

Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 1:21-28

Background

Epiphany means several things: a gift is received; the gift must be shared. Jesus appears to be suggesting a rhythm, a balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God. We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Who is this man? He now has a little band of raw recruits – eager to serve yet largely clueless. Does Jesus send them off to school? No. He shows them. He models the behavior that will form disciples. He teaches with authority. He is right where they are – not way over their heads. He heals when he notices it is needed. Who he is speaks powerfully: as one with authority.

Theme: Who is this Jesus?

Supplies and Preparation: You will need copies of the narrative Gospel reading and definition sheet below. You will need either a white board or easel and paper.

Beginning:

Brainstorm with the group by asking: What do you think of when I say the word authority? (Write their responses on a white board or easel.)

Let's read through the definitions of authority. (The definitions are printed at the bottom of the Gospel narrative so everyone can read them. You could have them read it silently, however it will be more engaging if you go around the room and invite people to each read one of the definitions out loud.)

Source or reference

1a (1) : a citation (as from a book or file) used in defense or support (2) : the source from which the citation is drawn b (1) : a conclusive statement or set of statements (as an official decision of a court) (2) : a decision taken as a precedent (3) testimony c : an individual cited or appealed to as an expert

Power

2a : power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior b : freedom granted by one in authority

To administer or command

3 a : persons in command; specifically government b : a governmental agency or corporation to administer a revenue-producing public enterprise <the transit authority>

Once everyone is done reading the definition, ask if there is one definition that sticks out for them when they think of Jesus' ministry.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, God, for the teaching with authority that we have from Jesus. Amen.*

The Scripture (Mark 1:21-28): You will need volunteers to read the parts of the narrative Gospel. Notice that everyone has a line to read together as well.

Reflection Questions:

- What is the setting for this passage? (Jesus has just called the first four of his disciples, and he has brought them to Capernaum. It is the Sabbath and time to head to the synagogue.)
- Why do we suppose the authorities at the synagogue deferred to Jesus' choosing to teach? (We do not know. Perhaps they had heard of him and wanted to hear what he had to say, perhaps there was just something about him that made them feel they should invite him to preach. Perhaps he simply stood up and began to preach.)
- What was the response of those who heard Jesus speak? (He "taught as one having authority.")
- What else might those who heard have said about his teaching? (Perhaps they said things like, "This had the ring of truth to it," or, "I could understand every word he said!")
- What may have been the response of the scribes? (Jealousy? Disgruntlement – Hey, we study like mad to give good sermons and we don't get any respect. Fear? – Who IS this guy and will he take our jobs?)
- What do we think people understood as an "unclean spirit" and what do we make of it? (An "unclean spirit" would have been the explanation for a disease they could not otherwise diagnose.)
- How would we explain Jesus' response to the "unclean spirit"? (Jesus did not come to save the people from Rome, but to show them that the Kingdom of God is right here, now. Jesus healed people as yet another manifestation that the Kingdom was present.)
- What was the response of the people who witnessed this event? (They couldn't be stopped from spreading the story far and wide.)
- Now that we have read this story, let's go back to our definitions of authority. What kind of authority do you think Jesus had?
- If we use definition 1c: an individual cited or appealed to as an expert, how was Jesus looked to as an authority in a positive light?

- What can we learn from an individual who can, because of their expertise, help us see things in a new light?
- If Jesus is our source, our expert with a new teaching, how does this kind of authority inform our lives? What new teaching does it bring forth?

Option: Invite the group to consider, privately, what “unclean spirits” might be pestering us – voices that hold us back, make us feel incompetent, etc. Invite the group to consider, privately, whether they can choose to say “Be silent, and come out!” or whether we need to share our thoughts with the clergy, a trusted friend, or possibly professionals.

Getting Closure: Consider, together, these statements:

- Jesus came to show us that each of us is welcome in the Kingdom of God that is right here, now.
- Jesus calls out of us what impedes our growth as well as bringing us a new teaching that invites us to explore us who we are called to be.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, God, for the authority we see in Jesus. Amen.*

Mark 1:21-28

Narrator: They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out,

Person with an Unclean Spirit: ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’

Narrator: But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

Jesus: ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’

Narrator: And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another,

All: ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’

Narrator: At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Definitions of Authority

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