

Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

This Us vs. Them lesson plan will help youth understand the importance of inclusion. It also addresses the gospel passage where Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman and says “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” This passage emphasizes the theme of inclusion and God’s love for all people, regardless of their background or origin.

The discussion focuses on the concept of inclusion and prompts participants to consider groups that may be treated unfairly in society. It encourages them to think beyond their own circles and recognize that everyone deserves fairness and justice.

Overall, this lesson plan on inclusion provides a comprehensive approach to understanding and implementing the value of inclusion in daily life, inspired by the teachings of Jesus and the message of God’s love for all.

Share the Good News

Materials and Preparation for the Do Not Be Afraid Lesson Plan

- Bibles or copies of the Scripture passage Matthew 15:21-28 (to be distributed among the participants during the Bible reading).
- Pencils and papers (for the opening activity where participants will write down the groups they belong to and their reflections).
- Whiteboard or flip chart with markers (for the discussion portion of the lesson to jot down key points and ideas).
- Printouts of the reflection questions and challenge (to be distributed among the participants for individual or group reflection).
- Music player or device with speakers
- Copies of [Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer](#) for the closing prayer activity.
- Optional: Inspirational quotes from saints and Catholic leaders related to inclusion, written on cards or printed out, to be used as discussion prompts or to decorate the classroom.
- Optional: Art supplies (markers, colored pencils, craft materials) for an optional art activity where participants can create posters or cards with messages of inclusion and love to display around the school or community.
- Optional: Resources or materials about saints who promoted inclusion and treated others with respect, which can be shared during the discussion to provide role models for the participants.

- Optional: Project materials for the inclusion project challenge, if the group decides to organize an activity or campaign to promote inclusion in their school or community.

Opening Activity for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

The opening activity encourages participants to think about the groups they belong to and reflect on the positive aspects of belonging as well as any potential downsides. This activity sets the stage for discussing how our natural tendency to associate with like-minded individuals can sometimes lead to excluding others.

Have everyone get comfortable. Each youth should have pencil and paper.

- Think of some groups you belong to. Write them down.
- What do you like about belonging to these groups?
- Is there a downside or a negative to being a member of any of these groups?

After giving the youth some time to write their answers, do some sharing. Look for common themes.

Scripture Reading for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

We often tend to associate with people who share similar traits and common interests: people on our sports team, friends who like the same video games, the theater troupe, our fellow choir members, chess enthusiasts, etc.

There is nothing wrong with this unless it leads to an “Us vs Them” mentality. We have to remember not to exclude people outside of our usual circle or even worse, treat them unfairly. We have to always work to develop an attitude of inclusion.

The Scripture reading from Matthew 15:21-28 tells the story of Jesus interacting with the Canaanite woman, emphasizing the theme of inclusion and God’s love for all people, regardless of their background or origin.

Read [Matthew 15:21-28](#) (Jesus Heals the Canaanite Woman’s Daughter)

At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon.”

But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. Jesus’ disciples came and asked him, “Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us.”

He said in reply, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, “Lord, help me.”

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He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."

She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."

Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

And the woman's daughter was healed from that hour.

[Matthew 15:21-28](#)

Reflection for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

First, a little history lesson. In the Old Testament, the prophets indicated over and over again that God is the God of all nations. But the Jewish people had a special relationship with Him. The people of Israel had been through a lot together and they were a pretty close-knit group. Even Jesus sometimes indicates that He was sent for his people, yet in his ministry he often reaches out and praises foreigners also.

The Canaanite woman was a foreigner, not a member of the "chosen people". Why does Jesus enter into this dialog with her? His answer seems very rude. But perhaps it was meant to teach the disciples – and us – something specific about inclusion.

We all want to stick up for our own groups and make sure we get our fair share. We want our team or club to get as much funding and resources, if not more, than the other teams and clubs. If a choice has to be made, we want to be on the winning side.

But God wills that all people be treated fairly. He wills that everyone have what they need. Jesus has enough healing power for his own people and for foreigners like the Canaanite woman's daughter. He wants everyone to be healed and saved. The Kingdom of God is a place of inclusion.

- Can you think of any groups at your school or in society who seem to be treated unfairly?
- Would you want to be a member of these groups? Why or why not?

Sometimes we divide ourselves by race, or immigration status, or gender, or political party, or even religion (include other groups from the discussion) to the point where we are only concerned with taking care of ourselves.

But we are all God's beloved children. He loves the people outside of our groups as much as He loves you and me. And His Kingdom is a place where all of us can live in peace and justice and love. Doing God's will means working for a fair world for everyone.

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Small Group Reflection Questions for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

After the reflection, young people will be divided into small groups for further discussion. The following questions will guide their conversation:

- Jesus interacted with the Canaanite woman despite her being from a different group. Why do you think Jesus did that? How does this story teach us about inclusion?
- Think about the groups you listed in the opening activity. Have you ever felt excluded or treated unfairly by any of those groups? How did it make you feel, and what could have been done differently to promote inclusion?
- Can you share an example of a time when you reached out to someone outside your usual circle of friends or classmates? How did that experience make you feel, and what did you learn from it?
- Imagine you see someone being teased or ridiculed because they belong to a different group. What could you do to stand up for that person and promote inclusion in that situation?
- In what ways can schools or society be more inclusive? Think about policies, activities, or actions that can help create a fairer and more inclusive environment for everyone.
- Have you ever been hesitant to befriend someone because they were different from you or belonged to a different group? What can you do to overcome those hesitations and build connections with diverse individuals?
- How do you think the world would be different if everyone practiced inclusion and treated others with fairness and kindness, regardless of their background?
- Share a story or example of a person who has been a role model for inclusivity and treating others with respect. What qualities or actions made that person stand out to you?
- In your own words, define what inclusion means to you. Why is it essential to embrace inclusion in our communities and schools?
- Brainstorm some practical ideas or projects that your group could initiate to promote inclusion in your school or local community. How would you go about implementing these ideas?

After a few minutes, ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the larger group.

Challenge for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

This week, we want to take the lessons we've learned about inclusion and put them into action! The challenge is all about making a positive difference in our school and community by practicing inclusion and kindness towards others.

1. **Step outside your comfort zone:** Challenge yourself to reach out to someone who may not be in your usual group of friends or classmates. Start a conversation with them, ask about their interests, and find common ground. You might discover new friendships and learn from different perspectives.
2. **Stand up for others:** If you see someone being treated unfairly or bullied because they belong to a different group, don't hesitate to speak up. Be their ally and defend their right to be treated with respect and kindness. Remember, being inclusive means looking out for one another.
3. **Be the bridge:** Sometimes, there might be misunderstandings or conflicts between different groups. As a peacemaker, you can help bridge those gaps. Organize activities that bring diverse groups together, like group games, team-building exercises, or collaborative projects.
4. **Include everyone in your activities:** When planning events or gatherings, be mindful of including as many people as possible. Avoid exclusive cliques and make an effort to invite others who might feel left out. The more, the merrier!
5. **Listen and learn:** Take the time to listen to the stories and experiences of people from different backgrounds. Learn about their cultures, traditions, and values. It will help you appreciate diversity and become more empathetic towards others.
6. **Celebrate differences:** Instead of focusing on what makes us different, let's celebrate those differences! Organize cultural fairs or events where everyone can showcase their unique traditions, food, and talents.
7. **Start an inclusion project:** Gather a group of friends and start an inclusion project in your school or community. It could be a campaign to promote kindness, a club that welcomes everyone, or a support group for those who feel isolated. Your actions can inspire others to follow your lead.
8. **Be a role model:** Lead by example. Be kind, respectful, and inclusive in all your interactions. When others see you treating everyone with fairness and compassion, they'll be encouraged to do the same.

Remember, even small acts of kindness and inclusion can have a big impact on someone's life. Together, we can create a more inclusive and harmonious environment where everyone feels valued and accepted. Let's spread the message of love and inclusion wherever we go!

Prayer for the Us vs. Them Lesson Plan on Inclusion

[Pope Francis' Five Finger Prayer](#) is a powerful and meaningful way to connect with God through prayer, embracing a spirit of inclusion. As we come together to pray using this method, we are reminded of the vast diversity of people around the world, each with their own joys, sorrows, hopes, and dreams. Just as our fingers are different from one another, so are the individuals we encounter in our lives.

This prayer prompts us to be inclusive in our thoughts and intercessions, extending our love and compassion to all of God's beloved children, regardless of their backgrounds, beliefs, or circumstances. With each finger representing a distinct group of people, we unite our hearts and minds to send forth our heartfelt prayers for the well-being and happiness of everyone, creating a harmonious and inclusive space for all in the presence of our loving Creator.

Resources

[More about racial justice from a Catholic perspective](#)

[Learn about saints who spoke up](#)

[More Themes](#)

[Background Material](#)

[Music Suggestions](#)

[More Youth Ministry Lesson Plans and Reflections](#)