

The King's Enemies

Text: Mark 3:1-6

Big Idea: Jesus does good by healing a man on the Sabbath, but the religious leaders plot to kill him because he broke one of their rules.

Aim: To teach that Jesus came to give life and do what's best for us, but some people hate him for that.

The Story So Far

Lesson 1:

- John the Baptist announces that the Lord (Jesus), is coming.
- He tells the people that Jesus is greater than he is because Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, not just water.
- He tells the people to prepare their hearts for the Lord by turning to God. They show this by being baptised.

Lesson 2:

- Jesus allows John to baptise him to show that he identifies with those he came to rescue.
- The Holy Spirit resting on Jesus in the form of a dove confirms that he will baptise with the Spirit.
- God's voice from heaven confirms that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus overcomes the devil's temptation in the desert to prove that he has come to "crush the serpent's head".

Lesson 3:

- Jesus tells the people that God's kingdom is near.
- To get into the kingdom, people need to repent and believe – this is modelled by the fishermen who immediately leave their old lives to follow Jesus.

Lesson 4:

- Jesus' popularity as a healer increases massively.
- Jesus prays and then makes the decision to not heal some people in favour of telling others the good news.

Lesson 5:

- Jesus claims to have God's authority to forgive sins. He proves this by physically healing a paralytic.

Lesson 6:

- Jesus shows the extent of the forgiveness that he offers by calling a corrupt tax collector to follow him. This angers the religious leaders.



Leader's Study Notes

This lesson focuses on Mark 3:1-6, but it would be helpful for your understanding to read Mark 2:1 - 3:6. Notice how the religious leaders question Jesus and how he responds in each case.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

Mark 2:1-3:6 is a series of five episodes that show a rapid rise in opposition to Jesus. In each case, Jesus answers a question posed by his accusers. Jesus' answers show that while he may be guilty of their accusation, it is the religious leaders' understanding about the Messiah and the nature of God's kingdom and his law that needs to change – dramatically!

The first four episodes can be summarised as follows:

Episode 1: Mark 2:1-12 (lesson 5)

Question: Who can forgive sins but God alone?

Response: But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...

Key teaching: Jesus is the Son of Man, the judge of the world who can forgive sin.

Episode 2: Mark 2:13-17 (lesson 6)

Question: Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Response: I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.

Key teaching: Jesus is not for the religious who think they are good enough, but offers forgiveness and friendship to sinners who know they need him.

Episode 3: Mark 2:18-22

Question: How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?

Response: How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?

Key teaching: Jesus offers a personal, wonderful relationship instead of an impersonal religion.

Episode 4: Mark 2:23-28

Question: Look, why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?

Answer: The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Key teaching: Jesus brings freedom, a way of choosing to live for him instead of living under the burden of the law.

The final episode (Mark 3:1-6), can be seen as a conclusion to the series. It summarises and brings to a climax the steady rise in opposition, which started in Mark 2:7. This time it is Jesus who asks the question, and the response of the religious leaders exposes their hearts and the nature of religion.

3:1 — A shrivelled hand is a long-standing disability, not a worsening condition. Jesus didn't need to heal it on the Sabbath, but he chose to do so to make his point.

3:2 — God had commanded his people to not work on the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:14). Jewish Rabbis taught that help could only be given on the Sabbath to save a life, anything else would break the commandment.

3:3 — Jesus did not even try to avoid the trap.

3:4 — Jesus' question can be understood on two levels:

1. Jesus is saying, "What do you think God wants you to do on the Sabbath? Good or evil? Life or death? You want me to leave this man to suffer, just because it's the Sabbath? I want to do good all the time, even on the Sabbath, so I want to heal his disability right now – even though it's not life-threatening."
2. Jesus came to do good and bring life while the leaders of the time, though they claimed to do good, actually brought evil. While Jesus was bringing life to the man's hand, the leaders were planning to kill Jesus (3:6).

3:5 — What must Jesus' anger have looked like? Terrifying! The people's rejection of him as the one who brings life made him angry.

3:6 — The Pharisees were the religious leaders. The Herodians were the political supporters of Rome's man, Herod. So, this represents the combining of religion and politics against Jesus. It's only chapter 3, and already they want to kill him!

Reflect

- What has Jesus done in this passage to cause such deep hatred for him? Is this logical? What is the real cause?
- Have you experienced similar hostility for simply doing good and telling the life-giving

message about Jesus? How does this passage help you?



Review

Review the previous lesson by asking the children the following questions:

- Who did Jesus have dinner with? [*Levi and other 'sinners'* (Mark 2:15)]
- Who was shocked by this? [*The Pharisees* (Mark 2:16)]
- Who did Jesus come to call? [*Sinners* (Mark 2:17)]



Introductory Idea - Option 1

Withered. Can you find a selection of withered items? Perhaps a plant that hasn't had any water; an apple that has been in the oven for half an hour; or dying flowers.

What does 'withered' mean?

What might a withered hand look like? What would you not be able to do if you had a withered hand?

In today's true story from the Bible, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, but some people were angry at Jesus for doing this. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]



Introductory Idea - Option 2

Stubbornness. A leader dresses up as a doctor in a white coat and has another leader or child volunteer to be a patient. The doctor places the patient on the operating table and explains that the patient has a very serious problem that must be operated on. This is a special operation that has never been done before – an operation to remove stubbornness.

Where is stubbornness found in the body? Show pictures of various parts of the body and point to them on the patient – heart, liver, brain, kidney, foot, hand, head, stomach, each time asking, "Is this where we find stubbornness?" Talk about stubbornness being an attitude (how we feel about something). To be stubborn is to refuse to believe even when there is good evidence.

In today's true story from the Bible, Jesus met some very stubborn people when he healed a man. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to discover the answers to the following questions:

- On what day did Jesus heal the man? [*The Sabbath* (Mark 3:2)]
- Who was angry at Jesus? / Who was being stubborn? [*The Pharisees* (Mark 3:6)]
- What did they want to do to Jesus? [*Kill him* (Mark 3:6)]



Teaching Plan

Younger children will only be able to understand that the Jewish leaders added lots of extra rules to the ones God had given his people. This made it very hard for them to keep all the rules. The rule that Jesus broke was not a rule that God had made, but the leaders had made.

Older children may be able to understand the difference between the commandment to keep the Sabbath special (in order to have a rest and to make it a special day for worshipping God), and the religious traditions which had developed.

The man with the shrivelled hand is used by Jesus as the perfect visual aid so make this the focus of the story. Having a real live plant and a withered one will be helpful to explain what it means for something to be withered.

The story is very short and so more time needs to be given to discussing the incident.

- How would this man's life have been very difficult because he could only use one hand?
- How would this man's life have been better after meeting Jesus?
- What did the healing prove about who Jesus is?
- Why did the Jewish leaders not want Jesus to heal the man?
- Could Jesus have waited and fixed the man's hand the next day? Why did Jesus want to heal him right then?
- What did the Pharisees want to do on God's special day? Were they keeping God's rule? Were they even keeping their own rule?



Game Idea - Option 1

One hand race. Divide the children into teams of at least two children. One child from each team attempts an assigned task. After a set period of time, a second child helps the first child to complete the task. The children are only allowed to use their left hands. Points can be awarded for the first team to complete each task.

Suggested tasks are:

- Peel a banana

- Take off a shoe and sock and replace them
- Build a tower with building blocks such as Lego bricks
- Make a ball out of playdough or clay
- Tear a circle out of a piece of paper
- Roll up a sheet of newspaper
- Folding a sheet of paper exactly in half
- Threading cotton reels (or similar), onto a piece of string.

Remind the children that the man in today's true story from the Bible would only have been able to use one hand. What Jesus did for him was amazing – it changed his life forever and the Pharisees hated Jesus for it.



Game Idea - Option 2

For older children – divide the group into two teams. Each team nominates one person to be the 'patient' who needs to be rescued.

Each team will also require two wooden sticks to act as splints; two bandages; a piece of cloth to be used as a sling, and a large towel to be used as a stretcher. All these items get placed opposite each team on the other side of the room.

Explain that each team's patient has been badly injured and the following procedure needs to be carefully followed to ensure they are safely evacuated:

1. Bandage the head wound.
2. Splint the left leg using two sticks and a bandage.
3. Make a sling from the piece of cloth for the right arm.
4. Carry the patient to the other side of the room using the towel as a stretcher.

These instructions can be written on a flip chart or the list given to each group. The only rule that both teams need to keep is that they may only send one person at a time to collect supplies and each person may only collect one item at a time. They will need to exercise care when carrying their patient.

When the activity starts, the leader must continually disrupt one team's efforts by imposing a range of petty rules e.g. insisting that they wind the bandage in the opposite direction to how they have already started; making the person who collected one splint return it to collect the other one first, etc. This should create a lot of frustration and anger. The other team will win easily.

Remind the children that Jesus would not allow the laws that the Pharisees had made up to interfere with him doing good and bringing life.



Discuss and Apply

This lesson is primarily about the identity of Jesus and the fact that he came to do good and save life. Surprisingly, both the political and religious establishments (Herodians and Pharisees), were opposed to Jesus' acts of kindness and his life-giving power. This makes no sense logically, but can only be explained by their stubborn hearts. Their hearts were hardened by sin, so they rejected Jesus' right to rule over every aspect of life, including their religion and rules.

As you discuss this lesson with the children, think about how you can help them to see how outrageous it is that the religious and political leaders were opposed to Jesus. Help them to understand that it is because of their sinful, stubborn hearts that these people hated Jesus and wanted to kill him.

For younger children, it will be enough for them to know that Jesus came to do good and save life, but some people hated him for that. Young children assume that everyone loves Jesus and so you'll need to give thought to the shape of your discussion. You might spend some time recounting examples of Jesus' kindness and life-giving power in previous stories from Mark's Gospel.

- To whom had Jesus shown kindness and love in the true stories you have looked at in previous lessons? How had he helped each of them?
- Did most people like what Jesus was doing for them? Think about all the crowds desperate to get to Jesus.
- Is Jesus the kind of person we would choose to be our friend?

Explain that not everyone wanted to have Jesus as their friend. Even though he did amazing things to help people and make their lives better, some people always found a reason to hate Jesus. In today's true story, the Pharisees were angry because Jesus broke one of their rules so that he could help the man with the shrivelled hand.

For older children, your discussion may start in a similar way as for younger children (see above). Older children have probably already experienced a level of hostility to the person and work of Jesus. It would be worth exploring if this is the case and where that hostility comes from in their world.

- Why do some people hate Jesus so much?
- What are some of the things they do that shows their dislike of Jesus and his life-giving message?

Where the hostility comes from parents, teachers or other authority figures, we want to be careful not to undermine those authorities. But, at the same time, we want to help the children to understand that the hostility is a result of stubborn hearts that need to repent and trust in Jesus. Only God can bring about this change through a work of the Holy Spirit, so we need to pray that this will be true for those who oppose the truth about Jesus.



Prayer Idea

Can the children think of anyone they know who does not like to hear about Jesus? You may need to share about someone you know so that they understand the concept. Encourage them to pray that these people's hearts would be changed by God so that they would love Jesus and want to follow him.



Activity A

For younger children choose either this activity or Activity B.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity A onto paper or card for each child.

Before the lesson save time by folding each page in half and cutting both hands out together. Each child will also require one lollipop stick.

The children colour in both hands and then scrunch up the hand that has no text on it. Straighten the scrunched up hand out a little and then attached both hands back to back with the lollipop stick between them. The children flip the stick around to show the man's hand before and after Jesus healed him.



Activity B

For younger children choose either this activity or Activity A.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity B onto paper for each child. To save time during the lesson cut the page as marked and paste the blank block to the left of the Pharisees over the grey block to the right of the man with the withered hand to form one long strip. Keep the two paper strips to one side for each child.

The children colour in the pictures. Help them to fold the picture strip as indicated. Apply glue to secure the two Pharisee pictures back to back. Do the same for the two pictures of the man Jesus healed.

Help the children to paste the two strips as shown. As you turn the man with the withered hand over to reveal the healed hand, the picture of the Pharisees will also change to include their murderous thoughts.

Can the children tell you the story using the picture?



Worksheets

For older children choose either Worksheet C or Worksheet D from the Media section of this webpage. Print whichever is appropriate onto paper for each child and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

By now, every child should be able to recite the following verse:

Mark 1:15 – *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* [NIV]

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