



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

A Better Way

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 18

Title: A Better Way
Author: Joanne Peters
Church: Bergthal Mennonite Church,
Didsbury AB
Theme: By following Jesus' plan, we
can stay friends with people
who disagree with us.
Props: 2 puppets and a puppet
theatre or a table.
Text: Matthew 18:15–20

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Jeff was so upset.
- I wonder what would have happened if Jeff had "gotten back" at Alfred by embarrassing him in front of the whole band?
- I wonder what happened when Frederick went and talked to Alfred.
- I wonder how using Jesus' better way will help us then next time we have trouble with our friends.

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This story was written as a puppet show, but can easily be adapted to be a skit. Children love puppet shows – even those with simple "sock" puppets, animal puppets, or stuffed animals from behind a table.

Gathering Activity:

Take a few moments to welcome the children and to help them settle into a mood of holy listening. Imagining themselves onto the lap of Jesus is a good way of doing this, even if it is a puppet show. Open your Bible to Matthew and introduce the show with words such as:

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gives us a great plan for when we don't get along with each other. Jesus tells us that we should go and talk to the other person. And, if we can't work it out on our own then we should ask others to help us figure out how to be friends. Jesus knew that we would sometimes have trouble getting along with each other so he gave us a plan to follow when we do disagree. Our puppet friends, Jeff and Clarita, just had that kind of trouble. Let's see what happened:

Puppet Play:

Jeff: *Enters; obviously upset and making “huffy” angry sounds.*

Clarita: *Enters – sees Jeff and is taken aback by his obvious displeasure.*

Jeff: *Sees Clarita and goes “stomping” over to her.* I am so ticked off! Let me tell you, if I so much as see him again I’ll . . . I’ll . . . I’ll knock him right into next week!

Clarita: Whoa, cool your jets there, turbo! What’s gotten you so freaked out?

Jeff: It’s that doofus, Alfred. That guy has the intelligence of a parking meter.

Clarita: That’s a pretty harsh thing to say. I thought he was your friend.

Jeff: WAS is right. Not anymore – nuh uh, no way, no how!

Clarita: Sounds serious. Tell me what happened.

Jeff: It is serious. You know how we’re both in the Tri-County Super-Duper Whiz-Kid Showdown Marchin’ Band . . . right?

Clarita: O . . . kay?

Jeff: Well, last week we had our final rehearsal and I was rippin’ into the main part of my tuba solo. I mean I was all over that piece – chewin’ it up, tearin’ it apart and servin’ it as the main course of that musical banquet. Know what I mean?

Clarita: You mean you were doing a great job?

Jeff: Yep, I was. I finished my solo and waited for the applause . . . modestly, of course.

Clarita: Of course!

Jeff: And, instead of applause I heard Alfred’s squawky voice bellowing across the room, “Hey, Jeff, there was so much wind coming out of that tuba I thought the top of your head was going to blow right off!”

Clarita: *Giggles, tries to cover it up by coughing.*

Jeff: It’s not funny! But everyone laughed and no one remembered to clap! We always clap for each other. I felt terrible. Alfred thinks he’s so cool, just because he plays drums. Big whoopee – take a stick, hit the drum, count the beat – it rarely goes beyond four you know – how hard is that?

Clarita: You know, Jeff, maybe Alfred didn’t realize that your feelings would be hurt. You two have always been such good friends.

Jeff: But not anymore. I’m going to get him back. I’m going to tell everyone that Alfred – he picks his nose with his drumsticks! Yeah, then no one will want to sit next to him or practice with him.

Clarita: Um, I don't think that's a good way to deal with this.

Jeff: No, you're right – I'll have to think of something meaner!!! Maybe I'll put a stink bomb on the end of his drumstick and when he hits the drum, it'll smell so bad everyone will be calling him "Skunk Boy" for the rest of his life. And then I'm going to tell everyone else in the band about what a lousy friend he was.

Clarita: Is being mean the only way you can deal with this? Isn't there a better way?

Jeff: Well, he hurt my feelings! What do you think I should do?

Clarita: Tell him he hurt your feelings. Maybe he doesn't know he hurt you. Then, the two of you could figure out a way to deal with this and still be friends.

Jeff: I don't know – do you really think it's worth a try?

Clarita: I think it's always worth a try. It sure sounds a lot better than rigging up a stink bomb and embarrassing him in front of everyone on purpose. Friends are worth the effort.

Jeff: But what if that doesn't work?

Clarita: Then you could ask someone else to help you work it out. Another friend or a trusted grown up might have some ideas on solving this problem.

Jeff: Maybe you're right. And maybe he didn't mean to be such a doofus. I think I'll go find him and ask him to talk about it with me.

Clarita: Uh, Jeff.

Jeff: What?

Clarita: I'd avoid using the word "doofus" too.

Jeff: Right! Gotcha! I'll go tell him how I'm feeling. *Both puppets exit.*

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for your better way of getting through problems. Thank you for friends like Clarita, who remind us of your better way. Please help us talk to people who hurt our feelings and to encourage our friends to do the same thing. Amen.