

Aim of lesson

To learn from the bad example of those who are determined to oppose Jesus, and from the good example of how the Lord Jesus handles opposition.

Bible background

Matthew 12

Outline of lesson

How would we react?

Ask the class how they would have reacted if they had seen the miracles Jesus did. After they have given their ideas, ask if they would decide Jesus was a dangerous influence and should be got rid of! Would any people today react like that? People with political power perhaps or religious power or riches?

Grain or chaff?

Read together Matthew 12:1-8 and discuss what is happening here. Get the class to cross out the wrong statements in the first section of the student workbook. Get the class to look up Deuteronomy 23:25 to clarify the first point. Scholars often do not realise that the reason for the criticism is working on the Sabbath by separating the grain from the chaff.

Healing on the Sabbath?

In turn, read Matthew 12:9-15, 22-28 (or 36); and 38-42 correcting the next section after reading it. If there are questions on demons or Beelzebub, refer back to the section on the devil.

Jesus and the Pharisees

Go through the points which show the attitudes of the Pharisees and apply them to the class. Ask if they ever criticise people because they care what happens to them or because they want to show them up or have people laugh at them. Similarly, look at the attitude of Jesus and contrast it with the wrong statements. Ask the class if, when they are in the right, they lose their temper with someone who criticises them, demand an apology, ridicule or refuse to speak to the other person, or do they avoid conflict, answer patiently and care for those who attack them.

Read together Matthew 5:43-48. Note especially verse 44. Ask the class if they think Jesus prayed for the Pharisees who were opposing him. Ask the class to write in their workbook the prayer that they think he might have said. Discuss how praying about our enemies might help us treat them as we should since it will help us to see them from God's point of view.

Digging deeper

Jesus' family

This section investigates Jesus' earthly family, and their attitude to him during his ministry and after his ascension. Who can be Jesus' family now?

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class to pray during the week about the people who criticise them. Ask them next week if it helped them to keep their temper and answer kindly.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, please help us to answer people kindly when they criticise us and not to ridicule and laugh at others.

Other suggestions for activities

- The incidents in this story could be dramatised with the class using their own words.
- The class could write a psalm or poem like Matt. 12:18-21 describing the qualities of the servant which have come out in this lesson.