

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: March 3, 2019
Lesson Title: "Calls"
Lesson Passage: Mark 1:9-20

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson introduces a three-month study of the Gospel of Mark. The Bible passage begins with Mark's descriptions of the baptism of Jesus and his temptation in the wilderness, then tells about the calling of his first disciples at the beginning of his public ministry.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain why Jesus, though sinless, submitted to John's "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (2) Explain how both the baptism of Jesus and his temptation in the wilderness helped to prepare the way for his public ministry.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Note that this week's Bible study marks the beginning of a series of lessons in Mark's Gospel. Challenge your class members to read all 16 chapters of Mark within the next four weeks. Then comment on the nature of this Gospel: Mark writes like a journalist. His account is fast-paced and concise. He omits the story of the birth of Jesus and goes straight to the beginning of his public ministry. This lesson begins with a description of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Read Mark 1:4 and 1:9, then ask this question: If John preached a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin," and Jesus was sin-less (Hebrews 4:15), why did Jesus come to John to be baptized? Sug-gest these possible explanations: (1) As Isaiah 53:12 says, "he was numbered with the transgressors." That is to say, Jesus identified him-self with sinners in order to save them. (Heb. 2:17 echoes this idea.) (2) Jesus submitted to John's baptism in order to set an example. ILLUSTRATION: Refer to the incident in which Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. On that occasion, he was not a slave, but he assumed the role of a slave in order to set an example (Jn. 13:15). Similarly, at his baptism, he was not a sinner, but he assumed the role of a person in need of repentance in order to set an example. (3) Mt. 3:15 suggests that Jesus's intention was to endorse John's message, to emphasize the necessity of repentance.

2. Comment on the three things that immediately followed Jesus' bap-tism (Mk. 1:10-11): (1) "He saw the heavens opened." A literal trans-lation reads, "he saw the heavens as they were being torn" (the same verb used in Lk. 5:36). That is to say, the curtain that usually stands between the abode of God and this earthly sphere was ripped open. (2) The "Spirit descending upon him like a dove." Here was a tangible ful-fillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Isa. 11:2). (3) "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well-pleased" seems to have come from Psalm 2:7 (a psalm for the coronation of a new king) and Isa. 42:1, in which the Servant of God is ordained to a mission of redemptive suffering. NOTE:

Many interpreters agree that this was the decisive moment when Jesus was divinely commissioned to carry out his messianic ministry.

3. Focus on Mark's brief description of the temptation in the wilderness (1:12-13): "The Spirit drove him into the wilderness" accurately reflects the force of the Greek verb. But this does not necessarily imply that Jesus resisted. APPLICATION: Christians sometimes undertake difficult tasks out of a sense of divine compulsion even today. (For example, responding to a call to missions.) Further comment: Mark's Gospel probably was written in Rome at about the time of the terrible persecution under Nero (A.D. 64). In their sufferings, Christians undoubtedly found solace in the knowledge that the Lord himself had done battle with Satan and had emerged victorious. APPLICATION: In our own times of hard testing, we, too, can find strength in the knowledge that the Son of God has been there, in "the vale of tears," before us.

4. Note the three central points in the preaching of Jesus, as it is described in Mark 1:15: (1) The **Kingdom is at hand**. (The "Kingdom" means literally God's reign, His rulership.) (2) **Repent**. The word "repent" means "turn"--turn from sin, turn to God. (3) **Believe the gospel**, the "good news" of God's saving work through Jesus Christ.

5. With reference to Mark 1:16-20, share the following observations about the call to Christian discipleship: (1) Jesus took the initiative. The Jewish rabbis of that day waited for followers to seek them out; but Jesus "called to him those whom he desired" (Mk. 3:13). (2) He called them into a relationship of mutual trust. They demonstrated their trust by abandoning their means of livelihood and following him without question; but Jesus also had to trust them, to believe they could be depended upon to carry out his mission on earth. (3) His invitation required total *commitment*. They could not follow him on a part-time basis. APPLICATION: Practicing religion only on Sunday is not full-time discipleship. (4) He called them to a task, they are to be "fishers of men" (v. 17).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A closing question: How should contemporary disciples respond to Jesus' message about the kingdom? First, repent and believe the good news of the kingdom (Mk. 1:14-15) and so enter the kingdom like little children (Mk. 10:14). Second, pray for the rule of God to come soon (Mt. 6:10). Finally, be ready when the kingdom does fully come (Mt. 25:1-46).

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