

Anger and Arguments



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



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Love, humility, and prayer solve all problems.

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A Soft Answer

“A soft answer turns away wrath: but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

I went to visit my dear friend one day. As I sat in the living room waiting for tea, I watched something take place which taught me a great deal. The two girls didn't know I was sitting there watching everything.

Gina and Sally were playing together. The older one, Gina, had a beautiful new doll in her arms, which she was tenderly caressing. The younger one, Sally, crept up softly behind Gina, and gave her a sharp slap on her cheek.

As I was sitting there watching, I expected Gina to slap Sally back. After all, that would be the natural thing for a child to do. But, no, Gina's face looked surprised and then filled with understanding. She rubbed her hurt cheek with one hand, while she held the doll closer with the other. Then, in a tone of gentle reproof*, she said, “Oh, Sally, I didn't think you'd do that.”

Sally looked ashamed, but made no reply. “Here Sally,” continued Gina, “sit here in sister's chair. I'll let you hold dolly a while if you'll be very careful.”

Sally's face looked red hot with anger, but instead of getting upset, she sat down with the doll on her lap, giving her sister a glance of real appreciation, mixed with shame.

As I watched, I was deeply touched by this scene. It was unusual, I thought, to see a child show such calm understanding and forgiveness after being treated so badly. I then called Gina over and questioned her. “How can you be so patient with Sally, my dear?”

“Oh,” was the laughing reply, “I guess it's because I love Sally so much. You see, Sally's a dear sister,” she said excusingly, “but she's got an awful temper, and Sally forgets herself sometimes. Mommy said if Sally should do any angry thing to me, and I should do angry things to her, we'd have a dreadful time, and I think we would. Mommy said I should learn to give a 'soft answer,' and I'm trying to do that!”

I took Gina in my arms and kissed her. “My dear,” I said, “I think you have proven that you have learned that lesson.”

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32).



- How did Gina react when Sally slapped her?
- How do you think things would have turned out if Gina had slapped Sally back?
- What do you think the younger sister learned from the way Gina treated her?
- How would you react if you were Gina?

*reproof: correction



Danger: Anger

There was a dull thud, and the Taylors' house trembled slightly. Not far away, construction workers were using dynamite* to make a tunnel through a mountain.

"I wish those men were done exploding that stuff!" exclaimed Jessica. She covered her ears with her hands. "It makes me afraid."

"It is noisy, isn't it?" agreed Dad.

"And it crumbles things apart," Jessica added. She had seen films showing how dynamite was used to break up big rocks. "It won't crumble us apart, will it, Daddy? I'm scared!" She scooted over on the sofa, close to her father.

"No, Honey," Dad assured her. "It's not going to hurt us as long as we stay away from it. You're safe here." Reassured, Jessica went out to play.

Soon she returned to the house. The door slammed behind her and her face wore a scowl as she flung herself into a chair. "I'll never speak to Rodney again," she fumed. "Never! You know what he said? He said I looked like a monkey!" Her words were followed by the boom of another explosion at the construction site.

Dad looked down. "You know, Jessica, anger is kind of like dynamite," he said quietly. Jessica looked at him, puzzled. "Yes," Dad continued, "it's very much like dynamite. It's loud, it's explosive, and it can hurt people."

Jessica thought about that. "Can it crumble us apart?"

"In a way," answered Dad. "I guess we could say that it crumbles our control. Anger is very powerful, and if we lose control, it hurts us as well as the person with whom we're angry."

"So we should stay away from it, just like we have to stay away from dynamite?" asked Jessica.

Dad nodded. "That's right. As Christians, we need to let the Lord, not anger, control our actions."

As another explosion rumbled in the distance, Jessica got up from her chair. "I don't like dynamite," she said. "I think I'll go talk with Rodney for a while."



- Does anger sometimes explode in you?
- Have you experienced any of the damage anger can do, both to you and to others?
- Next time you feel "ready to explode," say a quick prayer, asking Jesus to help you gain control over your emotions. Ask Him to control your life and actions.

***dynamite**: a powerful explosive used for blasting



Anger Doesn't Pay

When I have lost my temper
I have lost my reason too.
I'm never proud of anything
Which angrily I do.
When I have talked in anger
And my cheeks were flaming red
I have always uttered something
Which I wish I had not said.
In anger I have never
Done a kindly deed or wise,
But many things for which I felt
I should apologize.
In looking back across my life,
And all I've lost or made,
I can't recall a single time
When fury ever paid.
So I struggle to be patient,
For I've reached a wiser age;
I do not want to do a thing
Or speak a word in rage.
I have learned by sad experience
That when my temper flies,
I never do a worthy deed,
A decent deed or wise.



- Have you ever thought something was unfair when you were playing or at other times? Talk about what happened and how you reacted. Did you get upset and angry or did you just keep quiet?
- What is a good way to talk to others when you feel things are not right? Give examples.

Filling the Coal Scuttle

Father was reading the newspaper, Mother was knitting, and Tim and Tom were sitting at the table drawing and painting.

"It seems to be getting colder," said Father, looking up. "Let's put some more coal on the fire, Tim."

Tim jumped up and went over to the coal scuttle. "It's empty!" He said, turning to go back to his drawing.

"Well, we've got to have some coal," said Father, "or the fire will go out. You'd better fill it."

"It's Tom's turn to fill it," snapped Tim.

Tom looked up from his drawing. "What's that?" he asked. "My turn? Oh, no. It's Tim's turn. I'm sure it is."

"No, it isn't," said Tim. "I know it's Tom's turn to fill it. I filled it last time, and I'm not going to fill it this time."

"But we've got to have coal," said Father. "Please just get it filled."

"It's Tom's turn," said Tim with determination.

"No, it isn't," said Tom emphatically. "And anyway, I washed the dishes this evening, and he only dried them; so he ought to fill it."

"No, I should not," retorted Tim. "And if you're going to talk about dishes, I washed the lunch dishes."

"And I washed the breakfast things yesterday, so..."

"But what about the coal?" asked Father. "I'm waiting for the coal. When is it coming?"

"It's Tom's turn," stated Tim again.

"Now look here," said Father, "That's enough. Both of you go outside the door for two minutes and decide who is going to get it. But don't come back without it. Hurry up, or the fire will be out."

Scowling at each other, the two boys made for the door. As it closed, Father could hear a high-pitched conversation going on.

"It's your turn."

"It is not, I tell you. It's yours."

"Well, I'm not going to go fetch it. You should."

"No, I shouldn't. It's your job."

"It's yours."

"It isn't."

Gradually the voices grew fainter as they moved away toward the coal shed. "I wonder what is happening out there," said Father to Mother. "I suppose I shall have to go and see about it, after all."

"I wouldn't," said Mother. "Let's wait and see what they do." They did not have to wait long. Suddenly there was a loud bang on the door, and the two boys burst in with beaming faces.

"Here's the coal," said Tim.

"Well, that's fine," said Father. "You both look happy. How did you fix it up?"

"Fix what up?" asked Tim. "Oh, yes. Why, we got a great idea. Tom filled half the bucket, and I filled the other half. So here we are."

"Splendid!" said Father.

"That was a good idea," said Mother.

"I don't know why we didn't think of it before," said Tom.

"Neither do I," said Father, smiling, "But it just shows that when there's a job to be done, it is a thousand times better to work together than to waste time arguing about whose job it really is."

"It reminds me," said Mother, "of that little rhyme which says: Let's all pull together in all kinds of weather and see what we can do."

"It's always a splendid thing to pull together," said Father with a laugh, "and as for the weather, it's warming up nicely now that we've got that coal!" The two boys happily went back to their drawing and painting.



- How did Tim and Tom sort out their argument?
- Don't you think it would have been smarter to work things out nicely in the first place rather than arguing about it?
- Did arguing give them more or less time to work on their fun projects?
- What would you do if you were Tim or Tom and you were asked to do something you thought the other should do instead?
- Sometimes it helps to make a written schedule of work duties so everyone in your house knows what is expected of them. Do you think this is a good idea to do in your house with your brothers and sisters? You can ask your parents about it.



Nails in the Gatepost

When I was young, I had a fiery temper which often caused me to say or do unkind things. I can think of one time in particular:

The teacher called on Ricky to answer a problem. He got very nervous that everyone in the class was staring at him.

"Ricky, can you tell me how much is 2×5 ?"

"Uh.....uh....6?"

Everyone started laughing. Just then the school bell rang signaling that class was over and recess had begun. Everyone made a dash for the door and out to the playground.

I found Ricky sitting sadly on a bench by himself. I'm ashamed to say that I made him feel even worse. "Ricky is a dumbo, Ricky is a dumbo. Ha! Ha! You are so stupid you don't even know how much 2 times 5 is!!"

Ricky ran home crying. His mother called my parents and told them what had happened. My father sat me down to talk to me about how unloving I had been. He started to cry because I had hurt his trust in me.

"I'm sorry I let you down, Dad."

"Son, I forgive you, but there is something I want to show you. Come with me." He took me out to the yard and showed me one of the brand new wooden fence posts that he had sunk into the ground. He took out a nail and hammered it into the post.

"Every time you say something mean and unloving, I will drive one nail into this post. Today, this is the first nail. Each time you do something kind or a good deed, one nail will be taken out."

Months passed. Each time I entered our gate, I was reminded of the reasons for the ever-increasing number of nails in the post. It helped me realize that I had a problem with saying and doing unkind things, and I needed to change. I finally decided to make it a challenge to remove the nails.

At last the wished-for day arrived—only one more nail!

As my father yanked it out, I danced around proudly exclaiming, "See, Daddy, the nails are all gone."

Father gazed intently at the post as he thoughtfully replied, "Yes, Son, it's wonderful that the nails are gone—but the scars remain."



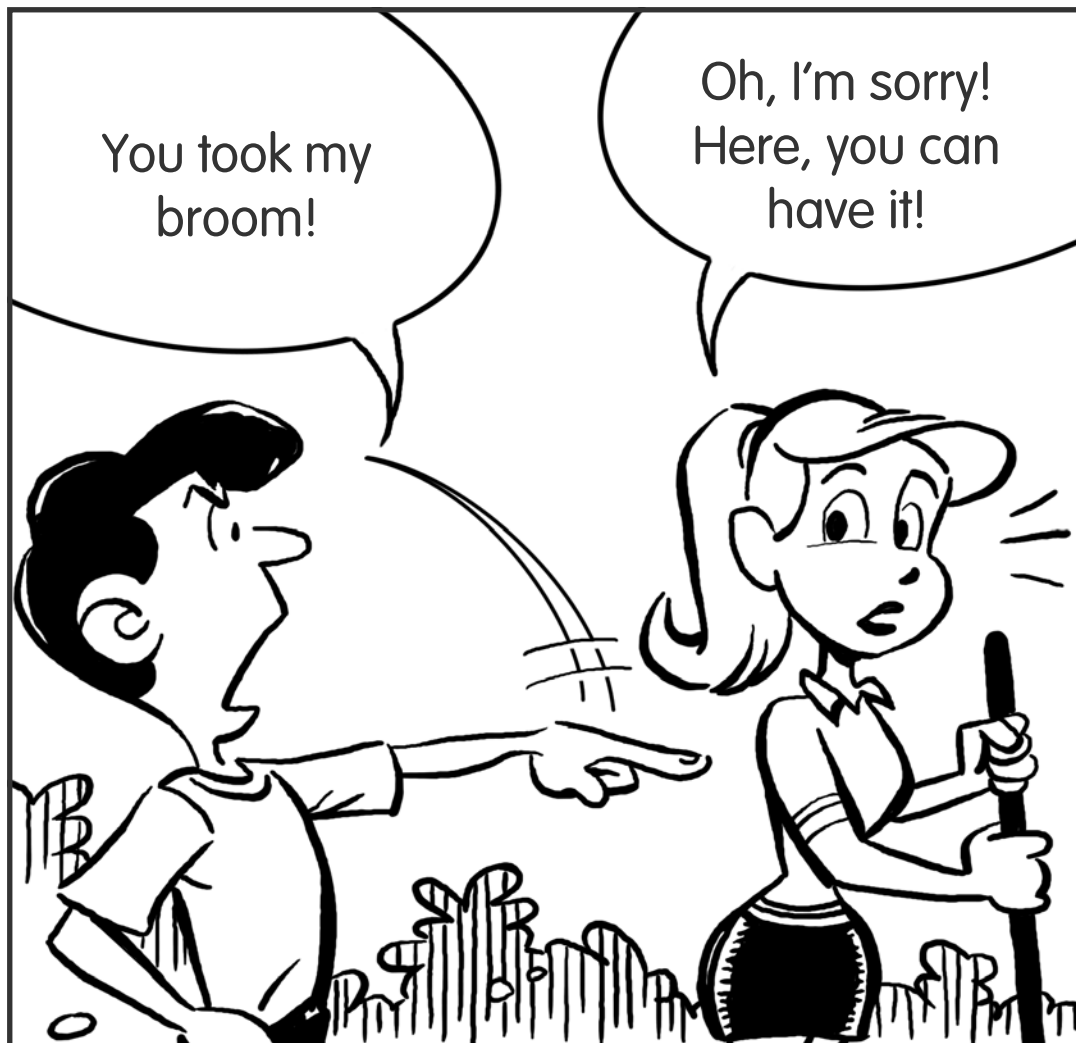
- How many nails would be in your post if you did this?
- Talk about what Father meant by the nails being gone, but the scars remaining.
- Try this: for one day keep a record on a piece of paper of your loving and unloving deeds and words. Every time you say a loving word or do a loving deed, draw a heart. Every time you do an unloving deed or say an unloving comment, cross out the heart. Look at the end of the day to see how you did.



Prayer and Praise

Dear Jesus, please help me to be slow to speak and slow to wrath. Help me to learn to control myself when I feel like getting mean and angry. I know that love is the answer to everything. Help me not to forget that. Amen.

Memory Fun



A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:1

Pencil Page

Word, Puzzle, Picture



Fill in the missing letters to the words in the sentences. Next, find and circle those same words in the puzzle. You can go horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

If th__gs aren't
_ight, we shouldn't fi_____.

Let's _alk it over in a
kinder way.

When tem_____ flare,
we get no_____.

Watch those wo_____ we say!

B	C	I	O	F	E	M
T	B	A	P	I	N	T
A	H	K	O	G	I	E
L	R	I	G	H	T	M
K	K	N	N	T	I	P
S	J	D	O	G	H	E
O	W	O	R	D	S	R
N	O	W	H	E	R	E

Finish drawing the picture



Make and Do

Let's Play Together

This is a little game to help you learn to keep your temper, even if things don't go the way you want them to or you may not win a game. Remember that you can also be a good loser and winning is not always the most important thing.

Love is the most important thing.

You will need:

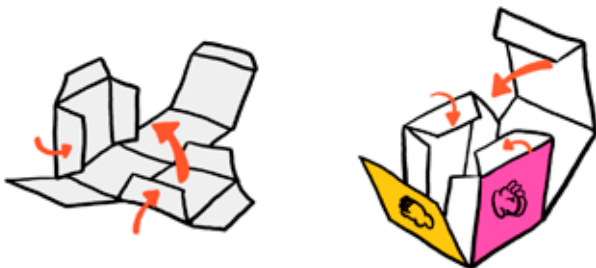
colors
scissors
glue



How to make the game:

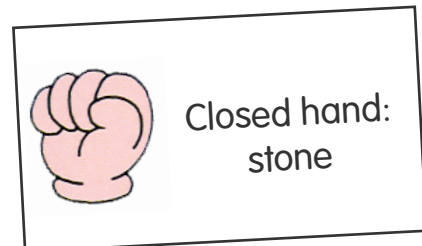
- Cut out the blocks on the next page along the heavy black lines.
- Color in your blocks, making each matching hand square of the same block the same color. Use different colors for block 1 than block 2, so you can easily tell them apart when playing the game.
- Fold all the dotted lines inward, so the pictures face outward.
- Glue the blocks together as shown below.

Now you're ready to play!



How to play the game:

- Pick a partner.
- At the count of 1,2,3, both of you throw your dice.
- See which hand pictures land face up and from the list below, see who wins!
- Continue this for as long as you wish.



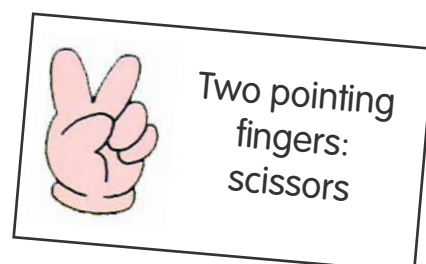
The stone wins over the scissors.

(It can break them.)



The paper wins over the stone.

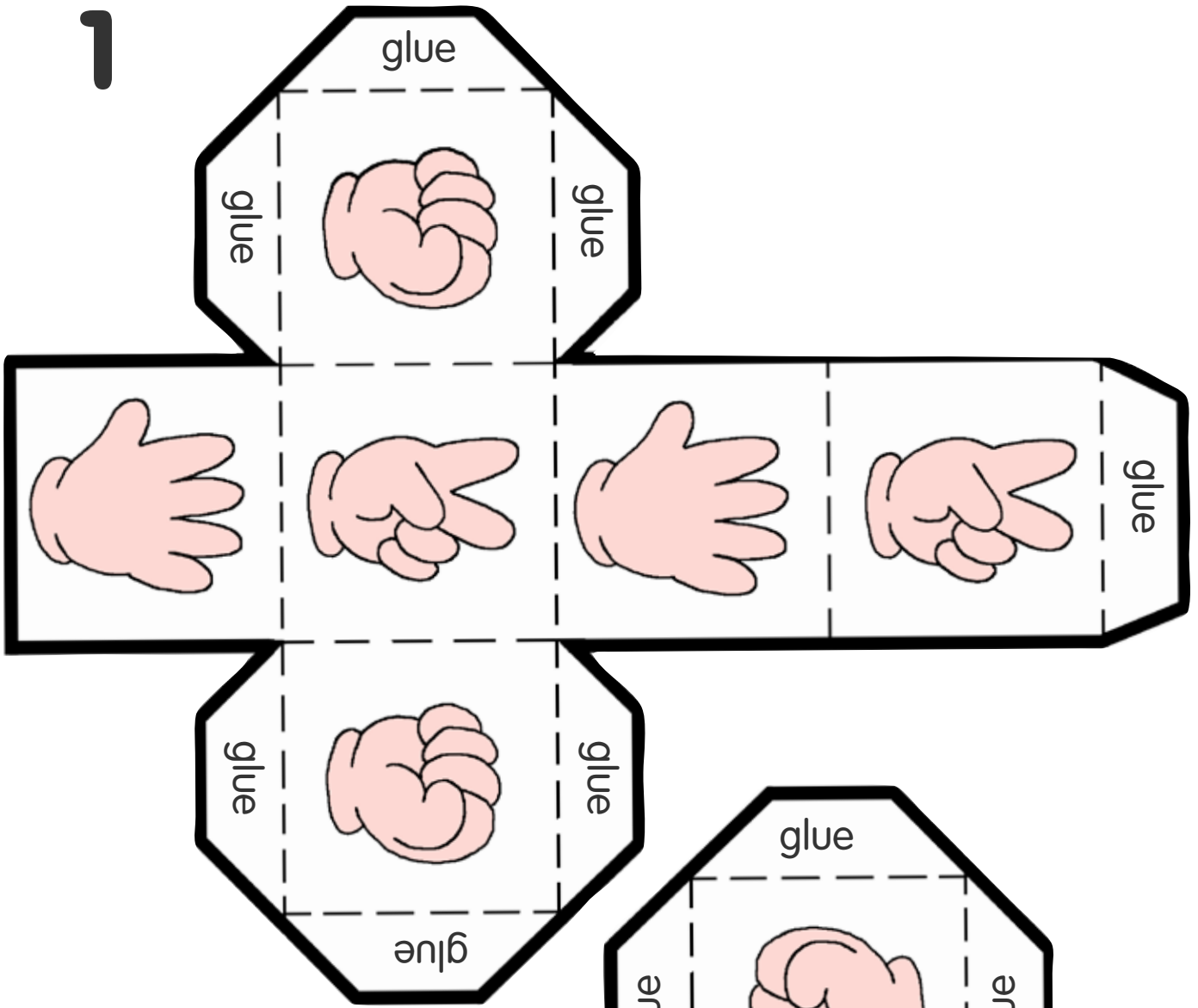
(It covers it.)



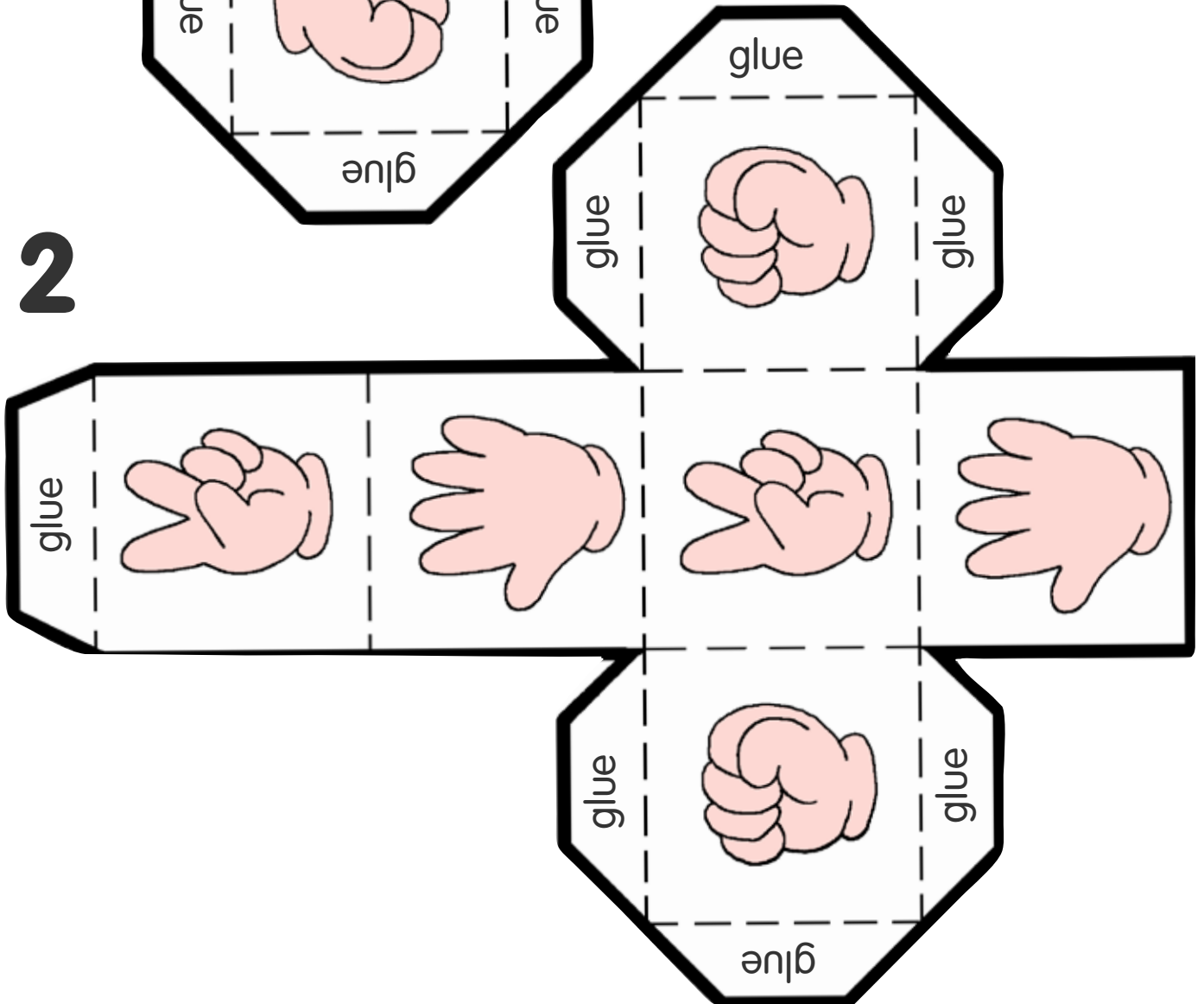
The scissors win over the paper.

(It cuts it.)

1



2



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From Jesus—with Love



Do you really enjoy your playtime? I sure did when I was a child. I used to run around with My friends and play games just like you do now.

When you're playing, does it ever happen that you feel that something isn't fair, and you get upset and angry? It makes playtime no fun when there are bad feelings or arguments. What can you do about that?

Well, the best way to win is to be kind and loving. Even if you lose the game, if you've been loving, then I will call you a winner! When you're playing tag or hide-and-seek, remember that the way I want you to play is by being nice to others and letting them have fun, too.

I like to have fun, too, and even though you can't see Me, I'm right there with you while you're playing. So think of Me playing with you, and how you would treat Me, and then treat others that way also. If you play that way, you will always be a true winner!



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