

“Identity: You are a Saint”

(Part of the Identity Series, and a follow up the “Job Identity” lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Katie McRee

Key verses:

Several verses that use the word “saint”

Objectives:

- **To celebrate that simply by being a Christian, we are saints. Saints that are part of a larger family of believers, and work as a team!**
- **Considering what we can do to glorify God through our sainthood.**

This is part of a series that will be presented throughout the school year, and a follow up to the “Job identity” lesson that was posted in February of 2016. The lessons can all stand alone, but if you are looking for more resources, you can certainly go back and start the series with the original Job lesson.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- Hook: St. Vincent (10-mins): Watching a video clip from the movie, “St Vincent.”
- Book: Called to be Saints (10 mins): Listing the requirements for being a saint
- Look: Unidentified Saints (10-15 mins): Learning about some largely unknown people who have done awesome things for the glory of God.
- Took: Claiming your Sainthood (5-10 mins): Claiming our characteristics and passions that could lead to sainthood and creating our patron stained glass windows

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- A way to show the video clip in the hook section
- Copies of the saint verses (provided)
- Whiteboard/ flipchart and markers
- Copies of sainthood applications
- Transparencies, one per kid- YES! They still sell those
- Markers
- Tape
-

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

St. Vincent (Hook, 10 mins)

In this section, we are watching a clip from a movie called St. Vincent.

- Before viewing the clip, you may want to explain a little bit about the main character, Vincent: He's a guy that is hard to love. He drinks, smokes, swears, and is a pretty miserable person, at least at first. But when no one is watching, he goes out of his way to take care of the people. The movie is about a relationship he has with a boy (Oliver) that moves in next door to him. The clip is of that boy giving a presentation at school.
- Show the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo1CYIRDz8g>
- Quick discussion questions:
 - Does Vincent seem like someone that should be considered for Sainthood? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think that Oliver believed that Vincent was worthy of Sainthood?
 - What qualifications do you think someone should possess to be made a saint?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

Vincent may or may not be worthy of sainthood, but the bible actually gives some pretty clear guidelines on what it takes to be a saint. Let's check it out...

Called to be Saints (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we are looking at several bible verses that use the word “saint” and making a list of requirements someone must possess in order for God to consider them as a saint... this is a list that would be much different than the one that the Catholic Church has created.

- Ask a student to stand at the whiteboard/flipchart. They are going to keep a running list of all the things that we mention are required for sainthood- the larger group can help them identify them as they read the verses! Hint: it’s going to be a short list!
- At the back of the lesson there are several verses that use the word “saint.” Ask a different student to read each verse to the larger group. (The translation matters! The word “saint” is replaced in some translations and that won’t work for this scenario!)
- Ask different student to read each verse, pausing after each one to write down what it takes to be a saint, according to the verse.
- When you are done, all you should really have on your list is something along the lines of, “they are a follower of Christ.”

Question for discussion:

- As you look at our list, is that what you expected? Why or why not?

Mini-Lecture:

Talk a little bit about what it takes to be a saint, and how the word is used in the bible, being sure to hit on these points (notes taken from compellingtruth.com):

- A saint is not someone who is particularly pious, whose prayers cause miracles, or who sacrifices a great deal for their faith. According to the Bible, a saint is just someone who has accepted Christ as their savior.
- The New Testament uses the word *saint* or *saints* 67 times. In every instance, the reference is to all believers (e.g., [Acts 26:10](#); [Romans 1:7](#); [1 Corinthians 1:2](#)). Never is the word used of a special group of believers who serve God better than others. Scripture is clear that all Christians are saints.
- The Bible defines the Christian saint as anyone who follows Jesus. Every Christian is set apart from the world, to do good works through Jesus. The term "saint" is a reflection of the changes God makes in us, not our success in embodying those changes.
- Another interesting observation regarding the biblical view of saints is that they are almost exclusively referred to in plural form—"saints." Even the one exception, found in [Philippians 4:21](#), has more than one believer in mind: "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus." The church is a team.

Continue with some transitional words along the lines of:

Isn't it cool to think that all we have to do to be considered saints by God is to follow Christ? You can be self-centered and a total booger, and God still thinks of you as a saint. But here's the thing, we learned from our discussion that the word saint is usually used to talk about a group of people. A single saint is much less effective than a whole team of them! God created us to be doing this work together! I don't know about you, but I would so much rather be a star player for my saint team, than be someone who fumbles or warms the bench.

Typically, the people that the Catholic Church identifies for sainthood have done great things to share God's love and further the Gospel. While none of these things are required for sainthood in God's book, it's interesting to think about what we might be able to do to help our team!

Let's take a look at some people who have NOT been identified for sainthood by the church, but have done some great things...

Unidentified Saints (Look, 10-15 mins)

In this section, the students will learn about lesser known, but real people who have done things to further the Gospel and decide if they should be a Parton Saint of something because of their works.

- Break the students into small groups- enough that you have one group for each Sainthood Application. You can make multiple copies of the applications if you have a particularly large group.
- Tell them that you have a stack of applications from real people who want to be considered for sainthood. As a group they will need 2 minutes to look over the application and report back to the larger group 3 things:
 - What is your person's name?
 - What has this person done for the Gospel that is notable?
 - If they are made a saint, what should they be the patron of?
- After 2 minutes, let everyone report their findings to the larger group.

Transitional Statement:

You may never hear of these people ever again, but the work they are doing for God is significant, and God certainly remembers their name. They are doing things they are passionate about and helping people know God by caring for them, and in some cases with very few resources. In the same way, God has given all of us tools to be part of the team of saints...

Identity: You are a Saint (Took, 5-10 mins)

They will be brainstorming things they are passionate about and thinking about how those passions could be leveraged to love others and share Christ.

- This is an exercise that you may have to alter a little bit depending on your group. The idea is to get them to think about what they could easily do (because they have a passion) to help others and share God. Thinking of those things may be easiest to do alone, or maybe in small groups- that part you will need to decide!
- Once that is identified, they are supposed to decide what they should be the patron saint of.
- Just like we do in church with saints that we want to recognize, we are going to make stained glass windows.
- Give each kid a transparency, and pass out the markers. Ask them to draw an image that could be used as a window to celebrate their work as a saint.
- When they are done, allow each kid to share what they created and how it represents them. If you have a window in your gathering space, they can tape it up in the window

Mini-Lecture/Closing!

If we accomplish nothing else good for the rest of our lives, we are still secure in our sainthood- there is nothing we can do to shake that! But when we think critically about how God designed us and use those traits to further the Gospel, then we bring glory to God through our sainthood. It doesn't have to be anything that is news worthy. It can be incredibly simple, and still bring glory to God.

Close in prayer, thanking God that we belong to him and the community of saints. Ask God to let us be courageous in using our natural talents and interests in sharing him with the people around us.

Saint Verses:

Ephesians 2:18-20 “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.”

First Corinthians 1:2 “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.”

Colossians 1:11-13 “May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

Romans 8:27 “And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

Hebrews 6:10 “For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”

Romans 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:33: For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints.

Revelation 14:12: Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

Applications for Sainthood

Applicant: Miss Minnie

History:

She lived close to a neighborhood in Orlando Florida that was government funded and she was concerned that the children that lived there would fall into unhealthy patterns. She knew many of their parents were stuck in a vicious cycle of poverty and was worried that if the kids were bored during their free time, they would look for entertainment and comrade in unhealthy places. For the past 30 years, during every week of the summer and spring break, she has run a day camp at the neighborhood park. She has very few resources, and is growing old, but she still goes out there whenever the kids aren't in school, and plays with them and tells them that God loves them.

Applicant: Sydney Hasty

History:

When Sydney was in college in Tennessee, she had some friends from her church that were a bit older than her and wanted to adopt a child. But adoption is expensive and they didn't have the money. She designed t-shirts and did a fundraiser for adoption, giving all the funds to her friends. Her friends eventually gathered enough money to bring home and love an orphaned child.

Applicant: Thea Sholander

History:

Thea had known two different groups of people that she felt could help each other- young women who found themselves unexpectedly pregnant, and couples who wanted children but were unable to conceive. She took it upon herself to start an organization to connect these two groups of people and has been aiding in connecting children with their forever families since 2011.

Applicant: Colin Stewart

History:

When Colin was in college, he really appreciated deep conversation and getting to know people. He was curious why people were so excited to spend a lot of time in clubs, hanging out with stranger and drinking heavily instead of investing in more meaningful conversations. So he started going to clubs with a cooler full of soda and hanging out with people while they were waiting to get in. He got to know them and looked for opportunities to tell them about his faith.

Applicant: Michael Howard

History:

In 1997, Michael Howard was concerned about the serious lead poisoning problems affecting the neighborhood children of Fuller Park. Through research he discovered that Fuller Park contained the highest lead levels in the city of Chicago. As a community leader he wanted to make some serious changes for the sake of his family and his entire neighborhood, and he decided that this work would start with the illegal dumpsite located across the street from his home.

Mounds of waste over two stories tall encompassed the entire three acres of land. Mr. Howard acquired the deed for the land and involved the community in a large scale, three-year cleanup of the dumpsite. Alongside his wife and fellow activist Amelia, and in partnership with hundreds of volunteers and community members, Mr. Howard led a cleanup project in which more than 200 tons of waste including concrete, wood, tires and other toxin-laced materials were removed from the site.

Upon cleanup of the site, the next step was development. Tons of fresh soil was brought in to establish the Great Lawn, and the Hope Mound was established as the first permanent fixture on Eden Place. South Point Academy trainees contributed a number of early structures to the Eden Place grounds, including the gazebo, DuSable Trading Post, and the storage sheds. The Mighty Oak and other surrounding trees formed the woodland at the north end of the property, including a reflecting pond meant to encourage reflection and respite from the urban surroundings.

In May of 2004, Eden Place was honored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Chicago Wilderness with The Conservation and Native Landscaping Award. Eden Place has continued to develop and grow with the support and recognition of local leaders and organizations.

Applicant: Sue Riddlestone

History:

Sue lives in the small town of Farnborough, England. Farnborough is an area that has a wide discrepancy in income levels and she was very aware of the fact that some families were struggling. She knew she could help. With the help of her church, she began collecting gently used children's clothing from parishioners and started a weekly clothing swap. Families in the area who are struggling to afford nice clothing for their growing children are able to bring Sue their old clothing, and for each item they bring, they are allowed to choose one article of clothing to take home. She also provides snacks, childcare, and a listening ear. It is a system that respects the dignity of everyone who participates, and costs almost nothing to run.

Applicant: Jason Cholewa

History:

While in high school in a suburb of Orlando, Jason formed relationships with several homeless people and helped them in whatever way he could.

One day when he was roller blading at a shopping mall (this was in the 90s!), he met two homeless men who were fascinated with his roller blades and ended up chatting with Jason for a while. When they parted ways, Jason told them that if they were there at a particular time the next day, he would bring them lunch. The next day after school, he picked up some burgers and delivered them to the two men. He continued to this for several months until the men were no longer there.

He also met a man in his early 20s named Jeff that lived on the streets. Jason asked Jeff if he wanted to go to church with him, and Jeff gladly accepted the invitation. The next Sunday, Jason woke up early, drove 45 minutes into the city to pick up Jeff, and brought him back to the suburbs where his church was located. Jeff participated in Jason's family tradition of going out for breakfast, and then they went to church. After church, Jason spent the entire day with Jeff, and then brought him to youth group in the evening. After youth group, he drove Jeff back to where he had picked him up. Jason continued to do this every Sunday until he graduated high school.

Applicant: The men of the Biker's Garage in Canaryville in Chicago

History:

In past years, the neighborhood of Canaryville in Chicago has been plagued by gang violence and poverty. In the early 90s, the people of Union Street Methodist looked to be a beacon of hope in the community. They started very successful youth programs that gave teenagers an alternative to community that was not connected to gangs, and they give out thousands of pounds of food each week from their food pantry. They were giving people in the neighborhood options and hope, which made the gangs hostile towards the people at the church. They would vandalize the church and threaten the people involved with the outreach programs

Across the street from the church is a Motorcycle Garage, and at any given time during the day, you can find a number of men hanging out there who perfectly fit the stereotype of a biker. Although these men look a little rough, they were very pleased with the work that the church was doing and offered protection to the church so that they could continue their work without fear. At all hours of the day and night, the men of the garage boldly approach suspicious characters hanging out at the church and ask them to leave. Many of them also help at the weekly food pantry. This is a relationship that has been going strong for more than 20 years.