Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Proper 22 (B)
New Testament: Mark 10:2-16

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
The Pharisees continue to try to trap Jesus. Divorce: "Is it lawful?" the Pharisees ask. Jesus moves the question to higher ground. Meanwhile, people were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples still did not "get it" and were trying to turn the children away. Jesus takes the children, lays his hands on them, and blesses them. Do we "get it"?

THEME
Jesus Blessed Them

BEFORE CLASS
The Episcopal Church recognizes divorce and, after appropriate counseling, may authorize a re-marriage. Frequently, children whose parents divorce carry in their psyches the conviction that the divorce was, somehow, their fault. Since the current statistics show that half of American marriages end in divorce, the odds are that there is at least one divorced person in your group.

For supplies today, you will need Bibles.

BEGINNING
Tell the group that people reading today's scripture passage have a wide variety of responses. Tell them we will look at the passage, attempt to understand what Jesus was saying, and look at where we are in our church today with the passage.

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OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, you appear to call us to balance being true to your word while also noticing where our hearts may have hardened. Help us to hear your truth as we read this word today. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 10:2-16

You will need four different readers, with a pause at the end of each section of the reading. Mark 10:2-4; Mark 10:5-9; Mark 10:10-12; and Mark 10:13-16. (See below for the passage broken into sections.) Read the entire passage first. Then re-read the passages before you reflect on each section.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Mark 10:2-4

- What is the trap the Pharisees think they have set for Jesus? (They want him to go on record on this issue.)
- What question does Jesus counter with? (He asks them what Moses ruled on this.)
- How have the Pharisees fallen into their own trap? (They are forced to answer their own question and quote the Mosaic law.)

Mark 10:5-9

- What scripture passage is Jesus quoting here? (Genesis 2:24)
- How is Jesus recasting the issue? (He is moving from what is legal to what God desires for us.)
- Can we think of other situations where we may have a law and have a pretty good idea of God's desire for God's people – and we also have reality? (Some examples might be the plight of children in our own community and in the world; people living in poverty and disease; even the desire to fully include children in our worship and ministry and not being satisfied with what we have been able to accomplish.)

Mark 10:10-12

- What is Jesus saying about the issue of adultery? (He indicates that women have equal rights.)
- Where are we, now, in our church on the issue of remarriage? (In the middle of the last century, The Episcopal Church ruled that re-marriage can be accepted and each diocese may set its own rules for the procedures for a divorced person to secure permission to remarry.)
- Discuss what things we are aware of that we do in our community to pastorally minister to divorced people, to the children of divorced people, and to remarried couples? What do we do as a community to nurture marriages?

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Mark 10:13-16

- What is it that the disciples still do not "get"? (The children are not only allowed, but welcomed to come to Jesus.)
- What three things does Jesus say about these little children? (Let them come to me; do nothing to stop their coming; and God's kingdom is for "such as these.")
- Do we think this means that we have to be childish to be Christians? If not, then what does this mean? (Consider the attributes of a child that Jesus might be referring to: openness, enthusiasm, vulnerability, expecting joy, anticipating surprise, etc.)
- How well do we welcome children in our worship and ministry?
- If we believe we could do more, what might that be?
- What impedes our offering wider inclusion? (Note: people often respond in the way they think they were taught. If they were taught that children need to be instructed before being included in worship, they are likely to continue to hold this view.)

GETTING CLOSURE

Consider whether this group chooses to advocate for wider inclusion of children in our life together. If not, agree to continue to hold the concept in prayer for guidance. If so, choose an attainable goal and commit to work toward it. (See also Proper 20 for more about the inclusion of children and possible resources.)

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for helping us notice when our hearts are getting hard and for showing us the way to stay open to your truth. Help us to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Amen.

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MARK 10:2-16

2 Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his
wife?' 3 He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 4 They said, 'Moses allowed
a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' 5 But Jesus said to them,
'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the
beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." 7 "For this reason a man shall
leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,* 8 and the two shall become one
flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined
together, let no one separate.'

10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 He said to them,
'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if
she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

13 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the
disciples spoke sternly to them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to
them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that
the kingdom of God belongs. 15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom
of God as a little child will never enter it.' 16 And he took them up in his arms, laid his
hands on them, and blessed them.

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