

Problems Contain Hidden Opportunities

Preparing Your Heart to Teach Session 6:

Problems are opportunities, at least that seems to be the way Jesus viewed them. Many times Jesus used the common problems his followers faced to teach them some new aspect of God's character or about wisdom in life. When the crowds were hungry in Matthew 14:16, Jesus said to his disciples, "You give them something to eat." In Mark 4:38-39 the lake was stormy the disciples woke up Jesus with a problem, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. When the disciples couldn't cast a demon out of the boy in Mark 9:28-29 they brought the problem to Jesus who used the opportunity to teach about prayer. It seems that Jesus was able to find a teaching opportunity in every problem his disciples experienced.

As you work with children do you view problems as irritations to get rid of or as opportunities for teaching? It's interesting that sometimes parents get frustrated because they feel their children aren't motivated to learn. Problems are one of the great motivators of life. If we solve a problem too quickly for a child then we sometimes lose the teaching opportunity.

Just think about your own life. What problems have you encountered, big or small, that challenged you to learn some new things? It's amazing how often it happens. Construction on the road forces you to learn a new and better route to work. Sickness gives you greater empathy for others who are ill. Conflict in a relationship forces you to talk about issues that are unpleasant.

The next time a child brings you a problem, take an extra moment and ask yourself how you might use the situation as an opportunity to teach

something about life. It's amazing how character qualities like perseverance and faith, can be taught through the every day problems of life.

What Children Learn in Session 6:

Some people view problems as intrusions into their lives and respond with anger or a bad attitude. This session will introduce problems to children as opportunities to grow, learn, and develop problem-solving skills they'll need to be successful. Instead of expecting parents and others to solve problems for them, children will learn that solving their own problems is a sign of their maturity. The Bible story of Jesus working with his disciples to feed 5,000 people illustrates the way Jesus used a problem to teach the disciples an important lesson.

A Summary of the Video Session 6:

Three more honor-based parenting skills are presented in this session. "Use sorrow instead of anger in the discipline process" reflects the way God grieves when we sin against him as mentioned in Ephesians 4:30. "Use decision-making and problem-solving to teach honor" helps parents know when to step in and how to use common everyday experiences in the teaching process. And "Envision a positive future" helps parents to focus on the positive qualities in their children so they can encourage their kids with a preview of a successful future. Jesus is used as a model of balance as he worked with his disciples. *(parent training video series is optional)*

Session 6

Read Along in the Book, "Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes... In You and Your Kids":

Pages 106-109 suggest the value of using problems to teach children honor. Instead of just solving the problem with kids, why not use the opportunity presented to teach children how we solve them.



Welcoming Activity

5-10 minutes

As children arrive, direct them to a table where they can begin decorating their sunglasses. The craft time will continue this activity later but it is a fun way to get children involved right away as they enter the room.



Together Time

15-20 minutes

Use the thoughts and ideas below along with your own thoughts and the Bible to dialogue with the children about how members of the Honor Club look for ways to solve problems and help others.

Introduction:

Have children model their glasses. If you have a Polaroid camera, you may want to take a picture of the children and allow them to watch it develop. If not, a film or digital camera will allow children to see themselves at a later time. Tell children that when we're in the Honor Club we see things differently. We look for ways to honor others.

Object Lesson:

Help children understand that there are often many sides to a situation, and that we can't



always know the whole story. Give each child a sheet of scrap paper. Have each student poke a hole in the center of the paper with a pencil. Then have the children hold their papers up and look through the holes. Ask them what they can see. Next, have them put their papers down and look in the same direction. Has the scene change? What do they see now? What is the difference between what they saw through the hole and what they see without it?

Bible Story with Application:

Read Matthew 14:13-21. Use the ideas you get from the story and the following thoughts to tell the Bible story emphasizing the way that Jesus let his disciples solve the problem themselves.

Jesus had just heard that his friend, John the Baptist, was killed. He was sad and wanted to be alone so he went out to the country where he could have some quiet time. When people heard that Jesus was alone, they came to find him so that they could be healed. Jesus took time to help them.

Do you ever feel like you just want to be alone? Where do you go for some quiet time? Let the kids share and then share yourself about a place you like to be alone.

After working with people for most of the day, it started to get dark. The disciples thought about the people getting hungry and so they came to Jesus with the problem. The disciples liked to

bring problems to Jesus. Sometimes Jesus would go ahead and solve the problem and other times he would give them ideas for solving the problem themselves. This time he just gave the problem back on them to try to solve it themselves. He said, "You give them something to eat."

Why do you think Jesus did that? Do you think Jesus could have solved this problem by himself? Then why did he tell the disciples to solve it? He knew the disciples didn't have any food. I think Jesus wanted to teach them how to solve problems for themselves. I wonder if there are some times in your family when your mom or your dad encourage you to solve your own problem. Can you think of a time that they told you to solve a problem yourself instead of solving it for you? Maybe you lost your shoes and they told you to go find them. Maybe you wanted a drink and they encouraged you to get one yourself. Maybe you wanted to buy something special and your parents made you earn the money for it. Why do moms and dads do that? Why don't they just solve the problem for you?

Sometimes the loving thing is for a parent not to solve a problem so that you can learn to solve problems for yourself. Sometimes kids can get lazy and rely too much on others to solve their problems. Jesus wanted to teach the disciples

how to solve problems for themselves and how to trust God in that process.

The disciples looked at each other and then started looking for food. Somehow they found a small boy who had a lunch of five small rolls and two fish. They brought the food to Jesus and he did a miracle. The Bible tells us that he prayed and then began breaking the bread and the fish. Then the food just kept coming and coming. Pretty soon there was enough food for all the people to have plenty and there was even some left over.

How do you think the disciples felt as they watched all of that happen? What do you think they learned that day? Sometimes we learn things by solving the problem ourselves. Our Bible verse today reminds us to be confident even when we find ourselves with tough problems.

Bible Verse:

Philippians 4:13 "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for helping us solve problems. Help us to view problems as opportunities instead of interruptions to our lives. Teach us to rely on you more. Amen.



Craft and Activity Time

15-20 minutes

Funny Glasses and Listening Ears

Supplies Needed:

- Photocopy the glasses and ears for each child
- Two rubber bands per child
- A single hole punch
- Chenille wire (pipe cleaners)

Instructions:

After decorating them with markers or crayons, have each child cut out two ears and the glasses and then punch a hole where indicated. For younger children, you will want to cut out the lens part of the eyeglasses ahead of time. Loop a rubber band through the hole in the ears and then pull the other end through the loop to attach the rubber band to the paper ears. The rubber band can then go around the child's ears. Put chenille wire through the hole in the glasses and mold it around the child's ear to hold them on like glasses.

Session 6

Discussion:

Children in the Honor Club see problems as opportunities. It's like they have special glasses and special ears to listen and see things differently. We look for solutions instead of just complaining. We look to work together to solve problems because we know that *how* we solve a problem is just as important as solving it.

Talk about the Bible verse again and how Jesus can help us do more than we thought we could.

Activity

Divide children into groups of four or five. Give each child in a group a different color marker. Give each group a large piece of poster board and an assignment to draw a picture using all the colors. You may tell them what to draw, i.e. a house, or let them decide. Each child must participate in the picture though and use only his or her own color. All colors must be represented in the picture. Discuss the benefits of working together as a team to solve the problem and come up with a beautiful picture.



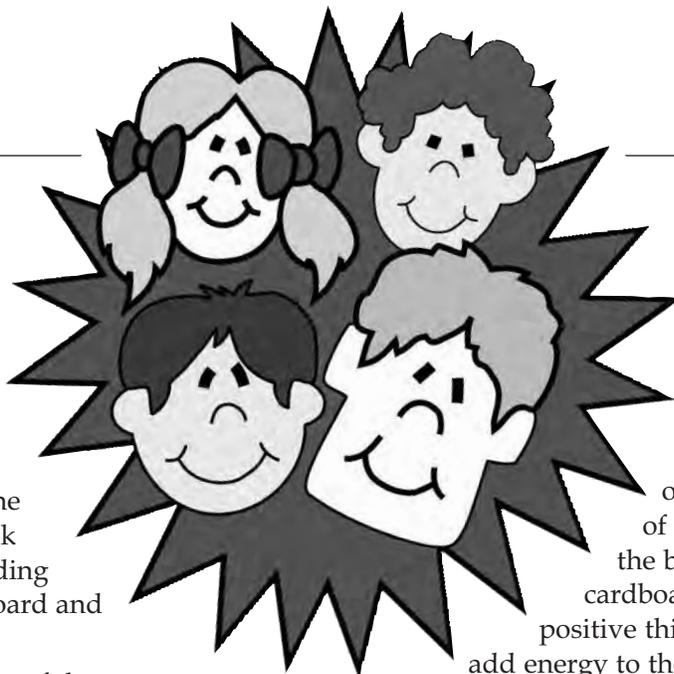
Game

15-20 minutes

Ping Pong Ball Balance Game

Have several ping pong balls and pieces of poster board available, one for each group of four children. Ask children to work together, one holding each corner or side of the poster board and do the following tasks:

- Just keep the ball in the center of the poster board.
- Lower the poster board to the ground without dropping the ball.
- Make the ball roll in a circle clockwise and then counterclockwise.



As children are doing these tasks ask them to look for ways to be encouraging as they give instructions to others, offer words of correction, or if the ball falls off the cardboard. Talk about positive things to say that add energy to the game. Also, talk about negative things people can say that focus on the problem instead of the solution. Talk about how different comments make people feel.

Snack

5-10 minutes

In keeping with the Bible story, purchase oyster crackers and little crackers shaped like fish. Of course these are different than the food that was served to the crowd, but it's a fun way to tie in the Bible story and remind children of the details.

Review and Close

5-10 minutes

Use the following case studies to help the students develop solutions for the children in the stories. Talk about solving problems and help children explore different solutions than they're used to.

- Bill lost his shoe. It wasn't under the bed with his other one. What are some ways Bill could solve this problem besides getting upset?

You might suggest that Bill look again, look other places in his room, stop and think about the last place he had his shoes, and ask Dad or Mom nicely for help.

- Sarah's friend Mindy wants to play with her and wants Sarah to exclude Kayla. Sarah would like to play with both Mindy and Kayla. How might Sarah handle this problem?

You might suggest that Sarah talk about it more with Mindy and maybe set up some time to just play with Mindy alone and other times to include Kayla. You may suggest that Sarah should take a stand for righteousness at this point and just tell Mindy that she won't exclude Kayla. How might you do this graciously?

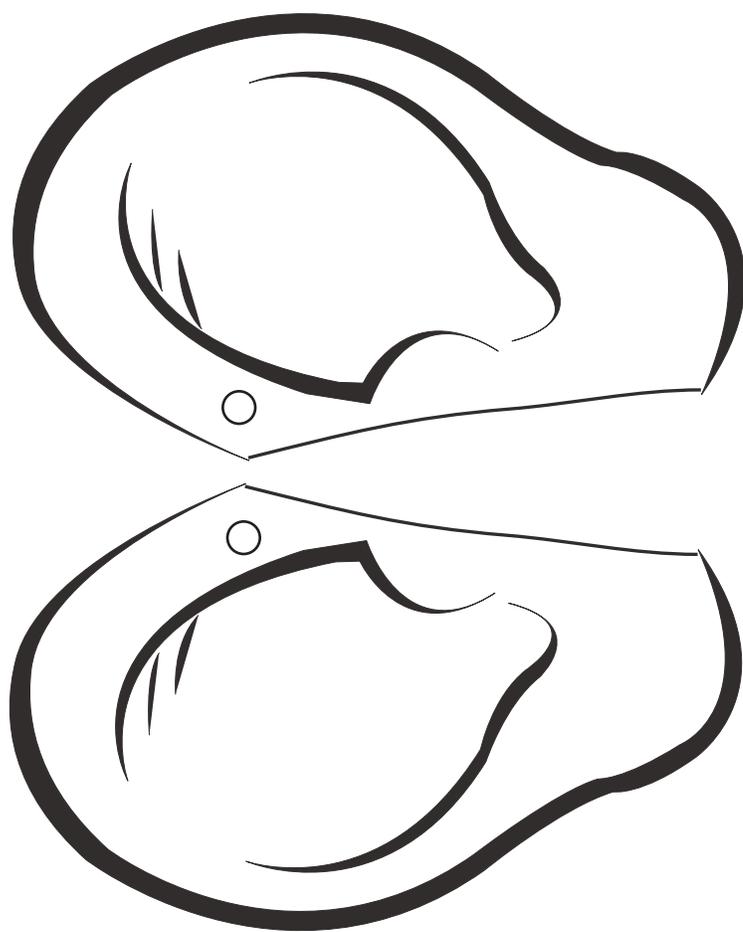
- Tom's mom said "no" when he asked her if he could go over to a friend's house and play for the afternoon. How might Tom handle this problem without becoming mean to Mom?

Handling disappointment is a challenge for every child. You might explore the idea of Tom appealing to Mom or trying to understand why Mom is saying "no." Tom should avoid whining, badgering, or complaining and may need to accept the "no" answer and say to himself, "maybe next time."

Session 6

Instructions:

Color the ears and the glasses and then cut them out carefully on the line. Punch holes in the place where indicated. Loop a rubber band through the hole in the ear and then bring that loop through the loop in the other end of the rubber band and pull tight but don't rip the paper. Put the rubber band around the ear. Use chenille wire to create ear pieces for the glasses and run them through the holes where indicated.



Look for Solutions Not Problems