

The Friend of little children

Jesus and the children, from Matthew 18, 19, Mark 10, Luke 18

JESUS' FRIENDS WERE ARGUING. Who was the most important helper in God's kingdom? They wanted to know.

"I am!" James said.

"No, you're not!" said Peter. "I am!"

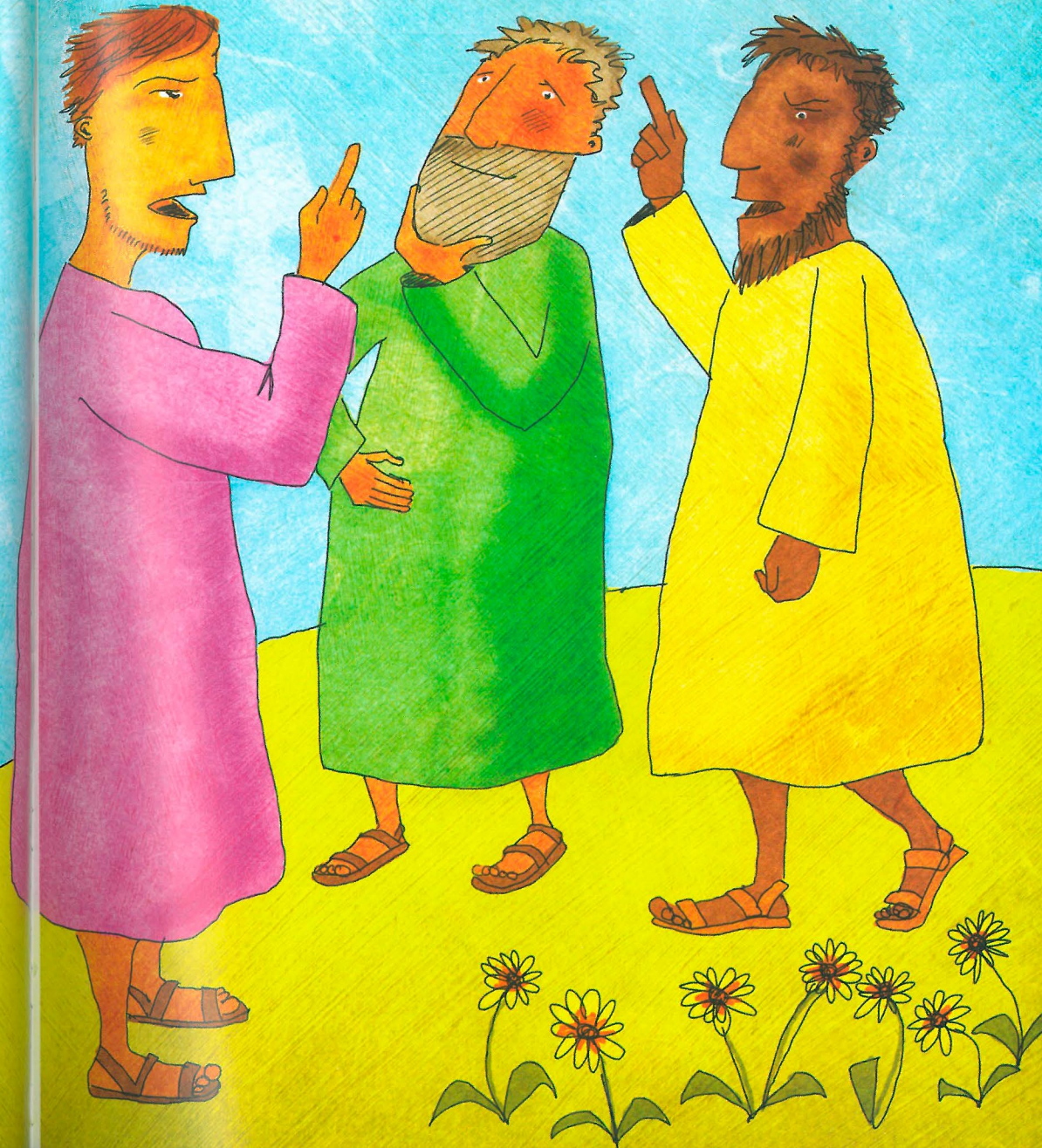
"Nonsense," Matthew said. "I'm the cleverest!"

"No, you're not!"

"Yes, I am!"

"Yes!" "No!" "Am, too!"

This silliness went on and on like that for some time. You see, Jesus' friends had started thinking they had to do something to make themselves special to Jesus — that if they were the cleverest or the nicest or something, Jesus would like them best.



But they had forgotten something. Something God had been teaching his people all through the years: that no matter how clever you are, or how good you are, or how rich you are, or how nice you are, or how important you are — none of it makes any difference. Because God's love is a gift and, as anyone will tell you, the whole thing about a gift is, it's free. All you have to do is reach out your hands and take it.

So while Jesus' friends were arguing, some people who knew all about getting gifts — in fact, you might say they were gift-experts — had come to see Jesus. Who were they? They were little children.

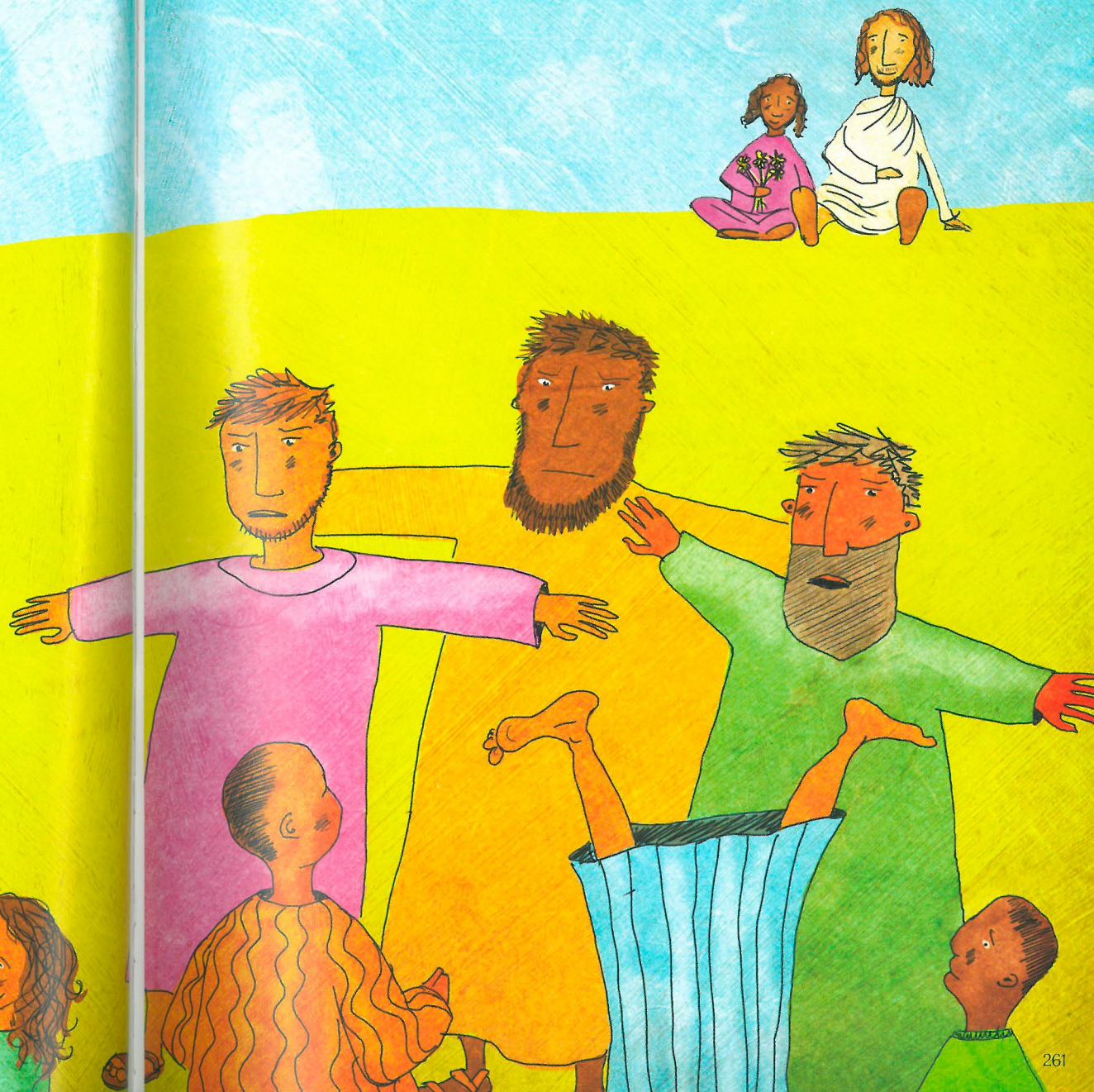


Jesus' helpers tried to send them away. "Jesus doesn't have time for you!" they said. "He's too tired."

But they were wrong. Jesus always had time for children.

"Don't ever send them away!" Jesus said. "Bring the little ones to me."

Now, if you had been there, what do you think — would you have had to line up quietly to see Jesus? Do you think Jesus would have asked you how good you'd been before he'd give you a hug? Would you have had to be on your best behavior? And get dressed up? And not speak until you're spoken to?



Or ... would you have done just what these children did — run straight up to Jesus and let him pick you up in his arms and swing you and kiss you and hug you and then sit you on his lap and listen to your stories and your chats?

You see, children loved Jesus, and they knew they didn't need to do anything special for Jesus to love them. All they needed to do was to run into his arms. And so that's just what they did.

Well, after all the laughing and games, Jesus turned to his helpers and said, "No matter how big you grow, never grow up so much that you lose your child's heart: full of trust in God. Be like these children. They are the most important in my kingdom."

