

Semicontinuous
Exod. 12:1–14
Ps. 149
Complementary
Ezek. 33:7–11
Ps. 119:33–40
Rom. 13:8–14
Matt. 18:15–20

Call to Reconcile

Goal for the Session *Children will hear Jesus' call to reconciliation and demonstrate ways of reconciling.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Matthew 18:15–20

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Mitchell G. Reddish

Matthew 18:15–20 has parallels with 16:13–20. Both passages use the word “church” (*ekklēsia*)—the only two places the term appears in the Gospels—and both passages speak of binding and loosing. Even though this passage is primarily concerned with matters of church discipline, its focus is on reconciliation, not punishment. The ultimate goal is to “regain the brother” (v. 15). Familial language is used. The final saying in verse 20 is a reminder to the community that the risen Christ is present in and with the church, even when the church must deal with disciplinary issues. This reminder serves as a word of assurance and as a precaution.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Charles Hambrick-Stowe

Jesus speaks here not of honest differences of opinion but of a fellow Christian who “sins against you.” Such sin would include the offenses summarized in the Ten Commandments, but one might extrapolate it to mean any self-serving behavior that breaks the unity of fellowship in Christ. When church members injure one another, it is not merely an individual personal offense: it is a theological matter, harming the body of Christ. Each step outlined by Jesus is to be undertaken in the hope of healing and restoration. Jesus could mean this: if we in the church do not forgive and heal, who on earth is going to do it?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Jin S. Kim

The ministry of reconciliation must be at the heart of any Christian community’s mission. The church has not been given the power to “bind” and to “loose” (v. 18) because it is always right, but because its primary language is one of confession, restoration, and reconciliation when offenses and divisions occur. This requires leadership that confesses in real time before the community, seeking collective accountability and correction as it returns the favor to the church body. There will be conflict, but it is precisely through conflict that we model for the world how to bind and loose one another appropriately.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Dale P. Andrews

Care and responsibility to forgive, to seek out reconciliation with the offender, are sustained in the authority given to the church. Power to bind and loose belongs not simply to the church leader or to the universal church (as demonstrated through Peter in Matt. 16:13–20), but also to the local church (18:18–20). This discipline teaches a theology of care by illumining the manner of care. The authority to interpret how to apply the rules of care, even the law, is given to the church. We seek to care for one another even when injured or offended, which requires discipline in binding and loosing ourselves to repent and to forgive, all sustained in Christ.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
Matthew 18:15–20

Focus on Your Teaching

Children this age are learning to relate to other children in a group setting. They are increasing in their ability to feel empathy. However, they will experience ruptures in relationships and need help in learning how to reconcile with others. As this new church school year begins, take time to help learners get acquainted with one another and with your learning area. This will help learners to experience your class as a place of welcome, belonging, and friendship.

Gracious God, help me prepare to begin this church school year. Give me the ability to listen carefully to what the children say and to be encouraging to those who seem hesitant to join in the activities. In Christ's name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- small table or large box
- green cloth
- battery-powered candle
- plain paper
- pencils
- crayons
- push pins or masking tape
- fine-tipped permanent marker
- Bible
- Color Pack 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- scissors
- tape

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, crayons or colored pencils
- option 2: small boxes or blocks, drinking straws, tape, puppets from Resource Sheet 1
- option 3: Color Pack 2, game markers or buttons, die

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, make a simple welcome sign and display it with Color Pack 1. Make a sign that says “Our Class” and put it on a wall or bulletin board. Set up a worship center by covering a small table or large box with green cloth and placing a Bible open to Matthew 18 and a battery-powered candle on it. Fold sheets of plain paper in half, one per child. Cut the strip with the finger puppets from the copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Reconcile).

As the children arrive, use a fine-tipped permanent marker to write his or her first name and birth date (for example, “Carol 18”) in the month of his or her birthday on Color Pack 1. While waiting for all to arrive, ask each learner to write his or her name on a folded piece of paper and then draw a picture of his or her family (including pets) on one half and things he or she enjoys doing on the other half. Welcome each child by name as you add his or her drawing to the “Our Class” display.

Gather the children around the worship center. Light the candle, saying it is a reminder that Jesus’ love is with all of us in Sunday school. Pray aloud, inviting learners to repeat each phrase:

Dear God, / we are glad to be at church today. / Thank you for being with us. / Help us to learn new things / about you and your Son, Jesus. / Amen.

Sit with learners in a circle and invite them to recall times they told a teacher or parent about a disagreement with a brother, sister, friend, or classmate, and then were told: “Go work it out yourselves.” Follow up each story by asking: Were you able to “make up” with the other person?

Even if you know the children in your class well, an introductory activity like these pictures may help you learn new things about them. It also helps the children to learn more about each other.

The word *reconcile* will be new to most learners. Children this age enjoy learning a “big word” when it is used enough to help them understand its meaning.

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins against you, go and correct them when you are alone together. If they listen to you, then you’ve won over your brother or sister. ¹⁷ But if they still won’t pay attention, report it to the church.
—Matthew 18:15, 17, CEB

EXPLORING

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Reconcile). Invite the children to describe what they see happening in the pictures. Ask them to describe the differences between the two pictures. Wonder together about what might have happened after the first scene and before the second. Call the learners’ attention to the word *reconcile*. Ask them to use a finger to trace the letters as the group spells and pronounces the word together. Explain that reconcile means to be friends again and to live in peace. Offer a mental picture by describing reconciling as building a bridge to connect with another person after you’ve had an argument or disagreement.

Turn in your Bible to Matthew 18:15. Tell the children that this is where Jesus teaches what to do when we have a disagreement with someone—how to reconcile. When Jesus talks about this, he calls his followers brothers and sisters. Read aloud Matthew 18:15, 17 from the sidebar. Discuss:

- ✂ What is the first thing Jesus says people should do to reconcile?
- ✂ What does Jesus say to do if the first step doesn’t work?
- ✂ When might you need to tell an adult about a disagreement?

Distribute the finger puppets from Resource Sheet 1. Have the children color the puppets and cut them out. Help them tape the tabs to fit a puppet on each index finger. Have the children use their puppets to act out Jesus’ words as you read aloud verse 15. Ask:

- ✂ How can Jesus’ teaching help you to work out your disagreements?

Invite them to use their finger puppets to act out how they might do this.

Review the story by singing the following words to the tune “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” having the children sing each line after you:

Mad, mad, mad at you.
Talking we should do.
Jesus says reconcile, reconcile, reconcile.
We’ll feel better too.

Repeat the song several times until children can sing it easily.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Hidden Word Puzzle** Children will grow in understanding Jesus’ teaching as they complete the puzzle and discuss ways to reconcile. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Hidden Word Puzzle) and crayons or colored pencils. Call attention to the color key. Ask learners to color the puzzle according to the code to discover a hidden word. As they work, invite them to tell about times they have observed children getting into arguments at school. How did things work out? When they have completed their coloring, have them identify the word *reconcile*. Review the meaning of the word and

EASY
PREP

invite learners to describe how following Jesus' teaching might make a difference in what they do when they have a disagreement with someone at school.

- 2. Build a Bridge** Learners will role-play a way to reconcile, using a bridge they construct. Form pairs. Tell the pairs to construct a bridge by laying drinking straws between two small boxes or wooden blocks. (To make the bridge sturdy, they can tape the straws together.) When bridges are complete, have pairs stand one finger puppet from Resource Sheet 1 (Reconcile) at each end of the bridge. Tell them to pretend these two puppets had an argument on the playground. Have pairs plan how their puppets will reconcile and then act this out for the rest of the group. Affirm portrayals of reconciling in different ways, such as: meeting at the middle of the bridge, phoning each other, one crossing the bridge to talk to the other, saying reconciling words, hugging, shaking hands.
- 3. Reconciliation Journey** As they play a game, learners will demonstrate ways to reconcile. Place Color Pack 2 on a table or the floor. Form pairs and give each pair a game marker or button to place at the start block. Have pairs take turns rolling the die and advancing that number of squares. When a pair lands on a square with a situation written on it, read it aloud for the group. If the pair can act out a way to reconcile in that situation, it moves ahead two spaces. If the pair cannot act out a way to reconcile, it moves back one square. Play until all players reach the finish.

Try to notice which activities each child enjoys most. This observation will help in future planning. If you work with a team of teachers, invite them to do the same and then discuss your observations.

CLOSING

Summarize that Jesus teaches us how to work things out with other people, how to reconcile. It's not always easy to do this! First we need to tell the other person why what she or he is doing is not OK with us. If that doesn't work, we can get help to work it out. Sing the reconcile song from Exploring.

Explain that in the closing prayer, learners will respond "O God, help us reconcile" when you point to them. Pray aloud:

When we hurt a friend,

O God, help us reconcile.

When we are angry with a brother or sister or cousin,

O God, help us reconcile.

When we don't like someone because of what he or she did,

O God, help us reconcile.

When we are mad at our parents or teachers,

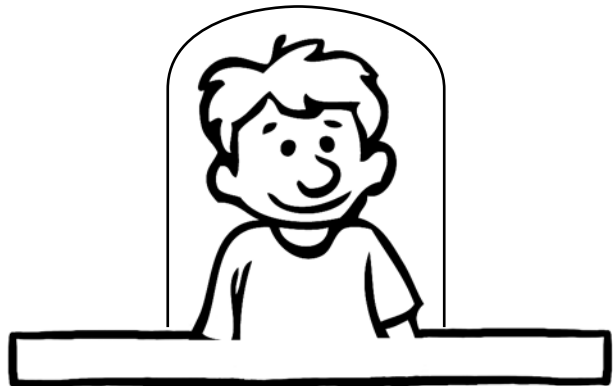
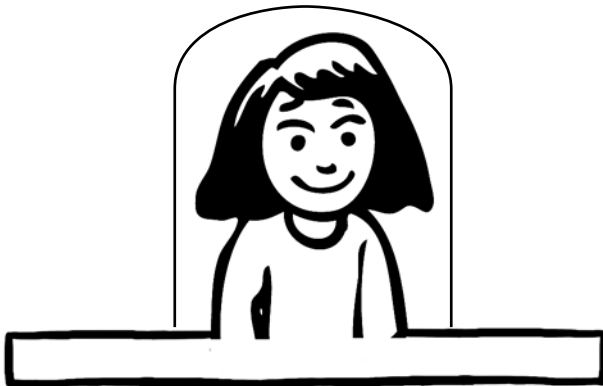
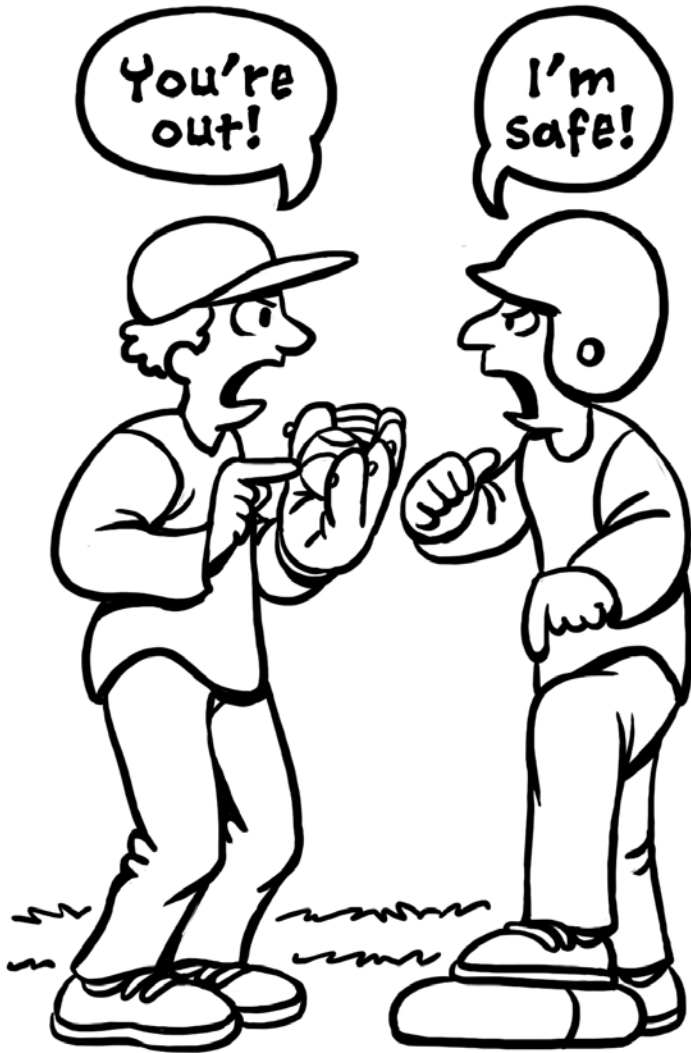
O God, help us reconcile. Amen.

Go around the circle, blessing each child: "(Name), God loves you."

September 6, 2020
Call to Reconcile

Grades (K) 1–2
Resource Sheet 1

Reconcile



Hidden Word Puzzle

Color Key:

