

Focus: Staying close to Jesus

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
Cycle B Easter Season CD
Bible Reading: in Lesson plan
Stick
Plant
Book: What is God Like?

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about Jesus the Good Shepherd. This week we are going to hear a story from Jesus that tells us to always stay close to him so we can do good deeds and give glory to God.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray,

Dear God, your son Jesus is the vine that gives us life.

May we always be a part of Jesus and give you glory in everything we do.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song/Movement

Join in the Dance, track: 1, from Easter Season Cycle B CD

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.

Join in the dance of the earth's
jubilation! This is the feast of the
love of God.

Shout from the heights to the ends
of creation: Jesus the Savior is risen
from the grave!

1. Wake, O people; sleep no longer,
greet the breaking day!
Christ, Redeemer, Lamb and Lion,
turns the night away!

2. All creation, like a mother, labors
to give birth.

Soon the pain will be forgotten, joy
for all the earth!

3. Now our shame becomes our
glory on this holy tree.

Now the reign of death is ended;
now we are set free!

Memory Verse

Say: Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.

I am the vine and you are the branches.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *The vine is the part of the plant that grows out of the earth. Many branches grow off the vine. The vine draws up the food and water it needs to grow from the soil. The branches cannot live apart from the vine. Jesus is like the vine. Jesus is the source of all life. He provides us with everything we need to grow*

.>>>>Sing Alleluia for Easter Season:

"Hallelu, Hallelu" Track 2 on CD Labeled EASTER SEASON CYCLE B,

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah,

Praise ye the Lord!

Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelu, Hallelujah,

Praise ye the Lord!

Praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah,

Praise ye the Lord!

Repeat three times

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of John.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: None, pp. N/A,

Jesus said to his disciples

[Chatty hands, thumb against fingers]

"I am the true vine,

[Make an undulating motion with your hands, to indicate a growing vine]

And my Father is the gardener.

[Pretend to dig in the garden]

He takes away the branches that don't bear fruit.

[Pretend to take a branch off a tree and toss it away]

He prunes the ones that do so they can bear even more fruit.

[Pretend to pick lots of fruit from a tree]

You were pruned by what I taught you.

[Point to the children]

I am the vine and you are the branches.

[Make an undulating motion with your hands, then point to the children and raise your hands up like branches in a tree]

Branches cannot bear fruit when cut from the vine.

[Pretend to twist something into two pieces]

You must stay close to me like branches that stay on the vine.

[Clasp your hands together tightly and hold them over your heart]

Then you will do good things and love each other.

[Draw a heart in the air]

This will give glory to my heavenly Father.

[Point heavenward]

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *What does Jesus tell the people about the true vine?*
- *Who is the vine grower?*
- *How are Jesus' followers like the branches?*
- *Who will grow and bear much fruit?*

Reflection on Reading:

The vine draws water and nutrients from the soil and provides what the branches need. The branches can't grow flowers or fruit without this. Jesus is like the vine that gives life to us, the branches. From Jesus we get love to give others, wisdom so we know how to live as God wants us to live, and salvation so we can live with God forever.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Staying Close to Jesus:

I found this in my yard. (Show them the broken branch) As you can see, there are no leaves on it at all. It is completely dead. In fact, I wouldn't even call it a branch; I would call it a stick.

Do you think this would come back to life if I planted it and watered it? I don't think that would work because the branches get the nutrients that they need to live from the tree. Branches cannot live or grow without the tree. Without the tree, there will never be leaves on the branches. If the branch comes from a fruit tree, there will never be fruit on the branch if it is separated from the tree. If I take this dead branch and plant it in the ground and water it, it won't come back to life, it will always be just a stick. (You can use the imagery of a lamp needing electricity too)

That same thing is true about our life with Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Show them the plant—the leaves grow and are healthy because they are connected to the stem. If we took one of these leaves off the vine what would happen to it?

If we keep our life connected to Jesus, we will grow. Our life will produce beautiful leaves and delicious fruit. But if we are separated from Jesus, our leaves will wither and die and we will never put forth any fruit.

What will your life be? Will you be a beautiful branch on the tree...or will you just be a stick?

Dear Jesus, help us to remember that apart from you, we can do nothing. Amen.

Activity 2:

What is God's Glory?

God's glory is best seen in Jesus Christ. He, the Light of the world, illuminates God's nature. Because of Jesus, we are no longer in the dark about what God is really like. When we do good deeds and show God's love to others we are giving glory to God. God's glory is the expression of his goodness and love.

Let's learn a bit about God. We can't ever really know and understand EVERYTHING about God, but we can learn many things.

Read book: What is God like?

Ask: Does it help to know what the bible says God is like? How can we give glory to God?—by having love in our heart.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group—let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who created each of us to be connected to Jesus?
Do you believe in Jesus, who gives us life as a vine gives life to its branches?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, whose life flows to us through Jesus?*

Sending Forth

Say: Remember that doing good deeds for others gives glory to God. Some good deeds you can do are hold a door open for someone, put away your toys when you are finished playing, visit an elderly neighbor or family member.

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "Rejoice in the Lord" track 3 from Easter Season CD Cycle B while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.