

#### 4.15 Moses and Jethro: The first two steps of Problem Solving

Topic: Peace in Community

Subtopic: Problem Solving – two steps  
3G. Integrity, Honesty and Justice.  
4C. Problem Solving

Class: Standard IV (Grade 4)

Objectives: **Knowledge:** Students will know the first two steps of the problem solving process. **Attitude:** Students will understand the value of good government.

Materials Needed:

Blackboard and Chalk  
Exercise book  
Peace Circles Chart

References: Exodus 18  
*Peace Education* Lesson 12

Memory Verse: Psalms 39:1a

#### Teacher Activities

**Introduction:** Ask questions to see what the students know about Moses.

**Bible Story:**

- Tell the story of Moses and Jethro.
- Ask questions to see if students understood the story.
- Make sure they understand that Moses was creating an early form of government.
- Discuss the importance of having honest men and women in government.

**Application:**

Introduce the first two steps of problem solving:

1. Ask, “What is the problem?”
2. Brainstorm ideas

Apply the two steps of problem solving to the story of Daudi.

Review the peace circles using the chart.

**Evaluation:** Do students understand that they should ask questions to find out what others think the problem is before trying to solve it? Do they work together to come up with creative ideas?

#### Student Activities

**Introduction:** Talk about Moses.

**Bible Story:**

- Answer questions about Moses and Jethro.
- Discuss honesty in government.
- Write the first two problem solving steps in their exercise books.

**Application:**

- Discuss Daudi’s problem and come up with several different ways to look at the problem.
- Brainstorm ideas to solve Daudi’s problem.

**Evaluation:** Can students explain and apply the first two steps of problem solving? Do students understand why we need honest people in government?

### **Extension Activities:**

*Practice problem solving with another story.* Shana, Jerida and Arah were friends. Usually the three girls walked to school together. One day Jerida and Arah left for school early so they did not stop to get Shana. Jerida was going to stop and buy some school supplies and they did not think Shana would want to go so early. Shana felt left out when they went without her. She thought Jerida was trying to take away her friend, Arah, so she told her other friends to ignore Jerida because she was being mean. Soon all the girls were fighting with each other. Some were being Jerida's friend and others were being Shana's friend.

Ask: "What is the problem?" What would Jerida say? What would Arah say? What would Shana say? What would the other friends say? What do you think the real problem is? Now Brainstorm Ideas. What could the girls do to solve this problem. *Have the children think of other problems to discuss if you have time.*

*John Woolman and Slavery.* Use the optional story at the end of the lesson.

*Retelling a story from Peace Education Lesson 12.* In this activity two students leave the room. The teacher tells a short story to the class and then chooses a volunteer from the class to tell the story to one of the students who did not hear it. Then that student tells the story to the other student. The class looks for differences in the way the story was told. This activity emphasizes the importance of good listening. If you have time, you might use this activity before introducing the story of Moses. Discuss how it is important to listen to others to see what they think the problem is.

### **Notes for Teacher**

Moses had a problem and his father-in-law, Jethro, helped him solve it. Jethro gave Moses an idea that would allow for various leaders to help Moses deal with arguments and conflicts. This was the first government of Israel. Jethro and Moses model the first two steps in problem solving. The first step is to listen to each other and learn what everyone thinks the problem is. The second step is to brainstorm ideas about how to solve the problem.

**Key Points:** We need honest men and women serving in government so their decisions will be fair. Problem solving requires listening to each other and brainstorming ideas until you find the best solution.

**Introduction:** Your students are probably familiar with the story of Moses as a baby and Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Find out what the students know about Moses by asking questions. Make sure the students understand that:

- Many years after Joseph died the Israelites were still in Egypt
- Pharaoh was making the Israelites serve him as slaves.
- God sent plagues so Pharaoh would let the people go.
- Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness

**Bible Story:** *Tell the story.* It is suggested that you pretend to be Jethro as you tell the story. You might wear a sheet, kango or blanket around you to look like clothing from Bible times and use a scarf or towel for a headress. The story is written as though Jethro is talking.

**Hello, class. My name is Jethro. You probably know my son-in-law, Moses. He married my daughter, Zipporah. When he went back to Egypt to get the Israelites, Zipporah and Moses' two sons stayed with me. Once the Israelites were gathered in the**

wilderness, I decided it was time to take Moses' wife and sons to meet him, so I traveled to where this great crowd of people was camped in the Wilderness. There were almost a million people in this group and Moses was trying to take care of all of them.

Moses and I had a great time together that first day. He told me all the miracles God had done for the people and I was so amazed. I said, "Praise the Lord, who saved you from Pharaoh and the people of Egypt! Praise the Lord who saved His people from slavery!"

I stayed that night with Moses and his family. The next morning when I woke up Moses was already gone so I left the tent and went to see what he was doing. I saw this long line of people coming to talk to Moses. He was sitting outside and the people came to ask his advice.

With one million people there were always some fights and conflicts and people were asking Moses what to do to settle these arguments. All day long I watched and the people kept coming. The sun got hot and I could tell that Moses was tired but he couldn't stop because people were still lined up to see him. Finally, when the sun set, He got up. There was still a long line of people but he told them to go to their tents and come back in the morning. He didn't have time to see them tonight.

I went to Moses and I said, "Moses, why are you doing all this alone, with people standing here from morning until night? This is not good."

Moses said, "I have to do this. The people come to me to learn God's will. When two people have a dispute, they come to me and I decide which one of them is right, and I tell them God's commands and laws but there are so many people with problems and conflicts I cannot even see them all in one day. What am I to do?"

I told Moses, "While I watched you today the Lord gave me an idea. You could appoint good men under you and put some of them over 1,000 people and some over 100 people and some over 50 people. You could teach these leaders God's law and God's ways. Then the people could go to them to judge what is right. If there was a really hard case, they could bring it to you but for other decisions, the leaders could decide and you would not have to do it all. Then you won't be so worn out and the people can get their questions settled and go home. You must choose good men who fear God, can be trusted to do what is right and cannot be bribed."

Moses liked my idea so he appointed judges under him. He taught them God's laws and God's ways so they could make good decisions. The judges settled the smaller disputes and let Moses decide the difficult cases. Once I saw this was working, I told Moses and Zipporah good-bye and I went back to my home.

I have to say good-bye to you, too, but your teacher will be back in just a minute. Slip out of the costume and come back as the teacher.

*Discuss the importance of good government. How did appointing leaders as judges help Moses? (He was not as tired and the people got help sooner.) What kind of men did Jethro say could be judges? (He said they needed to be good men who were God-fearing, could be trusted and could not be bribed.) Let's talk about why each of these characteristics is important. Why is it important that the man be God-fearing? What does that mean? (A God-fearing man is someone who believes in God and knows that one day God will judge him; therefore he would be honest and do what is right.) What did Jethro mean when he said it needed to be a "man who can be trusted?" (A man who could be trusted would do what was right even if no one was looking. He would make fair decisions. Some people do what is right when others are looking but if no one is watching them, they steal and lie and do wrong things.)*

**Why is it important that leaders not take bribes?** (People who take bribes make decisions based on money instead of based on God’s law and what is right. God is always fair and just and he does not like it when someone is unfair. Bribes cause people to be unfair.) **Do you think it is important today to have honest men and women in government? Why or why not?**

**One person cannot do everything. That is why we need community helpers. Government is part of God’s plan for taking care of communities. All churches, schools and communities have to have some kind of plan for helping people and a plan for how problems will be solved. If there is a conflict in your church or village or community, how is it settled?** (Invite students to share how problems are settled in their church, village or community. Let them share what they know about settling problems in community.)

Application: **We are going to learn five steps for problem solving. Today we will look at the first two. I want you to write them in your notebook as I write them on the board.**

1. Ask: “What is the problem?”
2. Brainstorm ideas

**When we have a problem, the first thing we need to do is decide what the problem is. We need to Ask: What is the problem?** (Point to this on the board.) **Sometimes when we ask what the problem is, we may find out that not everyone thinks the problem is the same. We need to listen to each other and hear what others have to say. Moses thought the problem was that too many people had conflicts. What did Jethro think the problem was?** (Moses needed more help.) **Did Moses listen to Jethro? (Yes.) Often other people will see the problem differently than we do and they may have a different interpretation of the problem. .**

*Read a story.* Yesterday Daudi (or David) asked his father if he could go play football with his friend. His father said, “No, because you have not been doing your chores like you should. You did not get the firewood as I told you to and you argued with your mother about going to the market (store).” Daudi’s friend is upset because Daudi can’t play football. He thinks Daudi doesn’t like him and is just making excuses for not going. He won’t talk to Daudi. Daudi is mad at everyone.

- **What is the first thing to do when there is a problem?** (Point to the words on the board and have them read it together. “Ask: What is the problem?”)
- **What does Daudi’s friend think the problem is?** (Daudi doesn’t like him and doesn’t want to play football so he lied to him.)
- **What does Daudi’s father think the problem is?** (Daudi is not being responsible.)
- **What does Daudi think is the problem?** (His father won’t let him go with his friend. His friend won’t talk to him.)
- **What do they need to do?** (Talk it over and listen to each other. Daudi needs to listen to his father and Daudi’s friend needs to listen to Daudi.)

**The second thing we need to do when there is a problem is Brainstorm Ideas.** (Point to “Brainstorm Ideas” on the board.) **Brainstorm ideas means come up with a lot of ideas. In a storm there is a lot of rain. You need to just let the ideas come like rain. Don’t try to decide right away if they are good ideas or bad ideas. Just listen to all the ideas and maybe write them down.**

**Moses couldn't think of any ideas for how to do things except the way he was doing them. Who had a good idea? (Jethro.) Often if we can't think of ideas, we need to ask someone who can help us.**

**Try to come up with several ideas so that you can choose the very best one. Let's try to come up with some ideas to help Daudi. What do you think he should do?** (Some possible answers are: He could start being more responsible and do his chores. He could talk to his friend and try to make him understand. He could ask his father if he could go another time if he did his chores for a week. Then he could tell his friend that he would go with him another day.) **If you need help coming up with ideas to solve a problem, who could you talk to?** (You could ask a parent, older brother or sister, friend, teacher, pastor.)

*Review.* **Wherever there is a group of people, there will be conflicts. We need to have ways to solve problems.** Hold up the peace circles chart and review how peace starts with God, then we learn to live in peace with our family and then with community. Honest government helps us live in peace as a community.

*Optional Story: Friends Connection - John Woolman and Slavery.* On January 1, 1863, all slaves in the United States were declared free. Before that, many people living in the southern part of the United States had slaves. In 1863 the United States was fighting a violent civil war over this issue of slavery. However, most Quakers in the United States had already freed their slaves years before the Civil War started. That is because a Quaker man named John Woolman thought that slavery was a problem.

Why do you think slavery is a problem? (Let the children list several answers.) Most people who thought slavery was a problem were concerned about the way the slaves were treated but when John Woolman asked, "What is the problem with slavery?" He had a different answer. He said that slavery hurt the slave owners. He said the problem was that the slave owners did things they knew were wrong and then their conscience was hurt and they did not feel like they could pray and stand before God. Do you remember how Adam and Eve hid from God when they had sinned? John Woolman thought the problem with slavery was that the slave owners were hurting their consciences and then they felt like hiding from God because they knew what they were doing was wrong.

John Woolman lived in the northern part of the United States but he traveled all around the southern states, visiting Quaker meetings and talking with Quaker slave owners in their homes. Woolman went to the slave owners who were Quakers and convinced many of them to set their slaves free. Finally, enough Quakers were convinced that the Yearly Meetings made rules that Quakers would not own slaves. Many of the neighboring slave owners were angry with the Quakers, but the Quaker slave owners knew John Woolman was right. Their consciences were hurt when they had slaves and they wanted to be Friends with God and do what would be pleasing to God, so they freed their slaves. The Quakers then tried to convince other slave owners to free their slaves. If they could have convinced everyone, the United States might have avoided the bloody Civil War that lasted for 4 years and finally set the slaves freed.

- When John Woolman asked, "What is the problem?" he got a different answer than most people. What did he think the problem was with slavery?
- What did John Woolman do? We need to look at problems carefully. Sometimes we can see a different way to think about the problem and that can help us solve the problem.