Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

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

You will need Bibles, the bookmarks the children have made in previous sessions (if you have them) and an easel and paper or a whiteboard to record their ideas.

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. Older children will be less likely to voice these fears.

BEGINNING

Tell the children that there are several things going on in this passage. Tell them to be looking for:

- The Pharisees trying to trap Jesus, again.
- Jesus answering a different question than they are asking.
- And the disciples still not "getting it."

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OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for loving all of us – adults and children. Help us to hear your word and come to know you more today. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 10:2-16

For each of the three sections, ask for a volunteer to read the part of the Pharisees and another to read the part of Jesus. There are three sections to todays lesson. You may want to choose one if you are short on time.

Cultural Information on Divorce

In the time of Moses, men received the right to divorce a wife. The law actually was a provision of mercy and justice so that a divorce was required rather than women unjustly being abandoned. Divorce during Jesus' time in a culturally mixed society was a controversial issue. Through the years, the Mosaic law was interpreted in varying degrees of strictness – followers of some rabbis could divorce for any reason; followers of other rabbis could divorce only on the grounds of adultery. Jesus, in verses 11-12 suggests equality for women.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Mark 10:2-5

- What is the trap the Pharisees think they are setting for Jesus? (A "yes" or "no" response would provide a no-win situation for Jesus. They ultimately were trying to gather evidence that he was not who others said he was: the Messiah, the Christ.)
- What was the issue for the Pharisees? (The issue was not divorce; it was to find out if Jesus knew Moses' law, believed in it, and would teach it.)
- Instead of Jesus answering the Pharisees' question, Jesus asks them a question (verse 3b). What do the Pharisee's say? (They answer their own question by telling what the Mosaic law said.)
- What truth does Jesus say about Moses' law? (The reason a law for divorce was needed was because of people's "hardness of heart.")
- How would we define "hardness of heart?" (Some possible answers: being so sure we are right we are unwilling to listen to another point of view; or being sure we won't like a new kid in class so that we don't even give the kid a chance.)

Mark 10:6-12

- What scripture passage is Jesus quoting here? (Genesis 2:24)
- Who are the characters mentioned in these verses? (It mentions a man, father and mother, wife, God, and other persons.)
- What is God's role in marriage? (God is the connection that yearns to make them one.)

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- What might be God's role when a marriage breaks up? (Accept the answers as they are given. Your comment might be that God loves everyone in the family and God yearns to be in relationship with everyone.)

Mark 10:13-16

- What is it that the disciples are not "getting" here? (They are still chasing children away.)
- What was Jesus' response? (He was indignant.)
- What three things does Jesus tell his disciples in verse 14? (Let the children come to me; don't do anything to prevent their coming to me.; it is to people like these children that the kingdom of God belongs.)
- What is it about children that Jesus means people need to be like to get them in the kingdom? (Some options could be: Not stuck in their ways, willing to try something new, wanting to be with Jesus.)
- What did Jesus do then to make sure the disciples "got it"? (He took the children into his arms, put his hands on their heads, and blessed them.)

ACTIVITIES

If there is time, you may want to explore with the children questions concerning their participation in church. Record their responses on easel paper or a whiteboard.

In what ways does our church show children that they are part of the worship and mission of the church? (Do any of the children serve as acolytes? Do any of the children make a financial contribution to the church through mite boxes, envelopes, or other ways?)

What new things would these children be willing to consider doing to increase their participation? (Could they agree to look for newcomers and greet them after church? Could they take time to talk to a younger child that would look up to them or an older person who would be interested in a conversation with them?)

What might they be interested in taking on in the way of mission?

Would they like to investigate Episcopal Relief and Development, for example and to help provide food, water, or medicine? (https://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/christian formation)

Are there other outreach projects our church provides that they could help with? A food pantry? Soup kitchen?

GETTING CLOSURE

If the children have identified an outreach project they want to do, help them decide how they will proceed.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for assuring us that you love us just the way we are and for helping us grow up in your love. Amen.

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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