Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Proper 17 (B)
New Testament: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

BACKGROUND
During this "Ordinary Time" our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. 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.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
Temple security guards, those responsible for guarding the purity of the religion, are getting hung up on rules that seem urgent to them but they are missing what is important. Jesus dismisses their concerns about who washed what and insists that these concerns are reducing the ability to hear and do God's word. What is important is not what goes into the body, it is what comes out of our hearts.

THEME
What Does Defile?

BEFORE CLASS
If this is your first session with the group, make sure you have nametags for everyone and open with a Get-to-Know-You activity.

For class you will need a Bible and a Book of Common Prayer for each participant. If you are going to use the "script" found below as a way of reading the scripture, make sure to have enough copies for the group.

BEGINNING
Begin by going around the room and inviting a response to this statement: "We have a God who loves us unconditionally. Yet sometimes I find myself obsessing with 'getting it right,' and so I miss 'getting it.' "

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. *© 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*

OPENING PRAYER

Loving and patient God, thank you for bringing us to this day. Help us to hear your words and come to know you more as we meditate on your word. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

You may have one person read the scripture or use the script found below and have people volunteer to read the different parts found in the piece scripture.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what stood out for you most in this scripture.
- The concern voiced by the Pharisees appears to have two levels. What would you say those are? (They have noticed that the disciples do not follow all the rules about hand-washing and the Pharisees see it as their job to enforce these rules. And the Pharisees are genuinely concerned that this Jesus is usurping their power as leaders.)
- Jesus' condemnation of them in verse 8 is pretty harsh. Why do you think Jesus says this? (Jesus clearly recognizes the fact that the Pharisees are selectively applying the laws.)
- Why would verses 14 and 15 have been so shocking to the Pharisees? (They had very strict rules about which foods were OK to eat and which were not. Jesus was saying that ALL foods are clean.)
- Is the meaning unclear of any of the "evils" listed? (Some of the more difficult to define are: "avarice," an obsession with amassing wealth; "licentiousness," straying from a moral path; and "folly," not using good sense.)

GETTING CLOSURE

What do we do when we discover a serious flaw in ourselves? Invite the group to look at the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent on pages 447-452 in the Book of Common Prayer. Some of rite requires the ministration of a priest or a bishop, but much of it can provide a mechanism for two Christians to help each other – or for one to make a confession to God. You may wish to read psalm at the top of page 449 together.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for being here in our midst, for sending Jesus to show us the way, and for giving us each other as we continue this journey together. Amen.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Narrator: Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him,

Pharisees/Scribes: 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'

Jesus: 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

Narrator: Then Jesus called the crowd again and said to them,

Jesus: 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.' For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.