



Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

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An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting about when is it OK to break the rules?

Make sure you have a little time of worship for yourself and other volunteers before the session – even a couple of minutes are good.

The outline is based on a 45 minutes children's meeting.

Materials: Card, string, coloured pens and pencils, black felt pens.

Gather: Welcome each child into the circle, and ask them, and any adult, to say their names if there are people in the group who do not know each other. Ask each of them to say something about their week, mentioning a special occasion.

When they are settled help them to gather within the context of worship, using a simple meditation activity such as listening to a short phrase or sentence, lighting a candle or visualising a drop of water falling into a still pool. Take as long as possible over this exercise rather than rush through it to get to the topic.

5 minutes

Engage:

Spend some time talking about rules – the things that say what it is not alright, safe or allowed to do. If possible have pictures to show that illustrate children playing games together, being naughty, sitting on the naughty chair, doing something dangerous in the street etc – see *Additional Resource 73.A* from Issue 73 of the children's work edition of *Journeys in the Spirit*. This part of the session should be fun for the children, as they are talking from their own experience and should have a lot of ideas to share. Questions you might ask include:

- What rules do you have at home? Are there different rules for younger or older sisters, brothers and adults? What happens if someone breaks a rule?
- Are there rules about walking, using public transport or driving to school? Why are these important?
- What school rules can you mention? Do all schools have the same rules?
- What would happen if there were no rules in games and sports?
- What about unwritten rules? - for example - don't tell; treat a girl differently from a boy; share even when you don't want to. Do you know any others?
- Which rules are hard to keep? I wonder why? Are there any rules you would change if you could?

10 minutes

Tell this story – Jesus the rule-breaker:

There are a wealth of stories in the Bible depicting Jesus as a rebel and a challenger of authority, particularly in Mark's Gospel. *Mark 3 1-6* tells the story of Jesus, the man with the damaged arm and people called Pharisees - they were a group whose job was to make sure the rules in the Old Testament of the Bible were kept.

Jesus went into a synagogue where he saw a man. Something had damaged his hand. The Pharisees wanted a reason to say that Jesus was not obeying the law. So they watched him to see

if he would cure on God's rest day. Jesus said to the man with the bad hand, 'Come here.' And Jesus asked the Pharisees, 'Does the law allow us to do good things on God's rest day or to do bad things? Does it allow us to save life or to kill?' But they would not answer. Jesus looked round at them in anger. He was very upset because their hearts were so hard. He said to the man, 'Reach out your hand.' So the man reached out his hand, and it became well again. It was quite as good as his other hand. The Pharisees went out and they immediately talked with people who worked for the King, Herod. They tried to decide how to stop or get rid of Jesus.

There are two rules in the Old Testament about working on the Sabbath, the rest day for the Jews. One says: Keep the Sabbath day holy that day you should not do any work' - *Exodus 20 8 – 10*. The other says: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' - *Leviticus 18.19*. Which of these rules was more important for the Pharisees? Which was more important for Jesus? Why? **10 minutes**

Respond: Ask children to imagine that they are one of the people in the story – Jesus, the man with the paralysed hand, a Pharisee or one of the crowd. Tell children to close their eyes and now ask questions like – if you imagine you are this person what do you see....what do you hear....what do you feel? After a short while ask everybody to open their eyes and talk about what they saw, heard and felt. Work out together how they might tell this story to everybody else in meeting – this would need to be a prearranged session. Signs could be made using the resources listed above with the names and maybe pictures of different characters that children could wear. **15 minutes**

Reflect: It is very important for the children to recognise that people who break rules often have a good reason to do so. Rules are there for a purpose, so breaking them should not be a thoughtless act. Think about what can happen when you break a rule for what you believe is a very good reason. **5 minutes**