and the Gospel

Today's gospel presents Jesus as a teacher—and as a rejected teacher. As scripture teaches us, no rejection of Jesus can derail God's loving intentions for all creation. Our confidence in Jesus can sustain us no matter how difficult our struggles with other people, and with our own flawed selves.

For young children, we affirm several messages from today's story: Jesus is our teacher. Jesus knew difficult times. Jesus, our teacher, is with us in every difficult time.

In naming Jesus as teacher, we want to bear in mind that Jesus is the teacher each of us longs to have. On the one hand, Jesus is the One who understands us and accepts us, just as we are today. On the other hand, Jesus is the One who will not stop working with us until all God's desires for us are fulfilled. The simplest way we convey this message of constant, loving presence to young children is in the refrain of today's story-review game: Jesus is Near.

Strong Feelings

The pieces of music we suggest for today's painting activity evoke the deep, mysterious feelings that children can experience without being able to express them in words. Stravinsky's music from The Firebird is especially evocative: the firebird is a figure of Russian mythology, a symbol of both blessing and curse. This symbol sums up the human condition: with God, life is a blessing. Without God, we may experience life as a curse.

Strong feelings can bless us, too. We may not be comfortable feeling anger, but anger is what motivated the prophets of Israel to denounce injustice in the rich and comfortable. We may not be comfortable feeling sad, but Jesus easily wept at the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus. God has given us our feelings as part of the blessings of human life.

Children can experience their feelings as blessing when they have adults available who acknowledge their own strong feelings, model appropriate ways to handle strong feelings and show enough emotional security that they can stay present to children caught up in strong feelings themselves.

Look for opportunities to model these behaviors yourself. If you have a helper, it's appropriate to say, "Kai, will you help me with this problem? I feel frustrated trying to solve it myself." When you see a child dealing with strong emotions, it can be helpful to say, "I see you're feeling angry about your crayon breaking. Would you like to get another crayon or would you like to take a break from drawing?"

Where You’ll Find Everything Else

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today's readings, titled More about Today's Scriptures.
  - Feelings Faces Cards you can use to play the Feelings Game in today's session.
  - A copy of today's Gospel Story to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.
  - This week's At Home with the Good News to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.

- Open your Winter-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  - Information on Winter-C's Models of the Faith.
  - An article for catechists and/or families titled Learning through Music.
  - A printable article for catechists and/or family members exploring The Lord's Prayer.
  - An article for catechists and/or families further exploring Paul's Corinthian Letters.
  - An article for catechists and/or families examining The Influence of Jewish Worship on today's Christian worship.
  - An article for catechists and/or families exploring the variety of traditional Prayer Postures and Gestures.
  - The Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings invite us to consider the power given us through God’s love and presence. Jeremiah protests his call to prophesy, but God commands him to speak boldly. Paul teaches a quarreling community that, while all the spiritual gifts have value, it is respect and love for each other that deeply empower us. Jesus proclaims that the power of his ministry will not be confined to his hometown or even to his faith community.

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Today’s reading describes Jeremiah’s call to be a prophet according to the typical pattern of the Old Testament: call, hesitation and divine affirmation.

Like Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel, Jeremiah pleads his incapacity to serve as God’s prophet but is overruled. The Lord will put the words of God in Jeremiah’s mouth.

Jeremiah’s job is to stand firm, not to quaver before the hostility of his audience but to speak clearly the judgments of God.

God makes no promises about the ease of his mission; in fact, Jeremiah is guaranteed a battle. Nevertheless God’s presence is with Jeremiah, undergirding his obedience with divine strength.

1 Corinthians 12:31–13:13

Today’s reading sets Paul’s praise of love within the context of his explanation of the meaning of spiritual gifts. Apparently the Corinthians struggled with the evaluation and exercise of spiritual gifts within the community. Greater honor was given to those who possessed the more extraordinary gifts such as “deeds of power,” apostleship or prophecy.

Paul insists that no spiritual gift, no matter how powerful, is a true measure of a person’s spiritual maturity. Without love, the gifts are worthless. Instead, agape, God’s unmerited love to us and from us to others, is the essential gift of divine life and is the necessary context that gives all the spiritual gifts value.

In contrast to other spiritual gifts, love, faith and hope are permanent. Love is the greatest, for faith and hope are the response to love, which both precedes and follows them.


Jesus’ sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth and the public’s reaction to it foreshadow the meaning of his ministry, its rejection by Israel and the consequent mission to the Gentile world.

The people apparently want Jesus to do for his hometown what he has done elsewhere, perhaps to validate Jesus’ own claim (4:21). He reminds them of other occasions when God directed ministry outside the nation. The reaction of the people points back to the temptation (4:9) and forward to the crucifixion that took place outside the city.
Reflection
We like our categories, and we like them tidy. Then along comes Jesus, defying neat boundaries and boxes. Is he rabbi or carpenter? Ordinary working man or eloquent speaker? Good ol’ Joseph’s son, or heart-stopping prophet? And if he’s a home-grown Nazareth boy, why does he do greater deeds in Capernaum? His universal views seem to annoy those with jingoistic tendencies. How DARE God do good beyond the pale of Israel?

So Paul speaks of the greatest gifts as not easily quantified or categorized. The only things that endure can’t be noted on a spreadsheet or saved in a bank account: faith, hope and love. Instinctively, we know this. Seeking greatness, we don’t necessarily turn to church or political leaders. We look instead to caring people: the abuela who makes everyone welcome; the friend whose eyes affirm us; the married couple whose obvious love for each other spills over onto those around them.

Where will we find Jesus today? One hint appears in the last line of today’s gospel reading. He disappears by going “straight through their midst.” So he’ll be found where we least expect him—right where we are, doing whatever we’re doing. Now THAT defies categories!

The Scriptures and the Catechism
The foundation of our Christian community is the theological virtue of love (CCC, #1812–29, 2087–94). Paul’s eloquent description of love as the greatest gift to be sought for is also a challenging examination of conscience for all of us. As Christians we are called to a life of love that permeates every detail of our ordinary lives. Justice without love is not yet truly Christian.

The World of the Bible
Prophet
Biblical prophets (Greek, to speak for or on behalf of someone) speak as God’s intermediaries to the king and the covenant people. Rulers tended to forget that they were to rule according to God’s covenant law and not for their own interests.

The prophets spoke on behalf of God, reminding the people of God’s agenda and encouraging trust in God rather than in human power and wisdom. They also spoke on behalf of the poor and downtrodden who often had no one else to speak for them.

Although their words were often taken as predicting the future, their predictive power was nothing more than a consequence of their belief that God always comes in judgment to punish evil and in mercy to reward good. God’s judgment of sin and reward of salvation were accomplished in and through the political and social life of the people.

Prophets revealed God’s hidden presence in the political, social and personal events of their times. Being attuned to God’s word, the prophets showed a world that invited cooperation with God to establish and maintain right relationships. Through their double vision of the world from both the divine and human perspectives, prophets taught how to see, evaluate and act in the world as God instructed.

Prophets encouraged hearing and heeding God’s message. But they were never just interested in good ideas, but in good lives that met the demands of the right relationships with God and with others. They offered a new vision of the world and demanded that people change themselves and their ways because of God’s presence.