

# Preparing to Teach

Identity 2A

Joined to the Branch

3 Basic Truth Covered: Jesus shows me the wise choice.

## Unit Intro

The more time we spend with Jesus; the more parts of our lives we submit to him, the more we will resemble him. Jesus is the Branch and only when we are connected to him, by the power of his Spirit, will we produce the fruits of the Kingdom. This unit explores how we find our (new) identity in him: by following him, seeking his brand of happiness in our lives, depending upon him--even in the small things, practicing peace, seeking him after we mess up, and praying, to name a few.

**A prayer for teachers:** Father God, you created us to be in relationship with your Son, Jesus--the Branch. Holy Spirit, guide us into the ways that keep us joined to The Branch.

## Lessons in this Unit:

**Lesson 1: Jan. 7: Jesus is The Branch: Jesus and his family come back home, Matthew 1:18-25**

Lesson 2: Jan. 14: Disciples of Jesus: Peter and Andrew; "Let's Go!" *JSB* and Matthew 4:18-22; 16:17-19

Lesson 3: Jan 21: The Upside-Down Kingdom: Jesus Teaches the Secret of Happiness, *Children of God Bible*, Sermon on the Mount, Luke 6:20-26

Lesson 4: Jan 28: Parables: Lost Son, "Running away," *JSB*

Lesson 5: Feb. 4: Jesus' Friendship: Zacchaeus, "The Man who didn't have any friends (none)" *JSB* and Luke 19:1-10]

Lesson 6: Feb. 11: Jesus Teaches us how to Pray: Lord's prayer, "How to Pray" *JSB* and Matthew 6:5-14

## Today's Lesson:

After wrapping up the season of Advent last Sunday, this Sunday we begin a new unit covering our identity in Christ. However, this new unit is closely tied with the truths of Advent. Jesus is the new shoot growing out of the stump of Jesse and he is the branch we must remain joined to if we hope to resemble him and bear his fruit. Today's lesson will continue the story of Jesus' early life and show that he will grow roots in the humble town of Nazareth (a name, interestingly enough, connected to the Hebrew word "netser" meaning "branch").

Teacher, as you arrive on Sunday, be prepared to fill in your name, your parent's name and their parent's name in a family tree before the start of class. You will be using this prop during the "Getting Ready" part of today's lesson.

## Lesson Plan

Jesus is The Branch

**Bible Story:** Jesus and His Family Come Back Home • *Matthew 2:19-23*

**Memory Verse:** John 15:4 (and verse 5 for 3-5th graders): “Remain joined to me, and I will remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can’t bear fruit unless you remain joined to me. (5 I am the vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me.)”

**Song:** Be the Center

### Welcome/Getting Ready:

**What you need:** potted tree with branches, a stump for the base, a framed 5x7 print-out of the teacher’s family tree (or printed on cardstock that can be propped up).

*Co-Teacher at door welcoming kids, helping kids to recognize this space as sacred. Co-Teacher with hands out and let kids respond/chose greeting, high five, “knuckles” or a hug.*

*(see options at the door on the wall-CONNECT)*

*Teacher on floor in a circle on the carpet (K-2) or at the table (3-5th), getting kids ready (i.e. helping them prepare their hearts and minds for today’s time together and specifically the story).*

**TEACHER:** Good morning! My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

Show the children your family tree [**Teacher, please prepare ahead of time**]. Explain to them where you are on the tree, your parents, grandparents, etc. Choose a few children and explain where their names/their parents’ names would go on the tree.

### UNITE and DISENGAGE STRESS

Once everyone is seated, introduce John 15:4. Jesus said, “Remain joined to me, and I will remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can’t bear fruit unless you remain joined to me.”

Practice this verse a few times by saying a phrase, and having them repeat it. Stand together, act it out, repeat it loudly, softly, etc. Shake the wiggles out to prepare for the story.

### Storytelling:

**What we need: For PreK-2nd:** one large map of Egypt, Judah and Israel (need to add the town of Nazareth), two more 5x7 print-outs of family trees on propped up sturdy cardstock or in simple picture frames (one tree will have King Archelaus son of King Herod; the other Jesus,

son of Joseph and Mary, also add Jesse and King David up in the high branches), an angel.

[3-5th graders may turn to Matthew 2:19-23 and read it together, then flip to Isaiah 11:1.]

*I suggest that if kids try to talk to you during the story, you simply put a finger up to your ear to indicate 'listen' and wait for quiet to start again. If a child is persistent, then maybe offer a "no thank you" or remind them that they'll have a turn to talk when you finish the story.*

*Roll out the map on the floor in front of you. Set up King Archelaus' family tree near Judah. Set-up Jesus' family tree in Egypt. Open your Bible to Matthew 2:19-23. With minimal eye contact begin reading. Point to Herod and Joseph on the respective family trees:*

**"After Herod died, Joseph had a dream while he was still in Egypt. In the dream an angel of the Lord appeared to him.**

*Bring out the angel and set it next to the Joseph tree.*

**"The angel said, 'Get up! Take the child and his mother. Go to the land of Israel. Those who were trying to kill the child are dead.'**

*Begin moving the Joseph tree toward Israel.*

**"So Joseph got up. He took the child and his mother Mary back to the land of Israel. But then he heard that Archelaus was king of Judea. Archelaus was ruling in place of his father Herod. This made Joseph afraid to go there. Warned in a dream, Joseph went back to the land of Galilee instead.**

*Move the Joseph tree up toward the Sea of Galilee. Point to the town of Nazareth:*

**"There he lived in a town called Nazareth. So what the prophets had said about Jesus came true. They had said, 'He will be called a Nazarene.'**

*Flip your Bible to Isaiah 11:1. Begin to read, motioning to the old stump and the new tree growing out of it:*

**"Jesse's family is like a tree that has been cut down.**

**A new little tree will grow from its stump.**

**From its roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit."**

## **WONDERING:**

*While you may choose to use all of the questions, **be sensitive to the Spirit's leading** as you move into this phase. You may find that one or more of the questions seems particularly important to spend time with. Also, it is okay if the children speculate inaccurately. They are processing the story.*

*Teachers can share their wondering as well since building relationship with the children is one of the goals. It may be best for teachers to share after the kids so kids aren't tempted to mimic the teacher.*

### **TEACHER:**

- I wonder what your favorite part of the story is?
- I wonder if God has ever spoken to you in a dream?
- I wonder if you would follow God's directions?
- I wonder what this tree means to you?
- I wonder where you see yourself in this tree?
- I wonder if this stump reminds you of any other stories? (Isaiah 11:1-3 was read during the first Sunday of Advent when we lit the Hope candle.)

3-5th grade only (additional questions):

- I wonder if you think any part of this story could have been left out?
- The Hebrew word for branch is "netser". I wonder if this connects to anything in our story today? ("Nazarene" may be connected to the Hebrew word "netser".)
- Maybe the words "netser" and "Nazareth" are simply a coincidence. I wonder if God cares about such details?

**TEACHER:** "Will you pray with me? \_\_\_\_\_ Amen."

*Tell them that over the next few minutes they get to work on something of their choosing as a response to today's story. Describe what materials or activities are available to them and encourage them to think of how they will respond before they leave the circle. Let each child think about it for a second and then share what they have chosen to do (with the group) before releasing them. Remind the kids that they will have plenty of time to do their work (if they don't finish something, they can take it home and finish it later or come back to it next week here). Also remind them that they'll be coming back together for FEAST at the end.*

*At this time, remind children of our commitments. These are our behavioral expectations, which they may be reminded of throughout the morning as needed.*

**Our Commitments:** (see posters on the wall)

*Teacher, remind kids of the following (and unpack any of these as needed):*

It is “my job to keep you safe, and your job to keep it that way....so we commit to the following....

<b>PreK-2nd Grade</b>	<b>3rd-5th Grade</b>
Helping Hands	Acts of Service
Listening Ears	Reflective Listening
Quiet Voices	Respectful Speech
Walking Feet	Considerate Movement
Right to Pass	Personal Choice

After reviewing the expectations, please dismiss the children to their chosen response.

## **RESPONSE:**

\*During response time you may play the cd with *Be the Center* in the background.

*Co-Teacher should be responsible for oversight, set up, clean up (i.e. helping kids clean up and get things back where they belong--give kids responsibility) of the response time. When it is about 11:10 you should enter Feast.*

**TEACHER/Co-TEACHER:** During Response, we believe God is present and is accomplishing good work in the hearts of teachers and kids alike. **Wait and watch for the Spirit as you interact with the kids.** Have faith that parts of the story, if not all of it, did catch in their minds and hearts. Have faith the story will stick with them even after they leave this morning.

For the times when their Response work may not seem to connect with the story, first ask probing questions or remark on what you notice about their work. Perhaps they are connecting in a way we would never anticipate! If it appears this is not the case, then please help the kids focus on responding to the story **by asking them how their work helps them remember and/or understand today’s story. Alternatively, ask the Spirit to inspire you with thoughts and questions that will connect with the kids and help them along with their response.**

(We include a few thoughts to get your started after each Response Activity, but by no means are these exhaustive or meant to be a strict guide.)

**Ultimately, the kids have the right to pass when it comes to responding to the story. They are still required to be respectful of others who are working, but we cannot force a**

**response from them. Faith journeys--for adults and children alike--are rarely efficient and often circuitous.**

All of what is outlined above is meant to keep *relationship* (with God and others) as an important and sacred part of the morning. **Pray and believe God will honor this and is honoring this desire--even when faced with apparent mess and disarray.**

### **1. Touch the Story: (younger kids)**

**What you need:** all materials used for storytelling, including copies of the Jesus Storybook Bible and NIV Bible with today's passages marked.

### **2. Prayer: Learning to Listen**

**What you need:** prayer journals, electric candles

Taking a few children at a time, sit in a quiet prayer corner (Maybe even close the door to the other room) with lighted electric candles. Explain that prayer is also about listening for the voice of God. Take some time to sit quietly and listen. Perhaps no one will hear anything. Explain that is okay. The important part is to keep listening. If someone does hear something, share about it! Talk about it. Write it down in a his/her journal so she/he can remember.

### **3. Recreate: Your Family Tree**

**What you need:** copies of the family tree used in the storytelling, glue, pencils/pens, ½ sheets of cardstock or index cards.

Help the children create a family tree. [3-5th: Have children share their family trees with the group and.....] Wonder about where they and their families are related on the tree. Wonder if Jesus is on their tree. Is a non-family member on their family tree?

### **4. Art/Movement/Explore: The Stump and the Branch**

**What we need:** brown packaging paper, markers, large brown cardstock, different shades of green felt, different shades of brown felt, packaging tape, green construction paper, dark brown sand paper (for dirt?), large piece of white kraft paper taped on the chalkboard wall (unit memory verse can be written on the chalkboard on either side of the large piece of paper).

This response activity will be a collaboration with all the children throughout the entire Identity Unit. Today we will be building the stump and the new shoot/tree growing out of the dead stump. **Please leave this AND the supplies (in a bag) for it in the room, children can build upon the activity the following week.**

**“It is time to prepare for the feast! Please put your work in a safe place and clean up your work space.”**

## **FEAST:**

**\*\*\*Please use “Feast” language (not “snack time”) during this section of the lesson and remind children why we feast together (you may even ask them why we have feast and what our feast together helps us remember). Feast is a time to engage in relationship building and fellowship around something to eat--in “communion” with one another. It should bring us back to the day’s story and God, but also into deeper community with one another.\*\*\***

*Water and cups are available in the rooms each Sunday morning.*

**What you need:** corn chips, napkins/coffee filters/paper towel

*Have kids circle up again on the carpet with Teacher and Co-Teacher.  
Pass around hand sanitizer, napkins, then the bowl with corn chips.  
Welcome them to the Feast.*

*Engage in discussion with the kids. This is a time for relationship building.  
Go around the circle and let kids all have a chance to respond.*

Possible wondering questions:

[Name of child], I noticed you made \_\_\_\_\_. What did that mean? Why, etc.?

Who else would like to share their work with us?

(Teacher can share his/her response as well.)

-What are you looking forward to this week?

*Give each child an opportunity to share their work during the Feast and ask them how their work connects them to the story. Feel free to use any unused wondering questions (from the above “wondering” section if you’re looking for more conversation starters.)*

## **BLESSING:**

**What You Need:** Parent Cue sheets at the door, anything children worked on that they want to take home

**Co-Teacher, help dismiss kids from the circle. Teacher, keep kids in FEAST mode until their parents arrive. Bless them as they leave saying:**

***[Child’s name], Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Look for him this week!***