



DIVE DEEPER

READ Mark 3:1-6 (NIV)

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

THE SYNAGOGUE SABBATH SHOWDOWN:

› (v. 2) **Watched him closely** - παρατηρουν [paretēroun] Were watching on the side (or slyly). Luke uses the middle voice to accent their personal interest in the proceedings. It was the sabbath day and in the synagogue and they were there ready to catch him in the act if he should dare to violate their rules as he had done in the wheat fields on the previous sabbath. Probably the same Pharisees are present now as then.

› (v. 3) **Stand up front** - The NIV's "stand up front" is a modernization. The Greek says "get up in the middle" because, in second- and third-century synagogues at least, the seats were stone benches around the walls. It was a bold defiance of the Christ's spying enemies.

¿ **Jesus gives human need precedence over rules and regulations. How is this an important point, especially in church communities with rigid hierarchies and inflexibly enforced rules?**

› (v. 4) **Which is lawful?** - The rabbis had a highly developed Oral Tradition (Talmud) which interpreted the Mosaic Law (cf. 2:24). They made rigid pronouncements on what could legally be done or not be done on the Sabbath. One could stabilize an injured person in an emergency, but could not improve his condition. Jesus' question revealed the problem of the priority of their cherished traditions above human needs.

¿ **What do Jesus' priorities tell you about God's nature?**

› (v. 5) **He looked around at them in anger** - (συνλυπουμενος [sullupoumenos]). The reference to Jesus' anger may seem surprising. He is angry and grieved at their stubborn hearts. The Greek word sullupeomai is used only here in the NT and expresses some-

YES • NO • MAYBE

1. Many of the people sitting near me need to still work on improving their priorities.

2. Some people here may be surprised, but when I was younger, I was quite the rebel.

3. Jesus intentionally did things to cause fights.

4. Not doing something can be more evil than doing something that people think is evil.

5. When God gets angry, it's time to rejoice!



DIVE DEEPER (CONTINUED...)

what more passion than grieved (cf. deeply distressed, NIV).

Ignoring his opponents, Jesus turns to the man who is waiting for healing. With Jesus' word, the man is instantaneously restored. To do good and to save life, that is Jesus' mission. Perhaps by healing with a word rather than a touch, Jesus avoids the charge of violating the Sabbath.

¿ What makes God angry? Does that anger cause us fear or joy?
How?

› (v. 5) **Stubborn hearts** - (πωρωσει [pōrōsei]). The term "hardness" means calcified (see Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18). The word "hardness" often takes on the additional idea of willful "blindness." The NEB and REB have a striking rendition here: "Looking round at them with anger and sorrow at their obstinate stupidity." Jesus was angry not only at insensitivity toward suffering but at the entire system of legalism where the letter is more important than the spirit.

¿ What do you think causes a good, church-goin' person's heart to harden against God's way of doing things?

› (v. 6) **Began to plot...how they might kill** - (ἀπολεσωσιν [apolesosin]). Which literally means destroy as one would do to an animal. After Jesus healed the man, the Pharisees went out and plotted Jesus' death immediately. Although the NIV omits it in Mark 3:6, the word immediately is important because it indicates that the Pharisees were acting with malice on the Sabbath.

The enemies of Jesus never agree that doing evil and killing are appropriate Sabbath activities. Yet without waiting for the Sabbath service to end, they walk out and plot to put him away. The irony is inescapable. The conflict has reached a climax. The death of Jesus is being planned, and we are only in chapter 3! Jesus' opponents depart to work out a death plot. Jesus departs to carry on his life-giving ministry of healing, deliverance, and building a kingdom community.

¿ What does this story teach us about the character of God?

NOTES

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MY PRAYER

1. How am I disturbed by new things at church?
2. What priorities in my life match up with God's priorities?
3. What do I understand more clearly about God's character now?