

Open the Word

Present the reading Open the Bible at Matthew 18.15-20

Jesus teaches us how to deal with someone who upsets us.

Choose from these two ways of telling the story.

Sounds/actions Whenever the phrase 'don't listen' or 'won't listen' occurs in the story, ask all the children to cover their ears and make a 'la la la la' noise. Read the story a second time and invite them to invent sounds and actions for the rest of the story. ✓

Mime Ask two children to volunteer to mime. Invite them to stand at opposite sides of the space and act as if they have fallen out. As the story is read, ask child A to approach child B on their own. When the disciples ask, 'What if they don't listen?' child A can move back to where they started. Next, choose two other children to go with child A at the appropriate point in the story towards child B and then return; then when the 'whole church' is mentioned, the whole group moves with child A towards child B on the opposite side of the room. Finish reading the story and ask everyone to stand together in the middle, shaking hands and smiling at one another.

'Imagine,' said Jesus, with his disciples gathered about him, 'that somebody in the church has done something to upset you.' The disciples had just been asking about who was the most important in the church, and Jesus had shocked them by saying it was the children. Now he was teaching them about relationships.

Jesus continued, 'Speak to the person alone and tell them what they've done wrong. If they listen, you'll have solved the problem and got a brother or sister back.'

'What if they don't listen?' the disciples asked.

'Take along one or two other people, who can hear what you say to one another,' Jesus replied. 'If the person still won't listen, then tell the whole church what has happened. If they won't even listen to the church, then that person is not like a brother or sister to you. They are like a Gentile or a tax collector, and you shouldn't treat them as family.'

Jesus told the disciples that they would be the ones making judgements in the church. 'You are in charge of deciding what is forbidden and what is allowed now. Whatever you forbid on earth, will also be forbidden in heaven. Whatever you allow on earth, will be allowed in heaven. And remember, if two of you agree when you ask for something on earth, my Father in heaven will give it to you.' Looking at the group listening to him, Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'



Glossary

Gentile the name that Jews give to non-Jews; **tax collector** tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Romans, collecting money from their own people. This meant they were seen as traitors.

Talk together

- Why do you think Jesus tells us that the whole church should be involved if two people can't sort a problem out?
- Have you ever fallen out with a friend? What did you do about it?
- What things can we do to help everyone get along with one another?

For very young children

Play and explore building community.

Play materials: toys and construction sets that link together.

Storytelling

Gather the children in a circle and ask them to copy your actions as you tell the story:

Jesus was talking to his friends.

He said, 'If anyone does anything that makes you feel sad (*make sad face*) ask them to stop. (*hold up hand*)

If they don't listen (*cup ear with hand*) then ask some other people to come and talk to them (*beckon to someone else*) and make things right again.' (*shake hands*)

Jesus said that this helps make the church work:

'If two or three people come together to share my love (*hold hands around circle*) then I will be there.' (*place candle in centre*) ✓

Play

Provide some play figures and buildings, including a toy or model church. Talk about how we can share God's love at church, and Jesus will be there, but also that we can meet in many other places and still share God's love.

Create

Invite each child to decorate a strip of paper using art materials. Then make them into a paper chain to represent those gathered in Jesus' name in your group today.

Praise

Give each child a battery-operated tealight to hold or place in front of them. Play or sing 'Be still, for the presence of the Lord' (link on [WEB](#)) and encourage the children to watch their flame. ✓

Pray

Dear God,
thank you for being with us at (*insert name of group*) today.
Please help us to share your love,
and to build up our love for each other.
Amen.

Find more prayers opposite and additional activities on the next page.

[WEB](#) *Very young children* page with more activities, prayers and songs.