

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger 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

Conflict resolution

BEFORE CLASS

You will need Copies of the "Putting it Together" Sheet, crayons or markers, scissors, large paper or white board to put kids ideas up, and 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.

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.

Jesus said to his followers, "If a friend hurts you, go and tell them and work it out between the two of you. If he or she listens, then you have made a friend. If that person won't listen, take one or two others along with you so that they can help. Try to talk to that person again. If that person still won't listen, tell the church. If he or she won't listen to the church, you will have to start again, and offer God's forgiving love.

"Take this seriously because a yes on earth is a yes in heaven; a no on earth is a no in heaven. What you say to one another lasts forever. When two or three of you are gathered together in my name, I am with you."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what you remember most about the story?
- I wonder why teaching the people how to get along was important to Jesus?
- I wonder what Jesus was trying to teach us?

ACTIVITIES

Younger Children's Activity:

Forgiveness is hard sometimes, but when we are able to forgive others, our church and our community become whole. Today Jesus taught us what to do if someone is being mean to us or to someone else, if something we care about got lost or broken because of someone else. Do you remember some of the things he said? (as the children respond, write their responses on a large sheet of paper or on a board so you can come back to it later in your discussion. You may have to prompt them a bit to get them started.)

Once the children have time to respond, follow up with them saying: Jesus first taught us to talk to the person and ask them to stop. We are to do this in a loving way.

- 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 to the other person.

If the person still doesn't listen, then go to them again and bring along another person or two. It is a good idea for you to bring a trusted adult with you. Sometimes you may need to involve the whole community to solve the problem.

Finally, if the person that is being mean to you or someone else still doesn't listen, we are to 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.

- Talk to the person
- Involve someone else, like an adult.
- Walk away and when the person is ready, welcome them back.

Putting it Together Activity: (See the final page of this lesson for the activity)

As a fun 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

As we close our time together, let us pray: 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.

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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.

