

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults

Proper 15 (A)

New Testament: Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

BACKGROUND

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

As we continue the journey with Jesus and the disciples, we first get a lesson about what is clean and unclean. Jesus' words are important for us all to remember – that our words come from our heart and what comes from our mouths speaks of who we are and our intentions. Following this parable, Jesus encounters a woman from Tyre and Sidon who had somehow heard of his teaching and healing. She comes to him, speaking words from her heart, showing Jesus that she truly believes even though she is not from Israel. He heals her because of her deep faith.

THEME

Words from Our Heart

BEFORE CLASS

You will need two different translations of today's reading.

BEGINNING

Invite the group to gather together and talk about a time when they experienced the power of a kind or powerful word.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore what your words mean for our lives and what our words mean for others. Help us to grow in our belief and not be afraid to speak of your power and love. Amen.

THE STORY: MATTHEW 15:(10-20) 21-28

You will be reading the lesson today twice and will need two different readers. Think about having two very different voices read this such as male or female, young or old. Before reading the lesson the first time, invite people to listen for a word or phrase that stood out for them.

Tell them that this is a well-known story, and invite them to listen with new ears.

Invite the first reader to read the lesson. After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what word or phrase stood out for them.

When you feel everyone has shared, invite the group to listen once more and to listen for what Jesus is saying to them. Invite the second reader to read the lesson.

After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what they heard Jesus saying to them. After everyone has shared, you can begin with the questions or go to the activity.

[¹⁰ Then Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: ¹¹ it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” ¹² Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” ¹³ He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵ But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶ Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”]

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶ He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what this Gospel stirs in us?
- I wonder what questions this Gospel brings up for us?



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There are two stories...first let us look at the story Jesus tells us.

- Knowing all of the cleanliness rules of the Old Testament, the rules about what one should eat and not eat, I wonder what the crowd's reaction was when Jesus said that it mattered not what they ate?
- Having caught their attention, he now tells them what does matter – and that is our words. I wonder what he may have been pointing to in talking about this? (possibly those who were say bad things and treat people horribly, but make sure they abide by all the rules in the Bible?)
- What does this mean for us today?

The second part of the Gospel is the story about the Canaanite woman from Tyre and Sidon who comes to him begging Jesus to heal her daughter.

- At first, Jesus tries to ignore her because she is not from Israel. His response is perplexing at best. He does not speak to her, nor does he send her away. What might this be about? (Might he be using this moment as a teaching tool? As a way to hear the words from her heart – the same words he was just telling others about in his teaching? Might he want to know what she has to say?)
- The woman kneels before Jesus, just as people knelt before kings and royalty, showing that she recognizes his power and that she needs his help. He tries to turn her away. Why do you think he tried to turn her away? (He wanted to focus on his mission to Israel.)
- When she persists and shows her deep faith. She tells him that even if she only has a crumb, the smallest amount of possible, that her daughter will be healed. What does this say about her belief in Jesus' power? (even the smallest amount could take on a demon, her faith in his power was strong.)
- Jesus praises her faith and heals her daughter. This woman was brave for standing up to Jesus and showing him her faith. I wonder how we can show our faith in the same way today.
- I wonder how the words that come from our hearts are showing our faith in Jesus.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite the group to think about how they can use their words that week to profess and show their faith.

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, help us to not be afraid as we encounter you in the paths of our lives. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

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