



STORIES **AND** RITUALS

LESSON 21

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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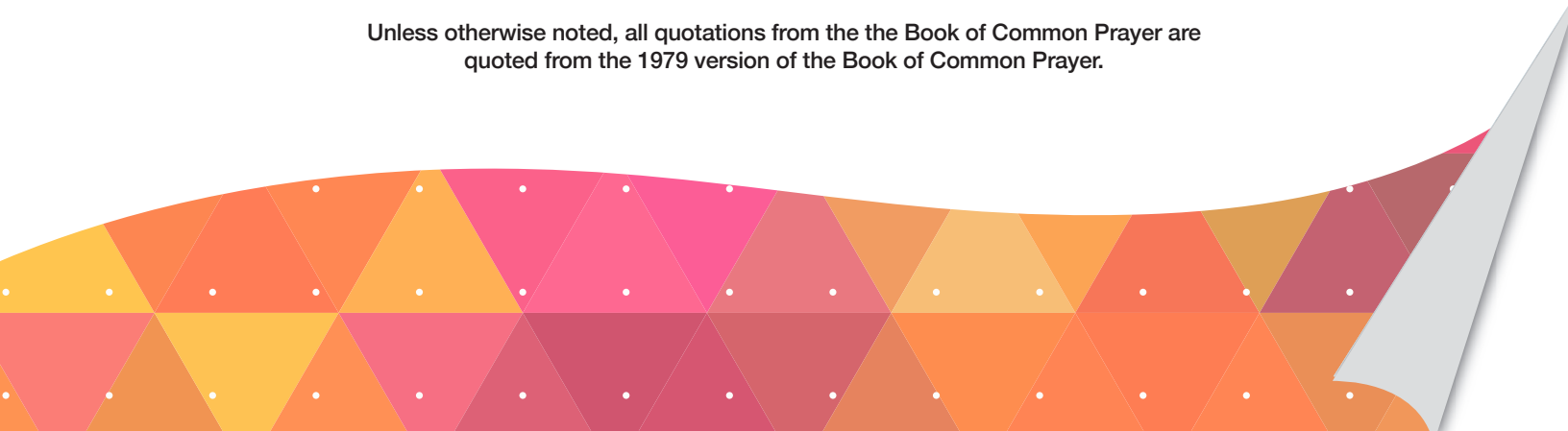
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Jesus' Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

Texts: Mark 2:23-28

Big Idea: We set aside intentional time to rest in God's presence.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify a theme of the lesson by participating in a group activity.
2. Formulate an understanding of keeping Sabbath by hearing a story about Jesus and the disciples.
3. Demonstrate ways we spend time in God's presence by participating in a prayer ritual.

ACTIVITY (TIME)

Dive In (10 minutes)
Group Check-In

Community Builder (15 minutes)
Love Giveaway

The Story (15 minutes)
**Jesus' Disciples Pluck Grain
on the Sabbath**

The Ritual (15 minutes)
**Solving the Puzzle of Sabbath
Keeping**

Dig Deeper (10 minutes)
Praying in Color

Wrap it Up (5 minutes)
Closing Prayer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Nothing

- Large sheets of paper,
- Markers • Scissors

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 21.1

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Blank puzzle pieces
- Magazines • Scissors
- Markers • Poster board
- Glue (optional)

- Paper
- Crayons or markers

- Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW



What's the Story?

The story in Mark 2:23-28 is about keeping the Sabbath. In this story, Jesus and his disciples are walking through grain fields and begin to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees are watching and ask why they are breaking the practice of not doing work on the Sabbath. By attacking the disciples, the Pharisees were really attacking Jesus. Jesus tells the Old Testament story of David, who took blessed bread and gave to it his hungry companions, and reminds them that the Sabbath was made for people to rest one day out of seven.

The familiar words Jesus says to the Pharisees are words we still must hear today: “the Sabbath was made for humankind; and not humankind for the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27)



What's the “Big Idea?”

Today's big idea is that *we set aside intentional time to be in God's presence*. In our culture today, Sunday is another busy day of the week. Just 20 years ago, sports and other activities were not scheduled on Sunday. Forty years ago, stores were not even open on Sunday! Think of your own schedules. Sundays are just another day chock full of activities and homework. When exactly do we make time to rest and spend intentional time with God?



What's the Symbol?

In today's overscheduled world, how do we keep the Sabbath? It's a puzzle really – how exactly do we do that? And that's our symbol: a puzzle. Together we will each create answers on a piece of that puzzle in intentional time with one another and the Holy Spirit.



What's the Ritual?

In today's ritual, participants will be invited to reflect on ways to keep the Sabbath – what they do on Sunday, or what they are willing to try. Then, participants will take a puzzle piece and decorate it to reflect their answer. The pieces will be put together to “solve” the puzzle.



Setting Up Your Space

Create a sacred space by designating a table to use as an “altar.” Cover a table with fabric, along with a cross, candles, and blank puzzle pieces. Create space for your group that invites reflection. Go to a different area if your space allows. Play quiet music with or without lyrics. Have private places for participants to sit apart to be with their thoughts. If you are participating in the Community Builder, Ritual, or Dig Deeper activities, gather the necessary supplies.

DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen
- Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not so great things that have happened to us this week. What were the highs and lows of your week? Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

Love Giveaway

Materials:

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers
- Scissors

Before the session:

- Secure a large sheet of paper. Write the words "GOD'S LOVE" in large print on the paper.

During the session:

- Invite the group in a place where everyone can see you.
- Show everyone the paper with "GOD'S LOVE" written on it
- God's love is something we can all have. It's not limited to just the Sabbath or only for some special people. It's for all of us! And we can give it to others!
- Point out that in this case there are 4 corners of God's Love.
- **If I were to give you a corner of God's love, how many would I have left?** *[Accept all answers.]*
- The cut off one of the corners and give it to someone. Have everyone count the corners together (there will be five corners).

COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- **We gave one corner away, but now we have FIVE! That's more than what we started with. What happens if we cut off the other three corners?**
- Continue in this way cutting off the other 3 original corners and giving them away.
- Every time we give a corner away, we end up with more of God's love to give away."
- Invite everyone to look at their corners. Have you received only one corner? **Give participants a moment to respond. As soon as you cut the corner off it became THREE corners (it's a triangle) ...so God's love keeps MULTIPLYING as in...the more we give away, the more there is to give.**
- If your group is large enough, try cutting off all the corners and give them away. **If we keep on going and cut ALL the corners off the original sheet of paper, what do we get? We get a circle! God's love encircles us!**
- Unpack the process by asking the following questions:
 - **Did this activity turn out the way you thought it would? What was surprising about it?**
 - **Where do you find love multiplying?** *[Answers will vary. Accept all answers.]*
 - **What are some small and maybe insignificant ways Jesus portrayed love in his life?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: breaking bread with people, spending time with sinners and the outcast, washing feet, etc.]*
 - **How do we show love to members of this group? How does our group show love to new members?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: praying for them, helping them with something, telling them about God's love, etc.]*



THE STORY

(15 MINUTES)

Jesus' Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 21.1

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 21.1
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 21.1.
- After the story ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary but may include: God cares about us, God gave us a gift we know as the Sabbath, etc.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary but may include: Our lives are busy and we need to make intentional time to be with God, Our love for God is expressed in how we treat other people, etc.]*
- **What is the story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary but may include: the world has forgotten what Sabbath means; our world has changed since laws were created in first century Jewish times; God loves the whole world, so we should treat all people with respect; etc.]*
- **In Jesus, God shows us that love is the core of a faith filled life. The apostle Paul says the person who loves is fulfilling the law. Everything Jesus taught us points us toward the way of love. Jesus told the Pharisees that they were missing the point. That if people were hungry on the Sabbath, it was an act of loving kindness to provide them with food. Not deny them because it was “the law”. God cares how we treat people – THAT is what pleases God**

THE RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Solving the Puzzle of Sabbath Keeping

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (*optional*)
- Method for playing music (*optional*)
- Blank puzzle pieces
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Markers (permanent markers work best)
- Poster board
- Glue (*optional*)

Before the session

- Gather materials for the ritual. You can find blank puzzle pieces through websites like Oriental Trading Company or at craft stores. Ideally, you should purchase large puzzle pieces. If you cannot find blank puzzle pieces to use, you could cut up large sheets of paper to fit together like a puzzle.
- Set up a poster board on your altar (or on a table nearby) on which puzzles can be placed.

During the session:

- If you are using music, start it playing softly.
- Ask participants to find a place where they can sit quietly, away from other people.
- **For the next ten minutes, we are going to take time to be intentional about our relationship with God. Scripture tells us that the Sabbath was created for us. What worked in 1st Century Jewish culture may not be relevant in the 21st Century. So what might this look like for you, for your family?**
- **We want to reflect on all the possible ways we might try to keep the Sabbath. Sabbath might be attending church with our family or serving at a food kitchen. It might be walking outside and finding God in nature, or saying a silent prayer each time you hit a stop light while in the car. It could also be not turning on TV during the day or putting your phone away for an hour! Think of what you do now during the Sabbath, and consider what you're willing to try. Be creative! Take a risk. Think of something radically daring!**
- Hand each person a puzzle piece. Instruct them to decorate the puzzle piece in a way that depicts how they might keep the Sabbath. Encourage participants to be creative in their own way.
- After 10 minutes, a little longer if there is a lot of creating going on, call the group back together.
- Instruct participants to bring their puzzle pieces to the poster board and join them together with other pieces.
- Invite the group to stand around the poster board. Invite participants to share their puzzle pieces with the group, if they feel comfortable doing so. Then, ask the following questions:
- What trends or similarities do you notice in all of our puzzle pieces?
- Do any of the pieces inspire another idea of how to keep the Sabbath? If so, which ones?
- Invite participants to hold hands. Close by praying the following prayer: **God, we thank you for the gift of Sabbath, and for the Sabbath time we have shared today. We know that you love all people and us. May that love fill our hearts and move us to grow closer to you. Amen**
- If desired, glue the puzzle pieces to the poster board, and hang the board up in your space for the group to see.

DIG DEEPER

(10 MINUTES)

Praying in Color

Materials:

- Crayons or markers
- Paper

Before the session:

- Familiarize yourself with the practice of “praying in color.” This is an intentional form of doodling. You can borrow or purchase the book *Praying in Color* by Sybil Macbeth to learn more, or go to this website: <http://prayingincolor.com/praying-in-color-praying-in-black-and-white>
- If desired, engage in the practice yourself and create an example to show the group.

During the session:

- **There are many ways to pray.** Today we are going to learn a new one. It's called **Praying in Color**. This kind of prayer is great because you get to decide how you pray! It's very free-forming. This is another way in which we can intentionally spend time with God.
- **The idea is simple – sometimes the need for prayer is so overwhelming, we can't find the words we need. Or we might not know what to pray but someone or a situation just sits on our heart and we want to do something. That's where this prayer comes in.**
- Instruct participants to draw a shape—any shape—somewhere on their paper.
- Invite each person to think of something they wish to pray for: a person, a situation, etc. They should write this person or thing in the shape. Encourage participants to doodle or draw around their shape, as they desire.
- Then, invite participants to draw another shape—any shape—in another spot on their paper. Inside this new shape, they should write a new person or situation for which they wish to pray. Again, **participants can doodle, or connect shapes. Stress that the process is up to them.**
- Encourage participants to continue drawing shapes and writing prayers. Give participants up to about ten additional minutes to work.
- After about ten minutes, bring the group back together. Ask the following questions:
 - **Did you like this form of prayer? Why or why not?**
 - **How did this form of prayer help you spend intentional time with God?**
- **Today we have spent intentional time with God. At this time I invite you to place your prayers in color on our altar as an offering of thanks to God for this special time.**

WRAP IT UP

(5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Gather the group for a closing prayer. Invite participants to share any prayer requests they may have for the week. Then, pray the following (or use your own prayer):

Be with us, O Lord, and surround us with your loving protection, let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace, and let your blessing be upon us always through Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen.

Lesson Sheet 21.1

Jesus' Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

A story from the Gospel according to Mark:

Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field. As they walked along, some of the disciples began to pick the heads of grain.

The Pharisees watched them and asked Jesus why they were breaking the Sabbath law. In that time, Sunday was the seventh day of the week, the day designated by God for rest and intentional time with God. The Sabbath law forbids anyone from working on the Sabbath, and plucking grain was considered work.

By attacking the disciples, the Pharisees were really attacking Jesus. But Jesus acted on principle and stated that the disciples were plucking grain to meet the human need of hunger – thus it was lawful because the Sabbath was created for humans, humans were not made for the Sabbath. He referenced the time in the Old Testament when David and his companions were hungry and ate consecrated bread that was lawful only for priests to eat.

In other words, Jesus made the point that rules, even God-given ones, are not meant to take precedence over human need. Jesus makes a very important point here about divine authority and illustrates that God made rules to serve humanity, not to rule over humanity. This is different than the Pharisees' behavior that seemed to rule over people instead of addressing their needs.

Because of his response, the Pharisees began to dislike Jesus even more.