Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults

Proper 20 (B)

New Testament: Mark 9:30-37

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

As Jesus prepares his disciples for what is to come, they not only do not "get it," they begin to jockey for position. Jesus is succinct: whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. He takes a small child gently in his arms and tells his disciples that as you welcome this child, you welcome not only me – but the one who sent me.

THEME

Welcome the Children

BEFORE CLASS

You may wish to make a copy of this resolution passed by the General Convention of our church in 2000: "Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 73rd General Convention affirms that children are central to the mission of The Episcopal Church and asks each committee, commission, and program of The Episcopal Church to consider, as it plans for the future, how its ministry will positively impact the lives of children in our church and in the world, how it will be impacted by children, and how it will encourage children's full participation in the worship and mission of the church."

BEGINNING

Show the class the resolution passed by General Convention in 2000. If few knew of this resolution, assure them that it has received little publicity in our church. To what extent does the group believe that our community has these priorities?

Since General Convention in 2000, The Episcopal Church has taken many measures to include, form, educated, and transform the lives of our children and our congregations.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

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This link has LOTS of information in it including the Children's Charter for The Episcopal Church, Lifelong Charter for Christian Formation, and the Five Marks of Mission. http://buildingthecontinuum.wordpress.com/2012/03/31/ministry-with-children-in-the-episcopal-church/

Usually in October, the Children's Defense Fund holds the National Observance of the Children's Sabbath, which is, "a way for faith communities to celebrate children as sacred gifts of the Divine, and provides the opportunity for houses of worship to renew and live out their moral responsibility to care, protect and advocate for all children." They have wonderful resources and ideas for honoring and celebrating children. You can find out more at: http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/faithbased/faith-based-action-programs pages/childrens-sabbaths/National-Observance-of-Children-s-Sabbaths.html

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the children you entrust to our care: those in our own families, those in our church community, and those in our community here and around the world. Help us to welcome the children among us as you welcome us. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 9:30-37

Invite two people to read, one will read verses 30-32, the other 33-37.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what stood out for you today?
- Our scripture starts with Jesus telling them what is coming, namely, that Jesus will be betrayed, handed over, killed, and then will rise again. Why do you think the disciples are having such a difficult time understanding this? (It is something that they don't want to face, and it is something that they simply cannot foresee.)
- When Jesus asks them what they are arguing about, they do not answer. How does Jesus get their attention when he calls them together? (He brings a little child into the picture.)
- What was so astounding to the disciples about Jesus' choice of a child? (Children had no rights and little value in their culture.)
- To what extent would we say that children are valued in our community and in our culture? (Note: one way to measure whether children are valued is to consider to what extent adults attend to children. To "attend to" is to listen to, notice, and respond indicating that they are understood. It is believed that children grow in their ability to love and to serve in direct proportion to their perception of how well they are 'attended to' by significant adults in their lives.)
- To what extent would we say the ministry of our church "positively impacts the lives of children in the church and in the world"?
- To what extent would we say children impact the ministry of our church?
- To what extent would we say that we, in our church, "encourage children's full participation in the worship and mission of the church"?

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- What might we choose to do to improve these situations?

GETTING CLOSURE

Consider committing to seeking out one child this week and engage the child in a conversation that truly attends to the child.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, we thank you for reminding us that we are to treat one another as you have welcomed children. Help us to engage in your mission, so we can welcome one another as one welcomes a child. Amen.

MARK 9:30-37

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to
know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be
betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he
will rise again.' 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask
him.

33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What
were you arguing about on the way?' 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had
argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve,
and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' 36
Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to
them, 37 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever
welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

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