

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 1:29-39

Background

Epiphany means several things: a gift is received; the gift must be shared. Jesus appears to be suggesting a rhythm, a balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God. We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

A rhythm is surfacing. Out to teach or to heal – then in to pray and listen. Jesus goes to Simon's house after the first teaching in the synagogue to find Simon's mother-in-law ill. He takes her by the hand and helps her up. Right back into the kitchen she goes to cook supper. By evening, the whole town was crowding around – many in need of healing, and most were healed. Jesus gets a little rest and then long before dawn goes inward – to a lonely place to pray. We see the balance in which he lives.

Theme: Prayer and Action

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for each person.

Beginning: Help the group to notice that following the "flashback" we had last week, we are now back with Jesus as a young man and Simon as an ex-fisherman of fish. Invite the class to notice the rhythm that Jesus is following: He balances action with contemplation.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to get our lives in balance: doing the work we have been given to do and finding the spaces in which to simply be with you. Amen.

The Scripture: Invite the class to follow along with you in their Bibles, if they wish, or simply close their eyes and listen to you reading the passage: Mark 1:29-39.

Reflection Questions:

- What are the elements you heard in this passage?
- What did you notice about Jesus teaching in the synagogue? (He was teaching with authority.)
- What did you notice about the healing? Who is healed? (Those who come to him or are presented to him, not a mass healing.)
- What did you notice about the rhythm of Jesus’ time? (He intentional pulled back to pray, then went back out to teach.)

- What could we assume about the relationship between Jesus and God from what we have already heard God say to Jesus? (You are my beloved.)
- Do we think God was telling Jesus to shape up and get his act together? Was he hearing a conditional love: “Do this and I will love you?”
- Could it be that the message Jesus was receiving is also for us? Could we be receiving unconditional love, also?
- And Jesus prayer to God, do we sense that Jesus was delivering a "To Do" list to God? What might be the implications for our praying with God?

Optional Activity: If time permits, you might like to look for some types of prayers in The Book of Common Prayer. Since its focus is "common prayer," there is less in the contemplative mode.

Some healing prayers are found on pp. 458 - 461. Additional prayers begin on p. 810. Perhaps the best contemplative prayer is found in Psalm 46 verse 11a:

Be still, and know that I am God.

Be still, and know that I am.

Be still, and know.

Be still.

Getting Closure: Invite people to say how they might experience the balance of prayer and action in their lives. Where have they noticed prayer and action?

Closing Prayer: Pray one of the prayers you found that seems appropriate, or close with the "Be still" prayer.

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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