



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Matthew 18:15-20

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Loving God,

thank you for always being there to love and forgive us.

Help us to become all that you have created us to be.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

### Opening Life Reflection

The theme for today is conversion. To begin, invite the young people to reflect on one thing that they would like to change about themselves. Provide a small prayer box (a shoebox works well), small pieces of paper, and pencils. Invite the youngsters to think of one change that could help them grow and have them jot it down on a sheet of paper. Explain that they do not need to share what they have written with anyone. Explain that we can put ourselves into God's hands and ask God to make us new. Then invite each person to come forward and place their paper in the prayer box. Discuss:

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- Why is it important to change and grow?
- Who helps you to change for the better?
- How can you help others change for the better?

Allow time for discussion. God helps us to grow and change. We are on a lifelong journey of conversion as we do our best to live as followers of Jesus.

### **Listening to the Word of God**

In the Old Testament reading listen to how God wants Ezekiel to help the wicked people change.

Read Ezekiel 33:7-9.  
Allow for silence.

### **Scripture Discussion Starters**

- Why does God want the wicked people to change?
- What will happen if the wicked do not change their ways?
- Why is it important for Ezekiel to warn the people?

In the gospel today listen to how Jesus encourages his followers to help sinners change their ways.

Read Matthew 18:15-20.  
Allow for silence.

- What does Jesus tell his followers to do if a member of the church sins?
- What will happen if the sinful person listens?
- What will happen if the sinful member of the church refuses to listen?
- What does Jesus say will happen when two or three are gathered in his name?

### **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the **Catechist Background** section.

In today's first reading from the Old Testament, God gives the wicked people a chance to change their ways. God commands Ezekiel to warn the people about their sinfulness. Ezekiel is told to speak every word God gives him to the people. God tells Ezekiel that he will be



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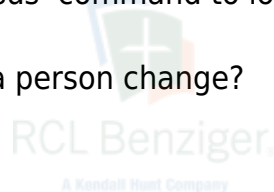
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responsible for the people's wrongdoing if he refuses to preach God's word to them. The preaching of Ezekiel will give every individual a chance to repent. God will respond favorably to those whom return to him in faithfulness.

In today's gospel we find traces of the struggles of the early Christian community to live out Jesus' command to love one another. Jesus encourages his followers to make every effort to bring the sinner back to the community. If the wrongdoer refuses to listen when they are confronted alone, other members of the church should be called upon to help. Today's passage shows that conversion of heart is always possible. People can change their ways and the Church community should help those who have gone astray. Jesus makes the point that prayer is important in such matters because a change of heart is a gift from God.

### **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- How does God respond to sinners who repent?
- Why is it difficult at times to live Jesus' command to love one another?
- How can a loving community help a person change?



[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life.**]

### **Doctrinal Discussion Starter**

#### **Conversion**

In the gospels we hear the command to "repent" right from the start of Jesus' public ministry. Although we are created to be good and to live in relationship with God, too often we turn away from God's love for us. Sometimes we make choices that do not respect others or ourselves. This was the case in Jesus' time, as well. Jesus' preaching and ministry called for a turn-around of the person, a call to let go of old ways and to embrace a new life of truth and love. We call the movement of turning our hearts back to God's love conversion.

Catholics understand that conversion is a lifelong journey of growth in relationship with God. We do not make this journey alone. All members of the Church community support and challenge one another to grow in faith. The entire body of the Church is called to conversion. The sacraments help us to live as children of God. In the sacraments God's love heals us and we become closer to God.



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We all make mistakes and take a wrong turn every now and then. As God's children, we are called back to friendship with God and God's people, the Church. Our faith tells us that God gives us the grace and the ability to begin anew.

- What is conversion?
- Who is called to conversion?
- How does the Church community help us to change and grow?

### **Sacrament Connection**

Jesus gave his church the power to forgive sins. When we sin, we have the opportunity to be reconciled with God and the Church through celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation. Reconciliation restores our relationship of love and friendship with God.

### **The Gospel in Life**

This week pray to God for the ability to change and grow.

