

Semicontinuous
1 Sam. 8:4–11,
16–20
Ps. 138

Complementary
Gen. 3:8–15
Ps. 130
2 Cor. 4:13–5:1
Mark 3:20–35

The Cost of Discipleship

Goal for the Session Youth will examine the tensions faith can sometimes bring to families and explore ways to respond in such situations.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 3:20–35

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Judith Hoch Wray

Jesus’ family serves as a literary tool to introduce several key themes. The antecedent of the pronoun translated as “people” (v. 21) in the NRSV is unclear, and probably indicates Jesus’ family as the ones who were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” “Out of his mind” is literally, “he has stood outside.” (Compare today’s idiom, “he is really out of it,” or the RSV “beside himself.”) The question of who is *outside* arises again and again. In verse 31 the family is standing outside, in contrast to their saying in verse 21 that he “has gone outside,” that is, out of his mind.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Wendy Farley

If we transpose this theological vision into our own time, instead of lepers and demoniacs crowding around Jesus, we might see the strange bodies of the disabled. The only ones not in the picture, the ones not pressing in at the doors and windows, desperate and aching to be near Jesus, are the ones who think they know what religion and family life is supposed to look like. Jesus, infinitely patient with the crowd, blasts away at these people. Everyone will be forgiven, except people who blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The inability to tell the difference between the power of the Holy Spirit and the demonic is an *unforgivable sin*.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Don E. Saliers

For us, however, the issue is how we now understand the relationship between discipleship and Christology. More than simply “understand” intellectually, it seems crucial for the churches today to seek to live out that understanding. Living out the form of discipleship Christ bids us follow means a new solidarity with all of humanity. It requires that we learn with him to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. It asks us to live into the densities of human joy and suffering. It calls us to find ourselves precisely in our willingness to give up our self-absorption. This is a demanding task, requiring a willingness to follow him into a new solidarity with God’s whole family.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Nibs Stroupe

We should look for the reality signified by the name “Satan.” Satan does not necessarily mean a personality with horns and a red tail, but it does name a demonic power that is actively engaged against the compassionate and reconciling love of God. This is the reality that Jesus names here, and whether we believe in a person named “Satan” is not as important as hearing about our captivity to the powers of evil signified by “Satan,” powers that continue to seek our allegiance.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
Mark 3:20–35

Focus on Your Teaching

“My parents just don’t understand” is a common refrain among young people. As they assert their independence teenagers may feel constrained by family expectations. Even the Scriptures suggest that Jesus’ relationship with his mother and family was strained at times. In this week’s reading, Jesus redefines the criteria for those who constitute his “true family,” one not defined by blood relations, but by doing the will of God. Teens are still exploring what it means to do the will of God and they are learning that sometimes making choices in the life of discipleship can create tension within families.

Reconciling Spirit, may my words reflect your love and create a supportive environment for the young people in my care. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Bibles
- scissors
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- bag or basket
- bowl
- stones
- permanent marker or paint pen

For Responding

- option 1: question squares from Resource Sheet 2, one die
- option 2: half-sized sheets of poster board, used magazines, scissors, glue sticks
- option 3: invited guest; option: copies of Resource Sheet 1

For Film Connection

- trailer for *The Way* (2011), Internet access

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, gather stones and print “courage” on them. Place the stones in a bowl. Cut apart the scenarios on Resource Sheet 2 (Family Matters) and place in a bag or basket. If you choose option 3 in Responding, invite a member of the congregation who has experienced tension within his or her family because of a faith commitment to speak with the group.

Welcome group members and invite them to form two teams of equal size. Explain that one team will be the “teens,” asking for their curfews to be extended. The other team will be the “parents,” explaining why the curfew time cannot change. Allow a few minutes for each team to think of persuasive arguments for its case, and then present a role play, with one or more people from each team participating. When the role play has ended, ask:

✠ What does it feel like when there is tension between parents and teens?

Invite group members to name other things that can cause tension or disagreement between family members. Explain that in this week’s Bible reading tension develops between Jesus and his family. Pray:

O God, be with us as we consider your word for us today. Amen.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and help youth find Mark 3:20–35. Explain that just before this section, Jesus had left the crowds behind to go up into the mountains with his followers. There he chose twelve to be his apostles to travel with him, giving them the authority to preach and to cast out evil spirits. Ask a volunteer to read Mark 3:20. The last half of verse 19 states that “[Jesus] went home,” probably meaning that he went to the house of friends or relatives.

Ask:

✠ What happens when Jesus returns home?

✠ Why do you think the crowd interrupted Jesus’ evening meal? What did they want?

The scribes were secular officials who functioned like lawyers and were the ones who made copies of the Torah. Later they came to have religious standing and were associated with the Pharisees.

Ask another volunteer to read Mark 3:21. In *The Message*, a paraphrase of the Bible, the last part of this verse reads: “They suspected he was getting carried away with himself.” Ask:

✧ What clues did the family have that would lead them to think that Jesus had gone “out of his mind” or was “getting carried away with himself”?

After his family commented on his behavior, another group came to tackle Jesus and his teachings. Review the information about scribes in the sidebar. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Satan Fighting Satan?) and invite volunteers to read aloud the paraphrase of Mark 3:22–30. Ask:

✧ How did the religious leaders react to Jesus’ popularity?

Explain that there were probably a number of reasons why the scribes didn’t like what Jesus was doing. They wanted to label him and discredit what he did so that people wouldn’t take him seriously. Ask:

✧ How do you think Jesus’ response to the scribes confirms or disproves their suspicions?

One of the features of Mark’s Gospel is the use of the *inclusio*, a literary device that uses a “sandwich” technique, framing one story within another, using the same or similar words, phrases, or themes at the beginning and the end. This technique intends that each of the two stories enrich the understanding of the other.

Point out the two scenes described in the reading: it begins with an encounter between Jesus and his family (20–21), moves into a story about Jesus and the religious scholars (22–30), and then returns to finish the story of Jesus’ encounter with his family. Read Mark 3:31–35. Explain that respect for family in these times was essential and it was important that Jesus’ behavior didn’t bring dishonor to the family name. Jesus’ response to his family’s request would have seemed shocking. Ask:

✧ How does Jesus redefine the term *family*?

✧ Why do you think he said that the people listening to him were his family?

✧ What does it mean to do “the will of God”?

Distribute the scenario strips from Resource Sheet 2 (Family Matters). Take turns reading the scenarios aloud and discussing the tensions between teens’ desires and the parents’ concerns.

Explain that, just as Jesus found, there may be times when youth might feel a commitment to follow God in a way that their parents and friends won’t understand. Ask:

✧ Where could you find support during these times?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Question Path** Youth will explore some of the tensions of living faithfully as followers of Jesus Christ by reflecting on questions together. Place the question squares from Resource Sheet 2 (Family Matters) in different places around the meeting space. Invite youth to walk around, look at the questions in silence, and reflect on how they might answer each one. Then take turns rolling a die; when a 1, 2, 3, or 4 is rolled, invite the group to offer a response to that numbered question. Continue until the questions have each been discussed one or more times.

EASY
PREP

- 2. Family Collages** Youth will examine some tensions their faith might cause in their families and explore ways the church family can offer support. Provide sheets of poster board and used magazines. Have youth divide their papers in half diagonally and tear out magazine pictures representing their families (parents, siblings, other relatives) to collage on one half and words or phrases representing tensions that might be caused by their choices to live in God's way. On the other half, have them collage images to represent their church family and words or phrases representing ways the church can offer support during times of tension. Compare collages and talk about the ways in which the youth group could provide a safe family of support.
- 3. Guest Interview** Youth will hear a story of a time when faith caused tension within a family. Introduce your guest and invite him or her to talk about a time when faith caused tensions within the family and how she or he responded. Encourage youth to ask questions to clarify or learn more about what happened.

Youth can formulate their own questions or use the ones offered on the bottom of Resource Sheet 1 (Satan Fighting Satan?).

CLOSING

Gather in a circle around the bowl of "courage stones." Invite them to each take a stone and sit quietly holding their stones and reflecting on these words: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister. This group is my family. Thank you, God."

Then lead the group in the following blessing, inviting them to repeat each line after you:

*May the hope of God surround us,
the love of God hold us close,
the power of God protect us,
the presence of God watch over us,
and the Spirit of God live in us. Amen.*

■ ENHANCEMENT

FILM CONNECTION

In the movie *The Way*, a father goes to Spain, where his estranged son had died on the first day of a pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago. While Tom had not understood his son Daniel's commitment to this faith pilgrimage, he decides to complete the walk in memory of his son. Along the way, he meets three fellow pilgrims, each carrying their own burdens, and they become a community of support for one another. Search YouTube for "The Way - Movie Trailer (2011) HD" to watch the trailer for the movie and discuss these questions together:

- ✠ How does Daniel try to explain his reason for doing the pilgrimage?
- ✠ What tensions does this seem to cause between Daniel and his father?
- ✠ Why do you think Tom decided to take the pilgrimage himself?

Satan Fighting Satan?

Mark 3:22-30, *The Message*

The religion scholars from Jerusalem came down spreading rumors that Jesus was working black magic, using devil tricks to impress them with spiritual power. Jesus confronted their slander with a story: “Does it make sense to send a devil to catch a devil, to use Satan to get rid of Satan? A constantly squabbling family disintegrates. If Satan were fighting Satan, there soon wouldn’t be any Satan left. Do you think it’s possible in broad daylight to enter the house of an awake, able-bodied man, and walk off with his possessions unless you tie him up first? Tie him up, though, and you can clean him out.

“Listen to this carefully. I’m warning you. There’s nothing done or said that can’t be forgiven. But if you persist in your slanders against God’s Holy Spirit, you are repudiating the very One who forgives, sawing off the branch on which you’re sitting, severing by your own perversity all connection with the One who forgives.” He gave this warning because they were accusing him of being in league with Evil.

Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



Interview questions:

- How did you feel about this situation at the time?
- How do you feel about it now as you look back on that time?
- Why do you think it is important to be faithful, even when it creates problems within families?
- What advice do you have for us?

Family Matters

You want to go on a mission trip with your church youth group; your parents want you to go to an important sports camp instead.

You want to attend a different church with a friend; your parents refuse because they are fearful that you'll like the other church better than theirs.

You want to take a year off between high school and college to serve on a mission team; your parents want you to start college right away.

You want to visit a very ill friend in the hospital; your parents are afraid it will be too dangerous for you.

1

What is one question you would like to ask Jesus about family relationships?

2

Why do you think doing something good can sometimes cause tension between you and your parents?

3

“Being a brother or sister (a follower) of Jesus Christ is hard work.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

4

“There’s nothing done or said that can’t be forgiven.” (Mark 3:28, *The Message*) Do you agree or disagree? Why?