

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

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

Resolving conflict

BEFORE CLASS

You will need copies for each child of the "Putting it Together" and the "Conflict Resolution as Children of God" sheets, crayons or markers, scissors, easel paper or white board, and a Bible.

BEGINNING

As the children enter the room, welcome them warmly and invite them to join you in your gathering area. Play a game of Hi (an exciting or good thing that happened this week) and Low (something that bummed you out this week). (If you have time, you can also do Uh-Oh, which is something funny or silly that happened this week.)

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.



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THE STORY: MATTHEW 18:15-20

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too. Invite a child to read Matthew 18:15-20.

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

- I wonder what you remember most about the story?
- Jesus says, "If another member of the church sins against you..." What do you think that means? (If someone does something wrong against us, if someone treats us badly, etc.)
- I wonder why Jesus was teaching this to his disciples? (Anytime people are working and living together, there will be conflict because we have differing expectations and opinions. Jesus wanted them to understand how to work things out in a different way than they had been.)
- 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?

ACTIVITIES

Option 1: Conflict resolution as Children of God (There is a take home sheet for this at the end of the lesson. Please copy this and send it home with the children and parents.)

As the school year begins, this is a great lesson to help children remember how we are to treat one another not just at church, but in our everyday lives.

Talk with the children about conflict: 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.

What is the first thing that Jesus tells us we should do when we have a conflict with someone? (Take some time to let the children answer or brainstorm. You may even want to write it up on paper or a white board.)

Step One: Go directly to that person.

When Jesus told us to do this, do you think he meant that we should confront them, yelling and screaming or be mean about it? How do you think we should approach someone that we need to talk to?

- Remember the Greatest Commandment – Love the Lord your God and Love your Neighbor as yourself.
- OR The Golden Rule – treat others how you would want to be treated.

When we go to someone we feel has wronged us, it is best to do so in a RESPECTFUL way. If we come to that person truly wanting to make things right, wanting to solve the problem, rather than blaming, shaming or attacking them, our words will go a lot farther.

Be RESPONSIBLE for your own feelings when talking to that person. Talk about how you felt, using “I” language like, “When this happened, I felt...” rather than things that can be seen as an attack such as, “You broke my bike on purpose. You are so mean.”

Talk it out with that person. Try to find a way that the action or behavior can be avoided in the future.

So what if that person doesn’t listen to you after you approach he or she one on one. What does Jesus tell us to do next?

Step Two: Bring along another person or two.

Sometimes having another person there as a mediator or another ear can help everyone involved see something or hear something that they haven’t before. Again, the approach to take is the Golden Rule approach, treating people as you would want to be treated.

For kids, involving someone else might in fact be the right time for them to include an adult that they trust such as a teacher, parent, or family friend.

And if the person still doesn’t listen? What does Jesus tell us then? (give some time to respond)

Step Three: Bring the situation to the church (or this may mean to your school or community depending on the situation.)

This does not mean a day of humiliation or attack, but a time that maybe others can talk to the person about what has been done. It allows other voices to be heard.

Then, if that doesn't work, Jesus says to "treat them like a Gentile or a Tax Collector." What do you think that means? (give them some time to respond)

In Jesus time Gentiles and tax collectors were seen as "other" or outside the community. Do you really think this is what Jesus meant? How did Jesus treat Gentiles and Tax Collectors? As equals, constantly trying to bring them into the community.

Sometimes we have to walk away from a situation and take a breather in order to gain some perspective and give the situation time to sit. But Jesus did not say to ignore or oust the person from your community or circle of friends, did he?

Jesus is calling us to continue to try to work with the person, to bring them back into the community, back into your friendship circle. Jesus is calling us to continue to include them, even if it may not be the easy or the popular thing to do. This does not mean that we have to let the person walk on us or treat us badly. This does mean that when that person is ready to come into the community (just as some of the Gentiles and Tax Collectors wanted to know more about Jesus) we are to welcome them.

Step Four: Continue to communicate with the person and when they are ready to come into the community, welcome them.

Finally, Jesus reminds us, that when two or three are gathered in his name, he is with us. What does that mean for our friendships, for the times when we are struggling with others, times when we need some help?

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.
 - OR 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 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.

Option 2: Putting it Together Activity: (See below for the activity)

As one way to help us remember these things we are going to create a puzzle for us to take home. This helps us remember that when all the pieces are in place, we are a whole community, working together just as Jesus said, "...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." When we are working together, Jesus is there among us.

GETTING CLOSURE

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...

CLOSING PRAYER

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly.



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Conflict Resolution as Children of God

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- 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.

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Putting it Together

1. Copy the puzzle on cardstock or heavy paper. If you don't have heavy paper, you can copy it on regular paper and back it with construction paper. (It needs to be heavy so that when they cut it apart, it will maintain its shape better.)
2. Give the children this puzzle and let them decorate it.
3. When they are done, have them cut it out, following the lines and then practice putting it back together.

Note: If you are doing this with young children, you may want to have the puzzle pieces pre-cut or be ready to help them cut them when the time comes.

