

Good trouble — Christian ed at home

Adapted from an article by JOELLE BRUMMIT-YALE in the Presbyterian Outlook



Scripture: John 2:13-22

Optional: YouTube videos or [March](#) graphic novels about John Lewis

Rules are important to young children. And they are especially tuned in to instances where someone has not followed the rules. Siblings tattle on one another. Over dinner, kids report about rules broken and consequences given during the school day. And few situations are worse in the life of a child than times she is reprimanded for not adhering to a rule.

For children, rules and trouble are black and white. A rule is generally considered as just and something to be obeyed for the good of the individual and the community. Trouble occurs when these idyllic rules aren't followed. Rarely does a young person think of trouble as a good thing.

So, then, how do we teach our children that rules aren't always fair? How do we explain that some exist so that all are well, while others have been put in place to hold individuals or groups of people back? When, in the words of civil rights leader John Lewis, is it better to make "good trouble" than to maintain status quo?

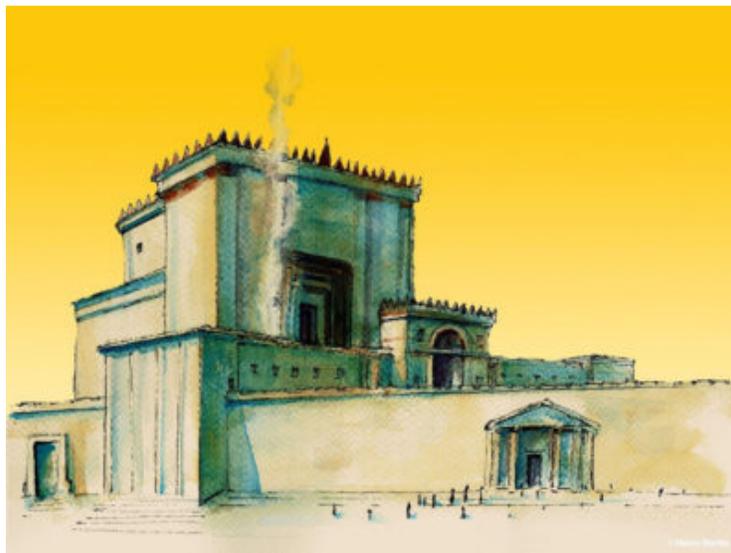
As is often the case, Jesus' ministry offers insight into this important topic. Throughout his life, Jesus raised up the poor, healed the marginalized and advocated for us to make the last first, just as he did. Sometimes, this meant

taking action and enacting the good news in a very public way. This week's lectionary Gospel reading...offers an opportunity to explore "good trouble" with your children.

Introduce

Begin the time with your children by talking about what it means to "get in trouble."

- Ask them to recount times when they were in trouble.
- Encourage them to reflect on what those experiences felt like and whether or not they should have gotten in trouble.
- Discuss why rules are important.
- Then talk about how some rules can be detrimental. Are there times when a rule could be used to hurt people or to prevent their well-being?



The temple in Jerusalem (by Henry Martin, Creative Commons)

Prepare

Prepare to read aloud John 2:13-22 to your children.

- Provide some context for the reading. Explain that a different form of money was used in the temple in Jerusalem, the place where people would go to make offerings to God.
- When people wanted to ask God for forgiveness or a blessing, they would take an animal such as a bird, sheep or cow to the temple to be sacrificed by the temple priests. They believed that God wanted them to offer an animal to God when they asked God for something.
- Outside of the temple, people who raised animals sold them to those wanting to take them inside for offerings. And those animals had to be

purchased using the local currency. Plus, a tax needed to be paid at the temple using local money.

- During important times in the church year like Passover, people would come from all around to make these offerings. Because these people lived in different communities, they used different forms of money. To purchase animals, they would need to exchange their local money into the form of money used in Jerusalem.
- The people who exchanged this money and who sold the animals were not always honest. In fact, many of them would take advantage of people from other areas coming to the temple. They knew that it was really important to the visitors to make their offerings. They knew these people would do almost anything to make sure that their requests were heard by God.
- So when they exchanged their money and sold their animals, they would often overcharge or cheat the visitors. To make matters even worse, the temple priests knew this was going on and they even encouraged it.
- Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Passover and sees this happening.

Read

Read aloud John 2:13-22.

- Ask your children to describe how Jesus reacts to the money changers and those selling animals.
- Then ask them why Jesus responded this way. Note that Jesus' ministry focused on sharing God's good news. He told and showed everyone he came in contact with that God's love is for all creation and he intentionally pointed out how important it was for all to be treated justly. Jesus wanted all to have access to God.
- The temple was a special place where people could connect to God. It was a place of goodness. It was not place where people should be mistreating or cheating one another.
- He created trouble so people would listen and understand that God cannot be bought or sold. Jesus knew that the rule that people could charge extra to exchange money or to sell animals wasn't a good rule. It hurt people and kept them from being able to come close to God in the temple. His own body would be the temple.

Wonder

Share with your children that many people throughout history have done something similar to what Jesus does in the temple square. They have caused trouble to help others understand that the way things are being done isn't right. They have created "good trouble."

- Ask your children what they think it means to cause “good trouble.”
- Share civil rights leader John Lewis’ definition: “Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and to get in good trouble, necessary trouble.” Explain that John Lewis and others saw that there were laws that prevented people of color in the United States from experiencing the same rights as white Americans had, so they caused “good trouble” to show the world that many of God’s people were being mistreated. (If your children are older, they may enjoy learning more about John Lewis. There are a number of good videos on YouTube as well as a series of graphic novels called “March.”)

Do

Discuss opportunities when your children might engage in “good trouble.” Tailor the discussion for their ages.

- Elementary children can stand up for someone who is being bullied or picked on, even though that may mean that other children may treat them differently. They can ask questions when they believe a rule or an expectation is harmful to them or to others.
- Middle and high school students may want to explore direct actions.
- You can also share times when you’ve been part of “good trouble” or brainstorm ways your family can engage in actions that give people experiencing these difficulties greater access to what they need to be well.



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