

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: March 17, 2019
Lesson Title: "Unites"
Lesson Passage: Mark 3:23-35

ABOUT THIS LESSON

After choosing his twelve disciples, Jesus "went into a house" (Mark 3:19--see explanation in Teaching Procedure 1). And such a crowd came in that they could not even eat (3:20). In the crowd were scribes from Jerusalem who accused Jesus of relying on the power of Satan to exorcise demonic spirits (3:22). Jesus responded by saying that, though Satan was evil, he was not stupid enough to seek his own destruction by warring against himself (3:23-27). Mark then segues into an account in which the family of Jesus comes to interrupt his work and take him home. But Jesus refuses to go with them, explaining that his first allegiance is to the larger family of God (vv. 33-35).

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Summarize Jesus' answer to the charge of the scribes that he was casting out demons by the power of demons. (2) Explain Jesus' refusal to accompany his mother and brothers.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with these comments: In the Gospel accounts, there are many evidences that Jesus was devoted to his earthly family. Yet, there came a time in his earthly ministry when he was compelled to make it clear that he belonged to a broader family circle, the family of God that was united by their faith in God and their allegiance to the will of God. This is a major revelation in this week's Bible passage.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Although our Bible passage doesn't include Mark 3:19, that verse establishes the scenario of the events described in our lesson: (1) In the RSV, verse 19 ends with the phrase, "**Then he went home.**" But the KJV says, "**and they went into a house.**" EXPLANATION: The Greek term, *oikos*, could mean either "house" or "home." (2) It is likely that Mark is referring to the house in Capernaum that he mentioned in Mark 2:1. (Perhaps this was the house of Simon and Andrew noted in Mk. 1:29.) SUGGESTION: Use a map to show that Capernaum was somewhat distant (40 miles) from Jesus' boyhood home in Nazareth.

2. Point out that Mk. 3:22 explains the reason for the remarks of Jesus in Mk. 3:23-27: (1) The "scribes who came down from Jerusalem" were regarded as the official interpreters of the law of Moses. (2) These scribes were hostile toward Jesus for multiple reasons. His healing of sick and crippled people and his exorcising of demons, together with his inspired teachings, had created a sensation all through Galilee (Mk. 1:28, 32-34, 45). And his teachings were so authoritative that they overshadowed the teachings of the scribes (Mark 1:22), threatening their standing as religious authorities. (3) But they were also incensed by Jesus' seeming indifference toward their interpretations of the law of Moses (Mark 3:2). (4) The hostile scribes accused Jesus of being in league with the devil

("Beelzebul, the prince of demons") and said he was using the power of this archfiend to perform healings and exorcisms (3:22).

3. Refer to Jesus' response to this criticism in Mark 3:23-26:

(1) His response to these absurd criticisms is clear and logical. Satan could hardly be at war with himself. Their contention that Jesus was using the power of Satan to cast out demons was nonsense,

because everything Jesus was doing in word and deed was focused on putting an end to Satan's reign. How could he be using the power of Satan to defeat Satan? NOTE: When Mark says "Jesus spoke to them in parables" (v. 23), he means that Jesus was using analogies, a common understanding of "parables." (2) A "kingdom divided against itself" (v. 24) would be like a country torn apart by a civil war. (3) "A house divided against itself" (v. 25) is essentially the same point.

ILLUSTRATION: Abraham Lincoln used Jesus' analogy in his historic "House Divided Against Itself" speech at the Illinois Republican State Convention on June 16, 1858. His point was that a government cannot endure half slave and half free.

4. Read Mark 3:27, and observe that, here, Jesus is making a somewhat different point:

He has previously said that it was ridiculous for the scribes to claim that he was using the power of Satan to defeat Satan; but, here, he goes on to say that he (Jesus) is indeed stronger than Satan, and is "plundering Satan's house" by casting out demons; and Satan, "the strong man," has already been bound.

5. Summarize the meaning of what Jesus says in Mk. 3:28-30: Every sin will be forgiven except attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan (as the scribes have done), because those who indulge in such blasphemy are simply incapable of repentance, which is the essential prelude to forgiveness (Lk. 13:5).

6. Finally explain the incident recorded in Mk. 3:31-35: The pronouncement in v. 35 is the key to understanding the episode described in these verses. There are many evidences in the Gospels that Jesus was devoted to his earthly family. Yet, the very nature of his mission in the world necessitated the inclusion of every believer in the family of God. (Read John 1:12-13.)

CLOSING THE LESSON

A final thought: Statisticians estimate that, by 2060, 2.3 billion people will belong to the worldwide family of God, and that 42% of them will live in Sub-Saharan Africa, many in destitute circumstances. Do we think of them as our brothers and sisters in Christ?

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