

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 22
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: 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 Gospel

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 paper and crayons.

The Episcopal Church recognizes divorce and, after appropriate counseling, may authorize a remarriage. Frequently, children whose parents divorce carry in their psyches the conviction that the divorce was, somehow, their fault. As a teacher, you probably cannot heal that deep wound, but attending to what the child has to say can help the process. For this lesson, more than any in the series, it is important for teachers to listen more than talk.

Beginning: Today we have a story with two stories in one. Jesus is telling people to watch out and not have their hearts closed, and he is also telling people, yet again, that he loves the children – all the children.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for loving all of us – adults, children, old people, young people, big children, and little children. Amen.

The Story (Mark 10:2-16): Some leaders came to ask Jesus a question. They were pretty sure Jesus would not be able to answer their question. And Jesus gave them an answer they did not expect. They asked Jesus if it was OK for people to get a divorce. Jesus told them they were asking the wrong question! When people get married they really want to stay married, but sometimes they get divorced. But Jesus said the problem is not divorce, it is "hard hearts." What is a hard heart? Well, it could mean you won't play with a child in your class. Or it could mean

you say you don't like something or someone without ever making an effort or trying. Jesus' friends still don't "get it." Jesus wants the children to come to him and to be a part of what everyone does. Jesus ended his story by blessing each child.

Activity: Give each child a piece of white paper and some crayons. (Take one yourself and draw along with them.) Tell the children to draw a picture of Jesus with them, telling Jesus things that make them sad and things that make them happy. When they have finished with their pictures. They can take it home and put it beside the cross they made a few weeks ago – to remind them that Jesus is ready to listen any time.

Activity: Give each child a piece of paper – the same size as the other pieces you have given for additions to the poster. Tell them to draw Jesus with them and also with other children if they would like. Tell the children this picture will be added to your class poster of Jesus.

Getting Closure: Bring the children into a circle with you, preferably sitting on the floor. Invite the children to tell you about the pictures they drew. (Accept what they offer – do not attempt to evaluate what they have done or what they say.) A serious nod or verbal thank you is usually all that is desired from the teacher. If you sense the child might want to say more, invite the child by simply asking, "Did you want to tell us anything more?" (If the answer is no, assure the child that is OK.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for being here with us and listening to what we say. Thank you for loving each of us and reminding us we are important in your kingdom. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 22
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: 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 Gospel

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:

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

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 today's 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 Pharisees 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.)

Reflection Questions: 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.)
- 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.)

Activity: 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.

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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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 22
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 10:2-16

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A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

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.

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 Scripture (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.)

Reflection Questions: 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.)

Reflection Questions: 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?

Reflection Questions: 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.

Mark 10:2-16

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