

Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 1:9-15

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

The gospel for the First Sunday in Lent (Mark 1:9-15) reads much like the one we had the First Sunday after Epiphany (Mark 1:4-11), and the Second Sunday in Lent has the identical lesson as we had two weeks earlier for the Last Sunday after Epiphany! Lent provides us with different lenses, lenses that see the cross in the distance, while reading the same text.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus is Baptized, the Spirit descends on him "like a dove," and he hears the affirmation: "You are my Son, loved, and pleasing to me." It appears that he is affirmed and ready for ministry. Yet, immediately the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness where he must spend 40 days taming the temptations that come with power. Only then is Jesus equipped to proclaim the good news. And so we too are invited to notice the temptations that are pulling us off course, diverting our energy, and impeding our ability to proclaim the good news.

Theme: Temptation and Prayer

Before Class: Materials needed for the season will be Bibles (one for each person), copies of The Book of Common Prayer (one for each person), paper, and pencils or pens.

Beginning: Ask for volunteers to suggest what Lent means -- as a season of the church year and as a personal discipline. If your own church has a particular focus for Lent (a particular outreach, for example -- or extra learning opportunities) be sure to include those in the discussion.

If the children are taking on a project such as a missionary offering, be sure the adults understand its scope so they can be encouraging and possibly even participate. You could also consider the two typical ways people approach Lent: as a time of giving up something -- either something that really should be given up anyway or that is to be given up as a discipline. Another approach sees Lent as a time of adding something—an additional church service, time in prayer, devotional readings, or a more vigorous outreach activity. This is not a “show and tell” opportunity, but a time to consider some options.

Creating the Setting: Point out that the next two Sundays have readings we have recently explored, but that since the Scriptures always have new insights, we will get a different perspective on both of these. Then, as we read today’s Scripture, ask the class to be holding in mind the theme for the season of Lent: “Getting Equipped for Ministry” and the temptations that get in our way.

Opening Prayer: *Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan; Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for the First Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer, p. 218)*

The Scripture: Mark 1:9-15 Invite people to read small portions, possibly in this fashion: One person read verses 9 through 11, another verses 12 through 13, and a third person the last two verses.

Reflection Questions:

- We are meeting a man who is about 30 years old. And he is just now (apparently) responding to his vocation. A man of 30 in Jesus' time was not a young adult, but a mature man. Why do we think he waited this long? (We have no clue, we can only guess.)
- What is his first act of his new ministry, according to this passage? (He seeks baptism from his cousin, John.)
- What happens next? What could possibly have tempted Jesus?
- The Rev. Richard Rohr, Roman Catholic Franciscan paraphrases the three temptations which are described more fully in Matthew 4:1-11. Father Rohr says the three temptations are Success, Power, and Righteousness (being sure you are the one with the correct interpretation). How might each of these temptations have posed a risk for Jesus?
- How might these temptations pose a risk for us today?

Getting Closure: As time permits, invite each person to take a sheet of paper and a pen/pencil and write down (for their eyes only,) temptations in each of these areas that are stumbling blocks. Allow enough time for prayerful notations. If anyone WANTS to volunteer to describe an insight that came from this activity, accept their offering.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you for the insights into temptations that are getting in our way. Give us courage to confront these temptations and, like Jesus was able to do, put them behind us. We ask this through your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."