

Lesson 3- Controversies

Read for This Week's Study

[Mark 2:1-3:6](#); [Micah 6:6-8](#); [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#); [Mark 3:20-35](#); [Luke 12:53](#); [Luke 14:26](#).

Memory Text:

“And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’ ” ([Mark 2:27-28](#)).

Five Important Points:

1. Overview of Controversies:

- The stories in Mark 2:1-3:6 illustrate Jesus' teaching in contrast to the religious leaders, showing aspects of who Jesus is.
- Each story links to the next, creating a cohesive narrative that circles back to the beginning.

2. Pattern of Stories:

- The stories are arranged in a specific pattern with topical parallels. Each story builds on the previous one, deepening the understanding of Jesus' message.

3. Key Verses:

- Key statements in Mark 2:10, 2:17, 2:20, and 2:28 highlight different aspects of Jesus' identity and mission.
- These verses encapsulate the essence of Jesus' teachings and actions.

4. Sandwich Stories Technique:

- Mark uses a narrative technique called “sandwich stories,” where one story is interrupted by another and then completed afterward.
- This technique emphasizes important aspects of Jesus' nature and mission.

5. Purpose of the Week's Study:

- The aim is to understand the controversies surrounding Jesus and what they reveal about His character and mission.
- Through these stories, we gain insights into the true meaning of discipleship and following Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of the “sandwich stories” technique in Mark's Gospel?

- **Answer:** The “sandwich stories” technique highlights the interconnectedness of Jesus' teachings and actions, emphasizing important theological points and the continuity of His mission.

2. How do the controversies in Mark 2:1-3:6 reveal the difference between Jesus' teachings and those of the religious leaders?

- **Answer:** The controversies show Jesus' focus on mercy, justice, and the true spirit of the law, contrasting with the religious leaders' emphasis on legalistic interpretations and traditions.

3. What can we learn from the way Jesus handled opposition and criticism from the religious leaders?

- **Answer:** Jesus handled opposition with wisdom, authority, and compassion, demonstrating the importance of staying true to God’s mission and responding with grace and truth.

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Sunday: Healing a Paralytic

Five Important Points:

1. Faith and Action:

- The friends of the paralytic demonstrated their faith by bringing him to Jesus, showing that faith can be seen through actions (Mark 2:5).

2. Forgiveness and Healing:

- Jesus first forgave the paralytic’s sins, addressing his spiritual need before healing his physical ailment (Mark 2:5-11).

3. Challenge to Religious Leaders:

- The religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority to forgive sins, considering it blasphemous (Mark 2:6-7).

4. Validation of Authority:

- Jesus validated His authority by healing the paralytic, proving that He had the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10-12).

5. Micah 6:6-8 Connection:

- The leaders missed the essence of true religion—justice, mercy, and humility—by focusing on legalistic practices.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the story of the paralytic teach us about the relationship between faith and action?

- **Answer:** It teaches that true faith is demonstrated through persistent and tangible actions that seek God’s intervention.

2. Why did Jesus prioritize forgiving the paralytic’s sins before healing him physically?

- **Answer:** Jesus prioritized spiritual healing because it addresses the root of human brokenness, which is sin, highlighting the holistic nature of His ministry.

3. How can we avoid falling into the trap of legalism like the religious leaders?

- **Answer:** By focusing on the core principles of justice, mercy, and walking humbly with God, and by prioritizing compassion and relational aspects of faith over rigid adherence to rules.

Monday: Calling Levi and the Question of Fasting

Five Important Points:

1. Levi's Calling:

- Levi, a tax collector, was called by Jesus to follow Him, despite his profession being despised (Mark 2:13-14).

2. Criticism of Jesus’ Associations:

- Jesus faced criticism for associating with tax collectors and sinners, challenging societal norms (Mark 2:15-16).

3. Jesus' Response to Criticism:

- Jesus likened His mission to that of a doctor healing the sick, emphasizing that He came for sinners, not the righteous (Mark 2:17).

4. Fasting and New Teaching:

- Jesus addressed the question of fasting by comparing His presence to a wedding feast, indicating a time of joy, not mourning (Mark 2:18-20).

5. Parables of New Cloth and Wineskins:

- Jesus used the parables of new cloth and wineskins to illustrate the incompatibility of His new teaching with old traditions (Mark 2:21-22).

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was Levi's calling significant, and what does it teach us about Jesus' mission?

- **Answer:** Levi's calling shows that Jesus seeks out and redeems those society deems unworthy, highlighting the inclusivity of His mission.

2. How did Jesus' response to the criticism about His associations challenge societal norms?

- **Answer:** Jesus' response challenged the notion of religious exclusivity, emphasizing mercy and the need to reach out to those considered sinners.

3. What do the parables of the new cloth and wineskins teach about Jesus' teaching?

- **Answer:** They teach that Jesus' message is transformative and cannot be contained within old, rigid structures of tradition; it requires a new, flexible approach.

Tuesday: The Lord of the Sabbath

Five Important Points:

1. Sabbath Controversy:

- The Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath by plucking grain, highlighting differing interpretations of Sabbath observance (Mark 2:23-24).

2. Jesus' Response:

- Jesus responded by referring to David eating the sacred bread, showing that human need can take precedence over ceremonial laws (Mark 2:25-26).

3. Sabbath for Humanity:

- Jesus emphasized that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit, not man for the Sabbath, and asserted His lordship over it (Mark 2:27-28).

4. Healing on the Sabbath:

- Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, challenging the Pharisees' rigid interpretation and showing that doing good is lawful on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-5).

5. Irony of Pharisees' Plot:

- The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus on the Sabbath, ironically breaking the very law they accused Jesus of violating (Mark 3:6).

Discussion Questions:

1. What principles of Sabbath observance can we learn from Jesus' actions and teachings?

- **Answer:** We learn that the Sabbath should be a time for doing good, showing mercy, and addressing human needs, reflecting its true purpose.

2. How did Jesus' healing on the Sabbath challenge the Pharisees' understanding of the law?

- **Answer:** Jesus' healing demonstrated that the Sabbath should be a day of restoration and blessing, not rigid adherence to prohibitions that neglect human well-being.

3. What does Jesus' declaration of being the Lord of the Sabbath mean for our understanding of His authority?

- **Answer:** It means that Jesus has divine authority over the Sabbath and its observance, and His interpretation of the law reveals its true intent and spirit.

Wednesday: Sandwich Story: Part 1

Five Important Points:

1. Intertwined Stories:

- The passage in Mark 3:20-35 contains a "sandwich story," intertwining the story of Jesus' family and the scribes' accusation.

2. Family's Concern:

- Jesus' family thought He was out of His mind due to His intense ministry activities and sought to take charge of Him (Mark 3:20-21).

3. Accusation of Demonic Power:

- The scribes accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, attributing His miracles to demonic influence (Mark 3:22).

4. Jesus' Defense:

- Jesus refuted the accusation with a logical argument, stating that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, and explaining His mission to bind the strong man (Satan) and plunder his house (Mark 3:23-27).

5. Unpardonable Sin:

- Jesus warned about the unpardonable sin—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which involves attributing the work of the Spirit to the devil (Mark 3:28-30).

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of the "sandwich story" technique in this passage?

- **Answer:** It highlights the contrasting responses to Jesus' ministry from His family and the religious leaders, showing different aspects of misunderstanding and opposition.

2. How did Jesus refute the accusation that He was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub?

- **Answer:** Jesus used logical reasoning, showing that Satan would not work against himself, and explained His mission to defeat Satan and liberate his captives.

3. What does the warning about the unpardonable sin teach us about the importance of recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit?

Answer: The warning about the unpardonable sin teaches us the critical importance of recognizing and respecting the work of the Holy Spirit. Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, by attributing His work to the devil, closes our hearts to the Spirit's influence and guidance, thus preventing repentance and forgiveness.

Thursday: Sandwich Story: Part 2

Five Important Points:

1. Family's Concern:

- Jesus' family thought He was out of His mind and set out to take charge of Him because they believed He was endangering Himself by not taking care of His basic needs, such as eating (Mark 3:20-21).
2. **Parallel Accusations:**
 - There is a parallel between the family's concern and the scribes' accusation of Jesus being possessed. Both show a lack of understanding of Jesus' true mission and identity.
 3. **Redefinition of Family:**
 - When Jesus' family came to see Him, He redefined family as those who do the will of God, highlighting the spiritual bonds over biological ties (Mark 3:31-35).
 4. **Connection Between Stories:**
 - The connection between the two stories in this "sandwich" reveals that misunderstanding and opposition can come from both close family and religious authorities, emphasizing the importance of spiritual kinship.
 5. **Irony and Resolution:**
 - There is an irony in the outer story about Jesus' family and the inner story about the scribes: both groups misunderstood Jesus. The resolution comes when Jesus declares that His true family consists of those who follow God's will.

Discussion Questions:

1. **How does Jesus' redefinition of family challenge traditional views on family relationships?**
 - **Answer:** Jesus' redefinition of family places spiritual kinship above biological ties, emphasizing that true family bonds are formed through a shared commitment to doing God's will.
2. **What can we learn from Jesus' handling of the accusations from both His family and the scribes?**
 - **Answer:** Jesus' responses teach us the importance of staying true to our mission and identity in God, even when misunderstood or opposed by those close to us or by religious authorities.
3. **How can the concept of spiritual family help those who feel isolated or rejected by their biological families?**
 - **Answer:** The concept of spiritual family offers a sense of belonging and support to those who feel isolated, showing that the church community can provide the love and acceptance that might be lacking in their biological families.

Friday: Further Thought

Five Important Points:

1. **Ellen G. White's Insights:**
 - Ellen G. White emphasizes the importance of doing good on the Sabbath, contrasting the Pharisees' rigid traditions with Jesus' compassionate actions (The Desire of Ages, pp. 286-287).
2. **True Religion:**
 - True religion prioritizes human needs and suffering, placing a high value on humanity as the purchase of Christ's blood.
3. **False Religion:**

- False religions focus on exalting human traditions and can degrade humanity below the level of animals by neglecting human needs.
- 4. **Sabbath as a Blessing:**
 - The Sabbath is a gift from God meant to bless humanity, providing rest, restoration, and an opportunity to do good and show mercy.
- 5. **Reflection on Controversies:**
 - Reflecting on the controversies involving Jesus reveals the importance of understanding the spirit of the law, focusing on justice, mercy, and humility before God.

Discussion Questions:

1. **What strategies or practices help you and your local church stay sensitive to silently suffering people like the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12?**
 - **Answer:** Strategies include active listening, community outreach programs, prayer groups, and fostering an environment of compassion and support within the church community.
2. **Think about how blinded by hatred, tradition, dogma, and religion in general the religious leaders who rejected Jesus had become so that even His miracles didn't open their minds to Him. How can we as a people be careful that something similar doesn't happen to us?**
 - **Answer:** We can stay open-minded by focusing on the core principles of our faith, being willing to re-examine traditions in light of Scripture, and cultivating a humble and teachable spirit.
3. **How can your local church become "family" for those whose immediate genetic family may have rejected them over their faith?**
 - **Answer:** The church can become a family by offering unconditional love, acceptance, and support, creating a sense of belonging through fellowship, and providing practical help and spiritual encouragement.