

GETTING ALONG TOGETHER

New Testament Lesson #255

Jesus' disciples sometimes discussed among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom. They came to Jesus to ask him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1)? Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-3).

Jesus was emphasizing to his disciples how they should demonstrate many of the characteristics of a child if they wanted to be of value to God. Everyone matters to God. It isn't about being the greatest or better than someone else. All are precious in God's eyes.

To help make this lesson more meaningful, Jesus tells a story. "What do you think?" he asks. "If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off" (Matthew 18:12-13).

Jesus compares this shepherd to God. The way the shepherd cared for this one single sheep shows how much God cares about everyone. Jesus says, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14).

Jesus follows up this story about the one sheep that wandered off with a specific example of how they were to work out problems and disagreements among themselves. If a problem arises and a person commits some sin that you become aware of, Jesus instructs them to go to that person in private and help the person see how they have done wrong. The goal is to turn the person away from whatever he or she is doing wrong. Specifically, Jesus says, "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over" (Matthew 18:15).

If the individual doesn't listen to what you might tell them, then Jesus gives them some direction as to what to do next. He says, "if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'" (Matthew 18:16). The hope is that by having a few additional witnesses, it will help compel the individual to change.

If that step does not work, then Jesus advises a final step to be taken. Jesus says, "If he refuses to listen to them (2 or 3 witnesses), tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17).

Jesus wants men and women who are follows of him to get along and work together in resolving their problems and disagreements. In particular, when there are two or more believers working together, Jesus reminds them how the Heavenly Father will work with them, and Jesus is with them. He says, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19-20).

That is an amazing promise for us to remember as we work together with other believers and follow the example of Jesus and serve God and each other in all that we do!

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Jesus brings up the point about having an attitude like a child elsewhere. It is mentioned in Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17.
- The Apostle Paul describes a similar attitude that followers of Jesus should exhibit towards others. He writes to the Philippians, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:3-8)!

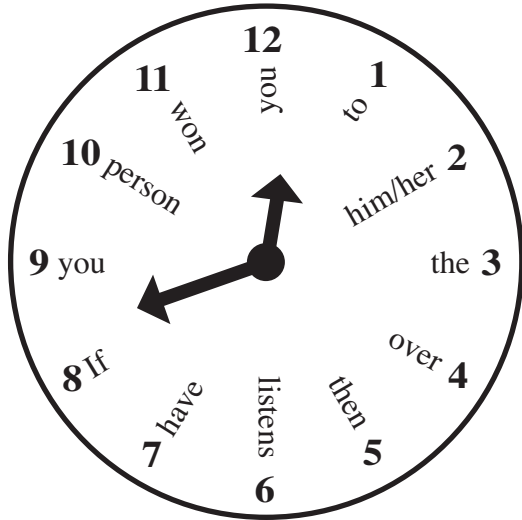
ANSWER KEY:

"If the person listens to you, then you have won him/her over."

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

God does not want to lose any of His little ones.

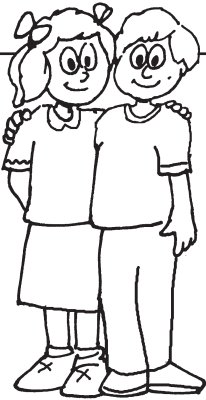
What did Jesus say? Use this clock code to fill in the blanks.



“ _____

 _____.”

Read more of what Jesus said.
 Write the word that means the opposite of the one given. Then fill in the blanks.



heavy _____
 night _____
 last _____

go _____
 always _____
 black _____

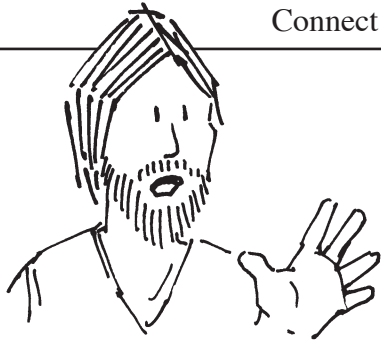
“ _____

 _____.”

Name _____

God does not want to lose any
of His little ones.

Jesus told how to correct someone who is doing wrong.
Connect the dots. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14



What should you do when you and a friend are not getting along? Match the words.

listen

talk

forgive

forgive

listen

talk

Name _____