

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults

Proper 18 (A)

New Testament: Matthew 18:15-20

BACKGROUND

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

This passage in Matthew comes in the middle of a larger piece in which Jesus deals with matters that are important to life in this new community, how we treat others, what is important in this community and why this community may be different than other communities. This section of Matthew speaks to us all being the body of Christ and that we are all of value in the eyes of God. It is about how we treat each other and how we are to best live as the family of God.

THEME

Conflict resolution

BEFORE CLASS

You will need two different translations of the Bible.

BEGINNING

Gather everyone together and invite them to think about how they manage conflict. Would they rather face it head on, avoid it, or something in between?

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, who gives us our friends and community, be with us as we hear your words. Help us to remember that we are meant to live together and serve you in our everyday lives. Amen.

THE STORY: MATTHEW 18:15-20

You will be reading the lesson today twice and will need two different readers. Think about having two very different voices read this such as male or female, young or old.

Before reading the lesson the first time, invite people to listen for a word or phrase that stood out for them. Invite the first reader to read the lesson. After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what word or phrase stood out for them. When you feel everyone has shared, invite the group to listen once more and to listen for what Jesus is saying to them. Invite the second reader to read the lesson. After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what they heard Jesus saying to them.

After everyone has shared, you can begin the reflection questions

Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- You have probably heard this Gospel before. Did anything new stand out for you this time?
- I wonder why Jesus was teaching this to his disciples?
- Do you think this message would be any different today?
- Do you think this is something we can do today? Why or why not?
- If you are experienced at conflict resolution, does this seem like a good way to do it?

ACTIVITY: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS CHILDREN OF GOD

Sometimes we all get angry or frustrated because of something another person has done. There are times when we feel that something unfair has happened, that someone is being mean to us or to someone else, that something we care about got lost or broken because of someone else.

Today, in our Gospel lesson, Jesus is trying to help us remember what we are to do when we feel that we have been wronged.

Remember the steps to Conflict Resolution:

- Step One: Go directly to that person.
 - Remember the Greatest Commandment – Love the Lord your God and Love your Neighbor as yourself.
 - The Golden Rule – treat others how you would want to be treated.
 - Be Respectful and responsible.
- Step Two: Bring along another person or two.
- Step Three: Bring the situation to the church (or this may mean to your school, work, or community depending on the situation.)
- Step Four: Walk away from the situation and take a breather. Continue to communicate with the person and when they are ready to come into the community, welcome them.

Why do you think that we are called to resolve conflicts? Why would this be important to Jesus and his followers?

When we are able to resolve conflicts and work out our differences, our community is stronger and we grow. If we aren't able to work these things out, our community becomes divided and we diminish. In working out our differences, Jesus offers his presence and promise to us.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Jesus is with us when we are together, Jesus is with us as we solve our conflicts, Jesus is with us when we are able to work with each other and build up our communities.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite them to think about ways they can improve their conflict resolution skills. How can they teach it to their children?

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you for our time together today as we talked about ways to solve conflicts or arguments in our lives. Please help us remember that our goal is wholeness with you and our communities and that you are with us as we gather. Help us to remember that as members of God's family, we are responsible to and for one another. In your name we pray...

Close by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly.