

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults

Proper 4 (B)

New Testament: Mark 2:23-3:6

BACKGROUND

We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

Proper: appropriate, fitting, and during Ordinary Time, the scripture appointed for each particular Sunday. The scriptures for this Season after Pentecost all come from the Gospel of Mark. In today's Gospel, we hear about the Pharisees challenging Jesus about the Sabbath.

THEME

Sabbath

BEFORE CLASS

You will need copies of the scripture for everyone. You will also need easel paper or butcher paper, markers, pens, pencils, etc.

BEGINNING

As we begin a new season in the church and as summer begins, you may find that your class changes, therefore you will need to make sure to begin the class so people can get to know one another. As the children enter the room, invite them to your gathering place in the room. Ask them to share about their week, what they did or what they are looking forward to in the coming week. Once you think that everyone has arrived, invite each child to say their name and one thing that they really like about their family. Nametags would be helpful as well.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEASON

Explain to the group that on this Sunday we begin the season of Ordinary Time or the Season after Pentecost. It is about six months long, making up the last half of the church's lectionary year. Ordinary Time is a time in which the mission of the church is carried out in the day-to-day life of its members. Besides All Saints' Day on November 1st, there are no high holidays (such as Easter) or disciplined fasts (such as Lent). And interestingly, in Ordinary Time we will probably encounter some out-of-the-ordinary events in our own lives and possibly even in our life together in this



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particular church community. The gift of this time – if we keep on looking for it – is finding the hidden blessings amid the ordinary occurrences. We could agree to share with each other, as we go along, things the world might consider unexceptional – a wildflower we noticed on a walk, an intriguing insight from a young child, even a place to purchase really fresh tomatoes.

The scriptures, for the Sundays from now until the end of November, are called Propers. Today is Proper 4. The Gospel for this year is mostly Mark – the most succinct of the Gospels. Mark was a "just the facts" Gospel.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you for the sabbath, a time when we rest and purposefully spend time with you and one another. Be with us as we pray and learn today. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 2:23-3:6

Ask for two volunteers to read the passage, one person reading the first paragraph, the other reading the second paragraph.

Before you begin to read, ask the group:

- Can someone tell us what the Sabbath is?
- The word Sabbath means to cease or to stop. Sabbath is a day of religious observance and a time when we stop work. The Jewish custom is to keep Sabbath Friday evening to Saturday evening.

Invite the readers to read the following story from Mark.

One sabbath Jesus and his disciples were going through the grain fields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

Again Jesus entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what stood out for you in the story.
- I wonder what questions you have.
- I wonder why the Pharisees were upset with Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “The sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the sabbath.”
- I wonder if there are times when we rest from work to spend planned time with God?
- I wonder if we have ever stopped our rest or our work in order to help others?

ACTIVITY: SABBATH PLANNING

Sabbath is something you have to plan for so that you are ready for it. If you were going to take a whole day off to rest and be with God and your family, what would you do? What would you not do? (Invite the group to brainstorm what a sabbath day would look like for them. Create two columns for what would they do and what they wouldn't do? If you have a large group, you can split them into smaller groups to have a conversation and have them report back.) Write their responses up on easel paper or on a white board.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite a conversation about what sabbath looks like for us in our busy lives. How can we each plan better to have times of rest and time with God.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of love, thank you for our time together to explore your Gospel message. Help us to always remember that there is a time to do each thing you have called us to do. Amen.