



Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools

The Last Supper Matthew 26:20-30

	page
The Story	1

The Lessons

1. One Bread	2
2. One Body	5

Bonus Lesson!

Servant to All (Foot Washing – John 13:3-17)	8
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The Last Supper

When it was evening and everything was ready for the Passover dinner, Jesus sat at the table with his twelve disciples. While they were eating, he told them, "One of you will betray me." This upset the disciples a lot and they all said, one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" Jesus answered, "One who has eaten with me will betray me. That this would happen to me is written in the scriptures, but the one who betrayed me will certainly suffer!" Judas, who was the one who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Teacher?' Jesus replied, "That is what you have said."

While Jesus and his disciples were eating the Passover dinner together, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never drink wine again until that day when I drink it with you in my Father's kingdom."

When they finished their meal, they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

(Matthew 26:20-30)

One Bread

(The Last Supper Lesson 1)

This lesson uses the tradition of the agape feast to talk about the Eucharist in a sort of sideways fashion without getting into any terribly specific and complicated Eucharistic theology. My hope is that this makes it comfortable for a wide range of churches as well as offering kids an effective entry point for deeper participation and contemplation of the Eucharist. You may still, of course, need to adjust some of the language to make it fit with your church's tradition and the particular experiences of your students.

Since it is, in my opinion, very difficult to talk about the Last Supper without involving food, the agape feast is real. You will need to serve bread, fruit (ideally), and juice/water. If you are up for it, setting a real table (maybe even with a table cloth and some flowers) would be a lovely touch.

Things to know about this lesson:

- Plan a quick trip to the grocery store!

Materials

- loaf of bread
- fruit (in bite-size, finger-friendly pieces)
- pitcher of juice or water
- plates, napkins, cups

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what church season we are in right now? (Lent)

And what is Lent for? (getting ready for Easter by focusing on God and thinking about how God wants us to live)

And who can tell me what happens at Easter? (Jesus dies and is raised to life again.)

Jesus knew that he was in danger because the leaders of the temple and the city did not like what he was teaching people. He also knew that his disciples – his friends – did not understand everything that he had taught them and that they would need help if he died.

One of the things he did just before he died was share Passover dinner with his disciples. Passover is a holy day in the Jewish religion and Jews, like Jesus and his disciples, gather to eat and pray together. Are there any special dinners you eat with your family and friends?

Let's listen to the story about this very special dinner.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

What did Jesus do with the bread and wine?

Have you seen anyone do something that looks or sounds like that? Who? Where?

Do you know why we have Communion?

Communion is a sacrament which means that is a sign for the amazing work that God is doing. There are lots of ways to understand Communion and I'm not sure anyone really understands it completely – like so many things about Jesus it is a mystery and a miracle.

But one way of thinking about Communion is that it is like participating in a very special dinner with each other, with Jesus, and with all the other Christians in the world and throughout history. And, while we share that dinner, God does the amazing work of bringing us together, even if we don't always notice it.

Introduce the Activity

In just a little while, we are going to go share a Communion meal (or whatever language works best in your setting) with everyone else in our church family. But before we do that, we are going to have a special meal together, called an agape meal. This is a very old kind of meal that Christians a long, long time ago used to share sometimes. Agape means love, so an agape meal is a love meal – when we eat it together, we are saying that we love each other and know that we are all part of the one family of God.

Look at the loaf of bread. How many pieces of bread are there? (One)

How many people are here today? (#)

We need to divide the loaf of bread into at least # pieces.

Help the kids tear up the bread – make more pieces if your numbers are too small for the size of the loaf. Extras can be shared (by the kids) around the congregation after the service).

Now how many pieces of bread are there?

But if we put them all back together, how many loaves would there be? (One)

And how many families does God have? (one)

Let's share this one loaf of bread with each other – brothers and sisters in God's one family.

Agape Meal

Say a simple grace before passing the bread, fruit, and juice/water around the circle. Enjoy – it's supposed to be a feast!

Regrouping

How was the agape meal like having a meal with your friends or family?

How was it different?

How was that like communion?

How was it different?

Sharing food – at home, here, or at communion – can mean lots of different things but it should also always make us thankful for the food we have and the people we share it with.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Jesus and the gift of communion. Thank you for friends and family and the gift of eating together. Amen.

One Body (The Last Supper 2)

This lesson focuses on the symbol of food in the Eucharist (rather than on social eating as in *One Bread*). It is my hope that you will be able to make simple unleavened bread with your students. If, however, that is not possible you can make playdough bread. You can even make the playdough in class or simply bring in store-bought clay of your choice.

You may still, of course, need to adjust some of the language around the Eucharist to make it fit with your church's tradition and the particular experiences of your students.

Things to know about this lesson:

- If you will be baking/cooking, make sure your kitchen is equipped with everything you will need.
- If you make the bread, consider arranging to use it for Communion.

Materials

- see recipes below

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what church season we are in right now? (Lent)

And what is Lent for? (getting ready for Easter by focusing on God and thinking about how God wants us to live)

And who can tell me what happens at Easter? (Jesus dies and is raised to life again.)

Jesus knew that he was in danger because the leaders of the temple and the city did not like what he was teaching people. He also knew that his disciples – his friends – did not understand everything that he had taught them and that they would need help if he died.

One of the things he did just before he died was share Passover dinner with his disciples. Passover is a holy day in the Jewish religion and Jews, like Jesus and his disciples, gather to eat and pray together. At this dinner, Jesus did something special with some of the food they shared.

Are there any foods that are special to you? Things you eat only on special occasions or things that remind you of someone special?

Let's listen to the story about this very special dinner.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

What did Jesus do with the bread and wine?

Have you seen anyone do something that looks or sounds like that? Who? Where?

Do you know why we have Communion?

Communion is a sacrament which means that is a sign for the amazing work that God is doing. There are lots of ways to understand Communion and I'm not sure anyone really understands it completely – like so many things about Jesus it is a mystery and a miracle.

(Last week, we talked about how Communion is like sharing a special dinner with each other, with Jesus, and all other Christians.) Another way to think about Communion is to focus on the food.

What is food for? (staying alive, being healthy, having energy, growing, etc)

What happens when we eat food? (we digest it, break it down and use it for our bodies, it becomes part of us)

What would happen if we didn't have food? (we'd die, get sick, get weak)

Jesus told us that the bread was his body. When we eat the bread, it is Jesus who becomes part of us and makes us healthy and gives us energy. This is another part of the amazing work that God does – giving us what we need to become more like Jesus so that, after church, we can go live the way Jesus taught us to live.

How did Jesus teach us to live? (with love, in peace, serving others, etc)

Introduce the Activity

We're going to make some bread (out of playdough). While we do it, let's remember that we need regular food to be healthy and strong but we also need Jesus.

*If you are simply using store-bought playdough, I suggest asking the students to make lots of different foods, including bread. Otherwise, the activity will be very short and rather dull – loaves of bread are not a sculpting challenge! You may find this is also necessary even if you make your own playdough in the class.

Breadmaking

Unleavened Bread Recipe

(makes 30-50 small pieces for communion)

If you have time, you can share some of the bread in class or you can save it for after church or to send home with the kids or you can use it for a (same-day) communion service. Make sure the kids know which you will be doing before you get started.

- 2 cups of flour
- 1/2 to 3/4 tsp of salt

- 1/2 cup of water
- 3/8 to 1/2 cup of oil (olive oil is best but vegetable oil would work)

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Whisk salt, water, and oil together with a fork until frothy. Add flour and mix until it is a dry dough – try not to over-mix as that will make the bread tough.

Put the dough onto a cookie sheet. Roll/pat the dough out as thin as you can, even to the point of pie crust thin (you may want to distribute portions of the dough for individuals or small groups to work on). Score the bread to prevent bubbles from forming. You can score it into the shapes you want to cut it into afterwards.

Bake for about 10 minutes. You don't want it to brown, much less burn, so watch carefully towards the end.

No-Cook Playdough Recipe

(or have a look at the many other recipes, including microwavable, traditional, and tarter-free, at playdoughrecipe.com)

- 1 cup of flour
- 1 cup of boiling water
- 2 tablespoons of cream of tartar
- a half cup of salt
- 1 tablespoon of oil

Simply mix all the ingredients together! Be careful as it can be quite hot. Once mixed (and slightly cooled), knead the playdough to get the right consistency. Share it around and start making "bread".

Regrouping

Admire the finished products. Eat some of the bread, if appropriate (perhaps using the closing prayer as a grace).

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Jesus and the gift of communion. Thank you for food that makes us healthy and strong, in our bodies and our minds and our souls. Amen.

Servant to All (Jesus Washes the Disciples Feet Bonus Lesson)

I included this lesson even though there isn't actually a spot on the schedule for it. It just didn't feel right to skip the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, especially as so many churches include this story in their liturgical practices.

You may want to replace one of the Last Supper lessons with this one or you may find a time to use it during holy week – consider the possibility of offering Sunday School during your Maundy Thursday service or even for part of your Good Friday service. Or build a special family service that includes everyone in the lesson and adds a short, meditative prayer time on to the beginning or end. 'Cause Holy Week isn't really busy enough...

Things to know about this lesson:

- It's messy – you have to have an excuse to wash feet, after all.

Materials

- Mural paper with the title "Following Jesus"
- Finger paints and shallow pans (for stepping into)
- Bowls (for washing feet) and towels

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what church season we are in right now? (Lent)

And what is Lent for? (getting ready for Easter by focusing on God and thinking about how God wants us to live)

One of the last things Jesus taught his disciples about how to live was that we are supposed to be servants and not masters.

What's a servant?

What's a master?

Which do you think you'd rather be?

Let's listen to the story and see why Jesus tells us to be servants.

Read the Story

Jesus and his disciples were having supper – the last supper they would have together. Jesus knew that God had given everything in the world to him. He knew that he had come from God and that we was going to go to God. But, even knowing how special he was, Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.

When he got to Simon Peter, Simon Peter said, "Lord, are *you* going to wash *my* feet?" Jesus answered, "I know you don't understand what I am doing, but you will later." Peter said to him, "No, Lord, you will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you are not with me." So Peter said, "Then wash my hands and my head as well as my feet!" Jesus answered, "If you have bathed, you only need to wash your feet for the rest of you is clean."

After he had washed their feet, he put on his robe and returned to the table. Then he said, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example, and you should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master and messengers are not greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

(John 13:3-17)

Discussion

What did Jesus do to his disciples? (wash their feet)

How did that make them feel? (uncomfortable, embarrassed, upset) Why?

In Jesus' time, servants washed their masters' feet at the end of the day. People wore sandals all the time and walked most places so their feet were hot and dirty and tired. Getting them washed probably felt really nice. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he was doing a job that servants did – not teachers or friends or important people.

Why did Jesus do a servants' job?

God wants us all to take care of other people's needs as well as our own – we are supposed to love others as we love ourselves. That means thinking about other people and finding ways to help them live happy, healthy lives.

If everyone behaved as a servant to others, everyone would take care of each other. Do you think that would be a good world to live in?

Introduce the Activity

Some of you might remember way back in the fall when we made footprints. We're going to do that again but, this time, everyone will wash someone else's feet as a way of showing that we are servants to one another, following Jesus' example.

Footwashing

Lay out the piece of mural paper, pans of finger paint, bowls of water, and towels. Direct the students to line up. The first student chooses a footprint colour, steps in the paint, and onto the mural paper. You wash her/his feet. That student will then wash the feet of the next student and so on. You go last so that the last student has someone's feet to wash (and so you can more easily facilitate everyone else's work). If you have a larger group you could use two (or more!) lines.

Regrouping

How did it feel to have your feet washed by someone else?

How did it feel to wash someone else's feet?

Can you think of something you can do this week to be a servant to someone else? (help a sibling/parent with something; give food to the food bank; visit someone who can't leave their house; donate a toy to a homeless shelter)

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Jesus and his example of how to be a servant. Help us pay attention to the needs of others so that we can be servants to them. Help us truly love other people as much as we love ourselves. Amen.