

A JOYFUL PATH

Spiritual Curriculum for Young Hearts and Minds,
Year 1 of the Inner Wisdom Series



At last, Sunday School lessons for which no apology is necessary.

— *James R. Adams, Author of “So You Think You’re Not Religious and From Literal to Literacy”*

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Example of stories used:

- 8 derived from the Bible
- 4 legends of Christian saints
- 9 adapted from folktales
- 5 biographical
- 2 original tales by Lorna Knox

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Spiritual Curriculum for Young Hearts and Minds

Using This Curriculum

A Joyful Path spiritual curriculum is intended for six- to ten-year-olds but can be adapted for children slightly older or younger.

The lessons can just be used as written, but our hope is that teachers and parents expand and adapt the ideas presented here to best serve their children, their personal goals, and their environment. Each part of the lesson outline will be reviewed and explained here in brief.

Introductory Lessons — In addition to the thirty-six full lessons, there are two lessons included that introduce the Progressive Christian view on the Jesus story and the Bible. The teacher may choose to use the two lessons at the beginning of the year or incorporate the ideas into the other lessons. These may also be appropriate to use in training new teachers.

Topic — The lesson topics are drawn from qualities that are important to develop in our own lives as well as to nurture in our children. The list is not definitive, but it includes many aspects of personal development that are vital if we want to open our hearts to a deeper relationship with spirit within ourselves and others.

The topics may be presented in any order throughout the year. However, there are two Christmas-related lessons and two Easter-related lessons you will want to use during the appropriate holiday season.

Affirmation — Affirmations are positive statements of truth that we aspire to. The repetition of affirmations can take our aspirations into our subconscious and bring about change in our thoughts and behavior.

Using affirmations with children is a fun and light-hearted way to communicate the essence of the topic being taught. Each lesson begins with the affirmation, and each story ends with the affirmation. Opening the lesson with the affirmation will help introduce the topic and bring everyone together in understanding. Closing with the affirmation helps to summarize the

experience and reinforces the idea you want the children to carry away with them. We recommend printing the illustrated affirmation page that is included with each lesson; children can share this with parents, and discussion can continue at home.

Affirmations need to be repeated multiple times to be effective. Ask the children to repeat the words after you in a strong, clear voice without shouting. Repeat at least three times in softer and softer tones until you are all speaking in a soft whisper. Repeat one more time and tell the children to stay silent but to say the words mentally, with concentration.

Be creative in the use of the affirmations, and you will find there are unlimited ways they can be used to expand and deepen the lesson activities. Here are some ideas:

- Sing to a simple melody.
- Make up a clapping rhythm.
- Create motions or a sign language way to express it.
- Say or sing as a round.
- Use different voices (like a mouse, like a giant, like a tiger, like a robot, like a bird, etc.).
- Use a beanbag and have the children stand in a line. Toss the beanbag to each child down the line and have them say one word until the affirmation is complete.
- Discuss why the illustration does or does not express the affirmation well.
- Let the children create a dance to express the words.
- Have the children illustrate the words.
- Make an affirmation banner to hang in the classroom.
- Email the affirmation to the children midweek as a reminder of the lesson.
- Create cards and have the children send them to friends or family.

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- And the end of the year, see how many affirmations the children remember.
- Make a list of the year's affirmations for a bulletin board.

Heart of the Lesson — This is a brief explanation of the topic for the teacher. It explains the main idea being communicated in the activities and story for that lesson.

Teacher Reflections — This section provides specific ways the teacher can prepare for teaching the lesson and how the topic can be used as an opportunity for personal growth and spiritual study.

Bible Verses — The New Revised Standard Version was used for all references, except those marked: “TFG” (The Five Gospels, published by Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993). Any modifications are noted in the text. Bible verses were primarily pulled from the New Testament and the words of Jesus. These can be used for teacher study as well as part of the lesson activities.

Quotes — Quotations are from a wide variety of sources and are included to expand understanding and illustrate the universal nature of the topics. These can also be used for teacher study or as part of the lesson activities.

Activities — Suggested activities are designed to get children involved and provide an experience that goes beyond passive listening. As much as possible, each lesson contains a variety of games and activities that open the heart, engage the intellect, or provide creative and physical activity.

Material lists are included, as well as tips for modifications. Tips for adding more music and nature awareness are also part of the lessons.

Stories — All lessons include a story written specifically for that lesson. These include six biographical tales, ten adaptations of multicultural folktales, ten adaptations of Bible stories, four legends of saints, and eight original stories written for this curriculum. The stories are followed by questions to help the teacher engage the children in meaningful discussion and relate what they have heard to the heart of the lesson.

Although the story is included at the end of each lesson outline, the story can be shared with the children anytime during the class. There is a suggested flow for each lesson that may put the story in the beginning, the middle, or the end, depending on the nature of the topic, the other activities, and the ideas conveyed in the individual story. However, teachers are encouraged to change the order of activities to suit their circumstances.

Notes:

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Sunday School Classroom Management Tips

Preparing to Teach

Begin preparing for the lesson early in the week. Read through the entire lesson to become familiar with the flow of activities. Allow time to gather the materials, props, and supplies you will need.

Make a personal connection with the topic. Focus on “The Heart of the Lesson” for a perspective on the topic. Do the “Teacher Reflection” (visualization, meditation, or questions) to deepen your personal experience with the topic.

Be aware of your own inner wisdom. Be open to insights and inspirations that come to you about the topic. Trust your inner guidance. You are God’s instrument serving the children in your Sunday School class.

Creating a Positive Environment

Establish positive relationships with the children. Warmly welcome children to class by greeting them at the door with a smile. Make eye contact and say their names.

Connect with children in a personal way. Find out about their interests, hobbies, achievements, and special events in their lives. Pray for them throughout the week, feeling appreciation for them as unique expressions of God.

Create a caring community. Provide opportunities for children to get to know one another by varying where they sit. Let children know that they are an important part of the class by giving them classroom responsibilities, such as passing out supplies and cleaning up the room. Do not allow any put downs or negative comments between students. Model respectful, caring words and actions.

Share your expectations for behavior. Clearly explain to children how you expect them to behave during class. Review examples of what it “looks like” and “sounds like” to follow the rules. Phrase expectations positively.

Rather than saying, “Don’t run,” say, “Walk slowly.” Instead of “Don’t interrupt,” say, “Wait to speak until the other person is finished talking.”

Explain and practice procedures and routines. Post a brief schedule so that children know “what’s next.” Establish specific procedures for common classroom activities, such as asking questions, moving around the room, and getting supplies.

Use rituals, celebrations, and ceremonies to acknowledge individuals and the whole class. Rituals may include beginning every class with a song and a prayer and ending each class by having the children complete an unfinished sentence (Today I learned ...” or “During the week, I will remember this lesson by ...”) Celebrate children’s birthdays with a class blessing or written notes of appreciation. You may also honor children’s accomplishments or milestones with special ceremonies.

Enjoy in joy! Your attitude is contagious. Having a happy, joyful attitude will make your classroom a place children want to be.

Engaging Children in the Lesson

Immediately grab children’s attention at the beginning of the lesson. Start on time, even if not everyone has arrived. Maintain a brisk flow throughout the lesson so that students don’t get restless. The best way to avoid discipline problems is to keep children interested and involved.

Use props and student volunteers. Props are an easy way to keep children’s attention and enhance the meaning of a story, Bible verse or Quote. Even simple props can be effective. For example, use one of your own coats as you tell the story of “The Coat of Many Colors.” Incorporate your children into the story whenever possible. For example, when telling “The Three Servants and the Coins,” ask three children to play the parts of the servants and hand them quarters as you tell the story. (You may want to let children know ahead of

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time that you will be calling on them and explain what you would like them to do.)

Encourage discussion and sharing among all students. Some children may like to talk all of the time, while others won't say a word. One way to involve everyone in a discussion is to have children sit in a circle and pass around an object. A child may speak only when he or she is holding the object. Always give children the "right to pass" if they don't want to talk. When applicable, use an object that relates to the story or Bible verse. For example, when discussing kindness, use a heart-shaped rock; when discussing St. Francis, pass around a bird's feather.

Vary your group size. Sometimes children will become more involved in the topic when interacting with a partner or in a small group rather than the whole class. For example, have children pair up with a partner to talk about a story's discussion questions. After a few minutes, bring the whole class back together to share their answers.

Surprise your students by occasionally doing something unexpected. Play an instrument, wear a costume, bring in an unusual object, or give each child a special note as he/she walks into the room. The possibilities are endless. Have fun delighting the children in creative ways.

Be flexible to adapt to the needs that arise. Sometimes your children may need a physical game or activity before they are ready to participate in a discussion or listen to a story. At other times, you may want to focus children's attention with a craft activity and end with a more energetic activity. Pay attention to the needs of your students, and adjust the lesson accordingly. Be aware of the time and extend or cut out activities as needed. When a special "teachable moment" happens, feel free to disregard the lesson plan.

Keeping the Lesson Flowing Smoothly

Plan ahead for transitions between activities. Children can become distracted and lose focus between activities. Consider ahead of time how you will end one activity, such as a game, and smoothly move into the next activity.

Give children time to switch gears between activities. Alert children before the transition is going to occur. You may use non-verbal signals, such as flicking the lights or playing a chime, to signal that a transition is coming.

Provide clear closure for one activity before beginning the next. Keep transition times short and grab children's attention at the beginning of new activity. Give clear directions so children know what to expect.

Encouraging Positive Behavior

Model the behavior you want to see in your children. Children learn the most from what you do rather than from what you say. If you want students to act respectfully, show respect for them.

Point out positive behaviors when they happen. Let children know that you notice them paying attention, listening during the discussion, or waiting patiently. You may acknowledge them by saying their names, whispering a comment to them, or giving them a non-verbal message through a smile, nod, or a "thumbs up" signal.

Use rewards consciously and sparingly. Rewards for positive behavior may motivate some children to behave appropriately, but they can also backfire and cause problems. Use them carefully.

Responding to Misbehavior

Notice potential problems and respond quickly to keep them from escalating. Often just standing close to the child is enough to prevent or stop misbehavior. For that reason, it's a good idea to move around the room during the lesson. Another effective non-verbal cue is making eye contact with the child. You can also use gestures, such as raising your hand when you want a student to stop a behavior.

Preserve a child's dignity. Children will often go to extreme lengths to save face. Avoid public power struggles and don't use words that would embarrass a child in front of his or her peers. Speak quietly and calmly with a child, privately if possible. If you have to intervene,

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be as unobtrusive as possible. Keep the lesson going with a minimum of disruption on your part.

Clearly communicate consequences for misbehavior. Decide on consequences before misbehaviors occur and explain them to the class. Help children understand that behavior is a choice, and that all choices have consequences. Knowing the results of their actions can be a motivator to behave appropriately.

Choose consequences that relate to the misbehavior. For example, if a child repeatedly interrupts others during discussions, withhold the privilege of sharing aloud for the rest of the discussion period.

Follow through with consequences every time. When you are firm, fair and consistent, children learn that you mean what you say. It may take only a few times of follow through to eliminate an undesirable behavior.

Involving Parents

Inform parents about the topics their children are learning. Discuss ways they could reinforce Sunday school lessons throughout the week. Make sure children take their projects home to show their parents.

Share your expectations for children's behavior with parents. Don't wait until there's a problem to talk to parents. Tell them about their child's successes regularly and often. Find out what they do at home to encourage positive behaviors. Then, if a problem arises, you can work as a team to find a solution.

Teachers Reflections / Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

Feel free to use these as discussion tools and questions for your older or more mature kids. These reflections are meant for the teacher to prepare for giving the lesson, but they may also work for some of your older kids. Use them as you feel appropriate.

Bringing Nature into the Curriculum

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”
— *Shakespeare*

It is a rare child who doesn't respond positively to being

outside and experiencing the natural world. While the activities in this curriculum series are well-thought-out and contain opportunities for children to learn about the inter-relatedness of all life, nothing is as good as a real life experience with the sun, clouds, grass and trees.

The most important goal of this kind of spiritual curriculum is not that children learn a particular dogma or story or lesson, but that they have a positive experience so that they go away with good feelings about the ideals they learn there. Giving the children positive feelings about the experience of learning outweighs the specifics of any lesson.

On a beautiful April day, perhaps you will hear the birds singing for all their worth and feel that exhilarated movement of energy in your body that says, “It's spring! Life and renewal are happening.” Stop and take a look around; is there a way you can structure today's class so that the children can have that same experience?

Fifteen minutes outside may be just the activity that will inspire the children most. Even if you have spent some time preparing a craft, if everyone's soul is craving to be outdoors, you'd be better off to meet that need if it is possible.

You can substitute a nature activity for the main activity or the story or opening the lesson. Trust yourself as the teacher. What will touch these children in this setting right now? Perhaps there is a park nearby, or your church is in a suburban location where there are shrubs, trees, a bit of grass.

Following are a few suggestions for activities you could do outside. Be sure to give children an opportunity to move and use their bodies a bit before expecting them to do a quiet, still activity. And use the guidelines on page 6 for transitions to help the children return inside.

Nature Through the Senses

Hearing — Have everyone sit down (giving each child a piece of paper to sit on might be a good idea to protect

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any dress-up clothing) and listen for a twenty or thirty seconds to the different sounds they can hear. Give those who want to share an opportunity to identify one sound they heard.

Then repeat the activity, this time for a full minute and have the children close their eyes. Tell them to count this time every different sound and see how many different sounds they recognize. Afterwards, ask if they heard anything new this time. Don't let the children become competitive shouting out how many sounds they heard; tell them it's not about how many, but how much you enjoy listening. Did they hear any animals? The wind? Insects? Did they hear more natural sounds or man-made sounds such as traffic or planes? Which sounds were the most enjoyable to hear? Ask open-ended questions to bring out discussion, not questions with right or wrong answers. It's about the exploring the experience, not being right or wrong or winning.

Touch and Smell — You can do a similar activity with touch and smell if the group is not restless or on a different day. Ask them to shut their eyes and feel the breeze on their skin. Can they feel the warmth of the sun or the cool of the shade anywhere on their bodies? Do they smell anything? The scent of a shrub or flower or traffic exhaust? Then draw their attention inside their bodies and feel their own hearts beating. Can they feel their breath in their throats or noses? Can they slow their breath down? End by asking them to smile and open their eyes and look around and see if they notice anything new they had not seen before the exercise.

Vision — Take a “nature walk.” Tell the children that their mission is to spot something special in the yards or landscaping that someone else may have not noticed yet. Have them walk slowly in a line, and challenge them to walk absolutely silently and look for instance a squirrel in a tree, a flower bud, a bird in the air, or an insect on the sidewalk. Stop and talk about any interesting discoveries.

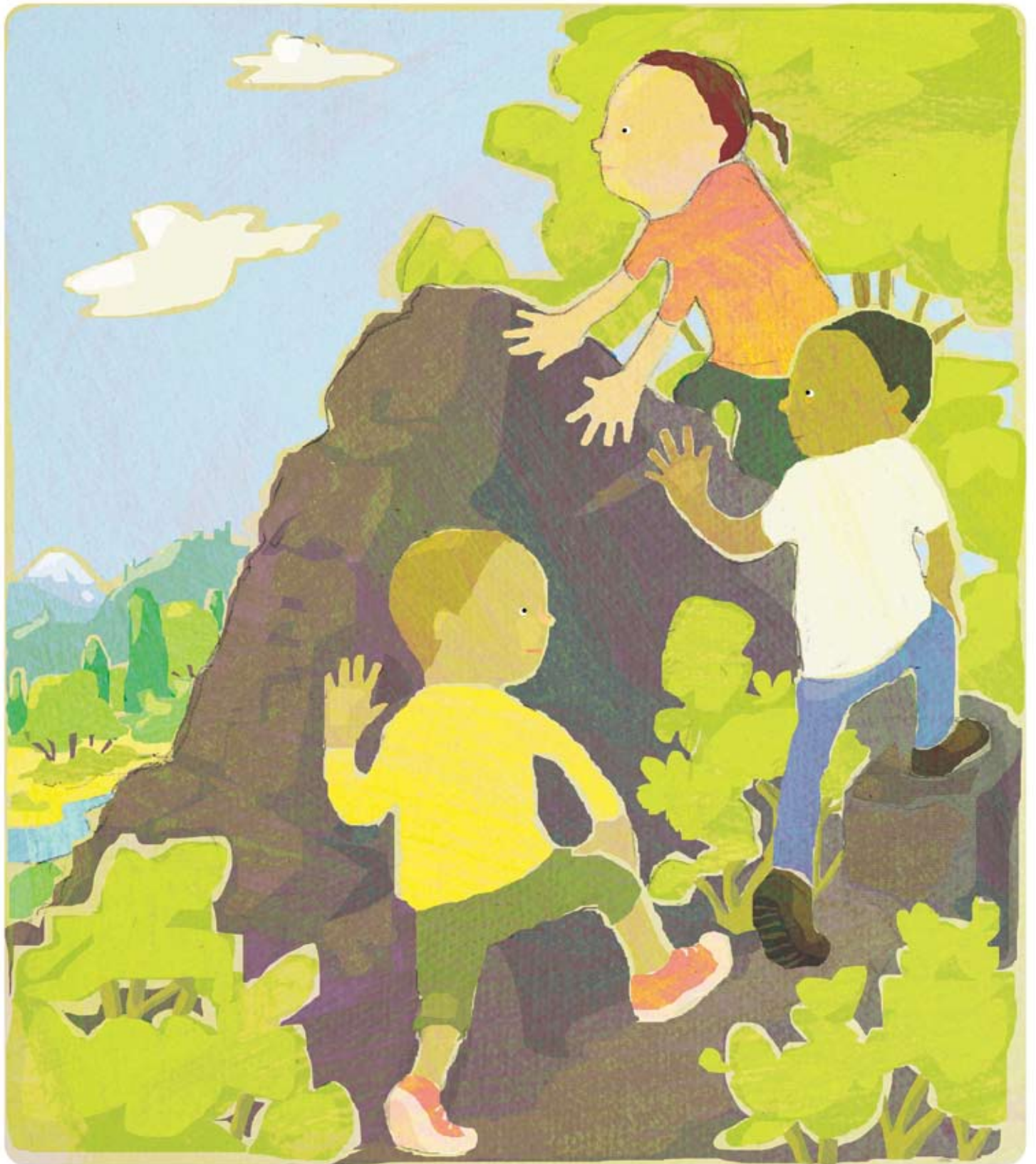
Taste — If you serve snacks, a good way to let the children enjoy it, is to go outside to have the snack.

Activity with Less Structure — You can also take a nature walk around the neighborhood and ask the children to look carefully for anything in nature that they like or enjoy. You can draw their attention to anything special you think they have not noticed because they are talking to each other, but mostly just let them enjoy being outside. When you return to the classroom you can bring more focus to the activity by having each child tell one thing in nature that they saw and are thankful for. After the first few children share, others may say they cannot think of anything else, so let them share anything at all in nature that they appreciate. You could end with a prayer thanking Mother Earth for those gifts.

If You Are In An Urban Area — Although you may not be able to take a nature walk, there is quite possibly a tree nearby that you can visit or some bit of landscaping that supports the life of at least some insects. Take the children there and speculate on what could live there and what it takes to support life.

Bring in natural objects to class as often as you can — flowers, pussy willows, herbs, pumpkins, apples, nuts and seeds. Get the children to focus on them by letting them handle them and asking questions such as: Where do you think it came from? How did it grow? (on a bush, a tree, a stalk). Is there any animal, bird or insect that might use it as food? What gave it life?

Notes:



AFFIRMATION: God is everywhere,
within me and around me.

THE NAMELESS ONE

>> Lesson 1: Who or What is God?

Affirmation: God is everywhere, within me and around me.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

When we want to become more aware of the Divine Presence; when we feel a desire to have a relationship with God or feel a longing to make a connection with a spiritual reality, where do we look? What do we look for? How do we know if we succeed? This lesson presents just a few ways to open discussion with children and help them explore both the concept of an infinite, omnipresent, impersonal God and also the concept of a deeply personal, divine presence. Neither can be completely understood by any form, expression, or outward experience.

God (Divine Presence, Nameless One, Allness, Oneness of All, Creator, One Spirit, etc.) is everywhere, infinite in expression, and accessible to all.

God is beyond all names. “I am who I am” suggests “I am beyond any name you can give me.” Christian theology has always maintained that our words and images about God are only pointers to a mystery beyond our comprehension.

Understood as metaphor, as an attempt to help us relate with a mystery beyond our understanding, the notion of God as Person can be helpful. It is in our Scriptures and in our Christian tradition.

We do a disservice to the mystery that is God, however, when we literalize this notion and create the illusion that God is an entity somewhere, such as heaven, and that some people can have exclusive access to this God. The Christian custom of addressing prayer and worship to an elsewhere-listening deity is linked to this illusion. Most Christian children learn at a very early age to think about God and to pray to God as an overseeing, heavenly person.

There is another way of thinking about God and prayer. It is the way of Jesus. Jesus spoke in Aramaic. When he taught people about the “kingdom of heaven/God,” when he told them they would “see” God, when he spoke to them about being “children of God,” when he taught them the prayer we know as “Our Father who art in heaven,” his listeners did not hear “God” as if God were a deity far removed from them. They heard Jesus speaking of “God” as “Breath,” “Oneness,” and “Unity” resonating all throughout the universe. This was in keeping with the concept of God embedded in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is also in keeping with the first thing most Christians are told about God: God is everywhere.

Jesus urged his listeners to be attentive to this presence which he named, in accord with his religious tradition, Divine Breath, the One, and Unity present in our breathing, in our words, and in our loving. He challenged them to give the best possible human expression to this presence always with them.

Our method and our goal in teaching children about God should reflect Jesus’ method and goal: constantly affirm the divine presence in everyday life and activities; challenge listeners to reflect this presence in all their words and actions.

Teacher Reflection: Activity

Notice the myriad of ways God’s presence is made apparent in your life. You may become aware of God’s presence through the kind words of a friend, the beautiful colors of a rainbow, or the gentle touch of a child. The words below, a translation of the Indian chant, “Oh, God Beautiful,” serve as a reminder of some of the many ways God’s presence is reflected in our everyday lives.

In the forest, you are green.

In the mountains, you are high.

In the river, you are restless.

>> Lesson 1: Who or What is God?

In the ocean, thou art grave.
To the serviceful, you are service.
To the lover, you are love.
To the sorrowful, you are sympathy.

Optional: Keep a small notebook with you throughout one day, taking time to jot down the way God's presence manifests itself to you, or use your journal if you have been keeping one during your teaching.

Bible Verses

Luke 17:20–21

The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is within you.

John 18:36

My kingdom is not from this world.

About the quotes: Jesus said his kingdom is not from this world — this is where some misunderstanding about another place in heaven may come from. Explain to the children that he meant his purpose was not to create a kingdom with a castle and a throne and an army like some people were expecting. His purpose was to remind us that we can experience God everywhere because spirit exists within us and is not confined to only what we can see or touch.

Matthew 5:3, 8–9

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called the children of God.

Quotes

Every creature is full of God and is a book about God.
— *Meister Eckhart*

God is a symbolic word that originated in ancient mythology.
— *Lloyd Geering*

As the primitive Christians looked into the future with faith based on their current experience, they expressed the substance of their faith in terms of the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We in turn must draw on our basic experiences of reality to express our faith for the future. Our experiences of reality are very different. Yet, strangely enough, they also lead to a trinity. The first element is this self-evolving physical universe, which as we understand it, encompasses the whole of reality. Second is the human species that has evolved out of this creative universe and thereby brought us into existence. The third "being" is that which the collective consciousness of humankind has in turn brought forth — the body of cultural knowledge without which we could not be human. These three constitute the God "in whom we live and move and have our being."

— *Lloyd Geering, from Coming Back to Earth — from Gods, to God, to Gaia*

After trying all religions, I have realized that God is the Whole and I am His part; that He is the Lord and I am his servant; again I realize, He is I; I am He ... God is not only personal and with form but He can take the form of Krishna, Christ or any other Incarnation. It is true that He manifests Himself in infinite forms to fulfill the desires of His devotees. It is also true that He is formless, Indivisible Existence-Intelligence-Bliss Absolute.
— *Sri Ramakrishna*

We may think of the Divine as a fire whose outgoing warmth pervades the universe.

— *Plotinus*

I. Opening the Lesson

Note: This lesson is very full (it's a full topic!) and could easily be spread out over two lessons.

Ask the children what they think of when they hear the word "God." Explore with them where they think God is. Be attentive to responses suggesting that God is above us, in heaven. These responses need to be addressed if we are to lead children to affirm that God is indeed everywhere.

>> Lesson 1: Who or What is God?

Where is God? Visual Activity

Materials needed: A standard page-size photo of a galaxy, such as Andromeda, a picture of a diverse group of people, standard page-size pink or red colored transparent overlay (or whatever size matches the pictures)

Show the children the picture of the galaxy. Let them look closely and comment before asking questions. Then ask the children:

- How many stars might be in this galaxy?
- How many stars might be in the Milky Way galaxy?
- How many stars can you name?
- Which star is closest to us?

Hold up the colored overlay, explaining that you want it to represent God's presence. Ask: Where will I put this on the photo? This corner? Or down here? Or up here?

Hopefully the children will say they want the overlay to be placed over the whole galaxy. Ask why — to whatever they respond.

Next, hold up the picture of the people and ask: Where should the overlay be placed on this picture? Is God with all people?

Remember to not express judgment — good or bad. Expressing even good judgment may make others feel like they don't have the right or good answer. Non-judgment answers would be something like, "You seem to have thought a lot about this." Or, "Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us," or try just repeating and affirming what they say to you. If they are having a hard time answering, you can support them by saying something like, "These are big questions, aren't they ... and you know what? No one really knows all the answers."

Create an Altar Activity

Because spirit is present everywhere, and the experience of that reality is really inside ourselves, we can worship (focus our attention with devotion) and commune with spirit anywhere. But it is also natural to desire a physical symbol of our inner experience.

Altars are a physical expression of inner devotion and can take many forms. In the classroom, an altar can be a helpful focal point for discussion, quiet meditation, and prayer. Making a space feel special or sacred can create a worshipful environment.

Tip: Today's topic particularly lends itself to creating an altar. But if you don't have time for it during this lesson, consider trying this activity another time. It could even become a regular opening ritual in your class time. If the setting you are in allows for keeping a permanent altar space, then maintaining an altar and adding and changing elements may be a fun and devotional activity for every class. If you are uncomfortable with the term "altar," you may choose a different term, such as "sacred space."

Materials needed: items you would like to use that express beauty, inspire devotion, and are spiritual reminders. If you are using a table or shelf, you may want to bring a silk or other cloth to lay down first. See below for examples of materials.

NATURE TIP: If time permits, take the children outside and have them each collect one thing that represents or reminds them of God.



Have the children help you create an altar space in the classroom. Choose a spot that is accessible and visible. Show the children the things you have brought, and ask for their help in setting them up or choosing which items to use. Explain that an altar usually consists of three things:

- 1) a sacred spot with holy energy (like a place where Jesus walked) OR the intention and desire to make it a sacred spot (using a special table, tray, scarf, or altar cloth expresses that intention)
- 2) one or more inspirational items that focus attention and express beauty of spirit (a picture of a spiritual teacher, an item from nature, a sacred symbol)
- 3) an offering that expresses the devotion of the heart (flowers, a candle, prayer beads, a beautiful stone, a leaf, a hand-written prayer or poem)

>> Lesson 1: Who or What is God?

When you have put the altar together, light a candle, say a prayer, or have a moment of silence to bless the space. If there is time, ask the children how they would create an altar if they could do it any way they wanted. Have they seen big altars in churches or small personal altars in homes?

After finishing the altar space, tell the children that you will return to it at the end of class. Ask them to treat it as a special area.

II. Building the Lesson

Animal Movement Activity

Use the movement activity to transition to the story. Ask the children: If divine presence is everywhere with all people, then aren't animals also with God? The children will probably respond with an enthusiastic "yes." Read the quote above from Meister Eckhart. Then name different animals and invite the children to move around the room like the animals you named. Suggestions for animals: a fish, a snake, a tiger, a chicken, a turtle, a bear. After several minutes of animal and enough movement to refresh everyone, ask the children to move like an elephant and gather together for the story.

Tip: Be aware of the energy of the children and avoid wild activity by choosing animals that require deliberate and slower movements.

Read the story, *The Elephant*, and use the discussion questions to relate it to the heart of the lesson. After the story and discussion, follow up with the puzzle activity.

Elephant Puzzle Activity

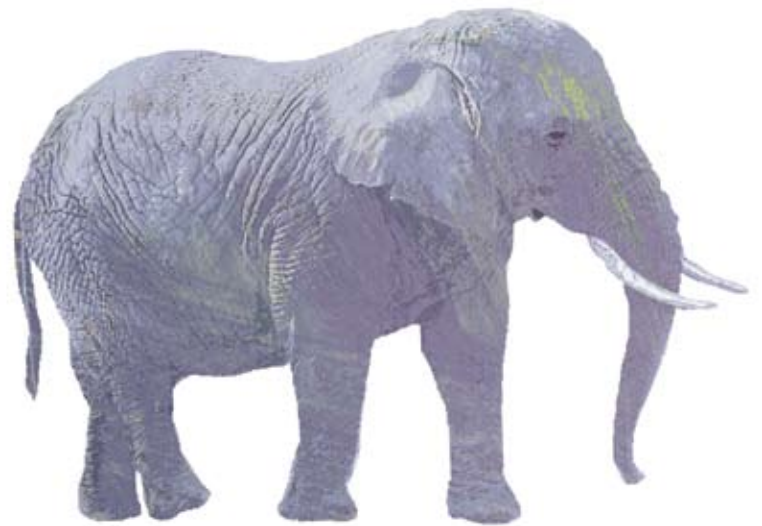
Materials needed: copy of the elephant picture for each child, cut up into puzzle pieces

Enlarge and print a copy of the elephant picture included in this lesson (or another that you have) for each child in the class. Then cut the picture into about six pieces. Using a paper cutter works well. Each puzzle piece can be unique, or they can all be cut the same way.

Keep each group of puzzle pieces together with a paper

clip, or place them in an envelope. Give every child a puzzle to put together, using tape to hold it together, or they can glue it to another sheet of paper.

Like the children in the story who experienced just part of the elephant, our experience of the God is just part of the whole picture. It is like having only part of a puzzle. We need to try to remember that the part we know is not the whole puzzle.



Tip: Cut the pictures into pieces that can be put back together fairly easily. If the activity is too challenging, the children will be frustrated and unable to appreciate the lesson.

III. Closing the Lesson

Gather within your altar area and choose any of the quotes or Bible verses from this lesson to share with the class. Encourage the students to continue thinking about where God is, what spirit is like, and how to experience and express divine presence. People explore this topic and continue to learn all their lives — it can't be answered in one conversation!

Present the thought that if we are all unique and our experience of the world is different from everyone else's, then it would make sense that our experience of the divine would also be unique. Like the elephant,

>> Lesson 1: Who or What is God?

truth exists as a reality but can be approached in many different ways. The most important thing to remember is: God is everywhere, within everyone.

Repeat the affirmation and encourage the children to remember it. Ask them to each bring in one thing next week that reminds them of God and can be added to the altar.

>> THE ELEPHANT

Adapted from an Indian folktale

Long ago, at the foot of the tall Himalayan mountains, was a small school. This school was unusual because all the students were blind. Janak was their wise and gentle teacher.

One day, Janak received a letter, which he read to the class:

Dear cousin,
I will be traveling
past your village in
a few weeks time,
and I would like to
visit your school.
Tell your students
I will be traveling
by elephant.
Your loving cousin

“What is an elephant like?” all the students asked excitedly. They had all lived their lives in the mountains and did not know about the animals of the plains.

“You will find out!” was all Janak would say.

The day Janak’s cousin arrived on his elephant, the class was too excited to study. Janak announced, “Today, the elephant will be the teacher.”

The children gathered around the elephant, and Janak led one to the long trunk and one to the bristly tail. Then he took two students to the side of the elephant, and they stretched up tall to feel the tough skin.

Janak’s cousin helped two of the blind children touch the elephant’s strong legs.

Finally, Janak lifted the smallest student on his shoulders, and the child reached out to feel the flapping ears.

All the children carefully explored their part of the elephant, exclaiming in wonder and delight. Later, they sat under a tree and talked about what they had discovered.

“Tell me what an elephant is like,”
Janak said.

“An elephant is like a big, long snake!” one student said.

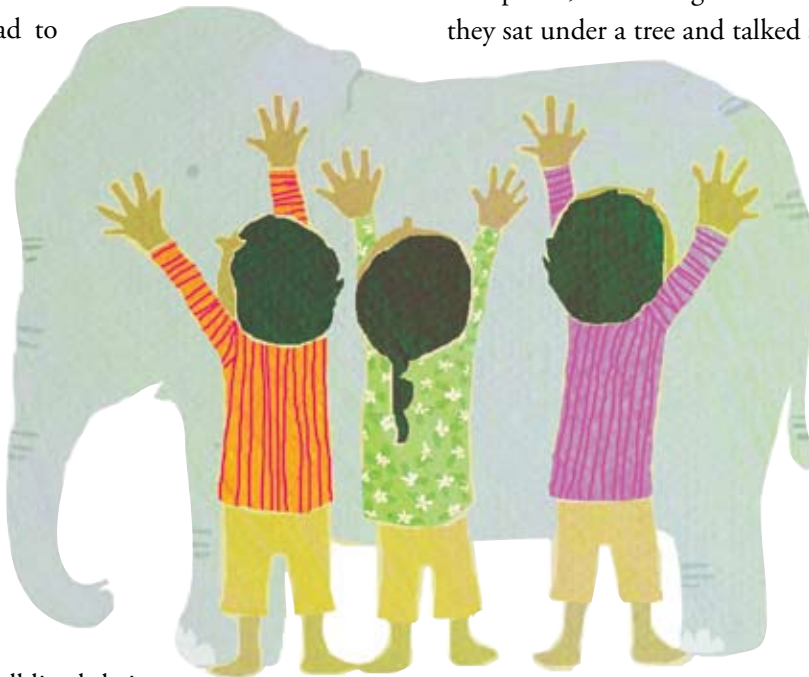
“An elephant is like a tough, bristly rope!” the first two students explained.

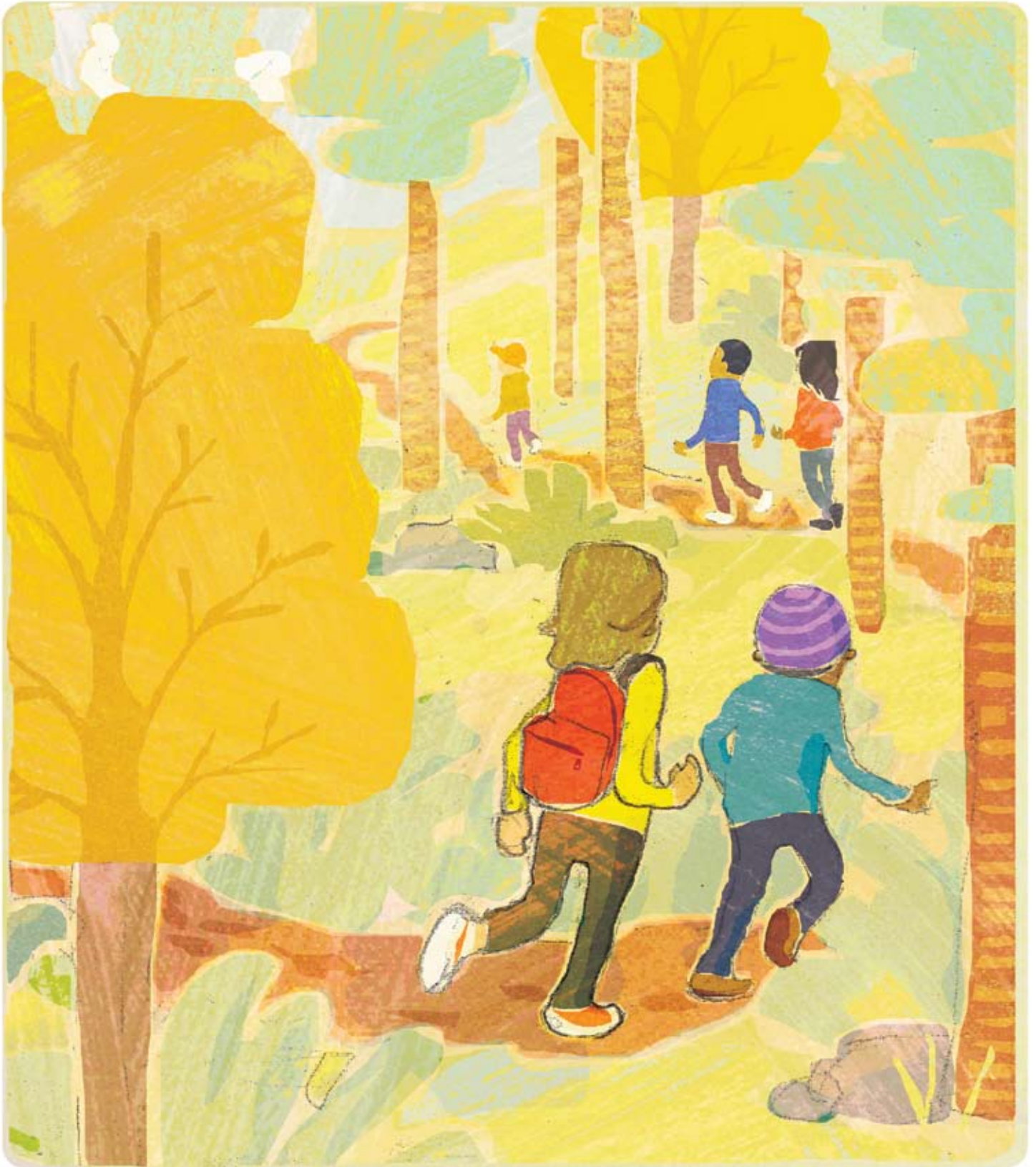
“No! An elephant is like a tall, rough wall that breathes!” called out two more.

“That’s not so! An elephant is not like any of those — it is like a strong, sturdy tree!” argued two more. “You are all wrong — an elephant is like a large, flapping fan that stirs the hot air,” the smallest student said confidently.

Janak’s cousin could not help laughing as each student loudly proclaimed that what they experienced of the elephant was right, and all the others were wrong.

Janak let them argue until the children grew tired of





AFFIRMATION: All of nature holds
the beauty and presence of Spirit.

GOD IN NATURE

>> Lesson 5: Worms, Snails and Fairies

Affirmation: All of nature holds the beauty and presence of Spirit.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

The natural world constantly offers opportunities to experience the presence of spirit in endless variation. Nature is one of the most clear and obvious manifestations of God in our universe.

The variety we see in the natural world — in the plants, animals, insects, birds, and water creatures — shows us that spirit is not limited in form or expression. The world around us continually speaks of the presence of spirit in all forms and every setting.

Children have a natural affinity and wonder for the plants, animals, birds, and insects they encounter in their environment. Building on that curiosity and interest to help them feel their connection with all of creation is a great way to awaken their wonder, awe, and reverent feelings. While it is a challenge to do that in the context of an hour or so inside a building once a week, it is worth the challenge to bring nature into the curriculum and space in which you are teaching because it is so universally appealing.

Teacher Reflection: Walking Meditation

- Go to a natural setting where you can walk freely, such as your backyard, garden, or local park.
- Walk slowly, noticing the natural beauty around you.
- Stop walking whenever you notice something that especially grabs your attention. It may be a leaf hanging at the end of a branch, a spider web glistening with dewdrops, a bee buzzing inside a flower, or the sunlight filtered through the treetops.
- While looking at the object, take three slow, deep breaths as you give it your full attention. Feel yourself

taking in the essence of the object with each breath.

- After your third breath, mentally say “thank you” and resume your walk.
- Continue walking for ten to fifteen minutes, pausing to stop, look, and breathe whenever you feel the desire to.
- When you’re finished, take a few moments to consider what caught your attention. Were you surprised by anything? Are you more aware of beauty and presence of Spirit in nature?

Note: If you’re unable to go to a park-like area, you may adapt this activity to the areas of nature you find on a city street, just like Teisha does in this lesson’s story.

Bible Verses

Psalms 19:1-4

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims (God’s) handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Isaiah 55:12

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Quotes

Everything in nature contains all the power of nature. Everything is made of one hidden stuff.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.

>> Lesson 5: Worms, Snails and Fairies

Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.

The winds will blow their own freshness into you ... while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.

— *John Muir*

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.

— *Anne Frank*

I. Opening the Lesson

This lesson may require planning, preparing, and even purchasing materials before class, or you may need only walk through the backyard or nearby park — depending on your location and setting. Go right into the first activity, and discussion will unfold from there.

Hands-on Nature Activity

Materials needed: Collect natural materials from your yard, neighborhood, or park, or if you are in a city, your market. This lesson is best in the autumn, as it is easiest then to find natural materials such as pine cones, seed pods, and beautifully colored leaves. In the spring, collect twigs with small leaves or flowers on them instead of the colored leaves. Also look for flowers, unusual pebbles or stones, and lichen or moss. You may be fortunate enough to find such treasures as a feather or a wing of a beetle.

Natural materials are available in the city, although they may not be free. Buy a pot of chrysanthemums, two or three packets of herbs such as sage, thyme, or dill, and several colorful squashes (the smaller the better, as children love little things they can hold in one hand). Buy some sunflower seeds still in the hull, and you will have natural items that are fun to handle and have wonderful fragrances too.

Tips:

- Do not bring anything valuable that you would worry

about or plan to take home. The children should be able to handle the objects!

- Have enough small items for each child to have two or three seeds, flower petals, and leaves or herb sprigs to use for the art activity later in the lesson.

- If you are able, the week before this topic is scheduled, ask the children to bring a nature item to share with the class.

NATURE TIP: If possible, go outside together and find one thing to add to the collection of items you brought for the lesson.



If you do not use an altar, set up a table with a beautiful cloth over it in the front or middle of the classroom. Have the children sit in a semi-circle so they can easily see. Bring the objects you have collected in paper bags or a closed box or basket. Draw each object out one by one and let the children identify it and guess where you found it. Then hand it to the child next to you to handle and pass around. The last one in the semi-circle will place each object on the table. Encourage them to feel the texture of each item, perhaps stroking their cheeks with it, and look closely at all the colors they can detect.

See whether the children know that the flowers become either fruits or seed pods. Let them contribute to the conversation by asking what other seeds they know about, whether they have ever eaten the herb, and so on. Ask what makes the plant materials grow and see if they can name the three necessary ingredients to plant life: soil, sun, and water. Someone might know how minerals are formed or the names of some stones and minerals.

Go slowly, and draw out the suspense about what is in the basket or bag. After you have shown the first two or three objects and started them around the circle, let children guess what each next object might be. You can also inquire what all the objects have in common as you go along and see whether they can identify that none of the objects are manmade, but nature's gifts.

>> Lesson 5: Worms, Snails and Fairies

Other answers might be that all of the objects are biodegradable and safe to touch, or that the colors are mostly greens and browns. You might mention that they all come from Mother Nature or our Mother Earth and that they are therefore precious.

After you have started the final object around the circle, let the children who want to tell which of all the objects is their favorite, the most colorful, the softest, the best one to keep for “luck,” and the most unusual one.

* Whether or not you have time for both the art activity and the story will depend on how long you spend on the opening activity and how receptive the children are to it. Some groups may get completely engaged in holding the objects and talking about the items; if so, just give each child their seeds, leaves, and petals or herb sprigs in an envelope to take home and read the story. If you have a restless group, you can cut short the opening and go right into the movement and art. This may be a great lesson to spread out over two weeks if you like.

II. Building the Lesson

Transition to the art activity with this movement visualization. The sunflower activity transitions well after the book, *The Dandelion Seed*, by Joseph P. Anthony, if you have it available.

Become a Sunflower Activity

Explain to the class that plant life begins with a small seed, and they have the opportunity to act like seeds that grow into sunflowers. Optional: play instrumental music (such as a moderate-tempo piano piece) softly in the background.

Sequence:

- 1) Curl up on the floor in child’s pose (fetal position on the knees) and pretend to be a seed. Remind them that seeds are under the earth, hidden from the sun and the activity of the surface, but they are filled with divine energy waiting to awaken.
- 2) Tell them it’s raining and drum your fingers on

the desk. All the seeds will soak up the water and begin to grow.

3) Demonstrate how they can stick one finger up in the air for a leaf sprouting; then add another leaf, and then let the arm rise up like a stalk. Encourage everyone to visualize the energy moving from the seed up into the leaf and how the leaf soaks up energy from the sun as well.

4) Then tell everyone to stand up tall like a big, strong sunflower and bloom (spreading out arms). Sunflowers turn toward the sun as the earth moves and the sun appears to move across the sky. Everyone can face the east as if it were morning and then turn towards the west as if it were evening.

5) Now everyone can become a caterpillar on the sunflower and go to a table for the art activity in slow-motion caterpillar speed!



MUSIC TIP: An alternate movement activity would be to use music that describes something in nature and let the children move to the music in whatever manner they like.

Nature Art Activity

Materials needed: two or three seeds, flower petals, and leaves or herb sprigs for each child, white glue, markers or crayons, and 8.5x11 card stock or thick construction paper (regular copy paper is too thin for this project)

Preparation: Have card stock waiting for each child with crayons or markers nearby. Tell the children that they can draw anything from nature that they want to; they can draw a bird in a tree, plants in the field, or a shrub outside the church. You will be giving them seeds, leaves, and flower petals to glue on their drawings in anyway they like. You and your assistant go around and distribute a few natural items to each child, being sure each child gets the same number and type of items as all of the other children.

>> Lesson 5: Worms, Snails and Fairies



MUSIC TIP: You can play calming music as they create — a song from Ashana would be appropriate.

You can talk to them about how our lives depend on the gifts of Mother Earth, such as fruits, nuts, and all other foods, and how important it is that we take care of her and thank her for all the things she provides. We are grateful for the animals we love to see and the water we drink. Remind them that without these gifts that the Earth offers us, we could not survive. It is a delicate balance that we must treat carefully. We must

give back to the Earth by taking great care of it.

When most children are finished with the art, you can have them gather round to hear the story and let the children who get into detail continue, listening from where they are.

III. Closing the Lesson

Read the story, *A Walk in the City*, and use the discussion questions to relate it to the heart of the lesson.

Close the lesson with the affirmation and a prayer, or read any of the quotations included in this lesson and have a few moments of silence.

>> A WALK IN THE CITY

Teisha was out on the balcony of her family's second-story apartment when her father called her. The large planter box there held a lovely miniature world, where Teisha imagined fairies napping on the woolly thyme and playing tag among the tulips. The trailing vine she had helped plant had grown long enough to hang over the edge of the balcony and wave at the neighbors below.

She ran to join her father as he called again. It was errand day, and there was no more time to sit with the flowers. Her father's strong hand held hers as they stepped out onto the noisy city sidewalk. Teisha looked up past the tall buildings to the friendly little clouds in the bright blue sky. The sun warmed her face, and she felt its happy energy.

Their first stop was the coffee shop. While her dad stood in line, Teisha noticed a small black spider moving silently across the floor.

She took a paper cup from the counter and put it in front of the spider so it would crawl inside. When they left the shop, Teisha gave one hand to her father and kept the cup in the other. She watched the curious spider explore the empty white world of the cup while they walked to the pharmacy.

At the pharmacy door, Teisha gently let the spider out into a pot of welcoming pansies. As the spider tiptoed away, a ladybug landed on Teisha's sleeve. It magically folded its wings. The cheerful spots seemed to say, "Hello," and Teisha invited it to ride along as

they walked to the drycleaner's shop.

As they reached the cleaners, the polite ladybug winged its thanks to Teisha and flew into the sunshine. Her father met a friend outside the shop, and while the grownups talked, Teisha watched a determined snail move slowly up the concrete wall, leaving a shiny trail. She held the paper cup on the wall and the snail



>> Lesson 5: Worms, Snails and Fairies

moved in.

All the way to the bicycle shop, the snail traveled around in the cup. Teisha could turn the cup in any direction, and the snail just kept sliming along, with its antennae eyes going up and down. The bicycle shop had a long strip of grass in front, and Teisha found the perfect spot for the snail behind a large rock.

While the snail munched a leaf, Teisha watched two birds have a bathing party in a puddle left by last night's rainstorm. They were having such fun, they didn't notice a long, tasty earthworm laying on the wet pavement. Teisha carefully picked it up and put it in her cup. Then she put a bit of wet dirt in too, for comfort.

The earthworm curled and wiggled in the little dirt it had, and Teisha watched it stretch out and then shrink again, all the way home. Teisha and her father climbed the stairs to the second-floor apartment and went inside. Teisha walked through the living room and out to the balcony, where the large planter sat in the sun. She looked carefully for the soft spot under the tulips and tipped the cup so the earthworm could dig a new home. Teisha was sure the worm and the fairies would get along very well.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What else could Teisha have done with the animals? Why did she choose to let them go, do you think?
- 2) Do you know how any of the animals that Teisha found are helpful to the earth or to people?
- 3) What is the most interesting animal you've ever found and picked up?
- 4) Do you ever feel God when you are noticing nature?
- 5) Do you feel there is a Spirit in parts of nature?

Book suggestion: The Dandelion Seed, by Joseph P. Anthony

Lesson Notes:



AFFIRMATION: I find within myself
the power to do what is right.

NINETEEN DANGEROUS TRIPS

>> Lesson 19: Willpower

Affirmation: I find within myself the power to do what is right.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

Willpower is our willingness combined with our power, applied with concentration and determination.

Applying our willpower to achieve goals is really a discovery of the divine power and guidance that lies within all creation. We discover that willingness opens the gate to infinite possibilities. We don't have to know how something is going to happen, just that we can help make it happen. People who make things happen and use their own power to do so do not sit back and wait for good luck or for obstacles to move; they move, and the obstacles become opportunities.

Children, and adults, often neglect to pay attention to their inner guidance. They may be willing to do what is right, but they are not able to hear the voice of their own inner wisdom. Great damage can be done to ourselves and others when we act with unkind or selfish intentions or when we don't act at all when someone is being harmed. Willpower must always be accompanied by sensitively listening to one's higher guidance within. Sometimes, doing what is right and good is not easy, and others will stand against us. But through our willpower we can stand tall in the face of fear and hate and with courage continue to do what is right.

Teacher Reflection: Questions

Reflect on an area of your life or a situation in which you would like to use willpower to overcome an obstacle or achieve a goal.

- Ask yourself, "What is trying to happen in this situation?" If you used willpower (your willingness combined with divine inner power), what would you do? What thoughts would you have? How would you

feel? What would the results be? How would your life change? How might others be affected?

- Turn your responses into a personal visualization. Sit quietly and close your eyes. Take a few breaths to calm your mind. Visualize yourself in the situation. For a moment, watch what is happening, noticing any obstacles or challenges that arise. Feel your willingness cooperate with your divine inner power. See yourself applying willpower to bring the situation to a positive conclusion or resolution. Observe the results manifesting in your life. Notice how using your willpower positively affects the situation and other people who may be involved.

- After the visualization, take a moment to jot down any thoughts or feelings you want to remember that will inspire you to use your willpower in this situation or at other times.

Bible Verses

John 4:34

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of God who sent me and to complete God's work."

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

Luke 10:27

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Quotes

Will is to grace, as the horse is to the rider.

— *Saint Augustine*

A firm resolve pierces even rock.

— *Japanese Proverb*

>> Lesson 19: Willpower

Lord, I'm going to hold steady on to You and You've got to see me through.

— *Harriet Tubman*

Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

— Harriet Tubman

I. Opening the Lesson

Read the story Harriet Tubman's Willpower and use the discussion questions to relate her life achievements to the heart of the lesson. Ask the children what obstacles Harriet Tubman faced in her lifetime and what were some things she achieved despite, or because of, those obstacles. Share the list of facts about Harriet Tubman below. Many of the facts are not part of the story.



Obstacles or Challenges Harriet Faced

- She was born into slavery.
- She was female at a time when women had few rights.
- She did not receive any education.
- She had a lifelong physical handicap.
- She was under constant stress and danger most of her life
- She was poor all her life.
- She worked for the army for years and didn't get paid.
- She lived without any of the luxuries we have now (plumbing, electricity, cars, washing machines, telephones).

Achievements and Contributions

- Got herself out of slavery.
- Rescued many others from slavery.
- Leaders such as generals and governors listened to her

and respected her.

- Never showed fear or complained about her life
- Helped people without expecting money.
- Made use of what little she had and shared.
- Helped fight for women's right to vote.
- Saved many lives when she worked as a nurse and spy for the Union Army.
- Established a home for poor elderly African Americans.
- Awarded a silver medal for bravery by the Queen of England.
- First woman to lead an armed expedition into war.
- Freed over 700 slaves, succeeded in the mission, and lost no lives.

II. Building the Lesson

Read the above quote by Saint Augustine. Explain that grace means the power of love that flows through the universe. When we open our hearts to possibilities we can't see, then grace can flow through our lives more strongly. The use of our will with an open heart combined with divine grace or power is a combination that can accomplish amazing things — like a horse (our will) and rider (divine power) working together to win a race.

Then read the first quote from Harriet Tubman that suggests she felt a partnership with God, just as a horse and rider are partners. Then transition to the Horse Race Activity.

Horse Race Activity

Materials needed: three different colors of paper, paper sack

In this horse race, everyone can pretend to be either the horse or the rider. Mark a starting line and a finish line on opposite sides of the room. Divide your class into three groups, and assign one of three colors to each group. Or, let the children choose one of three colors for themselves.

Crumple up one sheet of paper of each color and place the paper balls in a bag.

Explain to the children that they will take turns reaching in the bag and taking out one paper ball

>> Lesson 19: Willpower

without looking. The color chosen will indicate which “horses” (or “riders”) get to move one giant step toward the finish line. (If a yellow paper is pulled out of the sack, then the yellow players take one giant step forward.) Then the paper ball is returned to the sack and another player chooses. Continue until one group of horses reach the finish line.

Tips:

- Each player could have a yarn bracelet to indicate their color or a colored paper taped to their shirt.
- A spinner or game tokens could be used instead of the paper balls to indicate who moves.
- Keeping the colors to only three prevents any one player from being singled out as winner or loser.
- Horse pictures or toy horses would be a fun touch.

NATURE TIP: Play the horse race game outside for some fresh air.



III. Closing the Lesson

Disappearing Obstacles Activity

Materials needed: blindfold, whatever props are available in your space



MUSIC TIP:

The setup and first part of this game would be fun played to a song from the Butterflyfish CD or a similar upbeat, fun song. You'll need to turn the music off or down when the adult volunteer comes back in the room.

Set up an obstacle course that the children have to maneuver through. You can create a fun course with just a few props, such as chairs, pillows, and tables. After they have played a bit, explain that an adult volunteer will leave the room briefly and will return blindfolded. The class will have to lead the volunteer through the obstacles.

While the volunteer is out of the room, let the children help you quickly and quietly remove the obstacles. Tell them they will be pretending to lead the person around obstacles, and they must not say anything to spoil the surprise. Then let the blindfolded volunteer back in the room. Instruct the children to sit on either side of the room and give verbal guidance (no touching), pretending to guide him/her around the obstacles. Some small groups may be able to do this cooperatively, freestyle, or you may want the children to take turns, with each player giving one instruction, such as: take two steps to the left or straight ahead one big step.

After the volunteer reaches the goal across the room, remove the blindfold and reveal that the obstacles were not really there! Discuss how the obstacles we perceive can be minimized or even seem to disappear when we align our will with what is right and open our hearts to the power of divine grace.

Tip: It may go more smoothly if the volunteer knew what was going to happen. You may want to clue him/her in before class (without the children knowing, of course).

Close the lesson with a prayer and the affirmation or a few moments of quiet stillness. Remind the children that they have the power to choose to do what is right, even in the face of fear, if they are willing. Read the second quote from Harriet Tubman that is in this lesson.

>> HARRIET TUBMAN'S WILLPOWER

In the year 1820, almost all black people in the United States were slaves. Slaves had no rights; they were owned by another person and had no choices about their lives. Harriet Tubman was born to parents who

were slaves, and that meant Harriet was a slave too.

Harriet's mother and father could not protect her from the cruelties of slavery, and she was forced to work

>> Lesson 19: Willpower

from a very young age. She took care of babies and did work in the master's house and out in the fields. Even as a little child, she was sent out in the winter to check muskrat traps. Muskrats are large rodents that live in underwater dens and were trapped for their fur. Harriet had to walk waist-deep into freezing water and retrieve the dead muskrats.

Although she never learned to read or write, Harriet was smart and was always listening, watching, and learning. She was never a slave in her heart and never accepted that she was unworthy because she was black or because she was a girl. She learned to pad herself with extra clothing for protection during frequent beatings. When Harriet was about eleven years old, she boldly refused an order from a white man to help stop his runaway slave. Instead, she stood back and let the slave run by her. The man angrily threw a heavy metal weight after the runaway, and it hit Harriet in the head. The weight broke Harriet's skull and almost killed her. Unfortunately, this kind of cruelty to slaves was not uncommon, and Harriet wasn't even given medical care. She recovered, but she suffered for the rest of her life with pain, seizures, and blackouts as a result of the injury.

She couldn't read, but she was told stories from the Bible, and Harriet had a deep inner life of prayer. She always tried to follow the guidance she felt came from

God, and everyone who knew her said she showed amazing inner strength and appeared to be fearless.

After years of struggle and thinking about being free, Harriet heard she was to be sold and taken further south, where freedom would be impossible to find. She prayed and planned an escape. She took two of her brothers with her, but her brothers turned back.

It was too frightening to be out in the dark woods, possibly getting lost, shot, or recaptured. Harriet didn't want to give up, but she went back with them. Then, Harriet prayed and planned again — she wouldn't let anything stop her. The second time she went alone; traveling almost a hundred miles to Pennsylvania, where blacks were free.

She could have stayed in Pennsylvania and lived a safe life, but Harriet felt she had to help others escape a life of slavery. So, instead of staying, she went back to the South and led others to freedom. She could have been caught and killed or sold and taken far away, but she went anyway. Harriet made nineteen dangerous trips to the South and brought many of her family and friends and even strangers to a new life where they were no longer slaves.

Harriet used all her courage and willpower to make the trips. There were rewards given to people who turned in runaway slaves, and anyone willing to help





AFFIRMATION: I meet life's challenges with inner strength and courage.

COURAGEOUS CORRIE

>> Lesson 20: Courage

Affirmation: I meet life's challenges with inner strength and courage.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

Courage does not mean fearlessness and is a quality that exists within all beings and can be accessed at any time.

We need only to turn inward to face life's challenges with the courage that is already ours. Feeling anxious or fearful of new outward circumstances is normal for most people, but finding the courage to face those circumstances means recognizing that our divine nature is perfectly equipped and we have the inner resources to handle challenges. The message we want our children to hear is that feeling fear does not mean they are flawed or lacking something. Fear is a signal that tells us to take action — and the answer to what action is needed comes from our wisdom within. Being courageous is acting even though one is afraid.

Jesus and other wisdom teachers and social justice leaders all had to face fear along their path at some point, most likely at many points. If we look at the example of Jesus, the Bible has many stories of his courageous actions. For example, he stood by a woman who was going to be unjustly stoned, he confronted the Jewish leadership and debated theology in the temple, he went into Jerusalem to confront the injustices of the leadership of his country, knowing full well that it may cost him his life, he healed on the Sabbath even though it was against the law, he had physical contact with people of illness, and he accepted and befriended those considered unclean, inviting them to his table. Being brave just to appear brave can lead to foolishness, but to confront injustice or acting out of compassion is a different kind of courage.

Teacher Reflection: Visualization

Recall a fear you have overcome. It may be a fear you

had as a child that you no longer have, or it may be a fear you've recently conquered.

- What experiences, actions, or attitudes helped you overcome it?
- In what ways did you draw strength from your inner divine connection?

Think about a fear or apprehension you have now.

- Sit in a quiet place, close your eyes, and visualize where your fear is located on a continuum. Are you standing in a place where you are extremely afraid, or is your apprehension moderate or very minimal?
- While mentally standing on the continuum, take several deep breaths. With each breath, allow yourself to connect to the divine within. You may visualize the light around yourself growing brighter, or you may feel increased wellbeing and confidence. Maybe you will sit up a little straighter or feel a smile coming to your face.
- Remaining in that feeling of inner strength and connection, visualize yourself taking one small step toward less fear. What would you say and do once you moved to this new place of less fear? See yourself doing it.
- Take a few more breaths and repeat the affirmation for this week.
- Open your eyes when you are ready. Remember that you can draw on that inner strength whenever you need it.

Bible Verses

John 16-33

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!

Job 32:7-8

I thought, "Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom." But it is the spirit in mortals, the breath

>> Lesson 20: Courage

of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.

1 Corinthians 16:13–14

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.

Quotes

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, “I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.”

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

— *Eleanor Roosevelt*

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

— *Maya Angelou*

The truth that many people never understand, until it is too late, is that the more you try to avoid suffering the more you suffer because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you in proportion to your fear of being hurt.

— *Thomas Merton*

I. Opening the Lesson

Read the story, *Courageous Corrie*, and use the discussion questions to relate it to the heart of the lesson. Then transition to the *Courage Continuum Activity*.

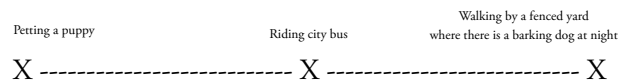
Courage Continuum Activity

Materials needed: examples of circumstances that require courage to deal with, prepared before class

Explain to the class that they will have an opportunity to show how much courage is needed in various circumstances by moving to different places in the room. First explain what a continuum is. Most children are familiar with a number line, so you could explain that a continuum is like a number line without numbers.

Show them where one end of the continuum will be at one wall and the other end will be at the opposite

wall. They are to stand on one side if the situation you describe requires very little courage and the other side if the situation requires a great deal of courage. They may also choose to stand anywhere in between to show how much courage they think is needed. The illustration below gives an example:



You might want to start with the situations that were in the story, letting the children show you how much courage they think was required for the situations the characters encountered. Then try some other examples that seem appropriate for them. Some more examples are:

- First day at a new school
- Going to a doctor or dentist for a checkup
- Performing in a school play
- Taking a surprise math test
- Walking in the park with a parent
- Camping out in the woods
- Standing on a rock near the waves at the beach
- Trying a new food
- Touching a tarantula

Encourage everyone to be supportive of one another. Notice how different the responses may be and point out how we all are challenged by different things. Present five to ten scenarios, depending on the time available. The last scenario leads to the next activity and should be this: How much courage would it take to stick your hand in a box without knowing or seeing what the contents are?

Tip: move from one scenario to the next fairly quickly to keep distractions and boredom from setting in.

II. Building the Lesson

After the *Courage Continuum Activity* let the children know you have an experiment for them. Explain that you have set up a box (or more than one) with something inside. There is a hole for their hand to fit into, but they will not be able to see inside the box. The box could hold something icky (but not dangerous) or something nice.

>> Lesson 20: Courage

Mystery Box Activity

Materials needed: one or more shoeboxes with a hole cut out one end and covered with tissue. Plastic bag and contents for each box

Explain that each child will have the opportunity to put their hand inside the box(es) and feel what is there. They should try to keep from reacting strongly and not give away what they feel so the next person is surprised. The activity is optional—no child should be forced to take part. If anyone does not want to try it, let them help you call up the other children or hold the box for the others.

Ideally, at least two boxes would be set up, one with something unpleasant and one with something pleasant.

Examples for unpleasant: a sealed bag with cold, mushy noodles inside, a rubber spider, a prickly scrub brush. Examples for pleasant: a bunch of soft cotton balls, a bundle of satin fabric, velvety soft baby blanket.

After everyone has an opportunity to try each box, show them what was inside. Ask them questions about their experience. Was it more difficult to put their hand in the first box or the second? Did it make a difference

when they saw the reactions of others? Would it have been different if someone else had dared them to put their hand in — like an older sibling, a friend, or a scientist?

III. Closing the Lesson

Facing something unknown, or facing something we know will be difficult, is when we really need to draw on the courage we have inside. Read the Maya Angelou quote and explain that acting in kindness, mercy, generosity, and honesty requires courage and is not always easy.

Affirmation Illustration

Materials needed: crayons, markers or colored pencils, words of the affirmation

Repeat the affirmation together and invite the children to illustrate it. Have them write the words on their art paper, give them paper with the words already printed, or print out the words so they can cut and paste them to their picture.

Close the lesson with the affirmation and a period of silence or prayer.

>> COURAGEOUS CORRIE

He's so brave! Corrie thought with an envious sigh. She was watching her older brother practice for his skateboard competition, and she could hardly believe her eyes when he flew up in the air and landed on the concrete ramp — all with a big grin on his face.

Corrie's brother had offered to teach her some skateboard tricks, but she had turned him down. She knew she wasn't brave enough to do anything so daring and scary.

Corrie was happy to see her cousin, Alexandra, running down the sidewalk toward her, waving and smiling. Alexandra was coming to Corrie's piano recital, and they were going to get ice cream afterwards.

"Are you nervous about the recital?" Alexandra asked, a bit out of breath from her run.

"I've been practicing every day, and I don't even have to look at the music anymore. And Mom took me over to the hall to practice on that piano too, so I don't think it will be too bad. At least I get some cookie dough ice cream after!" Corrie's calm answer impressed Alexandra, who had cried at her last piano recital.

As they got in the car, Corrie's mom explained that the piano teacher had called to tell them the recital was moved because of some plumbing problem in the building. They were meeting the other students at a different place and everything was going to be fine, so Corrie shouldn't worry.

The new place was nothing like the hall where Corrie had practiced. There was red carpet everywhere, and the piano was set up on a high stage. The students had

>> Lesson 20: Courage

to walk up six steps to get up there, and the piano was big, black, shiny, grand — nothing like the warm, wood upright she was used to. When the teacher called her name, his voiced echoed in the huge room and Corrie felt very small. But she held back the prickly tears that were behind her eyes and focused on the music.

Later, at the ice cream parlor, Alexandra kept saying, “Wow! You didn’t even mess up once! That stage was so huge — and you didn’t even act scared at all! Wow!”

Corrie knew she had been really scared, but she just wanted to have ice cream and forget about it. So when her mom handed her the cone, she was dismayed to see two scoops of mint chocolate chip, not the cookie dough flavor she had been looking forward to.

Her parents were talking and didn’t notice Corrie’s problem with the ice cream. She didn’t want to be whiny, but she really wanted cookie dough. The ice cream counter was so tall; Corrie could just see the head of the clerk behind it. She walked over and stood there, hoping he would notice her but feeling too shy to say anything. He looked down and smiled.

“Can I help you?” he said kindly.

“I think there was a mistake because I got mint chocolate chip and it was supposed to be cookie dough. Could you change it, please?” She spoke softly but politely.

“I’m sorry — my mistake! I’ll get you cookie dough right away.” The clerk made the scoops extra big and handed the cone to Corrie.

Alexandra was amazed. She had never spoken to a store clerk in her whole life. “Wow! You’re so brave. Wow,” she said between licks of her orange sherbet.

The girls were playing outside with Corrie’s kitten, Sunshine, later that afternoon. The kitten was still pretty small and a little scared of new things. Suddenly, a noisy truck went down the street and the kitten bolted into the closest hiding place — through a hole under the stairs to the dark space under the front porch of the house.

Corrie was horrified and ran inside to get her mom. Her mom brought cat food and reassured the girls that the kitten would come out. But the kitten was really scared and didn’t even come out for special tuna treats.

Her mom crawled under the porch as Corrie and Alexandra waited anxiously. Corrie almost cried at the thought of Sunshine in that dark, spooky place. Her big brother didn’t even go

under the porch — he lost his favorite tennis ball under there once and refused to go find it.

Her mom came out looking very dirty and discouraged. “Sunshine is too scared to listen to me; I think she trusts only you, Corrie.”

Corrie didn’t hesitate. She knew Sunshine needed her, so she crawled into the dark hole while her mom tried to shine a dim flashlight beam into the shadows.

“Sunshine, it’s me!” Corrie called sweetly as she crawled away from the light. Part of her mind noticed the weeds and the damp smell of old wood, the numerous spider webs, and a dusty tennis ball. Two little eyes



>> Lesson 20: Courage

glowed way back in the corner, and Corrie kept going even though her knees hurt.

The kitten suddenly appeared in front of her and crawled under Corrie's shirt, trembling with fear. Her soft fur tickled Corrie's stomach. She held the kitten with one hand and awkwardly crawled backwards towards her mom and cousin.

"Wow!" was all Alexandra could say.

Later, Corrie's brother came home from his skateboarding competition. He was proud to report that he came in third place. He looked at Corrie as he said, "Mom, Dad, maybe someday Corrie will be brave enough to learn how to skateboard."

Corrie said, "Maybe," and tossed him an old, dusty tennis ball.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Do you think Corrie is a brave person?
- 2) Is her brother brave?
- 3) Why do you think her brother said that Corrie wasn't brave enough?
- 4) Have you ever been brave to help someone else, like Corrie did with her kitten?
- 5) Do you think it takes courage to ask for what you want, like Corrie did in the ice cream parlor?
- 6) Do you think there are different kinds of courage?

Lesson Notes:



AFFIRMATION: I am a part
of all creation.

RACHEL DREAMS OF THE SEA

>> Lesson 25: Expanding Awareness

Affirmation: I am a part of all creation.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

Despite the appearance of differences and separateness, there is unity in divine creation, and we can become aware of that unity.

Deep within our hearts, we all long for an expanded sense of self. We long to feel oneness with the universe, with spirit in all things, and with the infinite spirit that created everything that is. Each time we experience a sense of connection or a hint of freedom from our ego self-definition, we become more aware of the Sacred that is always in us and around us. Jesus may have called it the “Kingdom of God.” Some scholars believe, however, that “Queendom” or “Sacred Unity” is a more accurate translation of Jesus’ words when he spoke about this realm of God which is always available to each of us.

Children naturally look for how they are a part of the world around them. They notice sameness and feel oneness more readily than adults who have been gradually trained to see only differences and separation. As we grow in our awareness, we learn that there is nowhere we can go and be apart from the constant, unchanging presence of God. We are never truly separate from anyone or anything in the universe. All that we do affects the world and everyone in it, like a ripple in a pond.

Teacher Reflection: Meditation

Notice your sameness/connection with other people and nature by responding to a few of the following prompts. Identify as many similarities and reasons as you can, ending the phrase “and we are One in God.” I am the same as _____ because _____, and we are one in God.

my spouse
my friend
my neighbor
my child
my Sunday school students
my pastor

Metaphorically,

I am the same as _____ because _____, and we are one in God.

a tree
a river
a flower
a bird
the sun
the ocean

When you’re finished identifying similarities, close your eyes and meditate on one of the above people or aspects of nature. Begin by feeling your sameness. Gradually deepen your connection, expanding your awareness toward oneness. End by affirming several times: I am a part of all creation.

Bible Verses

Psalms 139:7

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

Romans 1:20

Ever since the creation of the world [God’s] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things [God] has made.

Quotes

That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea.

— *D.H. Lawrence*

>> Lesson 25: Expanding Awareness

The universe is the harmonious interaction of all the elements that create balance and harmony.

The word universe literally means “one song”.

— *Deepak Chopra*

Thou art a second world in miniature, the sun and moon are within thee, and also the stars.

— *Origen c. 185–254*

In every outthrust headland, in every curving beach, in every grain of sand there is the story of the earth.

— *Rachel Carson*

I. Opening the Lesson

Introduce the Go-Togethers Activity with a challenge. Give three examples of how the items can be sorted and challenge the children to find at least three more. Give the most obvious ideas (such as size, color, function) and let them come up with others.

It can be fun to look for sameness in the things around us; our culture trains us to look for differences. Noticing how things or people are the same will gradually expand our awareness and help us to feel a part of a larger reality and, ultimately, all divine creation.

Go-Togethers Activity

Materials needed: large assortment of household items

Fill a box or bag with an assortment of small items. Check your home and classroom for various tools, utensils, and whatnots that are safe to handle. The bigger the assortment, the more fun this will be.

Put the items on the table or floor and explain that the purpose is to sort them and put them into groups, using any criteria for sameness. Large classes can work in teams. The same items can be sorted many times with different results. Let the children brainstorm ideas without help; they will be creative. (Some groupings could be: where the item might be found, who uses it, texture, source material, familiar or unfamiliar, names for the item, appearance, weight, smell, and others.)

Tip: if you divide the items available so teams can work

together, rotate the teams or the items until everyone has an opportunity to try a variety of items.

NATURE TIP:

Spend ten minutes outside gathering nature items to use in the activity.



II. Building the Lesson

Transition to the next activity by asking the children about stars. How are stars usually depicted in drawings? What kinds of stars do they know about that appear in nature? (Stars in the sky, star fruit, sea stars.) Do they know that a star appears when an apple is cut in half through the middle horizontally? Have they seen flowers that look like stars? Light reflecting on the water often looks like sparkling stars. Star patterns can be found many places in the natural world.

Talk about how stars twinkle and shine in the darkness. Stars are used by sailors to find direction while out at sea. Stars have been used as symbols of goodness and light since time began. The story of Jesus’ birth tells of him being born under a special star. This activity shows how we are like stars, made by the same creator and shining with the same inner light. You may also mention that scientists today teach us that each of us has bits of star dust in us—that we are literally made from bits of the universe.

We Are All Stars Activity

Materials needed: colored yarn and transparent tape, chalk, or painter’s tape

The idea of this activity is to create a five-pointed star shape around each child as they stand or lie with arms extended and legs apart. It can be done several different ways:

- While the child is standing against the wall, yarn is used to outline the star shape and taped to the wall.
- Large butcher paper is taped to the wall first and then, while the child stands against it, draw a large star around the child.

>> Lesson 25: Expanding Awareness

- Painter's tape is used to outline the star shape on the wall around the child.
- The child lies on the floor and an outline of a star is drawn or taped on the floor.
- Chalk can be used to draw the star shape outside on a fence, wall, or pavement.



Tips:

- With limited space and a large group, the stars of smaller children can be done inside the stars of the larger children.
- Bring examples or pictures of stars in nature, like an apple that you can cut, to add a fun element to the lesson.

>> ONE LIFE TOUCHES ANOTHER

A story about Rachel Carson

Rachel Carson loved the sea from the time she was a little girl. She was born in Pennsylvania, far from the ocean waves, but she could imagine the smell of salty air, the sound of surf, and the feel of wet sand between her toes. The sea was far away, but Rachel could feel that it was connected to the woods and streams she played in near her home — all the natural world was connected and full of life.

Life in all its wondrous forms drew Rachel outdoors

III. Closing the Lesson

Read the story about Rachel Carson and use the discussion questions to relate it to the heart of the lesson. Close with the following short visualization and a prayer or period of silence.

Sit up tall with your spine straight. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing. Each time you breathe in, imagine you are breathing in peace and calmness. Each time you breathe out, imagine you are breathing out all your worries and tension. Feel relaxed and still.

Keep your eyes closed, but look slightly up and imagine a warm light shining there in front of your forehead. That light is full of love, and it shines within you all the time. Imagine that same light shining within everyone in the room, and then imagine it shining within everyone in the world. Then imagine that same light shining in all the animals, plants, and every part of creation.

Repeat the affirmation with me: I am a part of all creation. (Repeat several times.)

Now remain still and repeat the words silently inside as I say the words out loud. I am a part of all creation.

Prayer:

May I be aware of the sameness in all creation, within me and around me. Amen.

every day. She and her mother watched the birds together and shared a reverence for all living creatures. Rachel's mother would gently capture insects that came into the house and take them back to their homes outside. When Rachel and her mother discovered baby robins whose nest had been destroyed, they kept the birds on the screened porch until they could safely fly away.

Rachel also loved to write. She was only ten years old when she had a story published in a children's magazine. What a thrill it was to see her story in print and know that other children were reading it! Studying

>> Lesson 25: Expanding Awareness

the natural world and writing were going to be two things Rachel did throughout her life.

Rachel finally experienced the ocean after she graduated from college. She had become a biologist — a scientist who studies living things — and she had a chance to learn and work for a while at a special laboratory right next to the ocean. She was overjoyed to see and touch ocean animals in their natural homes for the first time.

Rachel built a house where she could see the ocean from her front door, and she never grew tired of watching the water from her viewpoint on the land.

An amazing phenomenon can be seen in the ocean at night, if you are lucky to be in the right place.

Tiny sea creatures that glow in the dark are visible as thousands of little flashing lights just below the surface of the water. Rachel and her niece were watching these lights one night when Rachel noticed one light separate from the others and fly up from the water. As it flew close to them, Rachel realized it was a firefly, not an ocean creature like the other lights. The little firefly flew down to the water and seemed to be trying to get close to the other firefly-like glowing creatures. But it was doused with saltwater and wound up rolling around in the sand. It surely would have drowned, but Rachel rescued the little firefly and put it in a bucket to dry off its wings.

The firefly incident was just one experience that convinced Rachel that all life is interconnected. Animals and plants may seem separate, but they depend on each

other in one large ecosystem. When a leaf falls from a tree, a worm eats it. A robin may come along and eat the worm. The robin lays eggs and passes along what it ate to the baby robins. The ocean waters are home to millions of tiny sea creatures that drink the water, fish that eat the little creatures, and bigger fish that people eat. The tide pools are full of creatures that need the land and the sea to survive.

A friend told Rachel about seeing many birds die after DDT was used near her home. DDT is a chemical that was sprayed in the air and on plants to kill insects that could be harmful to crops and people. But the people using the spray didn't understand that when you kill one form of life, other lives are also affected.

Rachel learned everything she could about DDT and other harmful chemicals. She found out that some animals were in danger of becoming extinct because of the use of DDT. She also found out that DDT was making people sick. Rachel was a scientist and a writer — it was natural for her to write a

book to help people understand what might happen if

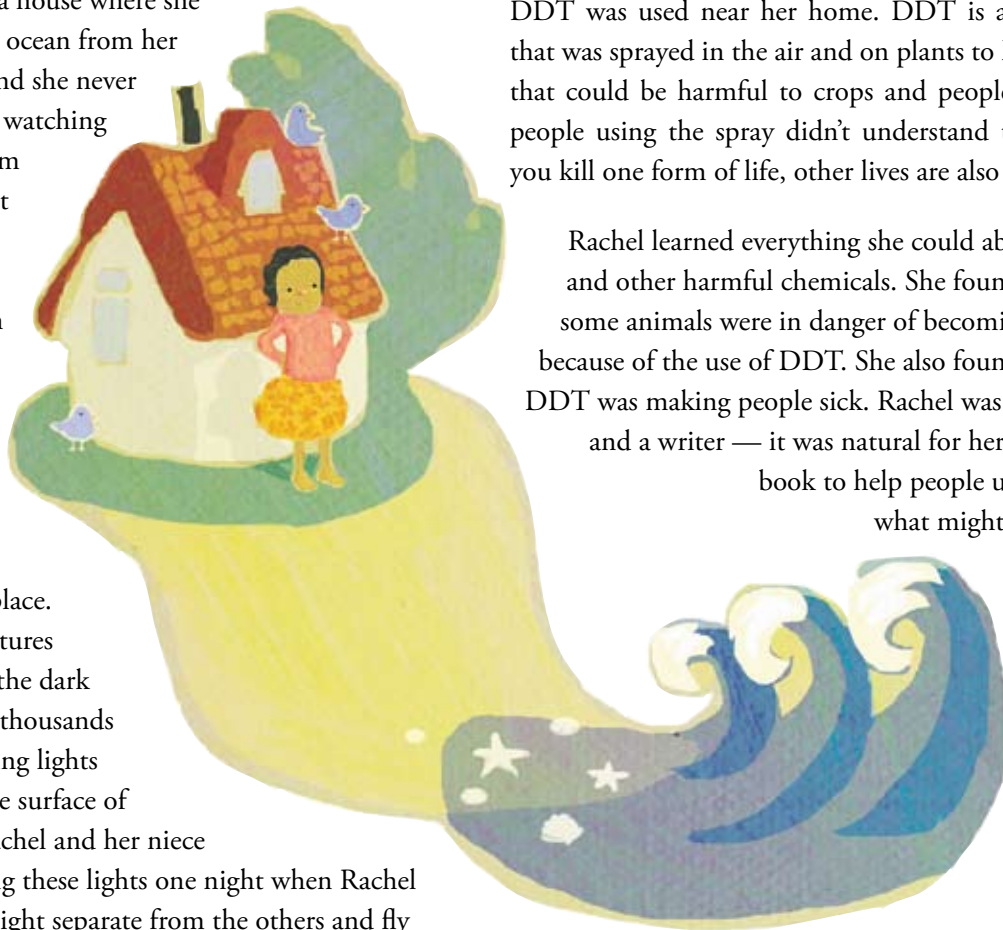
we forget how the world is shared by all living things.

She called the book,

Silent Spring. It

was the first book about the dangers of using chemicals written for everyone — not just for scientists.

Many things began to change after Rachel wrote *Silent Spring*. Other people joined Rachel in speaking out about caring for all life. People started to use chemicals differently, and some laws were changed to help protect natural environments. Many others began to understand the interconnection of the natural world and to feel inspired by how beautifully creation was made to work together.



>> Lesson 25: Expanding Awareness

**Note to teacher: Rachel Carson lived 1907–1964. Silent Spring was published in 1962.*

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you think is special about the ocean?
- 2) Have you ever felt connected to other living things, like Rachel did?
- 3) What do you like to do now that might continue into your adult life?



MUSIC TIP:
Bob Marley's song: "One Love"
might be fun to play
during the activity.

**Supplemental book suggestions: The Web at Dragonfly Pond by Brian Ellis and Michael S. Maydak or Creation, by Alexandra Sangster*

Lesson Notes:



AFFIRMATION: The spirit within me is
the One Spirit that lives in all.

ONE LOVE

>> Lesson 32: Inclusion

Affirmation: The spirit within me is the One Spirit that lives in all.

Getting to the Heart of the Lesson

We can experience the unity of all creation only when we include all in our reality.

When we exclude others, we refuse to relate to realities different than our own, and we keep our experience defined in a way that is comfortable and familiar. If we want children to be inclusive, we have to help them redefine their experiences in a broader way. For instance, if older children exclude a younger child from a ball game because she can't catch the ball, we can guide them to give her a special job that makes her feel part of the game. Finding a way to include her will expand their limited thinking. Scolding them for excluding her will most likely make them resentful, which leads to closing the heart.

Accepting and coping with outward differences is an important step toward opening the heart to others. But to really include others in our reality, we must understand that despite apparent differences, there is only one self, one spirit, and one true reality, underlying all that is. The more children experience their own spiritual nature, the more they will recognize the one spirit in all.

Teacher Reflection: Visualization

Connect with the One Spirit that lives in all by doing the following mediation and visualization:

- Sit comfortably in a place where you won't be interrupted for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply in and out several times, allowing your breath to slow down.
- Once you feel calm, visualize yourself sitting within a

column of divine light. With each breath, expand the column of light outward, creating a large field of light all around you.

- Visualize a friend or family member entering the field of light. Enjoy the feelings of oneness as you connect with each other in the light.
- Continue the visualization with as many other people as you choose, taking time to feel the oneness with each person one at a time.
- When you're finished, bring your awareness back to the room, open your eyes, and go about your day remembering your connection with everyone in the light.

Options:

- In addition to family and friends, you may want to visualize a person with whom you have had a disagreement or conflict. Bring that person into the light. Allow the light to dissolve any difficulties or inharmonious thoughts. Accept that at a deeper level, the two of you are one in the light.
- Adapt the visualization and take it into your daily life. As you walk down the street, wait in line, or sit in a meeting, visualize the light of oneness enveloping each person you meet. Silently bless each person by affirming, "One spirit lives in all." Notice how you feel at the end of the day of consciously remembering the oneness and unity of all.

Bible Verses

Matthew 25:34-40

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care

>> Lesson 32: Inclusion

of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Mark 12:28-31

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Ephesians 4:3-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Quotes

We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out, only from narrow chinks and round bored wells here and there in favored races and places, but He flows in grand undivided currents, shore-less and boundless over creeds and forms and all kinds of civilizations and peoples and beasts, saturating all and fountainizing all.

— *John Muir*

Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace.

— *Albert Schweitzer*

In everything that moves through the universe, I see my own body, and in everything that governs the

universe, my own soul. All men are my brethren, and all things my companions.

— *Chang Tsai*

I. Opening the Lesson

Read the story, *Marian Anderson Sings*, and use the discussion questions to relate it to the heart of the lesson.

Tip: Bring pictures of Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and/or her performance. They are available in books and on the Internet.

II. Building the Lesson

Mix and Make Activity



Explain that the next activity will be a fun exercise in working together. Play some light music and encourage everyone to walk around the room,

mixing together. Stop the music after a couple minutes and call out a number and an object. The players must group themselves in teams with the people closest to them and create the object. The number of people on the team is the number you call, and the object is created using only the team members' bodies. For instance: you call, “Three — rocking chair!” In groups of three, the players come up with a creative way to use their bodies and become a rocking chair. Every team member must be included in the solution.

You may choose to give a time limit for the creation of the object. Allow time for the teams to show their solutions. Then start again by playing the music and calling out a new number and object.

Suggestions for objects: dump truck, piano, umbrella, lawnmower, food processor, refrigerator, fountain, city bus, laptop computer, mp3 player, merry-go-round.

Tips: Encourage mixing and tell the players the teams must be different each time. Be sure every child is being included in the groups. Use different size teams, and if time allows, call out a number that includes everyone in the class and have everyone work together.

>> Lesson 32: Inclusion

III. Closing the Lesson

Bouquet of Spirit Activity

Materials needed: variety of cut flowers to make a bouquet, or an alternative such as stones, shells, fruit or nuts, a vase or bowl

Have everyone sit together at the story circle or altar. Bring out the flowers and give each child one. Tell them they have to spend some time looking at their flower and finding what is special about it. Then allow each child to share something they discovered about their flower. It may be the way the petals feel, tiny hairs on the stem, the way it smells, or the shape of the leaves. As they share, let them add their flower to a vase, creating a bouquet.

Admire the beautiful bouquet together and point out that it is the variety and the differences that help make the bouquet beautiful. But all the flowers come from the same source; they are all created by the same power. Transition to the Quotations Activity.

Tips:

- If you don't have a variety of flowers available, the activity could be done with stones, shells, leaves, or even nuts or fruit.
- If you think it appropriate because of the age of the class or other reason, you could point out a special quality about each flower for them.

Quotations and Affirmation Activity

The quotations in this lesson are deep and meaningful. Choose one or two that inspire you and read them to the class. Ask the children a few questions, such as: What do you think this means for us? What does this quote make you think about? Have you ever felt deeply connected to someone, even though outwardly they are very different from you?

Allow a few minutes for discussion, and then lead everyone in the affirmation. Repeat it several times together, gradually getting quieter and more inward. End with silence or a prayer.

>> MARIAN ANDERSON SINGS

Marian loved to sing. At six years old, Marian was in the children's choir of her church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Even then, her voice was strong and clear as she sang the songs she loved with devotion and joy. Her friends were not surprised when, at eight years old, Marian won the prize at the church recital—fifty cents!

Even with all her natural talent, Marian knew that she needed to study and work hard to be a professional singer. But when she was out of high school and old enough to seriously study music, there wasn't enough money to pay for a teacher. Marian was deeply grateful when her friends, who had listened to her sing with the choir, raised the money to pay for a well-known voice instructor. Marian never forgot that it was their kindness and generosity that made everything that came later possible.

It is very unusual for someone to have the ability

to sing both high notes, like many women soprano singers, and low notes, like many men singers. Marian was one of those unusual people, and she trained hard to build strength and control. Her teacher was so confident in her abilities that he entered her in a singing contest, and this time the prize was more than fifty cents! The winner would sing with the famous New York Philharmonic Orchestra, in a huge outdoor amphitheatre for thousands of people who paid for tickets to hear the music.

Her teacher was right to feel confident, because three hundred singers entered the contest and Marian won. She gave an amazing performance with the New York Philharmonic, and anyone would think that she would have had hundreds of invitations to sing after that.

But the year was 1925, and Marian was a black woman in a country where black people were not treated the

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same as white people. The restrictive laws against African-Americans and the attitudes held by many people of that time made it very difficult for Marian, so when she had a chance to go to Europe, she did.

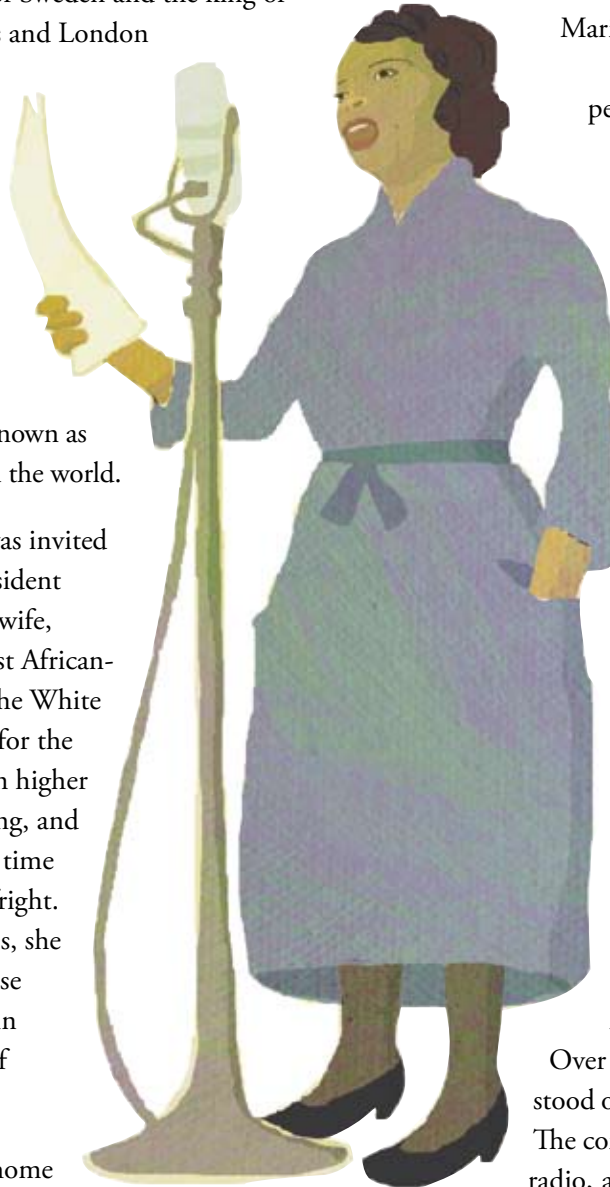
In Europe, Marian studied and continued to train her voice, and she sang — a lot. Marian became famous across the continent of Europe. She gave performances for the king of Sweden and the king of Denmark. She sang in Paris and London and toured Italy, Austria, Spain, Poland, Latvia, and Russia. She was praised by royalty, conductors, and music lovers everywhere she went. The color of her skin was not a concern; people just wanted to hear her sing. By the time she returned to the United States, she was known as one of the greatest singers in the world.

Back in America, Marian was invited to the White House by President Franklin Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor. Marian was the first African-American to be invited to the White House and the first to sing for the president. It seemed an even higher honor than singing for a king, and Marian said it was the only time she ever experienced stage fright. But, despite her nervousness, she must have done well, because they asked her to come again when the king and queen of England were visiting.

Marian was happy to be home in the United States, and she gave concerts throughout the country. She was deeply aware of the suffering caused by the idea that people with dark skin did not deserve the same treatment as those with light skin. She did what she could to change that belief. In the South, where barriers were particularly strong, she insisted on having seating available up front

for black audience members. Usually, the black ticket holders had only the poorest seats in the back section, although they paid the same ticket price as those up front. It was a small victory, but it was something she could do.

Then something happened that drew a lot of attention to Marian and the unfairness of racial discrimination.



Marian and the people who helped arrange her concerts requested permission to use a large concert hall in Washington DC. The organization that owned the hall refused. No other reason was given except the color of her skin. Many people were shocked and took notice. When the president and first lady found out, they took action and gave permission for the concert to be held somewhere else on the morning of April 9, 1939. It was Easter morning, and the place they chose was the Lincoln Memorial — a beautiful and grand monument in the most public part of Washington DC.

Outside, on the steps in front of the memorial's large statue of Abraham Lincoln, Marian Anderson gave a free concert.

Over seventy-five thousand people stood or sat outside to hear the music. The concert was also broadcast on the radio, and millions more were able to listen at home. It was a cold morning, and Marian had to wear a heavy coat over her lovely gown. But no one minded the chill, as the warm voice of Marian Anderson filled the air and filled the hearts of all who came.

Many lives were touched by Marian Anderson's voice,

ABOUT THE CREATORS OF A JOYFUL PATH

Lorna Knox is the main writer for A Joyful Path. She teaches at the Living Wisdom School and is on staff at the Ananda Temple and Teaching Center, in Portland, Oregon. Lorna is the author of two books for parents and teachers: *I Came From Joy! Spiritual Affirmations and Activities for Children* and *Scary News: 12 Ways to Raise Joyful Children When the Headlines are Full of Fear*, published by Crystal Clarity.

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Carol Malnor is an enthusiastic birder, as well as an author and educator. During her 20+ years in the classroom, she developed programs for many different types of students, from high school dropouts to gifted elementary students. Carol and her husband, Bruce, worked together training teachers for many years and have teamed up to write several Dawn teacher's guides. They also co-authored *Earth Heroes: Champions of the Wilderness*. In addition, *The BLUES go Birding Across America* gave Carol the unique opportunity to combine her passion for birds with her talents as a teacher and writer.

Deshna Ubeda is the Associate Director for The Center for Progressive Christianity. She does project management, writing, marketing, event planning, and web management. She has a degree in Religious Studies and Global Peace and Security. She has 15 years of experience working with children and is educated in early childhood development. She just finished writing her first fiction novel, *Missing Mothers*, which will soon be published. She also teaches yoga and meditation.

Lisa Mundorff is an artist, web and print designer, and illustrator living in Portland, Oregon. She has shown her artwork in galleries in both Seattle and Portland and is currently focusing on illustration projects for children's books. When not creating artwork, Lisa enjoys raising and spending time with her two children. She is also an accomplished musician — studying and performing classical violin for years, and playing fiddle in a Portland, Oregon-based Bluegrass band.