



TEENTEXT *HIGH SCHOOL*
GO DEEP. BE REAL. LET GO.

SEPTEMBER 2017

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TeenText **MIDDLE SCHOOL** and *TeenText* **HIGH SCHOOL**
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Week of	Lectionary Selection
September 3	Exodus 3:1-15 (NRSV)
September 10	Matthew 18:15-20 (NRSV)
September 17	Matthew 18:21-35 (NRSV)
September 24	Matthew 20:1-16 (NRSV)



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Each monthly issue of *TeenText* is filled with background about the weekly scriptures, a series of provocative questions that encourage the youth to respond and share, activities centered around the text, and supplemental media which digs deeper into the story by exploring other dimensions through the use of song lyrics, poetry, visual art, and movie clips. For more information contact: info@educationalcenter.org or visit: www.educationalcenter.org



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TEENTEXT *HIGH SCHOOL*
September 10, 2017

I. SETTING THE STAGE:

Bible

Paper, pens, pencils, and/or markers

Computer + web access (for YouTube videos, film clips, and to enlarge art/images)

II. TODAY'S TEXT: Matthew 18:15-20 (NRSV)

¹⁵“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. ¹⁶But 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. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, 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. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

III. ENTERING THE STORY:

Think about all the different groups that someone like you might be a part of. Some groups are small: like a family or a book club. Some groups are a little bigger: like an English class or a softball team. Some groups are large: like a company workforce or a church congregation.

Today's text mentions group sizes from where two or three are gathered to members in a congregation. List some of your groups that came to mind. The list might surprise you. How much of your life is spent in a variety of different groups and communities?

When people live, work, play, or pray close to one another, sometimes people get hurt. Yes, they might get physically hurt. But they might also just rub each other the wrong way. People say the wrong thing; they do the wrong thing. Stuff happens. Raw nerves. Hurt feelings. Jealousy. Selfishness. Revenge. Sometimes things occur (or don't occur) which force individuals to be cut-off from the group. Sometimes the group decides to throw-out the individual. Cut-off, thrown-out, plucked-out, led-astray, lost, and abandoned: however you say it, the result is separation.

How might the pressures and tensions that build within a group dynamic be acknowledged and resolved? How might the integrity of the group be honored and cared for? How might a group member who becomes cut-off or thrown-out be welcomed back and reconciled? Today's text provides a model, a set of instructions if you will. How good are you with instructions?

IV. EXPLORING THE STORY:

The most effective questions and activities (*ENGAGE*)—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses; ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.

GO DEEP

(What's happening in the story?)

1. Who is Jesus speaking to here? Back up and read the beginning of the chapter to give these words some context.
2. What question is Jesus responding to? Who does Jesus say the disciples have to become like? What does he say they aren't to become for the children? How might they have been guilty of doing this?
3. What specific issue is Jesus addressing? How do you think the early Christian community defined 'sin'?
4. Why do you think Jesus is addressing this? What situation do you imagine might have led to these instructions?
5. Summarize Jesus' directions to the disciples? What is the first course of action? The second? The third? How do they build on one another?
6. If the offender still doesn't listen, who does Jesus say to treat them like? What do you think this means?
7. Jesus employs the legal phrase 'bind and lose' meaning something forbidden or something allowed. Re-read these verses, with this definition in mind. What do you think Jesus means here?
8. What promise does Jesus make to the disciples? How do you think they understood these words pre-resurrection? How does this compare to how you hear them today?

BE REAL

(What connections can you make between the story and the world around you?)

1. How do Jesus' instructions compare to the way the Roman society dealt with conflict? How do they compare to the way our own society and culture do? What does Jesus ask us to do differently?
2. Jesus instructs the disciples not to immediately air their grievances to the world. Where do you see people sharing their hurts or the wrongful actions of others in unhelpful ways? What is the result of this?
3. What does conflict resolution look like in your own community of faith? Does it follow the pattern Jesus shares? How might you improve these methods?
4. What causes conflict in the Christian community at large? What do you see the church disagreeing over? How are these conflicts handled? How can they be better approached?
5. How does Jesus speak about tax collectors and Gentiles elsewhere? What does it mean that we should treat our offenders such as these?

LET GO

(Be open to discovering how this story is happening in your own life.)

1. Overall, do you think Jesus' path to resolution seems difficult? Why or why not? What part of his instructions do you find the most difficult?
2. What is your natural reaction when you are hurt by someone? Do you tell others first or speak with the offender directly? How does this compare to Jesus' instructions?
3. How would you feel if someone shared your hurtful actions with all your friends before coming to you?
4. Is this particular action/instruction (addressing the offender first and not sharing with others) impacted by the presence of social media? Why or why not? What are the dangers of sharing with others – particularly via social media?
5. Are these instructions just for practice in Christian community? Are they instructions for Christians in all of the communities we are a part of? Why or why not?
6. Jesus promises to be wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Where are the communities where you gather with other believers? How have you experienced this promise in your own life?

V. EXPLORING FURTHER:

A note about links: when TeenText goes to press all links are live and in working order. Links sometimes move or are renamed. If a link does not work for you try entering the search terms in Google.

ENGAGE—How might you implement these methods for resolving conflict in your own life? Consider the communities you are a part of and what it would look like in each of these. Have students create a chart, on one side listing the communities they are a part of (family, sports teams, friends, church, etc.). On the other side, list what these three steps would look like in each of these communities.

Compare your charts with others.

How difficult or easy does this seem when you look at it practically?

Below is a video about resolving conflict produced by a company that does business coaching and training. Watch the video and answer the following questions: How does the video describe people's reactions to conflict? Which do you identify with as your own reaction? How does it define conflict?

How does this compare to what Jesus is addressing in 'sin'? Do you find these instructions helpful? Why or why not?

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY5TWVz5ZDU>

The clip below, from the popular 90's movie *Mean Girls*, (LANGUAGE WARNING) a group of high school girls gather information about their classmates and share it with the whole school. Watch the clip and answer the following: How do they share the information with a large group of people? Is it shared anonymously? Is the gossip based on reality? Do people believe it, regardless? What is the result of this action?

Would it be easy to spread this kind of information (or misinformation) today?

How do Jesus' instructions speak to this kind of behavior?

Watch the clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prmSYgXF3Dg>

VI. BETWEEN SUNDAYS:

The stories we learn from the Bible are not only helpful to us at church, but they also can help us live our lives each day. Consider the following question to see how this week's text might be challenging them to live differently as they go about their normal routines (school/sports/social events).

As you look around this week at the communities of which you are a part, where do you see the most conflict? Where do you see the most hurt? How can you be a leader towards resolution in these places?